

WRITING ABSOLUTE MUSIC: MODERNITY'S LINGUISTIC SYMPHONY

Shelley L. Hay

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Approved by:

Dr. Clayton Koelb (Advisor)
Dr. Alice Kuzniar
Dr. Jonathan Hess
Dr. Eric Downing
Dr. Thomas Pfau

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ABSTRACT

Shelley L. Hay
Writing Absolute Music: Modernity's Linguistic Symphony
(Under the direction of Dr. Clayton Koelb)

Writing Absolute Music: Modernity's Linguistic Symphony explores one facet of the relationship between music and language in 19th- and 20th-century German literature and philosophy. By examining the vital role that the idea of “absolute music” has played in works by thinkers and authors such as Novalis, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Hermann Hesse, I argue that the somewhat counterintuitive phenomenon of writing about *music* in order to overcome problems associated with *language* originates in early German Romanticism and continues to influence German authors throughout the first half of the 20th century. Focusing in large part on Hesse's masterpiece, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, I establish that authors who seek to overcome language's inherent limitations and approach a transcendental reality by emulating musical structures in their novels and short stories ultimately fail to achieve their fundamental goal. I demonstrate that Hesse is the last great heir to this Romantic legacy and that the failure of *Das Glasperlenspiel* to access an absolute through words explains the shift in German literature around 1950 away from the Romantic ideal of turning language into music toward a less optimistic, more humble depiction of music's role within works of German literature.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GPS: *Das Glasperlenspiel*

GW: *Friedrich Nietzsche. Gesammelte Werke*

Hesse: *Novalis. Dokumente seines Lebens und Sterbens*

Klein: “Klein und Wagner”

Klingsor: “Klingsors letzter Sommer”

KSA: *Friedrich Nietzsche. Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*

Kurgast: *Der Kurgast*

Morgenlandfahrt: *Die Morgenlandfahrt*

Narziß: *Narziß und Goldmund*

SB: *Friedrich Nietzsche. Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe*

Steppenwolf: *Der Steppenwolf*

Tragödie: *Geburt der Tragödie*

INTRODUCTION

Hermann Hesse's Romantic heritage

I. The popularity and “Tabuisierung” of Hesse's works

Fame and reputation alone do not justify a scholarly investigation into a particular author's works, although it is difficult to ignore the fact that Hermann Hesse's stories are so popular that they have been translated into more than sixty languages, making him the most widely translated German author of all time next to the Brothers Grimm (Limberg 128). This in combination with the strong reader reactions, both positive and negative, to Hesse's multifarious novels and poems, along with the many prizes he has won over the years, including the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946, does, however, begin to explain the necessity of looking at his writings in more detail and combating the general “Tabuisierung seitens der Germanistik” that has ensued with regard to this particular author since the mid-1950s (Limberg 129). Additionally, the recent claim made by some scholars that Hesse's works – despite being heavily influenced by early German Romanticism – are still modern and useful to their readers in answering existential life questions, makes it irresponsible *not* to examine them more closely. Michael Limberg claims, “[w]er von der Literatur...Hilfe und Antworten für das eigene Leben erwartet, wird nach wie vor [Hesses] Bücher lesen” (135). I believe that the same holds true for German literary criticism. Scholars who seek answers to questions raised with regard to 20th-century literature *must* explore Hesse's writing in more thematic and structural detail than has been done in the past. Furthermore,

any individual wanting to understand the development and eventual disappearance of “absolute music” in German literature cannot neglect this renowned author’s writing. This dissertation investigates the intersections between language and music in Hermann Hesse’s masterpiece *Das Glasperlenspiel* and demonstrates that Hesse is the last great modern heir to the early German Romantic legacy surrounding the concept of “absolute music.”

II. Romantic influences in Hesse’s writing

The connection between Hermann Hesse and early German Romanticism is a relatively obvious one. Indeed, a large number of scholars have commented on the influence of writers such as Novalis or Ludwig Tieck on the 20th-century author.¹ Joseph Mileck notes in his article “The Prose of Hermann Hesse: Life, Substance and Form” that romantic themes can be found in nearly all of Hesse’s stories and poems. Mileck divides Hesse’s life work into three periods and mentions the influence that various romantic ideas play in each of these phases. He argues that works from the earliest period, from the beginning of Hesse’s literary career until roughly 1917, are “held together primarily by a common, decadent romantic spirit” (*Prose* 164). The famous author’s style becomes less romantic in some stories from the following decade, although Hesse still writes tales such as “Klingsors letzter Sommer,” which Mileck likens to “a romantic fragment” and describes as another instance of “decadent romanticism” (*Prose* 168). Finally, Mileck argues that Hesse’s later works are perhaps the most romantic of all. Mileck sees in them “a romantic spirit purged of its decadence, becom[ing] mature and mellow, wider in scope, deeper in thought, less aware of

¹ E.R. Curtius notes, for instance, that Hesse’s *Narziß und Goldmund* is “steeped in magical essences that recall Arnim, Tieck, Novalis” (7-8); Thomas Mann more generally claims that Hesse’s “lifework [has] roots in native German romanticism” (Bloom 22); Theodore Ziolkowski states, “Hesse is certainly an heir of romanticism” (*Sonata* 122); and Hugo Ball describes Hesse as the “letzte Ritter aus dem glanzvollen Zuge der Romantik” (26-27).

itself, and more conscious of its art...[These are works] which could have been written by Novalis and...acclaimed by Tieck” (*Prose* 170-171).

Although insightful and useful in many ways, Mileck admits to approaching his analysis “[f]rom [the] vantage point of distance and major trends rather than from the minutiae of individual works” (*Prose* 163). Thus, he comes to legitimate, although somewhat cursory conclusions. However, a closer investigation of Hesse’s individual works is in fact necessary to completely understand the effect early German Romanticism had on the author. Moreover, it is necessary to examine Hesse’s romanticism within the context of modernity. He was, after all, a 20th-century writer.

Ralph Freedman attempts to do both in his article “Romantic Imagination: Hermann Hesse as Modern Novelist.” Freedman begins by postulating confidently, “Hermann Hesse’s debt to the romantic tradition is a critical commonplace” (275). He then demonstrates how he believes Hesse can be viewed as both a modern and romantic author. Specifically, he explains, “[Hesse’s] aesthetic sensibility recalls of Novalis and Jean Paul, but his way of implementing this sensibility is representative of a contemporary attitude” (275). Unfortunately, this formulation remains rather vague. One might imagine that “aesthetic sensibility” refers to a romantic content in Hesse’s works, while Freedman’s “contemporary implementation” points directly to the author’s writing style. Indeed, Freedman continues by mentioning Hesse’s “romantic values” (275) and how the “resolution of conflict...is Hesse’s most consistent romantic theme” (276), but he then goes on to mention “Hesse’s narrative and descriptive techniques, [are] frequently borrowed from romantic models” (281). But what exactly does the scholar mean then when he posits that Hesse’s implementation of romantic themes is “contemporary”? While Freedman’s overall argument that Hesse is both

a romantic and modern novelist is plausible and important in situating the 20th-century author within the broader scope of German literature, the scholar's imprecise analysis leaves readers unconvinced.

One invaluable idea that Freedman does, however, introduce in his article is the notion that the relationship between music and language, romantic in origin, is taken up by Hesse on numerous occasions within his writing. Freedman states, “[a]s a writer, Hesse longs to be a musician” (283) and further claims that “German prose is an enticing instrument for making music” (275). Hesse follows in the early German Romantic tradition of wishing to turn language into music, a phenomenon Siglind Bruhn calls “transmedialization” in *The Musical Order of the World*. Nevertheless, Freedman only touches on the importance of music in Hesse's works, while Bruhn only focuses on one facet of it – musical ekphrasis – and neglects many direct statements made about music by characters within Hesse's novels. It is necessary, however, to examine the relationship between language and music in Hesse's works in greater detail. Hesse, a writer by profession, claims in a 1913 letter written to Alfred Schaer, “[m]ein Verhältnis zur Musik ist, wie Sie vermuten, ein unmittelbares... ich brauche stets Musik, und sie ist die einzige Kunst, die ich bedingungslos bewundere und für absolut unentbehrlich halte, was ich von keiner andern sagen möchte” (Michels *Musik* 141). What is it about music that fascinates Hesse so much? And how does one explain Hesse's ranking of music above all other arts, but his continued desire to write?

III. The origins and meaning of absolute music

Poets and philosophers have been contemplating the connection between music and language or music and philosophy for centuries. Carl Dahlhaus points out that Plato, for

example, insisted that music “aus Harmonia, Rhythmos und Logos bestehe,” which is to say that music consists of the tonal relationship between notes, the temporal space in which they occur, and the words associated with these notes (Dahlhaus 14). In fact, the appearance of all three of these things in combination was so essential to Plato that “Musik ohne Sprache...als reduzierte, in ihrem Wesen geschmälerte Musik [galt]” (Dahlhaus 8). This view that music without language was somehow deficient continued to prevail for the next two thousand years. John Neubauer notes in his book *The Emancipation of Music from Language*, for instance, that the medieval Christian church considered music without “verbal control” dangerous throughout the Middle Ages and that secular factions began a similar campaign against the “musical obfuscation of the text” by the end of the 16th century (24-25). It was not until the late 18th century that this notion of music as secondary to language began to change.

Coinciding with well-known social, political, and philosophical changes such as the French Revolution and the birth of Kantian philosophy, the end of the 18th century also saw a shift in aesthetic theory, described most famously by M.H. Abrams in his *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Abrams recognizes a move away from viewing art simply as an imitation of nature to acknowledging it as something *natural* in and of itself. Moreover, he describes a new emphasis placed on the relationship between the artist and the artwork, rather than the work of art and the world. In other words, art becomes a way of “organically” expressing the interior, subjective nature of the artist. In the realm of literature, this shift first led to an appraisal of music above other arts because it appeared best to fulfill the new requirement of expressing the inner nature or feelings of the artist. Unlike language, music was not bound to “ideas” or empirical reality in any direct manner. It is completely non-representational.

Abrams states, for example, that early German Romantics “talked of music as though it were the very essence and form of the spirit made patent – a play of pure feeling in time, unaltered by its physical medium” (93). Naturally, this new appreciation of music caused a shift in the relationship between it and language. Neubauer notes, “from the Romantic era onward, the relation between music and language reverses itself, all arts aspire...to the condition of music” (1). However, Neubauer is not just referring to *any* music in these passages, but rather to instrumental music of the time, or what would later be coined by Richard Wagner as “absolute music.” But what was it exactly about pure instrumental music that inspired these early German authors to want to emulate it in their writing?

There have been a number of investigations into what is meant by absolute music and how it relates back to literature and philosophy, but the approaches of these various studies have differed as drastically as the type of music the term has been applied to over the past two centuries, ranging from Viennese Classicism to 20th-century dodecaphonic music. One of the most well-known examinations “des historischen Charakters” of absolute music is offered by Carl Dahlhaus in his book *Die Idee der absoluten Musik* (8). In this work, the musicologist attempts to describe the origin of the term and focuses heavily on its development within the 19th century. His main claim is that “die absolute Musik als Ahnung des Unendlichen erscheint,” although mentioned in connection with the particular views of a number of different philosophical, musical, and literary figures, given the broad scope of his study, necessarily stays somewhat superficial (78). In other words, Dahlhaus mentions various manifestations of the notion of instrumental music as an autonomous, self-referential art which points to something absolute or beyond empirical reality in the literature and philosophy of the 19th century, but he fails to take a very detailed look into particular

occurrences of it within the spheres of music, literature, or philosophy, especially of the 20th century. This is rather surprising with regard to literature, in particular, because Dahlhaus himself acknowledges that “die Idee der absoluten Musik...eher eine Idee von Literaten als von Musikern war” (20).

In contrast, musicologist Daniel Chua takes a very novel approach to the study of absolute music in his book *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* by calling into question the very possibility of its existence. In other words, Chua sets out to “write[] against the notion of absolute music” (i). He points out the inherent contradiction in the idea that autonomous music, divorced from any references to spheres outside of music, such as language, is in fact deemed the most meaningful kind of music because of this emptiness. Chua then examines the act of constructing meaning within the realm of absolute music by reintegrating it into a number of various discourses. For instance, he discusses the role of this kind of music within philosophy, biology, physics, theology, and language. However, as was the case with Dahlhaus’ investigation, Chua, too, fails to focus primarily or in great detail on any particular representations or discussions of absolute music in the literary field despite recognizing that “[i]t is a music emancipated from language *by language*” (6), which is to say that the discussion of absolute music originates in literature and is thus intimately connected with written works.

Although Dahlhaus’ and Chua’s studies of absolute music, given the comprehensive nature of their investigations, cannot examine the exact relationship between absolute music and particular literary works that deal with it in any great detail, there is actually a vast amount of scholarship on just this connection. However, this scholarship tends to focus on only one depiction of absolute music in one author’s collection of works of literary fiction or

philosophy. For instance, numerous articles, essays, and books have been written, which deal only with Novalis' views on music – occasionally including in passing a few other early German Romantics such as Wackenroder or Tieck in the investigation – but very few survey a broader range of literature dealing with the topic or attempt to place a particular author's work within a larger literary context. Moreover, many of these investigations fail to examine the exact relationship between an author's linguistic crisis and his turn to writing about music in an attempt to resolve it.

Hence, one finds either very broad studies of absolute music that span the “history” of the phenomenon, but which simply mention relevant literary works and authors, *or* one finds more detailed analyses of the connection between literature and absolute music, but these studies generally have too limited a focus and do not look at the more general development of the relationship over time within the scope of multiple works of literature or philosophy. But if it is generally accepted that 1) absolute music “eine Sprache ‘über’ der Sprache sei” and that this was determined at the turn of the 19th century paradoxically “‘in’ der Sprache” (Dahlhaus 66), and 2) that this idea of absolute music has persistently played a vital role in the music, literature, and philosophy of the past two hundred years, then why is it that very few scholars have attempted to bring these various elements together? In other words, why has virtually no one examined the development of the representation of absolute music in specific works of literature and philosophy? Although German authors ranging from Friedrich Schlegel to Hermann Hesse have found a deficiency in their own medium of language and have attempted “[das] Unsagbare[] dennoch zu sagen” with the help of absolute music (Dahlhaus 72), academic scholarship has, unfortunately, left quite a bit regarding this phenomenon unsaid.

Thus, this dissertation examines the exact nature of this relationship between absolute music and works of literature influenced by it in the 19th and 20th centuries. Specifically, it explores the relationship between music and language in Hermann Hesse's 1943 novel *Das Glasperlenspiel*. But while focusing in large part on one individual novel, unlike previous studies of its kind, this dissertation simultaneously and continuously links Hesse's masterpiece back to previous works of literature and philosophy, which deal with the same subject. Hence, I focus both on the role that absolute music plays in one particular author's work while *also* placing it within the larger historical discourse on the subject. In the process, I answer a number of different questions that arise when contemplating the development of the depiction of absolute music in literature over the course of the past two centuries. What is the nature of the language crises that authors and philosophers have faced in the last two centuries? How do these crises differ, and how are they similar? Why do certain authors turn to writing about absolute music in an attempt to overcome their respective crises? In what way does absolute music supplement these authors' beliefs regarding language? What kinds of absolute music are these authors referring to? Does the "type" of absolute music they refer to somehow relate directly back to either their particular kind of language crisis and/or their societal or historical context? In other words, can connections be made between the time and place that these authors were writing in and the claims they make about absolute music and language? Finally, can one see some sort of grand "historical" development in the way that German literary and philosophical figures of the past two centuries *write* about absolute music?

To answer these questions, I first explore in a long, introductory chapter the genesis of the idea of absolute music within early 19th-century literature, concentrating on Novalis'

fragments, short stories, and his incomplete novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. I then move to works of a philosophical nature by investigating the role that music plays in the writings of two of the most renowned thinkers of the 19th century. Focusing on Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* and Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, I establish that these philosophers inherit early German Romantic ideas regarding the relationship between music and language and develop them further. In the end, I argue that Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* is influenced by each of these 19th-century thinkers' views on absolute music and/or language to varying degrees and that Hesse's works represents a literary composite of the history of absolute music. I do this by exploring the exact nature of Hesse's language crisis in the first chapter of this dissertation, while then relating his linguistic issues to music in the second chapter. I demonstrate that Hermann Hesse is, in fact, the final representative of this phenomenon within German literature. The dream of writing absolute music dies after 1943.

CHAPTER ONE

The influence of absolute music in 19th- century German literature and philosophy

I. Novalis' cosmic symphony

Hermann Hesse's works are clearly influenced by and deeply indebted to early German Romantic thought. Although acknowledging the contributions made to literature and philosophy by writers such as Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Wilhelm Wackenroder, Hesse claims to have been inspired mainly by the young Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, better known under his pseudonym, Novalis. In an introduction written to a compilation of Novalis' works edited by Hermann Hesse and his nephew Karl Isenberg in 1925, Hesse writes, "hinterlassen hat [Novalis] das wunderlichste und geheimnisvollste Werk, das die deutsche Geistesgeschichte kennt" (*Novalis* 11).

Although Novalis was only 28 years old when he died in 1801, Hesse feels that this one Romantic author had a greater impact in the world of music, philosophy, and literature than any other writer of the Romantic period. Hesse hints at Novalis' lasting legacy when he claims, "[i]m tiefsten Grunde sympathisch und fesselnd ist die Erscheinung des Dichters, dessen Lieder und dessen Dichtername mit feiner Musik im deutschen Volke fortklingen" (*Novalis* 172).

Novalis, however, although an author by trade, had a number of reservations regarding the medium of his profession. He felt that language should reflect the true nature

of the world, but that it fails to do so. This failure is largely a result of a common prejudice toward language. In fragment 101 from Novalis' *Allgemeinen Brouillon* the author writes:

Auf Verwechslung des *Symbols* mit dem Symbolisierten – auf ihre Identisierung – auf den Glauben an wahrhafte, vollst[ändige] Repräsentation – und auf Relation des Bildes und des Originals – der Erscheinung und der Substanz – auf der Folgerung von äußerer Aehnlichkeit – auf durchgängige innre Übereinstimmung und Zusammenhang – kurz auf Verwechslungen von Subj[ekt] und Obj[ekt] beruht der ganze Aberglaube und Irrthum aller Zeiten, und Völker und Individuen. (Schultz 483)

According to Novalis, people are unaware of how language becomes meaningful. They erroneously believe that there is a direct relationship between a word and a specific object in the empirical world. This identification or equation of the “symbol” to that which is “symbolized” is one of the great “mistakes” of all time. Novalis believes that only when this misunderstanding is resolved will a “goldne Zeit” (Schultz 437) occur. At this time, ideal poetry will reflect the true, underlying nature of the universe.²

In order to overcome this prejudice toward language and thus make it possible for people to write ideal poetry, Novalis makes a number of comparisons between language and music. However, it is not just any music that helps Novalis explain how it is that language is meaningful, but rather “Sonaten und Symphonien, etc. –...wahre Musik,” i.e., instrumental music of the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Schultz 566).³

By contemplating what words and musical notes may have in common, Novalis discovers some surprising characteristics of language. For example, Novalis asks:

Hat die Sprache nicht auch ihre Diskant- und Baß- und Tenortöne? Nicht ihren Takt – nicht einen Grundton – nicht mannigfaltige Stimmen und

² *Naturwissenschaftliche Studien*, fragment 15.

³ *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*, fragment 202.

Geschwindigkeiten? Sind die verschiedenen Arten des Stils nicht verschiedene Instrumente? (Schultz 541)⁴

The poet notes a number of similarities between music and language in this one small fragment alone. Most important is the claim that language, just like music, can be divided into soprano, bass, and tenor tones. With this analogy, Novalis points to the idea that notes and words relate to each other in constellations such as chords or sentences. This attribute, rather than a direct correspondence between language and the empirical world, is what gives both music and language meaning. That is to say, “the primary value of words lies not in their so-called vertical, semantic-referential dimension, but in their horizontal, syntactic combination” (Neubauer 202). Meaning is created through context.

In the same fragment, Novalis also compares the “verschiednen Arten des Stils,” referring to literary and linguistic styles, to “verschiedne Instrumente.” What Novalis implies with this association is that in both language and music, the method or style used to convey meaning is just as important as the content itself. Different instruments playing identical notes can change the character of a melody considerably. In the same way, different “styles” of writing, a poem in contrast to a newspaper article for example, may change the content of a written work significantly.

Interestingly, according to one of Novalis’ earlier fragments, instruments relate to language in a different way as well. The poet writes:

Dem Dichter ist die Sprache nie zu arm, aber immer zu allgemein. Er bedarf oft wiederkehrender, durch den Gebrauch ausgespielter Worte. Seine Welt ist einfach, wie sein Instrument – aber eben so unerschöpflich an Melodien. (Schultz 378-379)⁵

Novalis points here to certain limitations of language, but he sheds a positive light on these linguistic restrictions through another comparison to musical instruments. Words are

⁴ *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*, fragment 120.

⁵ *Fragmente und Studien 1797-1798*, fragment 8.

associated, after continual historical usage, to certain ideas and moods. A poet must use these historically biased words as the basis for his poetry. His resources are simple and limited. This claim makes more intuitive sense when one considers that a musical instrument has a particular range of notes available to it that it can use to create a melody. Despite the finite resources that the poet and musician have available, there are an infinite number of combinatorial possibilities open to them. Each unique combination of words or notes creates new meaning. Furthermore, this particular characteristic is what makes it possible for language and music to rise to the status of art. According to one of Novalis' most famous characters, the wise poet Klingsohr in the novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, “[f]ür den Dichter ist die Poesie an beschränkte Werkzeuge gebunden, und eben dadurch wird sie zur Kunst” (Schultz 227).

Novalis focuses not only on words and notes in his fragments, but also on the process of writing and composing. In general, he thinks, “[m]an muß schriftstellen, wie komponieren” (Schultz 527).⁶ In other words, the procedure for creating a work of literary fiction should not differ from the one used to compose a piece of music. More specifically, “[d]er Dichter, Rhetor und Philosoph *spielen* und komponieren grammatisch” (Schultz 473).⁷ The poet is bound to a limited choice of material – words – as well as to the rules of grammar. Composers are also tied to specific rules of composition. In this way, “die selbstgesetzliche Welt der Musik, das relationale Spiel der Töne, ist...eine Metapher von...Sprache” (Menninghaus 50). The emphasis should not be placed, however, on the fact that language and music are both limited in certain ways, but that they each work within their limitations to create something meaningful. It is by “playing” with the rules of grammar and

⁶ *Fragmente und Studien 1799-1800*, fragment 55.

⁷ *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, fragment 79.

composition – by enjoying the challenge of working within certain boundaries – that works of art are produced.

This idea of “play” is developed in more detail in Novalis’ text *Monolog*. He says:

[D]as rechte Gespräch ist ein bloßes Wortspiel...wenn einer bloß spricht, um zu sprechen, [spricht] er gerade die herrlichsten, originellsten Wahrheiten [aus]. Will er aber von etwas Bestimmtem sprechen, so läßt ihn die launige Sprache das lächerlichste und verkehrteste Zeug sagen. (Schultz 426)

The unintentional, playful combination of words creates “true” meaning. Although many of Novalis’ fragments are vague and open to various forms of interpretation, this particular passage is exceptionally counterintuitive and mysterious. Few people can imagine writing without knowing what one wants to express. This excerpt from *Monolog* only begins to make sense if one reads it in conjunction with fragment 128 from the poet’s *Allgemeinen Brouillion*. Once again, Novalis uses an analogy to music to clarify what he means by “unintentional writing.”

Der Poet braucht die Dinge und Worte, wie *Tasten* und die ganze Poesie beruft auf tätiger Ideenassociation – auf selbsttätiger, absichtlicher, idealischer *Zufallproduktion*. (Schultz 493)

The poet uses the materials available to him like a musician uses the keys of a piano. The poet simply associates certain words with other words, just as a pianist merely hits one key after the next on a keyboard, thereby creating a melody through an apparently arbitrary association of notes.⁸ These processes appear to be random and much like the result of chance. However, they are at the same time purposeful, which means that there is something leading the seemingly random choice. The poet and musician are not fully conscious of what this guiding force behind artistic production is. Nevertheless, this force or “play” is the

⁸ This would be the case with something like musical improvisation.

essential ingredient to creating true art. Novalis' Klingsohr notes, "[d]er Stoff ist nicht der Zweck der Kunst, aber die Ausführung ist es" (Schultz 228).

Although the process of creating art is more important than the product for Novalis, one may still wonder: what exactly does one accomplish when one "plays" with words and notes? The answer can be found, once again, in Novalis' *Monolog*. In a brief passage, in which the author compares language to mathematics, Novalis explains that art created by play actually mirrors the true nature of the world. He writes:

Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln sei – sie machen eine Welt für sich aus – sie spielen nur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus, und eben darum sind sie so ausdrucksvoll – eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnisspiel der Dinge. (426)

Language, music, and mathematical formulas are meaningful because they are systems of signs. As previously mentioned, it is the relationship between the signs which gives rise to meaning. In language, it is *not* the relationship between the signifier and signified which gives words meaning, as one may intuitively believe, but the relationship between the signifiers themselves. Language represents nature *indirectly*. The system that is language (with rules of grammar) should "mirror" the system of the world (with its natural laws). Similarly, the rules of composition in music and the laws governing mathematics build unique systems which "mirror" each other, as well as language and the natural world. The process of writing, that is the play with words, should be like the play between the things of the world. Novalis summarizes this idea with another analogy to music in a later fragment, in which he writes, "[d]ie *musikalischen Verhältnisse* scheinen mir recht eigentlich die

Grundver[hältnisse] der Natur zu sein” (Schultz 528).⁹ For this early German Romantic, meaning lies in the way that things relate to each other.

This passage in *Monolog* points to two important characteristics of language. First, for Novalis, the connection between words and things in the world is based on “eine[m] radikalisierten Willkür Motiv[.]” (Menninghaus 49). The connection between signifier and signified is *arbitrary*. In fact, it is so “radically” arbitrary that the connection appears to be almost “random.” Moreover, the depiction of a language as a system in itself that is “an keine eigentlichen Ursprünge mehr gebunden...sondern selbstgesetzlich schafft und auf anderes nur verweist, indem sie wesentlich, wie die Romantiker immer wieder sagen, ‘mit sich selbst spielt’” shows that language is *autonomous* for Novalis (Menninghaus 49). It is independent of any actual objects in the natural world. This idea that language and music are both autonomous systems that *indirectly* refer to the world is what Carl Dahlhaus means when he writes about absolute music. Just like the non-representational instrumental music of the 18th and 19th centuries, language becomes a “Metapher des Universums” by pulling away from empirical conditions (Dahlhaus 34).

Monolog touches upon one other important characteristic of language as well. The narrator concludes towards the end of the text:

Wenn ich damit das Wesen und Amt der Poesie auf das deutlichste angegeben zu haben glaube, so weiß ich doch, daß es kein Mensch verstehn kann, und ich ganz was Albernnes gesagt habe, weil ich es habe sagen wollen, und so keine Poesie zu Stande kommt. Wie, wenn ich aber reden müßte? und dieser Sprachtrieb zu sprechen das Kennzeichen der Eingebung der Sprache, der Wirksamkeit der Sprache in mir wäre? und mein Wille nur auch alles wollte, was ich müßte, so könnte dies ja am Ende ohne mein Wissen und Glauben Poesie sein...? (Schultz 426-427)

⁹ *Fragments and Studies 1799-1800*, fragment 65.

In this passage, Novalis focuses on the tension inherent to his theory of linguistic motivation. A conflict arises because one has to use language to talk about language. If the narrator of *Monolog* purposely attempts to say something about language, then the result will necessarily be nonsense. However, if the text does indeed appear to express something meaningful, then the narrator could not have really intended to express what he did. This paradox in *Monolog* points to the self-reflexivity of language. Language is self-referential. John Neubauer connects both this new idea of self-referentiality and the previously mentioned notion of the autonomy of language back to the idea of absolute music. He argues that absolute music is a “l’art-pour-l’art conception, based on the premise that art is pure play with form. Absoluteness here means self-referentiality” (195). Both language and music are closed systems, which refer back to themselves because they “play” within themselves simply for the sake of “playing.” Novalis’ *Monolog* is an example of the “attempt to present presentation itself in language” (O’Brien 115).

Novalis also uses musical analogies in *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs* to further develop his theory of language, “but *Saïs* approaches it from the opposite direction,” which means that instead of explaining “the nature of language by relating it to the nature of things, *Saïs I* explains nature as itself a language” (O’Brien 199). In *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, Novalis refers to nature as a “Chifferschrift,” a “Wunderschrift,” and even as “die heilige Schrift” (Schultz 95). Nature itself is a mysterious language that not all people understand. With this shift in focus, Novalis turns once again to the role that the poet or musician plays in representing nature through language and music. The teacher of the novices says:

Keiner Erklärung bedarf die heilige Schrift. Wer wahrhaft spricht, ist des ewigen Lebens voll, und wunderbar verwandt mit echten Geheimnissen dünkt uns seine Schrift, denn sie ist ein Akkord aus des Weltalls Symphonie. (Schultz 95)

The “holy scripture” or “nature” needs no interpretation, which is to say that it does not need to be directly “interpreted” or “translated” into human language. A person who uses language “truly” or without intention is connected to nature by (and represents nature through) whatever force guides his unintentional writing. The words written or spoken by the person using language “truly” are like a “chord in the symphony of the cosmos.” Just as a chord is simply one small part of a symphony and symphonies are composed of many chords, “the language of nature [is] spoken, not by a single subject, or by nature ‘itself,’ but by different subjects” (O’Brien 201). The writing or speech of each individual person that uses language properly is a part of the whole. It describes some aspect of the world. A person who speaks truly is simply “a medium of nature” (O’Brien 201). Moreover, these people’s utterances stand in relation to each other in the same way that chords stand in relationships to each other. Specifically, each use of language points to and is dependent on the rest of language. The infinite force driving nature, music, and language is in each person and each person contributes to completing this infinite power. In summary, language for Novalis “is foolish yet serious, playful yet natural, autotelic yet expressive, a mystery yet analyzable” (O’Brien 196). It is arbitrary and self-referential. Language is full of paradoxes, but when used or produced properly, it is meaningful and mirrors the true nature of the world.

Nonetheless, Novalis feels that language in his day is not yet able to achieve its maximum potential. People still fail to understand how words obtain meaning, they are still writing intentionally, and they do not yet let language play. However, the early German Romantic author has hope that an ideal poetry will be written in the future:

Das wird die goldne Zeit sein, wenn alle Worte – *Figurenworte* – Mythen – und alle Figuren – Sprachfiguren – Hieroglyphen sein werden – wenn man Figuren

sprechen und schreiben – und Worte vollkommen plastisieren, und musizieren lernt. (Schultz 437)¹⁰

Novalis believes in the coming of a Golden Age, in which words will be viewed as linguistic figures that can be arranged in many different ways to achieve different meanings. In fact, he offers an example of the combinatorial possibilities in language in this fragment itself. He speaks of “Figuren,” but also of “Figurenworde” and “Sprachfiguren.” He plays with the word “figure” and places it in different “figurations” with words referring to language, thereby slightly altering the meaning of the words. He also refers to words such as “myths” and “hieroglyphs,” ideas and characters with hidden meanings, which are waiting to be understood and interpreted. People will compose and make music with words when the Golden Age arrives. They will concentrate on the process of composition, guided by an unintentional force, which appears to randomly associate words with other words. This fragment enacts this aspect of his theory as well. The dashes point to the apparent random association between the words. Novalis believes, “[e]s wird eine schöne Zeit sein, wo man nichts mehr lesen wird, als die *schöne Komposition* – als die literarischen Kunstwerke” (Schultz 455).¹¹

However, fragments are not the most appropriate genre for this type of writing. Instead, Novalis believes that fairy tales are ideal for the “Musizieren” of words. This is because:

Ein Märchen...eigentlich wie ein Traumbild [ist] – ohne Zusammenhang – ein Ensemble wunderbarer Dinge und Begebenheiten – z.B. ein musikalische Phantasie – die harmonische Folgen einer Äolsharfe – die Natur selbst. (Schultz 494)¹²

¹⁰ *Naturwissenschaftliche Studien 1798-1799*, fragment 15.

¹¹ *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, fragment 29.

¹² *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, fragment 131.

Novalis compares the fairy tale in this fragment to both musical phenomena and a dream. A fairy tale is like a dream in that the occurrences, which take place in the story, do not need to be seen in logical relation to each other. Instead, a fairy tale can randomly associate people, places, things, and events with each other, much like the associations that take place in dreams. This way of telling a story is also like a “musical fantasy” or a musical improvisation. The notes played by an improvising musician appear to be randomly chosen, but they still fit together in some way. Novalis also compares the fairy tale to the harmonic chord progression of an Aeolian harp. This analogy is particularly helpful in understanding Novalis’ conception of ideal poetry. The wind, a part of nature, blows through the strings of the Aeolian harp and creates chords. These chords seem random, but if one believes there is an infinite and guiding force behind everything in the world, it is clear that this force must be deliberately creating the harmonic procession through the wind. Nature is speaking through the instrument. Similarly, the poet should act as a medium to nature and let this guiding force determine the apparently random ideas that fall onto his page. The effect will be a “tale whose wondrous, inexplicable, and chaotic events constitute a completely musical texture, a ‘musical fantasy’ without any immediately evident plot and moral” (Neubauer 203). The associations will appear to be random, but they will be meaningful. According to Novalis, “[d]as Märchen ist gleichsam der *Kanon* der Poesie – alles Poetische muß märchenhaft sein. Der Dichter betet den Zufall an” (Schultz 493).¹³

The manner in which language, music and the world interact with each other is depicted visually in one of the opening scenes of Klingsohr’s fairy tale in Novalis’ novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. In this scene, King Arctur and his daughter Freya begin to play a

¹³ *Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, fragment 127.

game of cards. However, these are no ordinary cards. They have “heilige tiefsinnige Zeichen...die aus lauter Sternbildern zusammengesetzt [sind]” (Schultz 234). As in language, the signs on the cards are not immediately meaningful. First, the father and daughter need to shuffle the cards and then arrange chosen ones on the table in a certain manner. The King “wählt[] mit vielem Nachdenken, ehe er eins dazu hinlegen” but he also seems “gezwungen zu seyn, dies oder jenes Blatt zu wählen” (Schultz 234). The tension between unintentional, yet guided writing is clearly shown in the way that the king feels compelled to choose certain cards. His choice is not completely random or arbitrary, but also not purposefully made by himself. When the king chooses appropriately, he creates “eine schöne Harmonie der Zeichen und Figuren” (Schultz 234). As in earlier analogies of writing to music, the correct choice of signs is described as being harmonious. They repeat this game a number of times.

At the same time that Arctur and Freya are playing with signs, the room in which they are located is filled with music and stars. Each time they create a different combination of signs the stars “bild[]en, nach dem Gange der Musik, die Figuren der Blätter auf das kunstreichste nach” (Schultz 235). The stars and the music imitate the arrangements of signs on the table. Just as different figurations of words in writing can reflect the nature of the world, the different arrangement of signs by Arctur and the constantly reshaping constellations of the stars and music mirror each other. Arctur’s world does not differ from our world in the way that it functions. The only difference is that the laws governing the way that music, language, and nature interact are obviously visible in the king’s realm. Novalis

offers his readers a clear image of his music-inspired theory of language in this section of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.¹⁴

II. Schopenhauer and the world as Will or music

While writing and publishing his influential work *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* only 18 years after Novalis' death, the few scholars who have explored the relationship between Arthur Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy and early German Romantic thought have simply postulated that the two are exceedingly different. For example, Bryan Magee points out:

The two central notions of Romanticism – the idealization of Nature, and the glorification of self-expression in life and art – are both of them diametrically opposite to Schopenhauer's views. (*Schopenhauer* 154)

However, I argue that these two thinkers have far more in common than generally assumed by academic scholarship. Specifically, "Schopenhauer attempts to demonstrate the *metaphysical* truth of art in his account of music, giving music the kind of privileged philosophical role it had at times for the early Romantics" (Bowie 264). Both Novalis and Schopenhauer explore the relationship between pure instrumental music and language, as well as each discipline's connection to the phenomenal and non-phenomenal world. And while these men may differ in some of the specifics of their philosophies, together they establish the theoretical foundation surrounding the concept of absolute music which acts as the springboard for the views of later philosophers, authors, and musicians alike. Moreover, both thinkers *in conjunction* will influence Hermann Hesse's later writings, most obviously

¹⁴ Much of the information in this section was taken from my Master's Thesis. Thus, for a more complete description of Novalis' theories of language and music, see: Hay, Shelley. *The Musical Language of The World: Absolute Truth in Schopenhauer and Novalis*. MA Thesis. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2005.

seen in the fact that Hesse's Klingsor character tends to read Schopenhaurian philosophy (*Klingsor* 232).

Clearly, music plays an extraordinary role in Novalis' theory of language, as it represents the ideal art – an autonomous, non-representational, self-referential art, which allows one to imitate the underlying nature of reality – and thus serves as a model for ideal poetry. However, it is arguable that Novalis does not attribute to music the highest role possible in his aesthetic theory, but rather, the young Romantic equates it with mathematics at times and hints that language could attain the same position as music in the future. In contrast, Arthur Schopenhauer does not view all the arts equally. For this 19th-century philosopher, “steht [die Musik] ganz abgesondert von allen andern” (Schopenhauer 339). Music falls in a category all its own and this “große und überaus herrliche Kunst” is indeed the highest and most important of the arts (Schopenhauer 339).

But just like Novalis, Schopenhauer draws upon the idea of a “purely instrumental – absolute – music” as a means of addressing language's shortcomings (Donovan xiii). Furthermore, the great pessimist uses musical analogies to explain the way in which he believes that reality can be divided into the world as “Will” and the world as “Representation,” echoing early German Romantic endeavors to discover the transcendental truth behind phenomenal reality by reflecting on music.

Whereas Novalis almost always compares music directly to language, Schopenhauer focuses on describing the true nature of reality through musical analogies, which then indirectly leads to a subtle critique of language. In one such analogy, the philosopher compares the bass note in a chord to inorganic nature:

Der Grundbaß ist uns also in der Harmonie, was in der Welt die unorganische Natur, die roheste Masse, auf der Alles ruht und aus der sich Alles erhebt und entwickelt. (342)

Just as all things in nature ultimately derive from and are created out of inorganic elements, so, too, do all the notes in a any given chord or harmonic progression arise and develop from the bass notes. Bass notes and inorganic nature represent the foundation of harmony and life.

Schopenhauer continues describing the empirical world through a number of other harmonic analogies. For example, he explains that “die höher liegenden [Stimmen] repräsentieren...die Pflanzen- und die Thierwelt” (342). Tenor and alto lines correspond subsequently to the plant and animal life in the phenomenal world. In other words, “[t]he fact that the musical scale has definite intervals corresponds to the fact that there exist definite grades or species of things in the inorganic and organic plant and animal worlds” (Alperson 157). The diversity of the phenomenal world is mirrored in musical harmony.

However, Schopenhauer’s analogies between music and the perceived world extend beyond harmony to include the melody in instrumental music. Schopenhauer explains:

[I]n der MELODIE, in der hohen, singenden, das Ganze leitenden und mit ungebundener Willkür in ununterbrochenem, bedeutungsvollem Zusammenhänge EINES Gedankens vom Anfang bis zum Ende fortschreitenden, ein Ganzes darstellenden Hauptstimme, erkenne ich...das besonnene Leben und Streben des Menschen. (343)

The melodic voice, often the soprano line of a piece, is the principal voice of a musical composition and is akin to human life. The melody, unlike harmonic accompaniment, is unrestrained and free. Still, the analogy between melody and human ambition remains somewhat vague. Therefore, Schopenhauer further examines this relationship and extrapolates:

Der unzusammenhängende Gang und die gesetzmäßige Bestimmung aller Ripienstimmen ist dem analog, daß in der ganzen unvernünftigen Welt, vom

Krystall bis zum vollkommensten Thier, kein Wesen ein eigentlich zusammenhängendes Bewußtseyn hat, welches sein Leben zu einem sinnvollen Ganzen machte. (343)

The main difference that Schopenhauer observes between man and the rest of inorganic and organic nature is that humans have consciousness. This allows them to create a linear whole out of the random events affecting their lives. In a similar way, a melody represents a linear whole in the musical composition quite unlike the rule-governed harmonic progression. Hence, just as Novalis makes room for freedom in his theory through the notion of “play,” Schopenhauer also allows freedom, in the form of melodic lines, to play a part in the otherwise orderly realm of musical harmony.

In fact, the only way in which the freedom of melody is limited and therefore somewhat similar to the determinacy of harmony is that

...das Wesen der Melodie ein stetes Abweichen, Abirren vom Grundton, auf tausend Wegen, nicht nur zu den harmonischen Stufen, zur Terz und Dominante, sondern zu jedem Ton, zur dissonanten Septime und zu den übermäßigen Stufen [ist], aber immer folgt ein endliches Zurückkehren zum Grundton. (Schopenhauer 344)

Melody is continuous, unbound movement and persistently creates different intervals with the other harmonic voices. The only imperative leading it is the general need to return to the tonal center of piece. If Schopenhauer’s analogy between melody and human consciousness holds true in all instances, then this passage suggests that man, as a conscious being, always needs to return to his inorganic origins. This sequence of moving away the tonal center or inorganic nature and then returning to it seems to hint at the cycle of life and death.

However, although “[i]n these analogies, Schopenhauer hopes to show the extent of the parallel between music and the phenomenal world,” music plays a much more important role in his philosophy with regard to the noumenal world (Alperson 158). The claim that

absolute music helps one access an absolute or transcendental realm of some sort is arguably supported more in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* than in any other philosophical work of the 19th century.

When Schopenhauer discusses melody generally reflecting man's conscious life, he also claims that man embodies "die höchste Stufe der Objektivierung des Willens" (343).

Summarizing his main argument, Schopenhauer explains:

Nachdem wir die im ersten Buch als bloße VORSTELLUNG, Objekt für ein Subjekt, dargestellte Welt im zweiten Buch von ihrer andern Seite betrachtet und gefunden haben, daß diese WILLE sei, welcher allein als dasjenige sich ergab, was jene Welt noch außer der Vorstellung ist; so nannten wir, dieser Erkenntniß gemäß, die Welt als Vorstellung, sowohl im Ganzen als in ihren Theilen, die OBJEKTIVITÄT DES WILLENS, welches demnach besagt: der Objekt, d.i. Vorstellung, gewordene Wille. (233)

According to Schopenhauer, reality can be viewed as the world as Will or as the world as Representation. Drawing on the Kantian tradition, Schopenhauer grants that the only way for people to know anything about an empirical object is through perception.¹⁵ However, since the perceived world is mediated through consciousness, one cannot know for sure that one, in fact, comprehends the true nature of any individual object. In other words, one knows only the perception of a thing, but not the "Ding an sich." All perceptions could, in theory, be flawed because man cannot escape from this prison of consciousness in order to see beyond mere appearances. According to Kant, there is no way for man to know the true essence of thing. However, "[t]he broadly Kantian picture that Schopenhauer presents...leaves him dissatisfied" (Wood 304). Although Schopenhauer accepts Kant's division of the world into the phenomenal and the noumenal, "[h]e differs from Kant over the notion of the world 'in itself,' to which he thinks we have direct intuitive access" (Bowie 262). Schopenhauer is convinced that a person can indeed have direct, unmediated knowledge of the essence of a

¹⁵ See Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.

thing beyond its appearance. This “something” is what Schopenhauer calls the Will. To put it another way: the Will is “das eigentliche DING AN SICH” (Schopenhauer 227).

The way in which Will and Representation relate, according to Schopenhauer, is that each Representation in the world, that is each object one perceives, is an objectification of the one Will. In other words, the Will is the life force behind every single thing in the world. Schopenhauer explicates:

[Der Wille] erscheint in jeder blindwirkenden Naturkraft: er auch erscheint im überlegten Handeln des Menschen; welcher beiden große Verschiedenheit doch nur den Grad des Erscheinens, nicht das Wesen des Erscheinenden trifft. (164)

The Will can be found in everything from inorganic nature to the reasoned action of men. Schopenhauer refers to the different ways in which the Will manifests or objectifies itself as the different “grades” of the Will. Although these things are phenomenally different, they originate from the same source. Hence, inorganic nature is one of the lowest objectifications of the Will and the life of man is the highest, but they are both essentially the same because they stem from one and the same Will. In other words, reality can be seen from two different angles: one can look at it as the world as Representation – phenomenal reality – or as the world as Will – noumenal reality – and one can truly “know” things about both.

This division of the world into Will and Representation adds a new dimension to Schopenhauer’s music analogies. Essentially, according to Schopenhauer, “Musik ist nämlich eine so UNMITTELBARE Objektivation und Abbild des ganzen WILLENS, wie die Welt selbst es ist” (341). Music, like the world of Representations, is a direct manifestation of the Will. In this way, Schopenhauer would agree with Novalis that music

and empirical reality parallel each other.¹⁶ In fact, the philosopher argues, “[m]an könnte demnach die Welt ebenso wohl verkörperte Musik, als verkörperten Willen nennen” (347).

Phenomenal reality can be described as either embodied Will or as embodied music.

However, it is important not to take Schopenhauer’s statements in these passages too literally. Although “Musik...die ganze Welt noch einmal [ist], aber ohne Körper” (Safranski 352), one must keep in mind “that music’s relation to the phenomenal world is indirect” (Alperson 161). Specifically, Schopenhauer cautions:

Man darf jedoch bei der Nachweisung aller dieser vorgeführten Analogien nie vergessen, daß die Musik zu ihnen kein direktes, sondern nur ein mittelbares Verhältnis hat; da sie nie die Erscheinung, sondern allein das innere Wesen, das Ansich aller Erscheinung, den Willen selbst, ausspricht. (345)

Music does not *directly* signify the world as Representation. Instead, both music and empirical reality exist as objectifications of the Will and therefore parallel each other indirectly.

But why does Schopenhauer attribute such an important role to music in his philosophy? And what role do other arts such as literature and painting play in his metaphysical view of the world? In order to answer these questions, it is essential not to forget that “among the great Western philosophers, he is thought of as the supreme pessimist” (Magee *Tristan* 165-166). For Schopenhauer, his philosophical world view and his opinions regarding aesthetics are intimately intertwined.

At one point, Schopenhauer describes melody as a “stetes Abweichen, Abirren vom Grundton” and compares this to man’s “Uebergang vom Wunsch zur Befriedigung und von dieser zum neuen Wunsch” (344-345). In other words, Schopenhauer compares the repeated

¹⁶ Bryan Magee phrases it well when he says: “The metaphysical will does of course manifest itself as the phenomenal world, but it also manifests itself as music, which can therefore be seen as an alternative mode of existence to the world itself, an alternative world with a reach as deep as the world’s being” (*Tristan* 171).

digression and return of a melody to the tonal center of a musical piece to the “inherently unsatisfiable” striving of man to fulfill the infinite number of wishes and desires that arise within him over the course of a lifetime (Magee *Tristan* 166). Not only is man never content and satisfied, but he is, in fact, miserable. According to Schopenhauer, “das Ansich des Lebens...das Daseyn selbst, [ist] ein stetes Leiden und theils jämmerlich, theils schrecklich” (353). Life is full of suffering and sorrow.

This negative account of the world of Representation has important consequences for Schopenhauer’s beliefs regarding the Will. Logically, “[s]ince, according to [Schopenhauer’s] philosophy, the noumenal and phenomenal worlds are the same reality viewed in different ways, it followed for him that the noumenal is something terrible” (Magee *Tristan* 166-167). When Schopenhauer speaks of life being awful, he does not only mean the world of Representations, but also the Will itself. Because the Representations are objectifications of the Will, the Will must also be terrible. It is a “mute, blind, implacable, absurd, vital force that rules the universe” (Liébert 32).

Predictably, man does not want to suffer and live a miserable life. Schopenhauer is “[u]nable to tolerate the consequences of such a view [and]...seeks a way of transcending the Will” (Bowie 263). However, standing outside the Will in this way is difficult “[w]eil man es *ist*” (Safranski 324). Each individual person is an objectification of the Will, making it almost impossible to view the whole of existence objectively. It is only under certain circumstances that a person can step outside of himself and escape the world of pain and agony. One way in which one can actually accomplish this, however, is through art. Schopenhauer explains that it is “[d]er Genuß alles Schönen, der Trost, den die Kunst gewährt, der Enthusiasmus des Künstlers, welcher ihn die Mühen des Lebens vergessen läßt”

(352-353). Through the pleasure of contemplating beautiful art one forgets oneself and the wretchedness associated with existence.

Nevertheless, not just any art form is capable of affording this type of relief and release from life's miseries. Plastic arts, painting, and poetry, for example, simply act as a "[c]amera obscura, welche die Gegenstände reiner zeigt und besser übersehen und zusammenfassen läßt" (Schopenhauer 352). These modes of art do offer the spectator some insight into the "truer" and "purer" nature of things, but they nevertheless do not allow for a total escape from suffering. With the exception of music, "der Zweck aller Künste...ist...Darstellung der Ideen" (Schopenhauer 334). In other words, the goal of most art is to represent what Schopenhauer calls Ideas. According to the philosopher, an Idea is "nicht das einzelne Ding, das Objekt der gemeinen Auffassung; auch nicht der Begriff, das Objekt des vernünftigen Denkens und der Wissenschaft" (311). That is to say, the Idea is neither the physical object nor the abstract concept associated with the object, which can only be comprehended through reason. The Idea is similar to the concept, however, in that "beide...Einheiten eine Vielheit wirklicher Dinge vertreten" (Schopenhauer 311). Both Ideas and concepts are universals of phenomenal objects.¹⁷ Schopenhauer then explains the main distinction between Idea and concept:

[d]ie IDEE ist die, vermöge der Zeit- und Raumform unserer intuitiven Apprehension, in die Vielheit zerfallene Einheit: hingegen der BEGRIFF ist die, mittelst der Abstraktion unserer Vernunft, aus der Vielheit wieder hergestellte Einheit: sie kann bezeichnet werden als *unitas post rem*, jene als *unitas ante rem*. (313)

An Idea is the universal Will divided into an individual perception. The concept is a unified notion created by man through reason. Most art, according to Schopenhauer, is beautiful if and when it allows one to access an Idea. Different forms of artistic expression, however,

¹⁷ Thus, Schopenhauer's *Idea* is very similar to Plato's *Form*.

allow one to access Ideas to varying degrees. Schopenhauer creates a detailed hierarchy of the arts “corresponding at each level to the hierarchy of grades of the will’s objectification” (Magee *Schopenhauer* 177). Architecture is the lowest kind of art, while tragedy represents the highest form (Schopenhauer 338).

Schopenhauer makes no mention, however, of music when discussing Ideas. This art form belongs in a category all to itself because:

Music, by contrast, does not represent anything in the phenomenal world, or have anything at all to do with it so far as its content goes. Therefore it has nothing to say about the Platonic Ideas, which are instantiated in the phenomenal world alone and have no existence separately from it. (Magee *Schopenhauer* 182)

Music does not deal with concepts, physical objects, or Ideas. It skips over these and represents a direct connection to the Will itself. It is “the self-expression of something that cannot be represented at all, namely the noumenon. It is the voice of the metaphysical will” (Magee *Tristan* 171). Music is a copy of the Will. All the other arts “reden nur vom Schatten, [die Musik] aber vom Wesen” (Schopenhauer 341). Despite the benefit man gains from the other arts, it is music that ultimately represents the truth behind the phenomenal world. For Schopenhauer, “[m]usic transcends [the hierarchy of the arts] because it does not have a subject-matter, at least in the sense of depicted things which exhibit Ideas” (Alperson 157). Music allows one to escape phenomenal reality completely and therefore affords man respite from the suffering of existence because it is non-representational.

Unfortunately, music does not permit one to elude the pain of the phenomenal world indefinitely. Instead music “erlöst [den Menschen] nicht auf immer, sondern nur auf Augenblicke vom Leben, und ist ihm so noch nicht der Weg aus demselben, sondern nur einstweilen ein Trost in demselben” (Schopenhauer 353). A person can only escape from the anguish of the world by listening to a piece of music and losing himself in it. However, this

release only lasts for the duration of a musical work. In the end, a person must always return back to “den empirischen Interessen des Individuums” and the necessarily related miseries of life (Safranski 324).

Not only does the melody of a piece of music affect the emotions of the listener but similarly, when the composer creates,

[d]ie Erfindung der Melodie, die Aufdeckung aller tiefsten Geheimnisse des menschlichen Wollens und Empfindens in ihr, ist das Werk des Genius, dessen Wirken hier augenscheinlicher, als irgendwo, fern von aller Reflexion und bewußter Absichtlichkeit liegt und eine Inspiration heißen könnte. (Schopenhauer 344)

According to Schopenhauer, a composer is “inspired” to write music. That means, just as was the case with Novalis, it is not the composer’s “conceptual thought or conscious intention,” which dictates what kind of melody he creates, but something unconscious and deep within him (Magee *Schopenhauer* 184). Arguably, this something is a keener sense and heightened awareness of the Will. In this way, “[t]he great composers are the great metaphysicians, penetrating to the centre of things and giving expression to truths about existence” (Magee *Tristan* 171). Musicians are the true philosophers in Schopenhauer’s view.¹⁸

Although Novalis affords *both* poets and musicians the ability to one day transcend empirical boundaries through art, whereas Schopenhauer clearly states that only music is able to offer any insight into or glimpse of the Will, the pessimistic philosopher does acknowledge that poetry and literature play a special role in his ranking of the arts. In fact,

¹⁸ Schopenhauer privileges the composer, but also mentions the negative effects that composing has on him. Schopenhauer writes: “Bei demselben bleibt er stehen, wird nicht müde es zu betrachten und darstellend zu wiederholen, und trägt derweilen selbst die Kosten der Aufführung jenes Schauspiels, d.h. ist ja selbst der Wille, der sich also objektiviert und in stetem Leiden bleibt” (353). The artist helps other transcend empirical reality, but he himself continues to suffer. This view explains many comments made later on by Nietzsche, Wagner, and Hesse relating to the “sickness” of artists and their inability to participate fully in life.

despite asserting that words should never neglect their inferior position to music, Schopenhauer does hint at ways in which the status of poetry can be raised – by becoming more like music. He explains, for example:

Rhythmus und Reim [werden] theils ein Bindemittel unserer Aufmerksamkeit, indem wir williger dem Vortrag folgen, theils entsteht durch sie in uns ein blindes, allem Urtheil vorhergängiges Einstimmen in das Vorgetragene, wodurch dieses eine gewisse emphatische, von allen Gründen unabhängige Ueberzeugungskraft erhält. (324)

In this passage, Schopenhauer intimates that poetry and music share certain characteristics in that they are both oral art forms, which may lead one to conclude that the language does have the potential to become more like music in certain respects. Hence, like Novalis, Schopenhauer believes, “[w]ie die Musik zu werden ist das Ziel jeder Kunst” and that poetry comes closest to fulfilling this desire (Schanze 413).¹⁹

Despite these similarities, which lead some scholars to claim that “Schopenhauers Ästhetik...in den Grundzügen nichts anderes als die romantische Metaphysik der absoluten Musik, philosophisch gedeutet im Kontext einer Metaphysik des ‘Willens’ [ist],” it is important to note that Schopenhauer and Novalis do not agree with regard to the possible coming of a Golden Age (Dahlhaus 37). For Novalis, “ist der Traum der absoluten Dichtung gleichzeitig mit dem der absoluten Musik geträumt worden” (Dahlhaus 142). The young Romantic firmly believed that if a poet could one day write as a musician composed, one would herald in another Golden Age. Correspondingly, Schopenhauer would agree:

Die Poesie kann ihrer utopischen Aufgabe nur in der Weise der Musik gerecht werden. Gleiches gilt für den Kunstdepten. Dichtung muß wie eine Partitur von

¹⁹ Although Schopenhauer may acknowledge to some similarities between music and poetry, he would never agree with Novalis that poetry could one day become entirely like music. This is impossible because words are necessarily trapped in the phenomenal world as abstract concepts, while music belongs to the realm of the Will. Hence, both Schopenhauer and Novalis write about poetry becoming like music, but diverge regarding the degree to which they believe this transformation is possible. Novalis suggests that poetry has the potential to literally become music, while Schopenhauer only allows for a limited likeness between the two arts.

des Rezipienten Phantasie als Instrument ausgeführt werden, wenn sie ihre Schönheit offenbaren soll. (Schanze 413)

Only by becoming completely like music could language access the Will. However, Schopenhauer denies the possibility by binding language to Ideas, which by his definition cannot escape from phenomenal reality. For Schopenhauer, poetry will never be able to access the Will and no Golden Age is possible. The dream of escaping indefinitely from the suffering and sorrow of life is unattainable.²⁰

III. Apollonian vs. Dionysian forces: Nietzsche and Wagner

Despite Schopenhauer's pessimistic outlook on life, the philosopher was extremely influential. Just a few decades after the first publication of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, two 19th-century giants "immediately established a bond" with each other through Schopenhauerian metaphysics: the thinker, Friedrich Nietzsche, and the composer, Richard Wagner (Liébert 39). The older of the two, Wagner acted as a kind of inspiration for the young philosopher both before and after their friendship ended. In fact, Nietzsche's early thoughts on music and the nature of reality, especially in his 1872 *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, are so heavily indebted to Wagner's views on music and drama that some scholars go so far as to claim that when Nietzsche "borrowed Wagner's idea[s], he showed himself to be more Wagnerian than Wagner" (Liébert 44). Even after the two had a falling out later on in life, one could argue that Nietzsche never made an entirely clean break with his mentor, seen by the number of letters and texts he wrote, in which he attempts to publicly distance himself

²⁰ Much of the information in this section was taken from my Master's Thesis. Thus, for a more complete description of Schopenhauer's theories of language and music, see: Hay, Shelley. *The Musical Language of The World: Absolute Truth in Schopenhauer and Novalis*. MA Thesis. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2005.

from the composer and discredit Wagner's musical work.²¹ Nietzsche spent most of his life reacting to Richard Wagner.

Furthermore, both men, each in his own way, inherited the same early German Romantic tradition, which informed Schopenhauer and his work. Both men see close connections between music, language, and the true nature of reality, and each of them approach the issue from multiple angles. However, each excels in different endeavors. Nietzsche, who "says he is a philosopher-musician – and a philosopher because a musician," is a miserable composer (Liébert 9), while Richard Wagner describes (and arguably misrepresents) himself in an autobiography as a "sort of spontaneous genius who came to music by way of literature" (Liébert 37), although his music has clearly been more influential than his theoretical writings.²² Given that Nietzsche – undoubtedly the better writer of the two – borrows a number of Wagner's ideas in his early writings, as well as that the fact that the current investigation into absolute music has established this music is "eine Sprache 'über' der Sprache" determined "'in' der Sprache" (Dahlhaus 66), i.e., in literature, it makes sense to limit the following exposition mainly to Nietzsche's writings. Moreover, although Richard Wagner is officially credited with coining the term "absolute music," Carl Dahlhaus has pointed out that the composer's understanding of the term is somewhat problematic.

Specifically, Dahlhaus reports, "die Idee der absoluten Musik – ohne den Terminus –

²¹ Nietzsche wrote, for example, *Der Fall Wagner* (1888) and "Nietzsche contra Wagner" (published 1895) as attacks on the composer himself, his music, and his political views.

²² Liébert dedicates a significant portion of his book *Nietzsche and music* to the study of Nietzsche's musical compositions and concludes: "[Nietzsche's] musical and literary talents always competed with each other. This competition was all the more grueling as it was unequal: the writer rather quickly acquired that mastery of form that almost always eluded the musician's grasp" (27). In other words, music informed and influenced Nietzsche's writing and general philosophical views, but the man found it difficult to successfully create his own music.

[erscheint] bei E.T.A. Hoffmann und umgekehrt der Terminus – ohne die Idee – bei Richard Wagner” (141).²³

The young Nietzsche is especially interesting for the project at hand – an examination of the role of absolute music in the literature and philosophy of the 19th- and early 20th-centuries, focusing on the works of Hermann Hesse – for two distinct reasons. First, although a few scholars have noted that Hesse was influenced by Nietzschean philosophy, even to the extent that Hubert Reichert argues, “the writing of Hermann Hesse may be interpreted in large part as a running debate with Nietzsche” (15), little academic scholarship has explored the ways in which Nietzsche’s ideas on music specifically may have helped shaped Hesse’s works.²⁴ Second, Friedrich Nietzsche represents a unique combination of Romantic idealism and Schopenhauerian metaphysics. Just like his Romantic predecessors, but unlike Arthur Schopenhauer, young Nietzsche seems to have believed in the possibility of a new Golden Age. His “point of departure [in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*] was a thoroughly romantic one” (Caro 5). However, whereas Novalis appears to use music in a way to explain how language can become more perfect and herald in this future utopia, Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer’s estimation of music as the highest possible art form. Music allows one to express the ineffable. Thus, Nietzsche places all his hope for a new age

²³ It can be difficult to precisely locate Nietzsche within the discourse on absolute music at times because of the ambiguity associated with Wagner’s use of the term. Susanne Dieminger suggests, “[f]ür Nietzsche bedeutet ‘absolute Musik’ zunächst zwar Instrumentalmusik und die Loslösung der Sprache von der Musik, trotzdem aber versteht er Wagners Musikdrama, das ja auch nicht ohne Text auskommt, als ‘absolute Musik’ im Sinne der schopenhauerschen Metaphysik” (24). In other words, the young philosopher (who had not yet broken with Wagner) can be said to have regarded the composer’s operas as an example of absolute music in the sense that they supposedly helped one transcend empirical boundaries. The question of whether this music represented a completely autonomous, self-referential system was of less importance to the philosopher at this time.

²⁴ Reichert focuses a great deal on the role that Nietzsche’s ideas of *amor fati* and nihilism play in Hesse’s works.

in the transcendental power of music: Romantic optimism combined with Schopenhauerian aesthetics.²⁵

Nietzsche, clearly drawing on Schopenhauer, states in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, “die Musik ist die eigentliche Idee der Welt, das Drama nur ein Abglanz dieser Idee, ein vereinzeltes Schattenbild derselben” (*Tragödie* 133). Although slightly confounding Schopenhauer’s terminology by referring to the non-phenomenal truth uncovered through music as an Idea rather than as the Will, Nietzsche retains the previous philosopher’s shadow imagery when acknowledging music’s privileged position in the world above other art forms. However, some of Nietzsche’s enthusiasm for music lies with the early German Romantics as well and their particular critique of language. Echoing Novalis’ claims about the problems associated with language, Georges Liébert argues:

To be sure, as a tireless writer, Nietzsche would not have authored so many memorable aphorisms if he had not loved words. Yet, as an heir of the German Romantics, he felt irritation for language that was too logical, too rational a language to translate lived experience without schematizing and mutilating it. To this was added the mistrust aroused in him by words that have acquired a life of their own, one made up of habits and prejudices, through a kind of instinctive fetishism, an abusive belief in grammar. (3)

Nietzsche turns to music because he feels that language is incapable of expressing certain experiences. He complains in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, “[u]nsre eigentlichen Erlebnisse sind ganz und gar nicht geschwätzig. Sie könnten sich selbst nicht mitteilen, wenn sie wollten. Das mache, es fehlt ihnen das Wort... Mit der Sprache *vulgarisiert* sich bereits der Sprechende” (*GW* 1086). Similarly, directly comparing language to music, Nietzsche writes, “[i]m Verhältniß zur Musik ist alle Mittheilung durch Worte von schamloser Art; das Wort

²⁵ I will focus almost exclusively on Nietzsche’s *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in this dissertation. Although the philosopher emphasizes music throughout his career, “[i]n der ‘Geburt der Tragödie’ ...legt Nietzsche den Grundstein seines weiteren gesamten Schaffens, zu dem er immer wieder zurückkehren wird; auf dieser Schrift basieren auch seine späteren Auffassungen, die vor allem in seiner letzten Schaffensperiode wieder zutage treten und aktuell werden” (Dieminger 15).

verdünnt und verdummt; das Wort entpersönlicht: das Wort macht das Ungemeine gemein” (KSA 12:493). Nietzsche obviously agrees with Novalis and other early German Romantics that language is problematic for a number of different reasons, but that music succeeds in expressing what cannot be articulated through words. However, despite praising music above all other arts, Nietzsche does *not* write about it as independent from language. In fact, he bases the title of his first substantial work on a dramatic art – tragedy. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche focuses on the relationship between music and all other arts in the creation of ancient Greek tragedy.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche never fails to emphasize the dominant role that music played in ancient Greece and consistently writes of language as the inferior art, subjugated to music, striving always to imitate music. He asserts, “wir [sehen] also die Sprache auf das Stärkste angespannt, die Musik nachzuahmen” (*Tragödie* 43), or he writes of “die nachahmende Efulguration der Musik in Bildern und Begriffen” (*Tragödie* 44). Nietzsche justifies his claims with Schopenhaurian philosophy and explains, “daher kann die Sprache, als Organ und Symbol der Erscheinungen, nie und nirgends das tiefste Innere der Musik nach Aussen kehren, sondern bleibt immer, sobald sie sich auf Nachahmung der Musik einlässt, nur in einer äusserlichen Berührung mit der Musik” (*Tragödie* 45). Just like his predecessor, Nietzsche separates the realms of existence that each kind of art form is capable of accessing. Specifically, “[d]er Ästhetik Schopenhauers, Wagners und Nietzsches ist die Auffassung gemein, daß die Musik das Wesen der Welt zum Vorschein komme, während die Begriffssprache lediglich an den Erscheinungen haftet” (Dieminger 28). Music alone allows one to access a reality beyond the empirical world, while language is necessarily bound to phenomenal reality.

Although “[d]ie Musik für Nietzsche in der Hierarchie der Künste den ersten Rang ein[nimmt]” (Dieminger 11), the other arts, such as literature or painting, still play an important role in depicting the “true” nature of reality. Following Schopenhauer, one can view the world as Will or as Representation. To properly represent every facet of reality, therefore, one might argue that it is necessary to depict both perspectives of reality through art. For Nietzsche, this was best accomplished in ancient Greek tragedy – a genre combining words and music. It is important to note, however, that “[w]hereas for Plato the melody and rhythm depended on the lyrics, and for Rousseau, in the beginning music and language were one, for Nietzsche music came first” (Liébert 27). The reality depicted by music is the purer one. In order to explain this belief, Nietzsche tells the story of two Greek gods: Apollo and Dionysus.

In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche describes the intellectual and artistic development of ancient Greek society as a struggle between Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies. This struggle begins with the wisdom of Selenus: “Das Allerbeste ist für dich gänzlich unerreichbar: nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu sein, nichts zu sein. Das Zweitbeste aber ist für dich – bald zu sterben” (*Tragödie* 29). According to Nietzsche, early Greek society had a very negative outlook on life, one that needed to be overcome in order to make existence or survival of the human race possible. Nietzsche finds the solution to the problem, originating with Selenus, in the Greek god Apollo. Apollo – “Gott aller bildnerischen Kräfte... aus dessen Gebärden und Blicken die ganze Lust und Weisheit des ‘Scheines’ [entspringt], sammt seiner Schönheit” – is the God of order and of dreams, the God of the plastic arts, the God who saved Greek man from the ugly truth of his existence (*Tragödie* 21-

22). That is to say, Apollo made it possible for people in ancient Greece to disguise and forget the true nature of existence.

Dionysus, on the other hand, directly represents the original, underlying nature of reality. He is the God of “Rausch” (*Tragödie* 24), of music, and of “trunkene Raserei, die alle Formen und Gesetze zu vernichten droht” (Dieminger 20). Nietzsche explains that while “[d]er Plastiker und zugleich der ihm verwandte Epiker...in das reine Anschauen der Bilder versunken [ist],” i.e., all artists influenced by Apollo, “[d]er dionysische Musiker ist ohne jedes Bild völlig nur selbst Urschmerz und Urwiederklang” (*Tragödie* 38). Dionysus represents Schopenhauer’s Will. Consequently, Apollo represents the world of Representation, the “principium individuationis, das über die Individualität und die Abgründe des Lebens einen Schönheitsschleier breitet” (Dieminger 17). Thus, life in ancient Greece consisted of a perpetual struggle or tension between Apollo and Dionysus, between viewing the true, base nature of the world as Will and merely observing the manifestations of the Will, the Representations.

In this environment, Nietzsche explains, “dass die Fortentwicklung der Kunst an die Duplicität des Apollonischen und des Dionysischen gebunden [war]” (*Tragödie* 19). In the beginning, there existed “ein ungeheurer Gegensatz, nach Ursprung und Zielen, zwischen der Kunst des Bildners, der apollinischen, und der unbildlichen Kunst der Musik, als der des Dionysus” (*Tragödie* 19). Apollonian and Dionysian art competed with each. Eventually, however, a balance was struck through one particular form: Greek tragedy. Both sides to existence were represented on stage and “das höchste Ziel der Tragödie und der Kunst überhaupt [wurde] erreicht” (*Tragödie* 135). While Apollo found representation through the medium of language and the individuality of the actors, Dionysus could be located in the

chorus, which Nietzsche equates with a “Vision der dionysischen Masse” (*Tragödie* 54). In *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche contrasts the Apollonian and Dionysian as “ontologisch begründete Urpotenzen, [die]...ihre Synthese in der tragischen Kunst [finden]” (Dieminger 16).

Why, however, is Nietzsche so invested in depicting Greek tragedy as the ideal “union of the artistic drives figured by these two divinities” (Liébert 33)? The answer lies, in part, with Nietzsche’s need to overcome Schopenhauer’s pessimism. Schopenhauer’s theory of the world as Will and as Representation, as a constant struggle between various objectifications of the Will leading to constant misery and sorrow for man, is obviously not a life-affirming type of philosophy. Although Nietzsche is completely convinced of music’s transcendental power:

[E]r lehnt entschieden [Schopenhauers] Konsequenz der Weltverneinung ab. In der Auffassung, daß das Dasein primär Schmerz und Leiden sei, stimmt [Nietzsche] in der ‘Geburt der Tragödie’ der Weisheit des Silen (und gewissermaßen auch Schopenhauer) zu, doch hält Nietzsche das Leben ‘heilig’ und mächtig genug, dies auszuhalten und mittels ästhetischer ‘Tricks’ und Verführungen bejahren zu können. Wir alle sind sozusagen Teil des Leidens des Dionysos, d.h. Teil der zerstückelten Weltwirklichkeit und so Mitspieler in (absoluten) Theater des Dionysos. Mit der Tragödie, mit der Musik streben wir danach, das ewige Leben selbst zu sein: einerseits durch die schöpferische Komponente, nämlich aus dem unermesslichen Reichtum eigener Möglichkeiten in ständig neue Verwandlungen zu schöpfen und immer wieder neu geboren zu werden bzw. uns selbst neu zu gebären als Kunstwerk, an dem Tag für Tag zu gestalten ist, und andererseits durch die Möglichkeit bzw. Notwendigkeit mittels ständiger Metamorphosen und Maskierungen dem Leiden an den eigenen Gegensätzen zu entfliehen, d.h. die zwar gesuchte aber letztendlich unerträgliche Konsistenz und Kohärenz der eigenen Identität wieder zu zerstückeln. (Dieminger 25)

Nietzsche believes in the Will as the underlying life force to existence. He believes that the Will is terrible, that living life as an individual objectification of the Will is painful, and that one can attain momentary relief from sorrow by listening to music. However, Nietzsche also believes in affirming life and in balancing out reality’s inherent negativity through the god of

“Schein.” Ancient Greek tragedy represented the perfect equilibrium between the world as Will and the world as Representation.

Unfortunately, Greek tragedy disappeared thousands of years ago, according to Nietzsche, because Apollonian forces once again gained the upper hand over the Dionysian. With the birth of Socrates and the rise of a Western intellectual tradition, the precious balance between Apollo and Dionysus – between the world as Will and the world as Representation – was destroyed. Nietzsche explains that Socrates, the figure Nietzsche most frequently associates with this intellectualism, “zerstört[e] das Wesen der Tragödie, welches sich einzig als eine Manifestation und Verbildlichung dionysischer Zustände, als sichtbare Symbolisierung der Musik, als die Traumwelt eines dionysischen Rausches interpretieren [ieß]” (*Tragödie* 89-90). Art after Socrates neglected the Dionysian aspects of existence and therefore failed to represent the true nature of reality. However, Nietzsche “erhofft[e] sich durch eine Wiedergeburt der Tragödie mittels des wagnerschen Musikdramas...eine Erneuerung der Kultur und Gesellschaft” (Dieminger 15). In other words, the young philosopher believed that Wagner and his music dramas, which were based on the notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, would restore the lost balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Wagner’s music was for the early Nietzsche “die ‘wahre’ und ‘eigentliche’ Musik” (Dieminger 20). Eventually, though, the friendship between the two men ended and Nietzsche began to follow even more closely in Novalis’ and Schopenhauer’s footsteps regarding the ways in which music and language can be combined or synthesized to directly represent all aspects of reality.

Specifically, Nietzsche’s own writing begins to take on more musical characteristics over the course of his career. First, he uses musical analogies in his letters and texts much

like Schopenhauer does in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.²⁶ There are “metaphors of the keyboard, of the vibrating string, of dissonance, of harmony, of melody. Their function is not simply to decorate his argument or to illustrate it. Music is the metaphor of life itself, of life as it ought to be” (Liébert 2). Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche use musical analogies or metaphors to exemplify their arguments as well as to point to the vital role that music plays in their respective philosophies: music as Will or music as life.

A second way in which Nietzsche’s later writing style is informed and influenced by music is in how he envisions the artist producing works of art. In particular, he suggests that inspiration or musical improvisation is the ideal model for artistic creation, just as Novalis did decades earlier. Writing about *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche explains:

Mit dem geringsten Rest von Aberglauben in sich würde man in der Tat die Vorstellung, bloß Inkarnation, bloß Mundstück, bloß Medium übermächtiger Gewalten zu sein, kaum abzuweisen wissen. Der Begriff Offenbarung, in dem Sinn, daß plötzlich, mit unsäglicher Sicherheit und Feinheit, etwas *sichtbar*, hörbar wird, etwas, das einen im tiefsten erschüttert und umwirft, beschreibt einfach den Tatbestand. Man hört, man sucht nicht; man nimmt, man fragt nicht, wer da gibt; wie ein Blitz leuchtet ein Gedanke auf, mit Notwendigkeit, in der Form ohne Zögern, -- ich habe nie eine Wahl gehabt. (GW 1214)

Nietzsche asserts that he is guided by some unnamed force when writing. This force puts thoughts into a writer’s head and seems to take from him the ability to consciously choose his words. Nietzsche’s notion of unintentional writing obviously comes directly from the idea of musical improvisation.²⁷ He explains, for example, in a letter to Carl von Gerdorff from 1867, “[v]or allem müssen wieder einige munteren Geister in meinem Stile entfesselt werden, ich muß darauf wie auf einer Klaviatur spielen lernen, aber nicht nur eingelernte

²⁶ These musical metaphors occur most frequently, according to Susanne Dieminger, in Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* (12).

²⁷ According to Georges Liébert, Nietzsche felt strongly about the importance of musical improvisation from an early age (20).

Stücke, sondern freie Phantasieen, so frei wie möglich, aber doch immer logisch und schön” (SB 2:209). This analogy is very similar Novalis’ declaration that poets should think of words as keys on a piano and that one must write as one composes.

Thus, the third way in which Nietzsche’s writing style takes on musical characteristics is that Nietzsche’s language literally attempt to become music in some ways. Following in early German Romantic footsteps, one finds “in Nietzsche a recurring aspiration to song, to speech that has been born of music, which does find free expression in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and in his poetry” (Liébert 4). Nietzsche is conscious of his literary aspirations and claims in *Ecce Homo*, “[m]an darf vielleicht den ganzen Zarathustra unter die Musik rechnen” (GW 1211). In fact, the philosopher goes so far as to compare the first book of *Also sprach Zarathustra* to “de[m] ersten Satzes der neunten Symphonie” (KSA 9:519).

Putting aside the question of whether Nietzsche was successful in his endeavors to write music with words, it is important to note that he inherited this idea from early German Romantics, combined their views with the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, and left behind his own powerful legacy which would eventually influence a number of later writers. One such writer who would become heir to this long Romantic trend in 19th-century literature and philosophy is Hermann Hesse. As we will see in the following chapters, Hesse tries throughout his literary career to overcome language’s inherent limitations by writing absolute music.

CHAPTER TWO

Hesse's *Glasperlenspiel* and the failures of language

I. Expectations and failures of language in Hesse's early works

It has now become clear that any attempt at describing Hesse's relationship to music must begin by exploring his relationship to language. What specifically is so problematic about the nature of the written word that a large number of Hesse's characters critique it? What are the goals of language and in what ways does language fail to achieve these goals? Is it all language that fails or just poetry? Do the attacks on language in Hesse's novels and short stories stay consistent over time or can a development or transition in argumentation be identified?

It may initially appear counterintuitive to pose these questions of one of the 20th century's most prolific authors. Indeed, there appear to be individual moments in Hesse's works when writing is praised as one of the most rewarding and exciting activities an individual could engage in.²⁸ For instance, Hesse's protagonist in the 1925 published short story *Der Kurgast* raves about the process of writing and claims:

Der Leser mag sehr darüber lachen, für uns Schreibende aber ist das Schreiben immer wieder eine tolle, erregende Sache, eine Fahrt in kleinstem Kahn auf hoher See, ein einsamer Flug durchs All. Während man ein einzelnes Wort sucht, unter drei sich anbietenden Worten wählt, zugleich den ganzen Satz, an dem man baut, im Gefühl und Ohr zu behalten --: während man den Satz schmiedet, während man die gewählte Konstruktion ausführt und die Schrauben des Gerüsts anzieht, zugleich den Ton und die Proportionen des ganzen Kapitels, des ganzen Buches irgendwie auf

²⁸ Hesse does not generally appear to make a distinction between nonfictional writing and poetry in his early works. However, this distinction will become relevant in the discussion of *Das Glasperlenspiel*.

geheimnisvolle Weise stets im Gefühl gegenwärtig zu haben: das ist eine aufregende Tätigkeit. (*Kurgast* 58)

The health spa guest describes the writing process as a unique form of pleasure, which is extremely exciting, yet nearly incomprehensible to outsiders. Although writing is not for everyone, in part because of how difficult it is to always keep the various layers of a text in mind, the intellectual joy obtained from trying to choose just the right word for any given passage is unparalleled and unbelievably rewarding for the true author.

However, although Hesse's character in *Der Kurgast* seems to offer an undeniable tribute to the process of writing in this section, a closer reading of the passage actually yields a somewhat more ambivalent verdict on the wonders of linguistic creation. In fact, a central problem associated closely with language in Hesse's other works is already present in this early glorification of writing. By obviously directing his comments to a "Leser," the resort guest clearly desires to share information with the reader. Yet the guest then proceeds to undermine this apparent goal by calling into question the possibility of ever effectively communicating the experience of writing to another person – via the vehicle of language itself. This inner contradiction is seen in a number of subtle ways: the use of the words "geheimnisvolle Weise," the necessity of using the visual imagery of "eine Fahrt in kleinstem Kahn" or "die Schrauben des Gerüsts," and finally, by blatantly explaining that writing is an "einsamer Flug." In other words, one aim of language is to communicate ideas and experiences to others, yet according to this passage of *Der Kurgast*, even the most carefully crafted language may fail in this endeavor.

Hence, it becomes clear that even when Hesse's characters are supposedly rejoicing in the act of writing, their relationship to language is frequently ambivalent. There are a number of other instances in Hesse's works, written before *Das Glasperlenspiel*, which

support the general idea that language is meant to serve particular purposes, and that it frequently fails to achieve its goals. It is important to explore these early linguistic issues so that one can completely understand the more complicated relationship that Josef Knecht, the protagonist of *Das Glasperlenspiel*, has to language. This understanding, in turn, will eventually help one discover why Hesse turns to writing about music as a response to these linguistic issues.

The first, most intuitive aim of language has already been hinted at: communication. A number of characters in Hesse's early works express their dissatisfaction with language's ability to help individuals communicate their ideas and feelings to others. For example, the somewhat disturbed Herr Klein in Hesse's 1919 short story "Klein und Wagner" frustratingly claims when asked by the dancer Teresina to explain who he is and what he is doing in Italy, "[j]a, ja. Sie wollen sich darüber unterhalten...Ach, es hilft nichts. Reden ist der sichere Weg dazu, alles mißzuverstehen, alles seicht und öde zu machen" (*Klein* 249). Klein obviously feels that it is natural for people to want to share experiences with each other, but he claims that language does not help in this venture. Indeed, language really just creates confusion and misunderstandings.

Some of the most obvious misunderstandings and failed attempts at communication occur in Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf*, first published in 1927. The protagonist of the novel, Harry Haller, has particular difficulties conversing with Pablo, a jazz musician he meets through their mutual friend, Hermine. Although the two characters share a love of music, they cannot seem to express their opinions on the subject through language. Haller becomes "gereizt und beinahe grob...[bei einem dieser ergebnislosen Gespräche]" (*Steppenwolf* 320) and eventually explains to the reader, "[s]eufzend gab ich es auf. Diesem Menschen war

nicht beizukommen” (*Steppenwolf* 323). Haller places most of the blame on Pablo for their inability to communicate with each other and refuses to reflect on the situation in more detail.²⁹ However, one of the main characters in a story written just three years later by Hesse, *Narziss und Goldmund*, offers more in-depth observations on the subject.

Goldmund complains one day, “es konnten ja nicht einmal zwei Menschen wirklich miteinander sprechen, dazu bedurfte es schon eines Glückfalles, einer besonderen Freundschaft und Bereitschaft” (*Narziss* 101). Although the young and still partially optimistic protagonist of this story does not completely exclude the possibility of being able to communicate with another individual, he does limit the likelihood of this happening. According to Goldmund, communication often requires a close relationship with one’s conversation partner and a great deal of luck.

This reliance on something as random as “luck” calls to mind previously mentioned statements made by Novalis in a number of his fragments. Hesse partially inherits the early German Romantic idea that intentionally trying to articulate a thought or feeling through language is doomed to failure. However, chance or luck, writing and speaking “unintentionally,” may allow one to convey the greatest truths.³⁰ In fact, Hesse directly shows his indebtedness to Novalis and these ideas in his 1919 novel *Demian*. Emil Sinclair mentions a book which has influenced him greatly and says, “[e]s war ein Band Novalis, mit

²⁹ This disrespect for Pablo’s linguistic abilities is shown on a number of occasions throughout the novel. For instance, Hermine explains to Haller that Pablo “alle Instrumente spielen und alle Sprachen der Welt sprechen konnte” (*Steppenwolf* 309), whereupon Haller sarcastically thinks to himself, “das mit der Vielsprachigkeit machte [Pablo] sich leicht, er sprach nämlich...nur Worte wie bitte, danke, jawohl, gewiß, hallo und ähnliche, die er allerdings in mehreren Sprachen konnte” (*Steppenwolf* 312). Furthermore, Haller denies any complicity in the failed conversations, in large part, because he is a writer. Haller prides himself on his supposed ability to express his inner thoughts in words and places all blame on the lowly jazz musician for their inability to communicate effectively.

³⁰ See the introduction to this dissertation for a more detailed explanation of Novalis’ idea of “unintentional writing.”

Briefen und Sentenzen, von denen ich viele nicht verstand und die mich doch alle unsäglich anzogen und umspannten” (*Demian* 84). Although Novalis’ writings attracted Emil in some mysterious, ineffable way, they did not, in fact, manage to transmit any concrete information to the character. Language may have been successful in inspiring the youth, but it failed to directly communicate any information to him.

Although Novalis does not directly attempt to explain how and why it is that language has this communicative shortcoming, one of Hesse’s other fictional characters does make an, albeit vague, explanatory attempt. Somewhat surprisingly, it is the enthusiastic health spa writer himself who points out why one may have trouble communicating through language. Although he supposedly enjoys the act of choosing just the right word for a particular sentence when writing, he acknowledges elsewhere in the text that despite all attempts, this word is perhaps still far from perfect. He complains that the “Vieldeutigkeit aller Worte” results in a kind of “Gebrechlichkeit [der] Werkzeuge” of communication and acknowledges the “Unmöglichkeit eines wahrhaft exakten Ausdrucks” (*Kurgast* 21). In other words, although it is enjoyable to choose one word among many when writing, it is not so pleasurable to discover that this one word itself may have many meanings and does not actually help clearly convey a particular idea from one person to the next. Language fails in communicating because each word has multiple meanings.³¹

Although it hinders communication between people at times, one may want to argue that this “Vieldeutigkeit” of language is not obviously just a negative quality. In fact, one might intuitively claim that it is just this characteristic, which makes poetry so enjoyable to read. Moreover, early German Romantics, such as Novalis, would have praised this aspect of

³¹ This particular problem with language seems to be one that Hesse shares with his characters to some degree. In a 1934 letter to Carl Jung, Hesse complains about the “Sprachverwirrung, wobei jeder jede Bezeichnung anders verwendet” (Michels *Materialien* 95).

language because it is one way in which language is more like music, the supreme art form.³² However, Novalis himself acknowledges that this is not how most people tend to think about words. They do not generally regard language as a system in which each element obtains meaning only by standing in a certain relationship to other elements in the system. In actuality, according to the early 19th-century writer, one often holds the erroneous belief that words and objects in the world correspond directly to each other. Hence, it makes sense that people working with this “faulty” assumption would view the “Vieldeutigkeit” of words as something negative.

It appears that a number of Hesse’s early characters seem to share similar ideas regarding language, thus viewing a word’s multiplicity of meaning as problematic, not only because it thwarts communication, but also because it undermines the idea that words correspond to things in the phenomenal world.³³ However, these “things” which words are supposed to point to are not always physical objects in Hesse’s works but often abstract ideas or sentiments. In other words, although some of Hesse’s characters may perhaps no longer feel that one word must correspond to one object in the world, they do still seem to believe that words should at least be able to point to intangible things such as thoughts or emotions. However, here once again, these same characters seem either surprised or frustrated to discover that language fails in achieving this desired goal.

³² As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Novalis claims that it is because musical meaning is clearly based on a series of relationships between notes and chords – any given note only obtains meaning by being embedded in the larger musical system – that music so ideally reflects empirical reality. Furthermore, since Novalis wishes language to become more like music, it follows that this particular characteristic of language, i.e., that any individual word can have multiple meanings, would be viewed as something positive by the early German Romantic. In other words, Novalis would admire a word’s ability to become meaningful only in a given context, through the other words and sentences surrounding it, because it brings language one step closer to music.

³³ As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, many 19th-century philosophers make a distinction between the empirical world, i.e., those things that man can directly perceive, and the nonphenomnal world, i.e., a reality that lies beyond empirical experience. In this dissertation, I use the terms noumenal, non-phenomenal, transcendental, and absolute often interchangeably.

For instance, the relatively inexperienced young Goldmund recognizes that words cannot express all kinds of emotion after one of his first encounters with the opposite sex. Goldmund remembers an afternoon spent with a woman named Lise and realizes, “er hatte heut kein Bedürfnis mehr nach Worten...nur nach diesem wortlosen, blinden, stummen Fühlen und Wühlen” (*Narziss* 86). Goldmund and Lise spoke very little with each other, and when they did it was “belanglos” (*Narziss* 86). After having had such long conversations with his mentor in the past, the young man is surprised to discover a situation which he cannot and does not want to express in words. The emotions associated with this woman and what the two experienced together are ineffable. Language, although Goldmund clearly expected it to be able to describe any situation in the world, is not capable of expressing his sentiments at this particular time.

In the same way, although feeling less surprised and perhaps a bit more frustrated, the protagonist in Hesse’s *Der Kurgast* also seems to realize that language is deficient in some way when he attempts to refer directly to certain emotions. The resort guest thinks to himself while observing one of the other guests at the resort, “die Sprache [hat] für seelische Vorgänge noch keine Ausdrücke gefunden...denn sprachliche Gegensätze wie Schadenfreude und Mitleiden sind hier aufs innigste verbunden” (*Kurgast* 13). The protagonist’s feelings towards his fellow spa guest are complex and composed of a number of different, oppositional emotions. He simultaneously rejoices in the fact that this other person is sicker than he is, but he also feels sympathy toward the ill guest and her plight. The author in him feels the urge to describe this complex emotion with one word, but he discovers that this word does not exist. Thus, just as Novalis concluded that words do not correspond on a one-to-one basis with objects in phenomenal reality, Hesse’s characters

seem to believe that language cannot describe the vast number of emotions a human being can have in and about the world.³⁴

It comes perhaps then as no great surprise that if language, according to a number of Hesse's characters, is incapable of accurately describing the phenomenal world of emotion, then it will almost certainly fail in portraying any reality beyond the empirical world. Just as late 18th- and early 19th-century philosophers and writers such as Kant, Novalis, and Schopenhauer, to name but a few, shared the belief that there is something beyond the world of visible objects – be it God, the Will, or any other “Ding an sich” – so, too, do Hesse's characters seem to acknowledge the existence of an absolute or transcendental realm or being. And much like Hesse's aforementioned precursors, many of the modern novelist's characters also appear to hold the view that one way in which to gain access to this spiritual world is through art. For instance, Herr Klein clearly states during a moment of epiphany and almost manic jubilation, “Kunst war nichts anderes als Betrachtung der Welt im Zustand der Gnade, der Erleuchtung. Kunst war: hinter jedem Ding Gott zeigen” (*Klein* 256). Klein clearly has faith that there is a supreme-being in the universe and that one way in which to truly know or feel its presence is through art. The man does not make any distinction between the various arts or note whether one is more apt at achieving this goal than others. Given his generalized comment, it makes sense to assume all forms of art share this aim and that poetry, just as well as music, sculpture, painting, or dance, should be a means of accessing the divine or absolute.

³⁴ In *Der Steppenwolf*, Haller also has difficulties describing his phenomenal reality at times as well. He explains to the reader, for instance, “[v]ieles erlebte ich in Pablos kleinem Theater, und kein Tausendstel davon ist mit Worten zu sagen” (*Steppenwolf* 395). In fact, he repeats these sentiments more than once: “Viele Dinge geschahen, viele Spiele wurden gespielt, nicht mit Worten zu sagen” (*Steppenwolf* 397). Haller seems shocked that he, a writer, cannot find the words to depict his surroundings. However, it is important to note that his “surroundings” are, in fact, Pablo's “magic” theater. It is unclear whether anything which occurs in this place is “real,” or whether everything Haller experiences is due to some drug-induced stupor.

Similarly, Goldmund ponders the meaning of art during his artistic apprenticeship with Master Niklas and surmises, “[w]enn wir nun als Künstler Bilder schaffen...so tun wir es, um doch irgend etwas aus dem großen Totentanz zu retten, etwas hinzustellen, was längere Dauer hat als wir selbst” (*Narziß* 160-161). The young man concludes that art’s main objective may be to give immortality to the artist through his creation. Immortality does not belong to the realm of empirical reality, and by creating a work of art, some part of the artist is capable of sharing in the eternal existence of the absolute. Although Goldmund comes to this conclusion while learning to become a sculptor, there is no reason to deduce that his comments pertain only to one particular kind of art, but rather that his statement could apply just as well to painting or poetry. Indeed, Narziß appears to believe that Goldmund has some sort of natural affinity for language. The older man explains to Goldmund on his return to Mariabronn, “[d]amals schien mir, es könnte ein Dichter aus dir werden” (*Narziß* 284). Thus, it seems possible and even likely that Goldmund could have decided to become a poet, aiming to touch upon the absolute by creating immortal works of art through language.

However, once again, Hesse’s characters seem to announce a goal of language while his stories simultaneously raise doubt as to whether it is possible to achieve it. In the case of being able to access the divine or absolute, Hesse both directly and indirectly questions language’s ability to attain this goal. In one of the most elaborate and explicit passages regarding words and letters in *Narziß und Goldmund*, the younger man remarks to his mentor:

Ich glaube...daß ein Blumenblatt oder ein kleiner Wurm auf dem Wege viel mehr sagt und enthält als alle Bücher der ganzen Bibliothek. Mit Buchstaben und mit Worten kann man nichts sagen. Manchmal schreibe ich irgendeinen griechischen Buchstaben, ein Theta oder Omega, und indem ich die Feder ein klein wenig drehe,

schwänzelt der Buchstabe und ist ein Fisch und erinnert in einer Sekunde an alle Bäche und Ströme der Welt, an alles Kühle und Feuchte, an den Ozean Homers und an das Wasser, auf dem Petrus wandelte, oder der Buchstabe wird ein Vogel, stellt den Schwanz, sträubt die Federn, bläst sich auf, lacht, fliegt davon. -- Nun, Narziß, du hältst wohl nicht viel von solchen Buchstaben? Aber ich sage dir: mit ihnen schrieb Gott die Welt. (*Narziß* 66)

Goldmund makes a number of different claims in this statement. Most importantly, he makes a distinction between two kinds of letters: the ones found in books and the ones he creates when he himself writes. The first kind of letter is utterly meaningless, according to the youth, and cannot actually say anything about the empirical world or what may lie beyond it. The second kind of letter, however, is a dynamic element of language, which constantly changes shape and shifts meaning. It refers first to one thing and then to another. Words' multiplicity of meaning does not seem to cause a problem for Goldmund because he is not trying to point to one object in the phenomenal world, but rather he allows his letters to speak of the entire dynamic nature of reality as written by God. In other words, Goldmund feels that his letters clearly point to something beyond the objects in the world, to the supreme-creator of the universe.

Narziß responds to Goldmund's comment, though, and explains to the younger man why his understanding of language is problematic. Specifically, Narziß declares:

Ich halte viel von [solchen Buchstaben]...Es sind Zauberbuchstaben, man kann alle Dämonen mit ihnen beschwören. Nur freilich zum Betreiben der Wissenschaften sind sie ungeeignet. Der Geist liebt das Feste, Gestaltete, er will sich auf seine Zeichen verlassen können, er liebt das Seiende, nicht das Werdende, das Wirkliche und nicht das Mögliche. Er duldet nicht, daß ein Omega eine Schlange oder ein Vogel werde. In der Natur kann der Geist nicht leben, nur *gegen* sie, nur als ihr Gegenspiel. Glaubst du mir jetzt, Goldmund, daß du nie ein Gelehrter sein wirst? (*Narziß* 66)

Narziß acknowledges that Goldmund's letters could be attractive in the way that they seem to magically shift meaning. They could even make one believe they are accessing something divine. However, Narziß questions not only the usefulness of this type of language in his

world, but also the reliability of it. He accuses these letters of pointing to all kinds of “Dämonen,” thus implying that whatever Goldmund is putting on paper is not actually pointing to God’s creation. It might be a type of illusion. Moreover, Narziß claims that man is not yet actually able to describe divine “Natur” because his mind is not yet ready to fully understand the dynamic, absolute force behind both empirical reality and language. Man’s mind wants to focus on existing objects in the world, not on what they could possibly become one day. Hence, for Narziß, as long as there are scholars in the world trying to understand empirical reality, neither the mind nor language of man will be able to grasp the “truth” behind nature, that which transcends phenomenal reality.

Although Narziß very directly explains in the story why language at his time cannot achieve its goal of transcending empirical reality, Hesse himself also seems to *indirectly* hint that poetry can not yet access the absolute – by rarely allowing his characters to only be authors, thus saving them from unavoidable failure. With the exception of the health spa guest in *Der Kurgast*, almost all of Hesse’s characters seem to focus on other arts instead of or in addition to writing: Knulp plays the harmonica, Kuhn is a violinist and composer, Goldmund becomes a sculptor and plays the lute, Klingsor is a painter, Klein becomes obsessed with a dancer, Emil loves to draw, Harry Haller and the narrator in *Die Morgenlandfahrt* are both poets *and* musicians, etc.³⁵ In Hesse’s early works, words do not yet show God in all things nor do they immortalize the poet. Perhaps it is the case that the early Hesse, although able to bring himself to critique language’s somewhat less ambitious goals, such as communication between people or referring to things in the world, could not

³⁵ Other scholars have noted as well that “es treten neben den häufigeren Figuren der Maler auch Musiker auf” (Kasak 8), yet they make little or no mention of the artist as author appearing in Hesse’s early works. E.R. Curtius notices this as well and hypothesizes that Hesse actually “mistrusts literature” (11) and is involved in a “conflict with the chosen profession – that of literature” (14).

bring himself to so blatantly challenge language as art. He could not yet directly claim that poetry fails in achieving its highest goal, that of accessing something transcendental or absolute, of bringing one closer to the divine, because he was not yet ready to undermine his own artistic existence with such a claim.³⁶ This hesitation, however, disappears in Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* and the author not only makes a much clearer distinction between language with "worldly" goals and language as art, but also critiques poetry more directly. Finally, these more developed linguistic claims eventually help one to understand why Hesse turns to writing about music.

II. The first failure of language: depicting empirical reality

In Hesse's masterpiece, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, the characters continue to question language's ability to achieve its goals. Language frequently does not allow people to communicate clearly with each other, it often has problems describing the empirical world, and it does not obviously allow one to access any kind of transcendental truth. However, Hesse's general claims about language become more specific and nuanced in his later work. Indeed, man's relationship to language becomes much more ambivalent in this novel and certain modes of writing actually appear to be praised at times. Moreover, a number of apparently peripheral dichotomies are set up in the book, such as the opposition between intellect and feeling, mind and nature, or life and art, as Hesse finally challenges himself to examine the nature of poetry in particular. It eventually becomes clear that these antitheses

³⁶ It is not too farfetched to make a connection between Hesse's personal opinions regarding this topic and those of his characters. A number of critics have pointed out the autobiographical nature of Hesse's work, e.g., Limberg notes that *Der Kurgast* is an autobiographical piece and even calls the work a "Selbstporträt Hesses" (104); Peter Suhrkamp, Hesse's longtime publisher and friend, says during a radio address to celebrate Hesse's 70th birthday, "[a]llen Lesern seiner Werke wird schon aufgefallen sein, daß er selbst in vielen von ihnen, den wesentlichsten, vorkommt und in mancherlei Gestalt" (Michels *Materialien* 168); and E.R. Curtius creatively writes, "[a]ll the rest of his works [other than *Narziß und Goldmund*] are autobiographical ectoplasms, transposed life histories" (10); while Josef Mileck makes the autobiographical claim most eloquently when he writes: "Like a hall of mirrors the author's works never cease to reflect his own image" (172).

are essential to the discussion of music in the novel. Finally, and most importantly to this study, Hesse moves from simply claiming that language fails in all of its endeavors, to a more Romantic belief that language may possibly overcome the obstacles put in its way. Specifically, as was the case in the 150 years between the early Jena Romantics and Hesse's futuristic novel, music seems to play the role of savior to language. By examining the many claims Hesse makes about language in *Das Glasperlenspiel* one is eventually led to an understanding of why the modern novelist still held fast to a Romantic tradition of "composing" texts foregrounding music.³⁷

i. The chronicler's battle with history

Hesse does not make a clean break with his earlier ideas regarding language. Instead, he incorporates the gradual transition or development of his views through a number of different characters within the novel.³⁸ Although one might automatically assume that the young Josef Knecht, the man whose life we follow throughout the course of the story, would be the main representative of Hesse's early opinions regarding language, it is an entirely different figure, in fact, who best summarizes the author's previous attitude towards linguistic endeavors: the narrator of the story.³⁹ In particular, it is the fear associated with critiquing one's professional existence, an existence based on the written word, which this character best encompasses. The narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel*, a historian whose goal it is to write the biography of Josef Knecht, "an anonymous narrator who is sensitive to the

³⁷ For a detailed description of the ways in which Hesse is arguably a modern novelist holding fast to a Romantic tradition, see Ralph Freedman's "Romantic Imagination: Hermann Hesse as a modern novelist."

³⁸ For an account of how Hesse's writing style developed over the course of his career, see Josef Mileck's "The Prose of Hermann Hesse: Life, Substance and Form."

³⁹ I will later show that Josef Knecht has a much more refined relationship to language, even as a young man, than many of Hesse's earlier characters did.

problematic nature of his undertaking” (Ziolkowski *Glass Bead* 41), is a figure who senses that he may fail in his main objective because of the general nature of language, but who only begrudgingly admits this possibility.⁴⁰ In fact, he spends a significant amount of time attempting to ignore or reject this probable failure. Furthermore, the historian is the first character in the story to make a distinction between different kinds of language, specifically between historical documentation and poetry, which later becomes essential to both the plot of the story and to the overall argument found in the novel regarding language.

Although Josef Knecht explains in a letter to the highest officials of the Order, “[d]as Interesse für Weltgeschichte ist bei uns Kastaliern, Ihr wisset es, äußerst schwach, ja es fehlt den meisten von uns nicht nur am Interesse, sondern sogar, möchte ich sagen, an Gerechtigkeit gegen die Historie, an Achtung vor ihr,” it is obviously not the case that all history disappears from the Province in the two hundred years following Knecht’s death (*GPS* 385). The narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* still feels it is important to objectively depict the former Magister Ludi’s life and even to offer the reader an introduction to the time of the Feuilleton, the age which eventually led to the development Castalia’s glass bead game. However, it is less important for the project at hand to examine the detailed debates between various characters in the novel regarding history as a discipline than to look at one facet of the discussion in particular: the role that language plays in capturing and depicting historical events. The very fact that the narrator writes Knecht’s biography attests to the importance he places on this kind of endeavor. Nevertheless, he expresses some concern

⁴⁰ This narrator has a great deal in common with the narrator of the tale *Die Morgenlandfahrt* (a story Hesse himself claims is a precursor to *Das Glasperlenspiel*) who also encounters a number of difficulties when trying to write about his time in the brotherhood of “Morgendlandfahrer.” The narrator of *Die Morgenlandfahrt* comments at the beginning of his endeavor, “[s]chon dieser erste Anfang, dieser in bester Absicht begonnene Versuch führt mich ins Uferlose und Unverständliche” (*Morgenlandfahrt* 348), and he often talks about his work in terms of an “unerzählbare Geschichte” (*Morgenlandfahrt* 351). His particular problem, though, is not so much with language, but rather that he has actually forgotten most of the details of his story.

regarding the success of his history, in part because of the unavoidable reliance on language to accomplish it. Although he wants to stick to a “sachlichen Bericht” (*GPS* 138) as much as possible, the historian encounters a number of problems when trying to tell the story of a man who lived hundreds of years earlier. He attempts “die Überlieferung genau so weiterzugeben, wie sie sich unsern Forschungen dargeboten hat” (*GPS* 48), but he must often admit that he only makes “behutsame Andeutungen” because some bits of information are simply “[seiner] Forschung nicht zugänglich” (*GPS* 185). That is to say, although the narrator wishes to rely on pure fact as much as possible, the practical absence of certain written documents makes the goal nearly impossible to achieve.

Lack of documentation has only indirectly, at best, anything to do with the historian’s linguistic concerns, though. Much more interesting than the *missing* records are the issues the narrator has with the “Unzahl von literarischen und anderen Dokumenten” that he *does* actually possess (*GPS* 16). He constantly refers to the authenticity of his various sources over the course of the novel but also apologizes almost as often for their unreliability. For example, when attempting to describe a particular lecture given by Knecht on the glass bead game, the narrator must admit that he has only acquired the notes that “ein Schüler...nach [Knechts] freien Vortrag stenographiert...[hat]” (*GPS* 69). The historian, however, is clearly dissatisfied with the necessity of using third-party documentation and calls into question the reliability of these written documents. He seems to expect written documents to capture the former empirical reality of Knecht’s existence, but he must acknowledge that these words on paper cannot always be trusted to do so. Hence, the reader finds the narrator constantly prefacing “facts” reported in his biography with phrases such as “glauben wir sagen zu dürfen” (*GPS* 364), or one encounters the character describing his biography as a mere

“Versuch” Knecht’s life “andeutend zu skizzieren” (*GPS* 8). The narrator sets for himself the goal of writing a factual history of Knecht’s life but realizes that he may fail. However, he can only partially acknowledge this probable failure through brief apologetic comments regarding the reliability of his sources before continuing to write his biography as if he never doubted the possibility of achieving his goal. In other words, much as the young author Hermann Hesse could not blatantly call his art’s ability to access the absolute into question, the historian of *Das Glasperlenspiel* almost never critiques historical documentation forthright.

It is not only the case, though, that the historian has problems with the written word. Indeed, far worse than being dependent on written documents, which may or may not be reliable, is the historian’s dependency on verbal utterances.⁴¹ He expresses regret, for instance, at not being able to better support the portrayal the old Musikmeister’s response to one of Knecht’s letters by explaining, “[d]iese Antwort ist aber mündlich erfolgt” (*GPS* 100). The narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* implies with this statement that verbal language is not as desirable as written language because it is even less reliable. The historian’s most obvious goal in his biography is to depict the empirical reality, the circumstances surrounding Josef Knecht’s life, in as much detail as possible. However, verbal communication is not the best source for this kind of study because it is located in a temporal space beyond that of the narrator. It is one of the many reasons the historian appears doomed to fail in his endeavor from the outset.

⁴¹ It is a bit of a mystery *how* exactly the narrator has knowledge of these verbal statements if they were made 200 years earlier and were not written down. Perhaps they have simply been passed along over the years by word of mouth – something not implausible, especially when considering the historian’s description of Knecht’s later life story as “Legende” (*GPS* 47).

This unreliability of both written and unwritten words in historical writing leads to another even more important antithesis in Hesse's masterpiece. The historian recognizes early on "daß Geschichte schreiben, auch wenn es noch so nüchtern und mit noch so gutem Willem zur Sachlichkeit getan wird, immer Dichtung bleibt und ihre dritte Dimension die Fiktion ist" (*GPS* 45-46).⁴² As we have begun to see, the narrator struggles throughout most of the novel to come to terms with the fact that his goal of exactly portraying Josef Knecht's life is not one which can be attained. He explains in this passage that when historical writing cannot rely purely on facts, it must resort to another kind of writing to fill in the blanks: poetry. Although the historian implies that poetry is the less valuable of the two types of writing, at least for his purpose, this creative form of writing is extremely important to understanding Josef Knecht's relationship to language. Furthermore, statements made about poetry and other forms of fictional writing are absolutely essential to comprehending why Hesse focuses to such a degree on music in this novel.

One of the reasons that the young Hesse and his fictional historian in *Das Glasperlenspiel* may have found it so difficult to fully accept language's various shortcomings is hinted at in a passage towards the end of the novel. After Knecht explains to Master Alexander, a high member of Castalia's Order during this period of history, that he will be leaving Castalia, Alexander reads a note left behind by the Magister Ludi. Although the note is simply a collection of quickly scribbled administrative comments about the state of affairs in Castalia, i.e., nothing of an expressly personal nature, Alexander is emotionally

⁴² This is one of the only outright critiques of historical documentation made by the narrator in the novel. However few and far between these kinds of statements are, though, the fact that the historian makes any claims such as these demonstrates that he may already be a more mature depiction of Hesse's earlier views. That is to say, whereas Hesse was unable to confront his particular problem with language at all in earlier works, the historian, although rejecting or ignoring his linguistic issues for most of the novel, does let the reader know that he is aware of them on some level.

affected by the words. On the piece of paper, “[i]n kleinen hübschen Buchstaben standen die klugen Bemerkungen da, Worte und Handschrift ebenso vom einmaligen und unverwechselbaren Wesen dieses Josef Knecht geprägt wie sein Gesicht, seine Stimme, sein Gang” (*GPS* 448). Words are not simply letters written on a piece of paper but rather, regardless of the actual content, pieces of the person who wrote them. Much as Goldmund believed that a work of art could make an artist immortal, Alexander feels that written words capture and retain some part of the writer’s essence or being. This characteristic of language helps further explain why both the early Hesse and his fictional narrator were able to only indirectly critique certain aspects of language – the issue was simply too personal.

Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the historian *does* point to problems associated with certain aspects of language, albeit often indirectly. It is also clear, however, that he has not given up the hope entirely that language may one day overcome its weaknesses. In a statement made early on to the reader of the biography, the narrator explains, “[f]ür eine objektive Darstellung dieses Themas ist die Zeit längst noch nicht gekommen” (*GPS* 11).⁴³ Although this claim initially appears to be making yet another negative statement regarding language’s ability to achieve its desired goals, it becomes clear on a closer reading that this passage is actually a very optimistic assertion about language’s future. The historian explains that the time to describe the glass bead game’s full history is “noch nicht” here, implying that the time is yet to come. In other words, much as Novalis believed in the

⁴³ The “Thema” the narrator refers to in this passage is the history of the glass bead game itself.

coming of a Golden Age, the historian, in early German Romantic fashion, also seems to hint at the possibility of language one day accomplishing things currently impossible.⁴⁴

This Romantic hope, despite the narrator's many concerns regarding his language-based craft, is most transparent in the first passage of the book, one from which the historian clearly draws inspiration, and with which he attempts to justify the existence of his biographical project. On the title-page of the book, one encounters a Latin quote supposedly written by Albertus Secundus and translated by Josef Knecht into German:

...denn mögen auch in gewisser Hinsicht und für leichtfertige Menschen die nicht existierenden Dinge leichter und verantwortungsloser durch Worte darzustellen sein als die Seienden, so ist es doch für den frommen und gewissenhaften Geschichtsschreiber gerade umgekehrt: nichts entzieht sich der Darstellung durch Worte so sehr und nichts ist doch notwendiger, den Menschen vor Augen zu stellen, als gewisse Dinge, deren Existenz weder beweisbar noch wahrscheinlich ist, welche aber eben dadurch, daß fromme und gewissenhafte Menschen sie gewissermaßen als seiende Dinge behandeln, dem Sein und der Möglichkeit des Geborenwerdens um einen Schritt näher geführt werden. (*GPS* 7)⁴⁵

The importance of the quote can plainly be seen, not only by its placement on the title-page of the novel, but also in its literal doubling, which is a result of the translation. Furthermore, some of the most central ideas encountered later on in *Das Glasperlenspiel* are already mentioned in the excerpt, for example, the various goals of language in representing empirical reality as opposed to "absolute" reality, the contrast between historical writing and more creative writing, and the significance of handwritten materials, to name but a few.

By opening the novel with a citation from a seemingly reputable source, one immediately encounters the narrator's obsession with historical, factual documentation.

⁴⁴ Once again, however, the historian undermines his own optimistic claim to a certain degree by then writing: "ein Lehrbuch des Glasperlenspiels...wird niemals geschrieben werden" (*GPS* 11). The narrator has hope, but it is limited. He seems to have a very ambivalent relationship to language indeed.

⁴⁵ This invented quote calls to mind a similar claim made by the narrator of *Die Morgenlandfahrt* as well. In this story, the protagonist asserts, "damit überhaupt irgend etwas auf Erden erzählbar werde, muß der Geschichtsschreiber Einheiten erfinden" (*Morgenlandfahrt* 349). In other words, historical writing is never complete or perfect, and certain details must always be created to fill in missing information.

However, the reader also instantly discovers that the historian's factual information is often not reliable. In this case, the original Latin quote was supposedly written by Albertus Secundus who, in actuality, is a fictional character created by Hesse for the novel.⁴⁶ Similarly, the language used in Knecht's alleged translation also points to the narrator's struggle when it comes to differentiating between fact and fiction. In particular, words based on the German word "gewiss" occur frequently in this passage, for example "in gewisser Hinsicht," "gewissenhafte[r] Geschichtsschreiber", "gewisse Dinge," "gewissenhafte Menschen," and "gewissermaßen." The stem of these various words, "gewiss," usually refers to knowing something with certainty or to pointing to something very specific. This is clearly what the narrator desires to do. However, a number of the words based on this stem in German mean almost the exact opposite. For instance, the phrase "in gewisser Hinsicht" and the word "gewissermaßen" actually mean that something is *not* absolutely certain. Instead, something is only true "in some sense," "in a way," or "virtually." In the case of the narrator, although the character would like to rely on nothing but facts in his biography, he really can only describe events and people from the past "in some sense." Finally, the word "gewissenhaft," meaning "conscientious," as well as "precise," "diligent," and "faithful," occurs twice in this passage. These are all adjectives which the narrator would use to describe himself. In summary, although the narrator wishes to say things "gewiss" in his biography, he can only say them "gewissermaßen," but one should not judge him because he is "gewissenhaft" and is doing the best that he can in representing the facts surrounding Knecht's life.

⁴⁶ Albertus Secundus is possibly meant to allude to Albertus Magnus, a 13th century Dominican friar and bishop, philosopher, and theologian. Theodore Ziolkowski explains in the forward to an English translation of *Das Glasperlenspiel* that Hesse actually wrote the passage for the novel himself and then had his students translate it into Latin (Ziolkowski "Forward" ix).

This opposition between fact and fiction, which the reader continues to encounter throughout the rest of the novel, is but one of many antitheses mentioned on the title-page. For instance, one finds the past and present contrasted in that a fictional medieval scholar, writing in Latin, has his work translated into German by a futuristic scholar from the province of Castalia. Similarly, the previously mentioned “gewissenhaften Menschen,” with whom the narrator obviously feels a kinship, are contrasted with “leichtfertige[n] Menschen,” who write about irrelevant things. Most importantly, though, the historian of the novel sets up a distinction between the act of writing about “nicht existierende[] Dinge” and writing about “[S]eiende[.]” This opposition, in particular, is important because it demonstrates that the most apparent distinction between the early Hesse and his fictional narrator in *Das Glasperlenspiel* – the two distinct goals each attempts to achieve through the process of writing – may not be as much of a difference as originally perceived. As previously mentioned, Hesse’s ideal language is a creative, artistic language, which allows one to transcend the phenomenal world and point to something absolute or divine. Language as art should make the artist immortal. The historian, on the other hand, in his constant struggle to depict what *actually* happened in Knecht’s life, initially appears to be focusing on the depiction of some former empirical reality. In other words, he believes that the goal in historical writing should be to point to something which actually existed or occurred. However, with his reluctant admission throughout the novel that this may be impossible, the narrator must resort to fiction to fill in the gaps of missing information. And although he often appears disappointed about this necessity, the title-page makes clear that on some unconscious level, the historian finds himself in accordance with this situation. Otherwise, he would not have opened Knecht’s biography with a quotation which positively portrays the

idea of presenting “nicht Seiende” things (things therefore outside empirical reality), which people believe in nonetheless, as “Seiende.” Thus, although the fictional narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* is disinclined to write about non-existent things while Hesse sets this as his goal, the two resemble each other in their mutual respect for what creative writing can actually accomplish: it literally creates things and allows ideas and objects the possibility of existing through words. Despite all the inner conflict, struggle, and confusion surrounding the historian of the novel, the reader really does encounter an early Hesse in this character. He is a figure who indirectly acknowledges Hesse’s general “concept of the artist-prophet...who, through his works, can eventually transform the world” (Norton 23). The narrator does, in fact, believe in an artist who can transcend empirical reality and magically create new things in the world. Yet one also finds in the figure of the historian the uneasiness and uncertainty of the young Hesse and the ambivalence of whether language can attain this goal. The author of *Das Glasperlenspiel* comes one step closer to confronting his fears surrounding language as art in this novel than he had in previous stories through the figure of the historian. Rather than having all his characters become painters and sculptors, Hesse introduces a writer in this novel who comments on language and frames the story. However, this writer is still distanced from Hesse in that he is a *historical* writer who is not supposed to want to write poetry. One must turn to the protagonist, Josef Knecht, to gain insight into more mature and complex views regarding language.

III. The second failure of language: communication

i. Plinio Designori and impossibility of communication between Castalia and the outside world

Although Josef Knecht differs in some ways from many of Hesse's previous characters, he also shares a number of their concerns regarding language. What makes Knecht unique, however, is the degree, to which he engages with these problems, and the way in which he confronts them directly, rather than simply avoiding them or writing around them. Furthermore, Knecht does not simply bemoan his linguistic issues, but searches instead for solutions to the problems. Whereas the narrator of the story initially focuses on the difficulty of depicting the empirical world through language, Knecht grapples with the two other previously mentioned problems associated with language, i.e., communication between people and language as a means of accessing the absolute. Demonstrating how and why language fails to achieve these two goals in the novel will make it more obvious as to Hesse turns to writing about music as a way of addressing these concerns.

Ironically, most of Knecht's views regarding language are found embedded within conversations he has with other characters in the novel. When examining the way in which Knecht communicates – or fails to communicate – with others, one must make an initial distinction between the two “types” of people he encounters in the story: there are those from Castalia, who are a part of Knecht's world within the Order, for example Yoga Alexander or the Musikmeister; and there are those outside this enclosed world, for example Pater Jakobus, a priest at the monastery Mariafels, which is the location of Knecht's first assignment as a full member of the Order after having completed his studies. One of the most interesting relationships Knecht has, though, is with Plinio Designori. Designori is a

character, who seems to bridge the gap between both worlds at times but ultimately ends up representing the world outside of the Province.

One of the main characteristics attracting Knecht to Designori from a very young age is Plinio's ability to speak well. Designori, a boy destined to return to the "real" world after completing his studies at Waldzell, wishes to share his knowledge of this world with his classmates, boys ordained to become full members of the Order and thus, never to leave Castalia.⁴⁷ Designori is described as "ein Jüngling von hohen Gaben, glänzend namentlich in Rede und Debate" (*GPS* 94), whose verbal abilities are so developed that even in comparison to one of the best students in Waldzell at the time, Josef Knecht, "[i]m Rhetorischen blieb Designori der Überlegene" (*GPS* 102). Designori's attempts at communicating ideas from outside the Province to the boys within it seem relatively successful. He and Knecht begin to debate the merits of both worlds and other students are drawn to the discussions. However, when examining the exact nature of the attention these debates receive, one discovers that Designori and his words are only interesting because they describe "das Geheimnisvolle, Verführerische, Faszinierende" associated with the outside world (*GPS* 96). Most of the boys are intrigued and curious but do not fully appreciate the content of the debates. Knecht alone seems to gain something more meaningful from these conversations and feels attracted to "jene[r] fremde[n] Welt, welche sein Freund und Gegner vertrat, die er in seiner Gestalt und in seinen Worten und Gebärden kennen oder ahnen lernte" (*GPS* 103). Although it appears that Designori may have actually communicated something to Knecht through words, this communication is just as much, if not more so, a result of Plinio's general

⁴⁷ The world outside Castalia's border is described as "einfacher, primitiver, gefährlicher, unbehüteter, ungeordneter" (*GPS* 103-104), while Castalia is referred to as "die zweite Welt...die geistige, eine künstliche, eine geordnetere, geschütztere, aber der beständigen Aufsicht und Übung bedürftige Welt, die Hierarchie" (*GPS* 104).

demeanor and his gestures, than a consequence of his actual words. Moreover, one must be cautious when claiming Designori successfully communicated his ideas to Knecht. Although Knecht claims to have a kind of knowledge of the outside world after speaking with his friend, he only uses the words “ahnen” and “kennen” rather than the stronger word “wissen.” That is to say, Knecht feels acquainted with or has a general sense of the world Designori describes to him but, seeing as Designori wanted to convince Knecht that the outside world is superior to Castalia, Knecht’s eloquent friend actually fails to impart the information necessary to achieve his goal. The heated conversations between the two were from Designori’s side unsuccessful, and from Knecht’s perspective, only a partial success.

Years later, the two childhood friends encounter each other in Waldzell once more when Plinio is on vacation from his job as a civil servant in the outside world and returns briefly to Castalia to take a class on the glass bead game. Both men remember the apparent closeness they shared as boys and decide to meet one evening to talk. To the disappointment of Knecht, though, he must admit that Designori now “eine Sprache [sprach], welche [er] nur halb verstand, viele oft wiederkehrende Ausdrücke klangen ihm leer” (*GPS* 145). Both young men speak, but neither really understands what the other is saying. Plinio is just as saddened and dissatisfied with the lack of communication and later remarks that all the two struggled to do was “das lahme Gespräch von einem Thema zum andern zu schleppen” (*GPS* 332). The distance between the Knecht and Designori has grown enormously over the years, and it is through a failure of language that they become most aware of this.

Finally, when the two friends have both become much older men, Knecht and Designori meet in Castalia once more. Knecht is now the Magister Ludi of the Province and Designori serves as a member of a commission designed to regulate and check the activities

of the Order. The men have changed a great deal over the years, especially with regard to the way in which they speak and think about language. They both seem to have distanced themselves from the naïve idea that two people from different worlds can actually communicate through pure language. Knecht notices the change in Designori almost instantly and thinks to himself that his friend “seine Freude am Mitteilen, Streiten, Austauschen, sein actives, werbendes, nach außen gekehrtes Wesen völlig abgelegt oder verloren zu haben [scheint]” (*GPS* 316). Designori has lost his youthful enthusiasm and absolute faith in the power of language, but it is not the case that the man has quit speaking. Indeed, Designori still talks a great deal, albeit in a much more subdued manner than in the past, while Knecht, on the other hand, has obviously distanced himself almost entirely from the idea that words are necessary or sufficient to conveying meaning. In fact, Designori is a bit disturbed by the fact that his old friend “kein Wort [sagte]” (*GPS* 328).

When Knecht does finally speak, mainly to appease Designori, he comments on the information his friend has been attempting to impart. Much like a remark made by Knecht when the two were boys, the glass bead master notes here, “[i]ch sehe aus deinen Worten und höre es aus ihrem Ton” (*GPS* 342). Once again, Knecht listens to the words spoken but also gains useful information from Designori’s manner of speaking. Moreover, Knecht seems to genuinely enjoy listening to the way in which his friend attempts to communicate more than he appreciates the message he is supposed to hear. He says, for instance, “[e]s ist ein Vergnügen, so erzählen zu hören” (*GPS* 333). It is not *what* Designori says so much as *how* he says it that is important to Knecht. Designori communicates much more through the tone of his voice and his body language than through the actual words he chooses.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Designori himself acknowledges the power of gesture and tone outside of words when he ponders his past as well. He remembers becoming a follower of Veraguth, a politician in the outside world, as a young man and

Knecht's enjoyment of Designori's way of speaking, marked by the years Plinio spent outside of Castalia, is one way in which we find Knecht to be more mature and open to language's possibilities and shortcomings than the last character we examined closely: the narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel*. If the historian can be seen as representative of Hesse's early views on language, then Knecht is clearly a figure more advanced and perhaps more in tune with Hesse's later attitude towards language. Specifically, the contradictory way in which the chronicler and Knecht react to Designori's language is very telling. Knecht truly appreciates his friend's way with words and explains to him, "du sahest weltlich aus und sprachest wie einer von draußen...aber alles, deine Haltung, deine Worte, sogar noch deine Traurigkeit, gefiel mir, war schön, paßte zu dir, war deiner würdig, nichts daran störte mich" (*GPS* 338). Knecht focuses in part on Designori's actual words, but also acknowledges the other man's general demeanor. Furthermore, the Magister Ludi does not expect Designori's language to "translate" into his own Castalian language, but rather is satisfied that everything about his companion's way of speaking fits together. Designori may not be communicating the exact content he intended to Knecht, but the glass bead game master is indeed receiving some information from the other man – just not solely through language. The narrator, on the other hand, "hears" much less of what Designori is attempting to communicate than the protagonist of the story. The historian complains, for instance, when introducing the section

recalls initially believing that he truly heard and understood the older man's message. However, he asks himself later "ob nicht [Verguths] Redner- und Volkstribunentum, sein Reiz und seine Geschicklichkeit beim öffentlichen Auftreten, ob nicht der sonore Klang seiner Stimme...mitgewirkt hätte" (*GPS* 354) in his decision to follow the man. In other words, Designori wonders whether it was not so much the message supposedly communicated by Vergath to Designori, but rather the way in which the older gentleman spoke. In fact, one can find this idea that gesture communicates more between people than words throughout Hesse's work. For example, the "Herausgeber" in *Der Steppenwolf* writes about an experience he had with Harry Haller in the past, and explains, "da warf mir der Steppenwolf einen ganz kurzen Blick zu, einen Blick der Kritik über diese Worte und über die ganze Person des Redners, oh, einen unvergeßlichen und furchtbaren Blick, über dessen Bedeutung man ein ganzes Buch schreiben könnte" (*Steppenwolf* 189). One simple glance conveyed so much information to the editor of Haller's story that he feels an entire book full of words would be necessary to even come close to communicating everything entailed in the look.

of the novel describing Knecht's and Designori's later encounter, that his only source for this chapter is a letter written by Designori. The narrator tells the reader that "zwischen den beiden ein Gespräch statt[fand], das Designori gleich nach seiner Heimkehr aufgezeichnet hat. Wenn es auch zum Teil Unwichtiges enthält und unsre nüchterne Darstellung vielleicht in einer manchen Leser störenden Weise unterbricht" (*GPS* 319). The narrator cannot tolerate the way in which Designori writes and does not allow the text to speak to him at all. Knecht has accepted Designori's way of speaking to a certain degree because he knows to rely on more than just words when attempting to communicate with someone. He acknowledges language's limits. The historian, however, is still trapped by the idea that language alone should be able to convey information without any additional help and that the mode of writing in Castalia is much better than the way in which people write in the outside world.⁴⁹

It has become apparent that Knecht believes that communication through language alone will almost always fail, and although we will see that a number of characters within the story cannot seem to accept this fact, Knecht does not actually seem very troubled by it at all. He is not so disappointed that he gives up speaking all together or having long conversations with people from the outside world. He is not dissatisfied because he has different expectations from the people around him regarding how much language actually participates in communication. The main difference between Knecht's linguistic expectations and those of others living in Castalia becomes most apparent in the telling of a childhood story, which he shares with some of his students. Specifically, Knecht talks of the private associations he

⁴⁹ It is important to note that Knecht does initially appear to have successful conversations with one character from outside the Province: Pater Jakobus. I will demonstrate in the following section on music, however, that these supposedly "highly communicative" encounters with the monk are due almost entirely to music rather than language.

makes between certain smells and certain pieces of music. He explains that the particular experience he has when hearing a certain song composed by Franz Schubert “läßt sich mitteilen, gewiß, so wie ich sie euch hier erzählt habe. Aber sie läßt sich nicht übertragen” (GPS 71). In other words, Knecht differentiates between vaguely describing and explaining a specific experience to other people and actually transferring the experience to another person. A number of other characters in the novel, however, would disagree with Knecht’s general statement because they feel one should be able to communicate more information about experiences than Knecht apparently believes is possible.

For instance, characters such as Plinio Designori seem especially frustrated with the natural limitations Knecht believes are inherent in language. This becomes most obvious when examining a portion of a conversation between Knecht and Designori concerning translation. Plinio complains that he feels like an “ungebildeter Ausländer” when conversing with Knecht, although they technically speak the same language (GPS 332).⁵⁰ Knecht listens in silence to his friend protest:

Manchmal...kommt es mir so vor, als hätten wir nicht nur zwei verschiedene Ausdrucksweisen und Sprachen, von welchen jede sich nur andeutungsweise in die andre übersetzen läßt, nein, als seien wir überhaupt und grundsätzlich verschiedene Wesen, die einander niemals verstehen können. (GPS 340)⁵¹

For Designori, language creates a barrier between two friends. It fails so completely in allowing the two men to communicate with each other that it is as if they are speaking entirely different languages, which are only partially translatable. The situation confuses and

⁵⁰ Designori explains further, it is as if he has come back to his “Heimat...deren Sprache mir aber nicht mehr recht geläufig sei” (GPS 328). The more time he spends outside of Castlia, the more he forgets the language of the Province. Although Designori seems often to be speaking metaphorically when he claims that the men of the outside world and the men in Castalia speak different languages, his figurative speech nonetheless points to language failing to communicate.

⁵¹ It is interesting that Harry Haller expresses almost the exact same notion in *Der Steppenwolf* when reflecting on his relationship with Pablo. Haller complains that they “hatten kein Wort [ihrer] Sprachen gemeinsam” (*Steppenwolf* 313).

disheartens Designori to such a degree that he is ready to quit speaking with Knecht altogether.

However, when Knecht eventually chooses to respond to Designori's complaint he explains:

Es ist wohl nicht so schlimm mit dem Nichtverstehenkönnen. Gewiß, zwei Völker und zwei Sprachen werden einander nie sich so verständlich und so intim mitteilen können wie zwei einzelne, die derselben Nation und Sprache angehören. Aber das ist kein Grund, auf Verständigung und Mitteilung zu verzichten. Auch zwischen Volks- und Sprachgenossen stehen Schranken, die eine volle Mitteilung und ein volles gegenseitiges Verstehen verhindern, Schranken der Bildung, der Erziehung, der Begabung, der Individualität. Man kann behaupten, jeder Mensch auf Erden könne grundsätzlich mit jedem andern sich aussprechen, und man kann behaupten, es gebe überhaupt keine zwei Menschen in der Welt, zwischen denen eine echte, lückenlose, intime Mitteilung und Verständigung möglich sei – eins ist so wahr wie das andre. Es ist Yin und Yang, Tag und Nacht, beide haben recht. (*GPS* 321)

One of the first things to notice is that Knecht claims there are different degrees of understanding, which are determined in part by the language that two interlocutors speak. However, as previously mentioned, it becomes immediately clear here that language is not the main component in communication for Knecht. First, he admits people may convey information *better* when they speak the same language, but this comparative form implicitly suggests that people communicate something even when they are speaking different languages. Furthermore, Knecht explains that two conversation partners' shared history and heritage plays just as much a role in their ability to communicate as language. In fact, background factors such as education can actually hinder two people who technically speak the same language from understanding each other.⁵²

⁵² To make his translation comparison even more concrete, Knecht continues, “[m]agst du ein Abendländer, ich ein Chinese sein, mögen wir verschieden Sprachen reden, so werden wir dennoch, wenn wir guten Willen sind, einander sehr viel mitteilen und über das exakte Mitteilbare hinaus sehr viel voneinander erraten und ahnen können” (*GPS* 321-322). The actual language one speaks has less to do with communication, according to Knecht, than the desire to communicate with someone.

However, much like the early German Romantics whose general ideas Hesse inherits and incorporates into his novel, Knecht does not believe that limited success should keep one from at least *attempting* to attain one's objective. In other words, one may not be able to communicate with certain people very well – one may not be able to communicate with *any* person on the planet perfectly – but one should nonetheless strive to do so, despite linguistic limitations. Knecht puts still a more positive spin on his message and explains that one can just as well say that *no* two people in the world can communicate with each other *completely* as that *any* two people in the world can communicate with each other *to a certain degree*. Knecht explains that everything is “Yin und Yang,” two sides of the same coin. This idea, like many others found in Hesse's works, can be traced back to early German Romantic origins, as well as to Schopenhauer's influence on the 20th-century author. In this case, Schopenhauer's notion of the world as Representation and the world as Will is very similar to Knecht's understanding of reality.⁵³

Although disagreeing on whether language's communicative failure is something disastrous or simply a limitation one can easily endure, Knecht and Designori both want to reduce the distance between their two worlds as much as possible. Designori admits he had “eine Aufgabe und ein Ideal...aus meiner Person eine Synthese der beiden Prinzipien zu machen, zwischen beiden zum Vermittler, Dolmetsch und Versöhner zu werden. Ich habe es versucht und bin gescheitert” (*GPS* 325). Designori dreamed of embodying a synthesis of both worlds, i.e., of acting as a translator between them, but he was unable to do so – in part, one may argue, because of his unrealistic linguistic expectations. Despite Designori's failure, this notion of synthesis is absolutely vital to the novel as a whole for Knecht seems to

⁵³ See the introduction to this dissertation for a general overview of Schopenhauer's philosophy.

have set this as his own personal goal as well.⁵⁴ He mentions to his friend, for instance, “[die Begegnung] öffnet mir einen Weg zu eurer Welt, sie stellt mich von neuem vor das alte Problem einer Synthese zwischen euch und uns” (*GPS* 339). This desire to unite both worlds, although clearly not to be accomplished through communicative language, is, in fact, one of the driving forces in the novel.⁵⁵ All action revolves around the idea that the numerous oppositions existing between Castalia and the rest of the world may be resolved through the figure of Josef Knecht.⁵⁶

ii. The Musikmeister and the inability to communicate within Castalia

Although it is perhaps not entirely surprising that members of the Order have problems communicating with people outside of Castalia, linguistic communication between people living in the Province is hindered as well by language’s deficiencies. Knecht discovers from a very young age, in fact, that words are not always the best means of conveying information from one person to the next, even if both interlocutors are members, or future members, of the Order. For instance, language completely fails Knecht when, as a boy, he first encounters the Musikmeister. While being “tested” by the high-ranking official from the Province to see whether Knecht has the general cognitive abilities and disposition to attend a Castalian school, the naïve boy has the desire to communicate his feelings to the

⁵⁴ Stephen Bandy notes, “[o]ne need not read *Das Glasperlenspiel* closely to observe that its underlying philosophical principle is that of dualities” and that “Knecht’s declared purpose is to participate in this dialectic by bringing together Castalia and its opposite” (303).

⁵⁵ White and White claim, “true strength comes from exposure to opposites, not from the inward-looking methods of contemporary Castalia” (942). However, it appears the story is a bit more complicated and that it is not only the *exposure* to opposites, but the Romantic desire to synthesize them that makes Knecht the strong and influential character that he is.

⁵⁶ Scholarship examining whether Knecht succeeds in this endeavor is split. I will argue in the following chapter on music that Knecht actually fails at the end of the novel to synthesize many of the oppositions found in the novel.

older man through language, but “er brachte kein Wort heraus” (*GPS* 53).⁵⁷ The Musikmeister seems to sense some of the difficulties that language presents in this situation and avoids using it when actually expected to do so. Rather than taking notes on Knecht, as the reader intuits is usually the case in these interview situations, the Musikmeister “hatte sich keinerlei Notizen und Zeugnisse über [Knecht] ins Heft geschrieben” (*GPS* 56). One could suppose that this was unnecessary because the man had already made the decision to bring the young boy to Castalia. Or more likely yet, given the Musikmeister’s later ambivalent relationship to language, one can assume that the man actually could not find appropriate words to exactly portray what he felt and thought about Knecht at the time.

After Knecht comes to Castalia and studies there for many years, he is not able to better communicate with his mentor through language than he was as a child. Indeed, language causes more of a barrier than a bridge between the two men. For example, when the Musikmeister gives Knecht his first official assignment as a full member of the Order at Mariafels, a monastery outside of Castalia’s borders, Knecht expresses concern that the academic freedom he has grown accustomed to is being taken from him. The Musikmeister responds, however, “du sprichst noch die Studentensprache” (*GPS* 152). In other words, there seem to be different types of languages within Castalia, which are just as much in need of translation as Designori’s “outside” language was for Knecht. In particular, it is a word’s ability to mean different things for different people that causes the most problems. Knecht becomes aware of this linguistic trait years later when remembering a passage from the

⁵⁷ This failed attempt at communication can be seen either as a problem between someone from the outside world and someone from Castalia – Knecht has not technically entered the Province yet – or as an issue between two people of the same world because Knecht clearly fits well within the established community and will soon enter it. Regardless of how one chooses to view this “transitional” situation, the point is that language does not help Knecht communicate with the Musikmeister. In the next section of this dissertation, it will become clear, however, that communication does indeed take place between the two, but it occurs through the medium of music rather than language.

general rule book of Castalia, which he read before becoming an official member of the Order. He comments to himself later on that words such as “‘Bindung’, Persönlichkeit’, Willkür’ sich seit damals für ihn gewandelt, ja umgekehrt [hatten]” (*GPS* 415). Given that the meanings of words are so unstable that any particular expression can change significance for one person over time, it comes as no surprise then that words can be confusing and hinder communication even within the Order. In the case of Knecht’s conversation with his mentor about the young man’s first appointment, it appears that Knecht’s definition of the word “freedom” is very different from the Musikmeister’s understanding of the term.⁵⁸

Knecht does eventually begin to move away from this “Studentensprache” but needs quite awhile to completely reject the idea that people within the Order should be able to communicate through language with each other. After a number of years have passed and the Musikmeister is nearing the time of his death, Knecht still places a certain degree of importance on words spoken or written by respected members of the Order and believes that these words may convey some sort of useful information from one person to the next. Hence, when the Musikmeister’s helper and servant, Petrus, comes to deliver a message to Knecht requesting that he visit the old man at his home, Knecht asks, “[u]nd warum hast du mir das, was der Altmeister dir für mich auftrag, nicht im Wortlaut übermittelt, wie es eigentlich zu erwarten wäre?” (*GPS* 271). Language appears to be highly respected in Castalia, and therefore it is customary to deliver messages “word for word.” Petrus, too, seems aware of the standard practices in the Province and “immer behutsam nach den

⁵⁸ Although Knecht fully recognizes and accepts the mutability of words in his old age, it takes him years to actually come to this realization. Knecht still seems completely stuck in his “Studentensprache” phase two years after the aforementioned conversation with the Musikmeister. He complains again to his mentor about his position at Mariafels and makes clear the desire “auf die Dauer [nicht] in den diplomatischen Dienst abgeschoben zu werden” (*GPS* 199). Once again, the Musikmeister calls attention to a word’s ambivalent meaning with the response, “[a]bgeschobenwerden, das Wort ist wirklich schlecht gewählt” (*GPS* 199). Knecht is obviously still trapped by his youthful “Studentensprache” and unable to fully communicate with his older friend.

Worten suchen, als müsse er sich in einer fremden Sprache ausdrücken” says, “[e]s gibt keinen Auftrag...und es gibt keinen Wortlaut” (*GPS* 271). The young servant acknowledges what is expected of him and cautiously explains the situation.⁵⁹ The reason that Petrus has no direct message to give Knecht is because the Musikmeister “seit einigen Monaten sich beinahe ganz des Sprechens entwöhnt [hat]” (*GPS* 274). Nevertheless, despite speaking very little, the Musikmeister is still able to convey his message to Knecht through Petrus.

Knecht visits his mentor and is somewhat surprised to realize after returning home that for most of his stay, “Worte [waren] dabei nicht gesprochen worden” (*GPS* 283). It is not the case, however, that the old man is simply too sick to speak during this one particular visit, but rather that he has distanced himself more and more over time from the idea that language is necessary in communication with others. Indeed, Knecht begins to visit him frequently and comes to realize that the Musikmeister “sich des Gebrauchs der Rede längst völlig entwöhnt hatte” (*GPS* 305). Knecht senses that the old man, in his silence, is approaching a kind of “wortlos gewordenene Vollendung” (*GPS* 305).

Although Knecht finally becomes fully conscious through the Musikmeister’s strangely wordless final days that silence can help people communicate with each other much better than language at times, it is clear that Knecht had always somehow sensed this. For instance, referencing an anecdote told by one of Knecht’s former students, the narrator notes:

[Knecht] fühlte genau, was...ein Sichertziehen, ein Nichtsbeachten wirken können...Knecht habe einst eine Woche lang im Kurs und im Seminar kein Wort mit [dem Schüler] gesprochen...und das sei in allen den Jahren seiner Schülerschaft die bitterste und wirksamste Strafe gewesen. (*GPS* 299)

⁵⁹ Interestingly, we find here another example of a character’s speech being described as a “foreign language.” Petrus fears that his communication with Knecht will fail, just as it would if he were to be speaking an entirely different language, because his message is so unusual.

Although the students were always happy to receive a friendly word from their teacher, it was when he was silent that they best understood the message he was trying to express at the time. Punishment was delivered and conveyed far better by not speaking than it ever could have been through words.

Similarly, Knecht already acknowledged during his school days through one of his required writing assignments for the Order, a “Lebenslauf” titled “Der Regenmacher,” that language frequently fails in communication. Toward the end of this fictional autobiography, the Regenmacher sacrifices himself for the good of his community. His son, Turu, must take his place as rainmaker and lead the important ceremony meant to finally bring rain to the water-starved village. However, after having just witnessed his father’s death, Turu “konnte kein Wort sprechen, nur mit Gebärden ordnete er das Notwendige an” (*GPS* 533). The boy is left speechless after watching his father die, but he manages nonetheless to communicate effectively with the people around him. Indeed, he expresses his wishes perhaps better through gesture and sign in this community, which his father previously noted does not respond to language as well as to action. Specifically, the Regenmacher remarks earlier in the story, “[n]ein, es war hier, wie so oft, mit der Vernunft und den klugen Worten gar nichts zu erreichen” (*GPS* 523). In other words, language is not the most effective mode of communication in this village. In summary, Knecht must have sensed, albeit on an unconscious level, as a young man already that he should not put all his faith in words when wishing to communicate with others – even if they are Castalians. It took his mentor’s silent death, however, to make him fully aware of this particular linguistic shortcoming.

Although Knecht is cognizant of this specific failure of language by the time he has spent a few years in the position of glass bead game master, the rest of the Order clearly still

believes that words are the best means of communicating with other people in the Province. Thus, we find Knecht frequently using language more as a way to please or control people than as a means of actually conveying some message to them. For instance, when Knecht has finally decided to leave Castalia indefinitely, he has his friend, Fritz Tegularius, write a letter to the highest officials of the Order explaining and justifying his reasons for wishing to leave. He does this, however, only to keep his friend close by and busy, but not because he expects the readers of the letter to fully understand or accept his message (*GPS* 367). Indeed, he knows that the letter could never fully communicate his thoughts, feelings, and beliefs at the time, and he is certain that the Order will reject his request. Similarly, when Knecht meets with his old acquaintance Alexander, now one of the highest ranking officials in the Order, he is asked to explain his behavior but must respond, “[w]as ich sagen möchte – wenn es nur nicht so schwer, so unglaublich schwer in Worte zu bringen wäre” (*GPS* 432). He then goes on to tell Alexander in some of the most interesting passages in the novel referencing language’s communicative failures:

Darum war auch das, was man dabei erlebte, so wenig mitteilbar, so merkwürdig dem Sagen und Formulieren entrückt; Mitteilungen aus diesem Bereich des Lebens schienen nicht zu den Zwecken der Sprache zu zählen. (*GPS* 419)

Knecht has come to realize some fundamental truths about the nature of reality during his time as Magister Ludi, but he is unable to express this new knowledge in language. He has come to sense that there is something transcending the empirical world, but does not believe that this type of experience is generally something that can be put into words. One cannot

share it with others through language. Instead, each individual must make the discovery on his own.⁶⁰

III. The third failure of language: transcending empirical boundaries

i. Knecht's desire to access a non-phenomenal reality

Despite acknowledging that language cannot really help him share his experience of some ineffable reality existing beyond the perceivable world, Knecht nevertheless attempts to describe his linguistic problem in more detail to Alexander. He explains that he is dealing with the “Schwierigkeit, nämlich in Worten auszudrücken, was sich doch den Worten stets entzieht; rational machen, was offenbar außer-rational ist” (*GPS* 435-436). Whatever it is that Knecht has discovered about or believes to be true about the underlying nature of the world, this truth lies outside the realm of reason. Furthermore, Knecht clearly states that language is something rational with no power to convey information that lies outside the domain of reason. Although Knecht's portrayal of his enlightening experience sounds as if he has accessed an absolute or transcendental truth, the man is very hesitant to describe the experience as such. Indeed, he claims:

Nein, an Manifestationen eines Gottes oder Dämons oder einer absoluten Wahrheit habe ich bei jenen Erweckungen nie gedacht. Was diesen Erlebnissen ihre Wucht und Überzeugungskraft gibt, ist nicht ihr Gehalt an Wahrheit, ihre hohe Herkunft, ihre Göttlichkeit oder dergleichen, sondern ihre Wirklichkeit. (*GPS* 436)

What exactly did Knecht experience during these moments of “Erwachen” (*GPS* 435) if the events existed outside the realm of reason but were not manifestations of something divine?

The great Magister Ludi appears to be contradicting himself, which is, however, his main point: he cannot use language to explain the knowledge he gained during these moments of

⁶⁰ Knecht did, however, as a young man, still have faith that a particular *kind* of language could help one access reality's transcendental realm. In a later section of this chapter, I will examine the fascination Josef Knecht had for poetry in his formative years.

enlightenment. Fortunately, when viewing his comments through the lens of Schopenhauer's theory of the world as Will and the world as Representation, Knecht's confusing remarks do, in fact, begin to make sense.

As mentioned in the introduction, Schopenhauer divides the world into that which can be perceived and that which lies beyond standard perception. The world of Representation, consisting of all observable objects, follows the principle of sufficient reason. In other words, all objects in the world follow the laws of nature and behave in predictable ways. These objects, however, are not just perceivable things, according to Schopenhauer, but also manifestations of the one Will. The Will, the force from which all these objects originate, exists outside the principle of sufficient reason. Hence, Knecht's first claim that his experiences cannot be rationally discussed alludes to the fact that he has somehow sensed the world as Will, rather than the world as Representation.

As previously noted, though, it is important to recognize that Schopenhauer does *not* claim that there are two separate worlds of existence: one which is observable and one which lies beyond perceivable reality. Instead, the philosopher emphasizes that there is only one world which can be viewed from two different perspectives. One generally focuses on the world as Representation, but in very rare moments, one can also sense the world as Will. Thus, when Knecht claims that he experiences something outside of the realm of reason but something which is still "real," he appears to be hinting at Schopenhauer's notion that there is but one world viewed from two different angles. Knecht does not wish to call his experience "absolute" because this semi-transcendental, divine-like reality beyond the empirical world is nevertheless something accessible and part of the one true world. It is simply something beyond "[der] Welt der Erscheinungen" (*GPS* 588). Furthermore,

Schopenhauer's claim that language belongs only to the world as Representation and not to the world as Will clarifies why Knecht appears to be contradicting himself but really is not (Schopenhauer 313). He is simply performing the point that he has been trying to make: language fails to describe or access this other aspect of reality, which Knecht hesitates to call absolute, transcendental, or divine, because of its "Wirklichkeit" (*GPS* 436).⁶¹ This "other" reality exists outside the principle of sufficient reason's domain, thus making language incapable of capturing its true essence.⁶²

Of all the characters we have encountered so far in *Das Glasperlenspiel* only one person other than Knecht seems to realize that there are experiences in the world, knowledge of something beyond phenomenal reality, which cannot be expressed through language. This person is Knecht's mentor and friend, the Musikmeister. In fact, the older man is responsible for planting certain ideas in Knecht's young mind, which eventually allow the glass bead game master to come to the aforementioned conclusions regarding language and the nature of the reality. For instance, as a young boy, Knecht complains to the Musikmeister that he cannot find a teaching which will help him to discover and rationally understand that which lies beyond phenomenal reality. The boy is frustrated and protests, "[a]lles widerspricht einander, alles läuft aneinander vorbei, nirgends ist Gewißheit...Gibt es denn keine Wahrheit?"

⁶¹ This idea of there being one true world which, however, appears as two realities, is alluded to much earlier in the novel through a statement made by Knecht's mentor, the Musikmeister. The wise man explains to Knecht, "unsre Bestimmung ist, die Gegensätze richtig zu erkennen, erstens nämlich als Gegensätze, dann aber als die Pole einer Einheit" (*GPS* 83). As previously mentioned, this entire novel is based on the idea of exploring supposed antitheses and then attempting to resolve the apparent oppositions.

⁶² Knecht makes a similar claim already in one of the fictional autobiographies he writes during his youth. In "Indischer Lebenslauf," one of the main characters, Dasa, goes into the woods and sees a man meditating. This man inspires Dasa to have a number of insights into the nature of reality beyond the empirical world, but the narrator explains that he "verstand dieses nicht mit dem Verstande und hätte mit Worten nichts darüber sagen gewußt, aber er spürte es, wie man zur gesegneten Stunde die Nähe des Göttlichen spürte" (*GPS* 574). Just as Schopenhauer makes connections between the world as Representation, language, and reason, Knecht hints at similar connections in this story. Dasa cannot express what he has grasped or sensed about reality beyond the empirical world because it lies outside the scope of language or reason.

Gibt es keine echte und gültige Lehre?" (*GPS* 85). The young man is searching for a theory that will explain and unify the various ways in which reality expresses or manifests itself. He focuses, as is to be expected of anyone living in Castalia's scholarly environment, on general philosophies propagated by the great thinkers of the past. However, the Musikmeister claims that Knecht is on the wrong path and proceeds to describe the error of his ways. The older man states, "[d]ie Gottheit ist in dir, nicht in den Begriffen und Büchern" (*GPS* 85). In other words, Knecht must seek knowledge of non-phenomenal reality in himself, rather than searching for it in books, i.e., in the written language of man.

Knecht internalizes the Musikmeister's advice, even if he does not consciously comprehend the full implications of it yet. A few years after the previously mentioned conversation, Knecht depicts his internal struggle with language and the role that it plays in discovering the true and full nature of the universe. Specifically, it is in the assigned fictional autobiography "Der Regenmacher" that one first observes Knecht beginning to accept the Musikmeister's skepticism regarding whether knowledge of non-phenomenal reality can be accessed through language.

The rainmaker, appropriately named Knecht and therefore representative of the young man's actual views on things at the time, also has faith in reason's ability to uncover truth.⁶³ He is alone in this belief, though, and complains with respect to his fellow villagers, "daß überkommene oder frei erfundenen Zaubersprüche und Bannformeln vom Kranken oder Unglücklichen viel williger angenommen werden als vernünftiger Rat" (*GPS* 507). The rainmaker feels that language can only be effective when guided by reason. However, the

⁶³ It is important to note that when Knecht, *the student in Castalia*, refers to reason, he is actually pointing to Schopenhauer's idea of the principle of sufficient reason. In other words, he is not alluding to the common connotation that something is "reasonable" if it makes sense and "unreasonable" if it does not. However, the character Knecht, *the rainmaker*, does sometimes mean to say that his fellow villagers are simply being illogical. He uses a more fluid version of the word "reason," which leads to some confusion at times.

rest of the community's members prefer magical incantations to logical explanations. Knecht is frustrated, feeling as he does that reason is more important than empty, performative language, yet he must conform and perform his duties as the village's rainmaker. For instance, when it seems one night that stars may be falling out of the sky and immanent disaster appears near, Knecht "hatte... gehofft, der Panik durch Vorbild, Vernunft, Rede, Erklärung und Zuspruch steuern zu können" (*GPS* 523). Logical speech seems the ideal way of dealing with the crisis situation. However, he must acknowledge "es war hier, wie so oft, mit der Vernunft und den klugen Worten gar nichts zu erreichen" (*GPS* 523). Instead, he must fall back on traditional, meaningless language and speak the appropriate "Gebetsworte" to calm the rest of the villagers (*GPS* 523).

The rainmaker finds this solution so problematic because although he believes language is a relatively appropriate medium for conveying logical ideas – ideas about objects in the world, all of which follow Schopenhauer's law of the principle of sufficient reason – he realizes that there are other notions in the world for which language is entirely inappropriate. His fellow villagers erroneously rely on language to help them access something existing beyond the phenomenal world. They believe that directly asking the gods for assistance helps control their reality, but the rainmaker knows that this is irrational. The rainmaker does not deny the existence of a non-empirical reality. In fact, he realizes at a young age that he has "ein dienendes, aber ehrenvolles Verhältnis zum Unnennbaren, zum Weltgeheimnis" but "[z]u Gedanken oder gar zu Worten konnte dies Erlebnis und manches ähnliches nicht werden" (*GPS* 499). That is to say, the rainmaker Knecht senses that there is something beyond the phenomenal world, but his experience of it cannot be put into words.

The actual Knecht of *Das Glasperlenspiel* becomes fully conscious of language's inability to describe non-phenomenal reality while writing the story. He initially attempts to describe through language the rainmaker's experiences of a world beyond the empirical one. For example, he tries to depict his character's otherworldly experiences with phrases such as "die Ahnung vom Ganzen...das Gefühl der Zusammenhänge und Beziehungen, der Ordnung, die ihn selbst mit einbezog und mitverantwortlich machte" (*GPS* 498). However, this description stays incredibly vague and Knecht must eventually admit, "[s]o etwa empfand [der Regenmacher], und was wir in unsrer ihm unbekanntem, begriffliche Sprache darüber zu sagen versuchen, kann nichts von deren Schauer und von der Glut seines Erlebnisses mitteilen" (*GPS* 499).⁶⁴ In other words, it is not just the case that the village's "primitive" language fails to describe a reality beyond the empirical world, but also that the more advanced language of Castalia fails as well.

Thus, Knecht *seems* to have finally consciously accepted the Musikmeister's skepticism regarding language's ability to access a non-phenomenal world. However, when reading passages from this particular autobiography in more detail, one discovers that Knecht has only internalized part of his mentor's message. Although all forms of communicative language mentioned in the story fail to achieve any lofty linguistic goal, Knecht seems to have hope that a different kind of language may still play an important role in his quest to understand and describe the world beyond perceived objects. Although none of the characters in "Der Regenmacher" can clearly speak of things beyond empirical reality, Knecht implies that words may very well be important in understanding entire makeup of the

⁶⁴ The rainmaker describes his experience, albeit unsuccessfully, in an earlier passage in even more detail: "Es war die erste Ahnung von den großen Geheimnissen, ihrer Würde und Tiefe sowohl wie ihrer Wißbarkeit, die den Jüngling in dieser nächtlich-morgendlichen Waldkühle auf dem Felsen über den tausend flüsternden Wipfeln wie eine Geisterhand berührte. Er konnte nicht davon sprechen, damals nicht und in seinem ganzen Leben nicht" (*GPS* 497).

universe, i.e., both the phenomenal and non-phenomenal sides to it. For example, Knecht writes in the short autobiography:

Wer den Schlüssel [zum Ganzen] hätte, der müßte nicht bloß aus den Fußspuren ein Tier, an den Wurzeln oder Samen eine Pflanze zu erkennen im stande sein, er müßte das Ganze der Welt: die Gestirne, die Geister, die Menschen, die Tiere, die Heilmittel und Gifte, alles müßte er in seiner Ganzheit erfassen und aus jedem Teil und Zeichen jeden andern Teil *ablesen* können. (GPS 498)⁶⁵

Knecht notes that the structure of all existence can be seen in each and every object found in the world – if one has the key to understanding it. This notion of the universe is very Romantic and reminds one of Novalis’ idea that all systems in the world, e.g., nature, mathematics, language, etc., should all simultaneously mirror every other self-enclosed system. Novalis points out that language is currently unable to fulfill its mirroring potential, but has hope that it someday will.⁶⁶ Similarly, Knecht, although clearly skeptical of language’s current abilities, loosely hints at the possibility that the written word may one day accomplish more and come closer to reaching its desired goals.⁶⁷ Specifically, Knecht’s use of a reading analogy when discussing the structure of the universe demonstrates that he still feels language may play a vital role in accessing “das Ganze,” the driving force behind empirical reality.

In fact, Knecht uses this very same metaphor again almost immediately in “Der Regenmacher.” He writes in this fictional autobiography, “[e]s mußte nun...im riesigen Netz der Zusammenhänge einen Mittelpunkt geben, von dem aus alles gewußt, alles

⁶⁵ My italics.

⁶⁶ See the introduction to this dissertation for a more detailed account of Novalis’ views regarding language.

⁶⁷ Thus, in this respect, the youthful Knecht is much more similar to Novalis than Schopenhauer. While the early German Romantics were hopeful that language could one day overcome its limitations, it is unlikely that the pessimistic philosopher, Schopenhauer, would have ever admitted this possibility.

Vergangene und alles Kommende gesehen und *abgelesen* werden konnte” (*GPS* 498-499).⁶⁸ Knecht writes of “reading” the entire history and future of the world from a single starting point. He feels that there is still a place for language when contemplating a reality beyond the perceivable world. Knecht, although agreeing mostly with the Musikmeister, is apparently not completely resigned to language’s failure in accessing non-phenomenal reality. Even if he seems unsure of how exactly words may be able to achieve this grand goal, he makes two attempts over the course of his lifetime to do just this. He turns, for example, to learning the glass bead game, a new type of language developed in Castalia to capture all human knowledge in one super-discipline. Knecht focuses a great deal on both actual languages in the world as well as metaphysical ideas and religion when creating his games, thus trying to connect the two. However, before devoting himself completely to this very Castalian enterprise, Knecht first examines an idea encountered already in Hesse’s earlier works: the notion that language as art might be able to access something beyond the perceivable world.

ii. Knecht’s first poetic attempts

As we have seen, language is generally viewed practically in Castalia. It has two explicit purposes. The members of the Order either use language to communicate with one another – mainly to transfer information or knowledge from one person to the next – or, as was the case with the narrator of the novel, to describe empirical reality. However, Knecht attributes a third goal to language. The Magister Ludi senses that there is more to reality than that which one directly perceives, and he attempts to access this non-phenomenal side to existence. Although communicative and descriptive language can never be used to

⁶⁸ My italics.

successfully speak about this alternate aspect of reality, Knecht, much like Goldmund in Hesse's earlier work, appears to believe that language as art – poetry – may be able to accomplish what practical, mundane language is unable to achieve.

Knecht is, however, the only person in Castalia who feels this way. Language is used almost only for educational and communicative purposes in the Province. It is highly regarded and students are expected to complete a number of written assignments during their years of schooling and training. Specifically, students are asked to complete “einer fiktiven, in eine beliebige Zeit rückverlegten Selbstbiographie” almost every year (*GPS* 118). A great deal of research and study is required to complete this assignment as the autobiographies are to be written “in Sprache und im Stil des Landes und der Zeit...in welchen sie spielten” (*GPS* 119). Naturally, given the fictitious nature of the assignment, students not only research and learn a great deal while accomplishing this task, but they must also tap into their creative abilities. The Order openly acknowledges that the fictional autobiographies are “eine Übung, ein Spiel der Imaginationskräfte,” which are, however, simply considered “ein legitimer Kanal für das dichterische Bedürfnis des jugendlichen Alters” (*GPS* 119). In other words, the focus while writing is clearly meant to be placed on the academic rather than the artistic side of the endeavor. As young adults have creative tendencies and desires, this activity allows them an acceptable way to direct these urges into something productive and worthwhile; it is “an institutionally-sanctioned safety-valve for the young pupils’ imaginations” (White and White 931). Creativity is generally frowned upon in the Province and “[e]s gab zuzeiten sogar in Kastalien sehr starke Tendenzen zur Pflege der reinen, nüchternen Fachwissenschaften” (*GPS* 62). Castalia is a purely scholastic environment.

Members of the Order will nevertheless study and analyze art of the past such as music and painting but, as is to be expected, only as an academic enterprise. Surprisingly, however, despite the emphasis placed on the importance of language in the Province, research into the literature of past generations is not generally pursued. The narrator explains at the beginning of the novel, “[w]ir sehen seit Generationen nicht mehr, wie es noch fast das ganze zwanzigste Jahrhundert tat, die Philosophie oder auch die Dichtung...als die große bleibende Leistung jener Kulturperiode an, welche zwischen dem Ende des Mittelalters und unsern Zeiten liegt” (*GPS* 26). Literature and philosophy are almost completely neglected in the Province. The members of the Order consider this general stance – the opposition to new creative endeavors as well as the study of only a select few older works of art – as completely legitimate. The narrator writes, “wir [glauben] – auf unsre Weise natürlich, auf unsre unschöpferische, epigone, aber ehrfürchtige Weise – das Bild jener Kultur, deren Erben wir sind, reiner und richtiger zu sehen” (*GPS* 26).⁶⁹ Castalia believes it has progressed beyond the mistakes of past generations by halting most creative processes, especially writing, in the Province.⁷⁰

Knecht also writes the required autobiographies and the narrator comments, “[v]on Josef Knecht sind drei solche Lebensläufe enthalten...den vielleicht wertvollsten Teil unseres Buches” (*GPS* 120). Given the general lack of first-hand documentation, the narrator finds himself excited to be in possession of some of Knecht’s works, even though he must simultaneously admit that he sees “in jenen ausgeführten drei Lebensläufen mehr die

⁶⁹ The use of the word “epigone” in this passage alludes to the fact that Castalia, and Hesse’s novel as a whole, will fail to achieve their desired goals in the end.

⁷⁰ This ban on creative poetry is ironic given the name of the Province: Castalia. According to Greek mythology, Castalia was a nymph who, after having been turned into a fountain by Apollo, acted as muse on artists who drank from her waters and inspired poetry (*Britannica*).

Schöpfungen und Bekenntnisse eines dichterischen Menschen und eines edlen Charakters als die Arbeiten eines Gelehrten” (*GPS* 121). In other words, Knecht shifts the weight from the academic to the creative side of the task when completing it. The narrator forgives him for this error and includes Knecht’s writings in the novel anyway, perhaps sending an unconscious message to the reader that he is also somehow dissatisfied with the sterile state of Castalia.

Focusing on the creative side of his autobiographies is not the only departure from the norm Knecht makes with regard to writing in Castalia, though. As previously mentioned, all forms of creative, artistic production are discouraged in the Province. Most people living there, however, do not seem to miss producing works of art. The narrator explains, “seit Generationen [war] das eigentliche, ernsthaft Dichten verpönt und teils durch die Wissenschaften, teils durch das Glasperlenspiel ersetzt” (*GPS* 120). That is say, the glass bead game is a sufficient replacement for artistic creation for most members of the Order, and they feel no desire whatsoever to write poetry. In fact, the situation has been taken to such an extreme that people are actually ashamed “selber Verse zu machen” (*GPS* 100).⁷¹ Indeed, the narrator goes so far as to write, “Gedichtemachen [galt] gar für das denkbar Unmöglichste, Lächerlichste, Verpönteste” (*GPS* 111). Writing poetry is not simply looked down on but considered absolutely ridiculous in the scholarly world of the Province.

Nevertheless, Knecht “violates the ban against artistic creativity by engaging in what is most frowned upon: ‘writing poetry,’” while studying in Waldzell (Bruhn 213).

The narrator excuses his subject’s disobedience by explaining, “diese Gedichte... zum Teil kunstvollen, zum Teil sichtlich rasch hingeschriebene Versen” were a “Rebellion gegen

⁷¹ Although poetry writing is completely suppressed in Castalia, we will see later that music is still a highly regarded art form in the Province. People do not generally create their own music, but acceptable pieces from the past are often played and studied (*GPS* 110-111).

gewisse kastalische Hausgesetze” (*GPS* 110). Once again, it appears to be the case that the narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* is at such a loss for primary source documentation that he even incorporates Knecht’s forbidden “Schülergedichte” at the end of his biography, despite being of the opinion that there is not a great deal to be gained from including them (*GPS* 144).

These poems, however, are much more than a mere sign of teenage rebellion. They are instead Knecht’s earliest attempts to point to something which exists beyond empirical reality through language as art. Knecht finds one of his youthful poems many years later and reflects on the title. He remembers, “[er hatte] das Wort ‘Transzendieren!’ hingeschrieben...als einen Zuruf und Befehl, eine Mahnung an sich selbst, als einen neu formulierten und bekräftigten Vorsatz, sein Tun und Leben unter dies Zeichen zu stellen” (*GPS* 411). Knecht had an epiphanic moment as a young man and decided thereafter to dedicate his life to the search of a non-phenomenal reality. This process obviously included writing poetry as a way of attempting to gain access to that which lies beyond the perceivable world.

Unsurprisingly, Knecht’s friend Fritz Tegularius, a full-fledged Castalian at heart, tells Knecht after rediscovering the poem, “[d]as Gedicht gehört zu den wenigen von Euch, die ich eigentlich nicht mochte, an denen irgend etwas mich abstieß oder störte” (*GPS* 411). Although Tegularius tolerates many of Knecht’s poems (perhaps only because his closest friend wrote them), he cannot appreciate or understand a piece of writing dedicated to unveiling a world beyond phenomenal reality. In this poem, Knecht wrote:

Wir sollen heiter Raum um Raum durchschreiten,
An keinem wie an einer Heimat hängen,
Der Weltgeist will nicht fesseln uns und engen,
Er will uns Stuf’ um Stufe heben, weiten. (*GPS* 411)

This “Weltgeist” that Knecht writes of is a vague, non-phenomenal entity for which Tegularius has no patience.

Knecht obviously believes as a young man that language as art might help him access some reality beyond the empirical world, but he loses faith in this idea in years to come. Instead, the man turns to mastering the language of the glass bead game as a means to his personal end. The Musikmeister appears at least partially responsible for Knecht’s rejection of artistic language. The wise man says during a conversation with Knecht about literature and teaching, “ich [würde] nicht versuchen, [den Studenten] die Dichtung als eine Erscheinungsform des Göttlichen zu suggerieren, sondern bemüht sein, ihnen die Dichtung durch die genaue Kenntnis ihrer sprachlichen und metrischen Mittel zugänglich zu machen” (*GPS* 128). Perhaps the Musikmeister simply wanted to protect Knecht from the repercussions of teaching students in Castalia something forbidden. Or he may merely have meant that Knecht cannot teach others to find in literature what he himself does not yet fully understand. Regardless of the Musikmeister’s intentions, this comment seems at least partially responsible for deterring Knecht, at least for a few years, from writing and reading poetry.

Despite this temporary detour, Knecht returns at the end of life to the poems he wrote as a young man (*GPS* 410). However, when Knecht first encounters one of his old pieces, the “Verszeile...die sagte er vor sich hin, nicht wissend, bei welchem Dichter er sie einst gelesen habe, aber der Vers sprach ihn an und gefiel ihm und schien dem Erlebnis der Stunde ganz zu entsprechen” *GPS* (408). Knecht has distanced himself to such a degree from his younger self that he does not even recognize his own poetry initially. He reflects on the content and thinks, “diese Sätze, wie konnten sie einem jungen Geiste absolut, zeitlos und

durch und durch wahr erscheinen” (GPS 415-416). Although Knecht is skeptical at first regarding his youthful and naïve belief that poetry holds the key to discovering something beyond perceivable reality, his poem still obviously affects the more mature Magister Ludi on some level. Just a short time after reading it, he leaves his position as glass bead game master and the Province of Castalia forever.

He goes to stay with his childhood friend, Plinio Designori, and his past faith in the possible transcendental power of literature is fully revived. While looking around his friend’s house, Knecht discovers a small library. He realizes:

...daß es lauter schöne Literatur des neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts sei, was er da vor sich habe...sitzend blätterte er in [einem] Buch, das viele Hunderte von Lehrgedichten enthielt, ein kuriozes Nebeneinander von lehrhafter Gesprächigkeit und wirklicher Weisheit, von Philistrosität und echtem Dichtergeist. (GPS 457)

Knecht is confronted with literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, the very time period in which Hesse writes *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Just as the reader of Hesse’s novel is indirectly encouraged at this point to contemplate the importance of the very book he is reading, Knecht also finds deeper meaning in the verses of the *Weisheit des Brahmanen*, a book which instantly captures his attention.

Knecht discusses his newfound treasure with his friend a short while afterward and proclaims the merits of the poet Rückert enthusiastically.⁷² Specifically, Knecht explains that Rückert:

...drei edlen Passionen alle gehabt [hat], die des Gärtners, die des Erziehers und die des Autors, und grade diese wird wohl bei ihm den ersten Platz eingenommen haben, er nennt sie an letzter und bedeutsamster Stelle, und er ist in den Gegenstand seiner Passion so sehr verliebt, daß er zärtlich wird und ihn nicht Buch, sondern ‘Büchlein’ nennt. Wie rührend ist das. (GPS 458)

⁷² Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866) was a German poet and translator, who wrote the six volumes of *Die Weisheit des Brahmanen* from 1836-1839 (*Britannica*).

After encountering this little known author, the former glass bead game master from Castalia is ready to deny and reject his previous existence as glass bead game master. He returns to his youthful excitement and hopefulness regarding language and tells Designori, “später einmal, denke ich mir, könnte mir wohl noch das Glück einer Autorschaft blühen” (*GPS* 460). Knecht is inspired to write once again and continue his quest for knowledge of non-phenomenal reality on this linguistic path.⁷³

iii. Knecht’s hope for the glass bead game

As previously mentioned, Knecht takes two different approaches over the course of his life when attempting to transcend empirical boundaries and gain some sort of knowledge of an absolute world. First, as a young man and then again in his later years, Knecht turns to literature, poetry in particular, due to his belief that language as art may be able to help him understand the world beyond perceived objects. Second, the man experiences a long phase in his adult life during which he seeks to answer to his existential questions by way of Castalia’s prized glass bead game. The narrator explains, “das Spiel war vorläufig das große Hauptproblem seines Lebens geworden” (*GPS* 130). Although the game, in the end, does not seem to offer any real solutions to Knecht’s problems or help him reach his ultimate goal, the time spent on this particular path was not in vain. Instead, “[d]ie Entscheidung für das Glasperlenspiel war eine wichtige Stufe” in Knecht’s life (*GPS* 439). It was necessary for

⁷³ Knecht will fail in this endeavor, most obviously because he dies shortly afterward and does not have the opportunity to write anything new. I will argue in the following chapter, however, that even if Knecht had had the chance to create new works of literature, they still would not have helped him achieve his goal of accessing a reality beyond the empirical realm. Specifically, I will demonstrate that in many of Hesse’s works, including *Das Glasperlenspiel*, music is actually the only art form capable of accessing what lies beyond the empirical world.

Knecht to pursue all possible avenues in his quest for access to a transcendental realm.⁷⁴

Given Knecht's intense interest in languages and literature from an early age, it is not surprising that the study of a particular language is what helps lead Knecht to focus his energy on the game itself. Specifically, it is Knecht's youthful obsession with Chinese which finally pushes him to concentrate almost exclusively on Castalia's esteemed game.⁷⁵

“[D]ie alten Chinesen” are mentioned on numerous occasions throughout the novel and are openly acknowledged by the narrator as partial contributors to the origin of the idea of the glass bead game (*GPS* 13). Knecht shares this view from an early age and mentions the merits and splendor of the ancient Chinese in one of his youthful poems (*GPS* 482). Hence, it follows logically that “Knecht...das Studium der chinesischen Sprache und der Klassiker in berühmten ostasiatischen Lehrhaus begonnen [hatte]” (*GPS* 132), where he studied the language, the music, and the customs of ancient China. However, he can only learn a certain amount at school and eventually leaves to study with “dem Älteren Bruder,” a man who was once a member of the Order, but who left it to follow his contemplative path in seclusion. For this outcast, the study of language is also extremely important and he surpasses all in Castalia in the “Technik des Pinselschreibens und des Entzifferns alter Schriften” (*GPS* 133). Knecht stays with this Chinese expert for a time and learns a great deal from him, including the art of “Stäbchenzählen” (*GPS* 138). This contact with the I-Ching, the ancient Chinese “Book of Changes,” which contains the philosophical and cosmological ideas of ancient China captured in 64 signs, plays the most important role in

⁷⁴ I will also demonstrate in the following chapter on music in *Das Glasperlenspiel* that Knecht's focus on the game is necessary for the reader to fully understand what Hesse is attempting to accomplish through the writing of his last novel. Specifically, the game is a metaphor for the early German Romantic notion of “symphilosophieren,” an idea very similar to Hesse's goal of “transmedialization.”

⁷⁵ Knecht actually begins his study of Castalia's glass bead game very early on. However, he does not devote himself entirely to the game until he has completely exhausted all hope in language alone being able to help him reach his goal.

Knecht's later turn and complete devotion to the glass bead game. Knecht practices this art of stick-laying with his new teacher on a daily basis, and "dieser...führte ihn in die Grammatik und Symbolik der Orakelsprache ein" (*GPS* 138). Knecht slowly loses faith in the idea that standard Western languages might be able to help him access a reality beyond the perceivable world, and he turns his attention instead to the I-Ching figures of ancient China. Knecht seems to hope that this symbolic and somewhat mystical language may help him achieve his lofty goal. This shift will eventually lead him to concentrate solely on the glass bead game as the game is understood by many in Castalia to be an extension and further development of the I-Ching. In fact, the ideas captured in the various arrangements of glass beads is very similar to the multiple meanings of the I-Ching characters, with the difference that the number of glass bead game figures "längst eine sehr viel höhere geworden ist als die Zahl der alten chinesischen Schriftzeichen" (*GPS* 43). In other words, one could argue that Castalians feel the glass bead game is, in some ways, simply a more extensive and exhaustive version of the I-Ching.⁷⁶ The narrator himself explains that mankind desired at one point in time "eine internationale Zeichensprache auszubauen, welche ähnlich der alten chinesischen Schrift es erlaube, das Komplizierteste ohne Ausschaltung der persönlichen Phantasie und Erfinderkraft in einer Weise graphisch auszudrücken" (*GPS* 36). The glass bead game was the result.

Although Knecht eventually devotes himself fully to the game, he never truly breaks with the language that inspired him to become a master player. The narrator notes, for instance, that a main difference between Knecht and the previous glass bead game master, Thomas von der Trave, is Knecht "war mehr ein Schüler der Chinesen und seine Art von

⁷⁶ For more information on the I-Ching, see: Smith, Richard. *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World: Yijing (I Ching or Classic of Changes) and its Evolution in China*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008.

Courtoisie weniger zugespitzt und mit Ironie durchsetzt” (*GPS* 312). Knecht’s entire way of communicating with other members of the Order is influenced by his early Chinese studies. Moreover, Knecht’s very first glass bead game as Magister Ludi is designed with his past interest in Chinese in mind:

Es sollte diesem Spiel...für Struktur und Dimensionen das alte, konfuzianisch rituelle Schema des chinesischen Hausbaues zugrunde liegen...[denn] [e]s war ihm einst, beim Studium eines Kommentares zum I Ging, die mythische Ordnung und Bedeutsamkeit dieser Regeln als ein besonders ansprechendes und liebenswürdiges Gleichnis des Kosmos und der Einordnung des Menschen in die Welt erschienen, auch fand er uralte mythischen Volksgeist in dieser Tradition des Hausbauers wunderbar innig mit spekulativgelehrtem Mandarin- und Magistergeist vereint. (*GPS* 265-266)

Knecht wishes to combine the knowledge of the I-Ching and the glass bead game because neither on its own seems to have supplied him at this point in time with sufficient answers to his questions regarding the truth behind non-phenomenal world.

However, the success of his attempt is called into question long before he even makes it. When mentioning years early to Elder Brother that he wishes to incorporate the I-Ching into the game language, the wiser man responds, “[n]ur zu!...du wirst ja sehen. Einen hübschen kleinen Bambusgarten in die Welt hineinsetzen, das kann man schon. Aber ob es dem Gärtner gelingen würde die Welt in sein Bambusgehölz einzubauen, scheint mir doch fraglich” (*GPS* 139). Elder Brother is obviously very skeptical regarding whether the glass bead game can accomplish its goal of incorporating all artistic and scientific disciplines into one super-language. He admits that the game may be a beautiful addition to the world, much like a small bamboo garden is, but he feels that Castalians are too ambitious with respect to what they believe the game can actually achieve. Thus, it becomes clear that one of Elder Brother’s main reasons for leaving the Province years before was his belief that the game

will likely fail in its attempt to describe the entire nature of the universe with nothing but a few glass beads.

Despite these convictions, Elder Brother still encourages Knecht with a somewhat sarcastic “nur zu” to try to incorporate the I-Ching into the game. Perhaps the wise man knows that Knecht will gain just as much useful knowledge about the nature of reality from a failed attempt as he would if he succeeded. Or Elder Brother may simply have known that Knecht’s quest to understand the nature of the phenomenal and non-phenomenal world would be impossible to stop. Regardless of the outcast’s reasoning, Knecht does learn something useful from the attempt. Specifically, he begins to become conscious of the game’s internal shortcomings, and the seeds for his decision to leave the Province years later are already planted.

Due to constraints on his time as Magister Ludi, Knecht finds it necessary to employ some assistance in creating his first official glass bead game. He asks his friend Fritz Tegularius, ein “guter Altphilologe, stark philosophisch interessiert” to help him research and create the game, which will be heavily influenced by language and philosophy (*GPS* 154). Tegularius seems at first to be the most ideal candidate for the job. He is an excellent glass bead game player and has a clear affinity for language in general. However, Knecht also realizes that Tegularius’ general linguistic abilities may not be able to compensate for the fact that his friend actually knows very little Chinese in particular. Indeed, Knecht complains to Tegularius at the very outset of the endeavor, “[w]ie gut wäre es jetzt, wenn du Chinesisch verstündest!” (*GPS* 267). This uncharacteristically emotional outburst hints at the importance of this game for Knecht. He does not only want to uncover the mysteries of the non-phenomenal world by incorporating the language of the I-Ching into the language of the

glass bead game, but he wants to fulfill another important goal in the process: Knecht wants to bring the outside world, represented by Elder Brother, and Castalia, embodied in the figure of Tegularius, closer together.⁷⁷ However, although the Chinese language helped Knecht bridge the distance between the Province and Elder Brother, it will actually cause a rupture between the two worlds in this case because of Tegularius' limited knowledge of this particular foreign language. Knecht attempts to solve this problem by asking his old Chinese teacher to help his Castalian friend overcome the linguistic barriers involved in creating this particular game, but he is not surprised when Elder Brother denies his request (*GPS* 268). Despite these complications, Knecht continues with the creation of the game and concludes that Tegularius did the best job possible, "wie es ohne Chinesisch irgend möglich war" (*GPS* 269).

Although not actually creating the perfect game he had envisioned and not coming a great deal closer to understanding the nature of the non-phenomenal world, Knecht does gain something useful from the entire experience. Specifically, the first seeds of doubt regarding the ability of the glass bead game to accomplish its goals – or to answer Knecht's metaphysical questions – are planted. This doubt motivates him to first study the game in even more detail, and eventually to leave Castalia and the Order forever. The problems associated with Knecht's first glass bead game as Magister Ludi lead one to pose important questions about the nature of the game. For instance, if one needs perfect knowledge of a discipline, be it a language or a mathematical equation, to translate it into the game language, is it possible for viewers to ever truly understand this translation? In other words, can people watching the game fully comprehend the nuances of Chinese as depicted by the glass beads

⁷⁷ Elder Brother is not technically a member of the same "outside world" as Plinio Designori, though. The main difference is that the Chinese scholar lives in total seclusion rather than as a functioning member of another society. However, for Knecht, anything "outside" of Castalia represents this other world.

without already knowing Chinese? Furthermore, if a less than perfect translation is created, as one can assume happened in the case of Knecht's first bead game because Tegularius' knowledge of Chinese was incomplete, are the games in general true representations of the knowledge of the world or are a number of them flawed? Indeed, Knecht admits himself that many games in Castalia may have mistakes in them when discussing Tegularius and his friend's general merits in a letter he writes early during adulthood. In this note, Knecht praises Tegularius' ability to find "die Fehlerquellen" in "[einem] verkomponierten Spiel" (*GPS* 155). Hence, one must ask if any of the games created are actually perfect translations of the knowledge in the world, or if it is simply the case that no one person was able to find the mistakes in them?

Although Knecht does not vocalize these questions explicitly, they must have been on his mind even before he attempted this particular game. Years earlier, while still a student, he embarks on a very un-Castalian endeavor. He explains his actions in a letter to Tegularius and writes with reference to a specific glass bead game, "ich arbeite mich durch jeden seiner Sätze durch, übersetze ihn aus der Spielsprache in seine Ursprache zurück, in Mathematik, in Ornamentik, in Chinesisch, in Griechisch usw" (*GPS* 126). Knecht decides to work backwards and translate a particular game into its original languages and disciplines. He anticipates the kinds of objections his elders in Castalia would raise if they knew what he was doing and imagines them saying:

[W]ir haben in einigen Jahrhunderten das Glasperlenspiel erfunden und ausgebaut, als eine universale Sprache und Methode, um alle geistigen und künstlerischen Werte und Begriffe auszudrücken und auf ein gemeinsames Maß zu bringen. Nun kommst du und willst nachprüfen, ob das auch stimme! (*GPS* 126-127)

Knecht realizes that other members of the Order would be personally offended by his actions and thus only explains to Tegularius the true nature of his studies at the time. It is clear,

though, that Knecht must at least unconsciously have already had concerns regarding the success of the glass bead game as a young man. Nevertheless, he dedicates a significant portion of his life to Castalia's favorite pastime. It could be that he feels it is still possible to create the "perfect" game and chooses to make this one of his missions in life, in the hope that the game will somehow, as the language of all languages, offer insight into the non-phenomenal world. Or it may simply be that Knecht believes that the game's existence, imperfect as it is, is better than the alternative, i.e., a world without the glass bead language. Or the narrator of the biography may be correct in assuming that Knecht's dedication and exploration of the game is simply part of the man's character. The historian explains, for instance:

Denn mit dem Sicheinspielen in immer verborgenere Geheimnisse der Spielgesetze und Spielmöglichkeiten, mit dem Heimischwerden in den bunten Labyrinthen des Archivs und der komplexen Innenwelt der Spielsymbolik waren [Knechts] Zweifel nicht unbedingt zum Schweigen gebracht, er hatte es schon in sich erfahren, daß Glaube und Zweifel zusammengehören, daß sie einander bedingen wie Ein- und Ausatmen. (*GPS* 142)

In order to fully understand Knecht's attachment to and later rejection of the game, however, it is important to examine the game's similarity to natural languages, its origin as a solution to problems associated with language, and its various shortcomings and failures. This examination will eventually help one to understand why Knecht turns back to poetry at the end of his life and what exactly he expects from this return. Moreover, a study of the game's problems will eventually shed light on what turns out to be the true path of enlightenment according to Hesse: music.

iv. The Age of the Feuilleton and the creation of the glass bead game

The best place to begin an investigation of this sort is at the very beginning, the time that inspired the creation of the game, the historical period known by all in Castalia as the Age of the Feuilleton. The narrator explains in the introduction to his biography that Western society as a whole began to degenerate in the 20th century, especially intellectually. People continued to pursue intellectual and creative endeavors, but Castalians view the products of this time as defunct. The narrator claims this period is characterized by the “Unechtheit der Kunst” (*GPS* 22) and the “Entwertung des Wortes” (*GPS* 21).⁷⁸ Indeed, it was this deficient use of language, both practically and artistically, to which the age owes its name. A great deal of writing was produced, but it all carried “den Stempel der rasch und verantwortungslos hergestellten Massenware” (*GPS* 19). Furthermore, the narrator is appalled “daß Autoren von Ruf und Rang und guter Vorbildung diesen Riesenverbrauch an nichtigen Interessantheiten ‘bedienen’ halfen” (*GPS* 18). The main method of production employed at this time – by which it was possible to reach the masses, but convey no actual meaning – was simply an “Anzahl von intellektuellen Modeworten wie im Würfelbecher durcheinander[zuwerfen]” with the result that “jeder sich freute, wenn er eines von ihnen annähernd wiedererkannte” (*GPS* 21). This situation leads people in the Province to depict

⁷⁸ Hesse mentions this degenerate time period in many of his earlier works as well, without using the phrase “the Age of the Feuilleton.” For example, one finds the artist Klingsor in “Klingsors letzter Sommer” lamenting, “[w]ir stehen im Untergang, wir alle, wir müssen sterben, wir müssen wieder geboren werden, die große Wende ist für uns gekommen. Es ist überall das gleiche: der große Krieg, die große Wandlung in der Kunst, der große Zusammenbruch der Staaten des Westens. Bei uns im alten Europa ist alles das gestorben, was bei uns gut und unser eigen war; unsre schöne Vernunft ist Irrsinn geworden, unser Geld is Papier, unser Maschinen können bloß noch schießen und explodieren, unsre Kunst ist Selbstmord. Wir gehen unter, Freunde, so ist es uns bestimmt, die Tonart Tsing Tse ist angestimmt” (*Klingsor* 330). Similarly, the narrator of *Der Steppenwolf* comments on the manuscript he finds written by Harry Haller: “Ich sehe in ihnen aber etwas mehr, ein Dokument der Zeit, den Hallers Seelenkrankheit ist – das weiß ich heute – nicht die Schrulle eines einzelnen, sondern die Krankheit der Zeit selbst, die Neurose jener Generation, welcher Haller angehört, und von welcher keineswegs nur dich schwachen und minderwertigen Individuen befallen scheinen, sondern gerade die staren, geistigen, begabtesten” (*Steppenwolf* 203).

this period generally as a time when there was “keine echte Bildung und keine echte Kunst mehr” (*GPS* 22), a period often described with words such as “Verfall” (*GPS* 23), “Entartung” (*GPS* 24), and “Ende der Kunst...der Sprache” (*GPS* 23). Language became nearly meaningless and failed to achieve any of the goals associated with it, especially that of creating works of art.⁷⁹

The glass bead game was not immediately created during this period, though. Other games were played, with letters and numbers, such as cross word puzzles, but these “Bildungsspiele waren nicht bloß holde sinnlose Kinderei, sondern entsprachen einem tiefen Bedürfnis, die Augen zu schließen und sich vor ungelösten Problemen und angstvollen Untergangssahnungen in eine möglichst harmlose Scheinwelt zu flüchten” (*GPS* 20). According to the narrator, people were in constant fear of death and destruction in this age and played “intellectual” games, not to actually develop and stimulate their minds, but as a way to flee from reality.

Although this relatively negative view of 20th-century language and game playing may seem rather “anti-Romantic” at first glance, especially if one recalls Novalis’ statements regarding the importance of “play” and of random “Ideenassociation” (Schultz 493) when attempting to herald in a Golden Age through writing, it is important to distinguish between the completely random play depicted in these passages of *Das Glasperlenspiel* and the early German Romantic play guided by an unnamed life force, which Novalis hails in his works. It is one thing to throw words into a dice cup and slap the result on a piece of paper; it is another thing completely to meditate over signs and symbols as King Arctur does in *Heinrich*

⁷⁹ This is the period during which Hesse was writing. E.R. Curtius extrapolates from these many passages as well as from personal notes by Hermann Hesse over the years and concludes that the author himself “shunned the living Europe of the twentieth century” (13).

von *Ofterdingen* and allow an ineffable order to the world to dictate the results without human interference.⁸⁰ Similarly, there are games that are conducive to mindless enjoyment, such as cross word puzzles, which have no intricate value or meaning in and of themselves, while there are others which help to preserve and reorganize the world's knowledge through the ages, such as the glass bead game, created at the end of the Age of the Feuilleton.

This particular aim of saving and protecting all knowledge that has existed at some point in history is explicitly grasped early on by Knecht. He asks his friend Tegularius to remember one of the early games they were asked to compose while studying the glass bead game as students. Knecht recalls working with ancient Greek, a "dead" language, and realizing:

...daß dennoch der Verfall und Tod jener Sprache nicht ins Nichts geführt hatte, daß ihre Jugend, ihre Blüte, ihr Niedergang in unserem Gedächtnis, im Wissen um sie und ihre Geschichte, aufbewahrt und daß sie in den Zeichen und Formeln der Wissenschaft sowohl wie in den geheimen Formulierungen des Glasperlenspiels fortlebe und jederzeit wieder aufgebaut werden könne. (*GPS* 124)

It is not only the case that the Greek language continued to exist because students of the glass bead game studied and read it, but rather, ancient Greek continued to live by being

⁸⁰ Evidence of the likely influence that this particular scene from Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* had on Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* can also be found in one of Knecht's early poems. The young boy writes in "Ein Traum":

So legt ich den, mir zitterten die Hände,
Aufs Lesepult mir einen dieser Bände,
Entzifferte die magische Bilderschrift...
Und alsbald war beschwingt ich in besternte
Geisträume unterwegs, dem Tierkreis eingebaut...
Harmonisch sich zu immer neuen Bindungen
Begegnete und eins aufs andre rückbezog...
Ich las und sah der Bilderschrift Gestalten
Sich miteinander paaren, rückentfalten,
Zu Reigen ordnen, auseinanderfließen
Und sich in neue Bildungen ergießen,
Kaleidoskop sinnbildlicher Figuren,
Die unerschöpflich neuen Sinn erfurhen. (*GPS* 478-479)

incorporated into the game. In fact, the entire history of this particular language from its origins to its downfall could be captured in the amazing game.⁸¹

It is at this moment in a letter to his friend Tegularius that Knecht makes one of the most unambiguous statements in the entire novel regarding what he hopes to achieve by studying Castalia's special game: he directly expresses his desire to understand the nature of non-phenomenal reality via the glass bead game. He explains in this letter to Tegularius:

Ich begriff plötzlich, daß in der Sprache oder doch mindestens im Geist des Glasperlenspiels tatsächlich alles allbedeutend sei, daß jedes Symbol und jede Kombination von Symbolen nicht hierhin oder dorthin, nicht zu einzelnen Beispielen, Experimenten und Beweisen führe, sondern ins Zentrum, ins Geheimnis und Innerste der Welt, in das Urwissen. (*GPS* 125)

Knecht believes at this moment that unlike other games, this play with glass beads carries a deeper meaning about the fundamental structure of reality. It appears that Novalis' indescribable guiding force might direct this game and help one begin to grasp the secrets of the universe – of both the phenomenal and non-phenomenal world. In other words, according to the youthful and optimistic protagonist of the story, the game does not merely depict particular manifestations of knowledge, but instead taps into the underlying origin of all knowledge. Viewed through the lens of Schopenhauer's philosophy of the world as Will and Representation, it appears that other games and natural languages simply point to Representations of the Will, whereas the glass bead game may also allow one to access or at least become aware of the Will itself in some inexplicable way.⁸²

⁸¹ Later on in life, Knecht makes a more explicit statement regarding the game's goal of preserving knowledge. He says, "[w]ir sind Fachleute des Untersuchens, Zerlegens und Messens, wir sind die Erhalter und beständigen Nachprüfer aller Alphabete, Einmaleinse und Methoden, wir sind die Eichmeister der geistigen Maße und Gewichte...Sauberhaltung aller Wissensquellen" (*GPS* 394).

⁸² Once again, Schopenhauer would likely have argued that this phenomenon is impossible given his general belief that music alone allows one to sense the Will.

This early faith that Knecht has in the ability of the glass bead game to represent the dual nature of reality appears related to its affinity with actual, natural language. Indeed, focusing his attention on this game is the logical result and culmination of Knecht's previous linguistic studies. First, as a boy, Knecht attempts to find the answers to existential questions in his native tongue by writing creative autobiographies and poetry. He then moves on to studying languages based on more complex symbols such as Chinese and ancient Greek rather than languages based merely on letters of the Roman alphabet such as German or Latin. Finally, he ends with a study of the glass bead game, an "Universalsprache," based solely on symbols created by glass beads and combinations thereof (*GPS* 39).

This idea of the glass bead game as a type of super-language continues throughout most of the novel.⁸³ The configurations of glass beads, for instance, do not simply yield game figures but are at times referred to as "richtige[] Dichtungen" or "kleine Dramen" (*GPS* 155) created by a "geniale...Autor[]" (*GPS* 156). The games are like linguistic masterpieces created by inspired and brilliant writers. They can be played "Akt um Akt" (*GPS* 285), or written, read, and "von tausend flüsternden Stimmen nachbuchstabiert, von...Sprechern laut ausgerufen [werden]" (*GPS* 286). As with other languages, glass bead games are meant to be a way of exchanging ideas and learning from other people so that "das Alleinspielen...das nur höchstens so ersetzen [kann] wie das Selbstgespräch ein wirkliches und echtes Gespräch" (*GPS* 327). Much as natural languages develop and change over time, for example by creating and adding new words to the base vocabulary, a particular game may modify the "Grammatik und Sprachschatz" of the game language and be fully "aufgenommen...in das

⁸³ Hesse emphasizes the idea of the game as language quite often even outside of the novel. He writes, for instance, in a letter to Rolf von Hoerschelmann in 1944: "Das Glasperlenspiel ist eine Sprache, ein komplettes System; es kann daher auf jede denkbare Weise gespielt werden, von einem und improvisierend, von mehreren und nach Plan, wetteifernd oder auch hieratisch" (Michels *Materialien* 241).

Spielarchiv und die Spielsprache” (*GPS* 211). That is to say, there is a grammar, “Kanon,” and “offiziellen Kodex” to the glass bead game, which changes over time as all languages do (*GPS* 211).⁸⁴

Interestingly, though, these game additions are not referred to as “Wörter” or “Buchstaben,” but instead as “Chiffren,” while the base vocabulary is no mere “Wortschatz,” but rather a “Hieroglyphenschatz” (*GPS* 211).⁸⁵ These minor semantic distinctions, while still connecting the glass bead game to language, also point to its special status as a language beyond natural languages. It calls to mind the magic and mystery surrounding early German Romantic ideas of a perfect language, one able to welcome a Golden Age of art and science. In fact, this description of the glass bead game as a universal language seems nearly identical to one of Novalis’ most famous fragments referencing language. Over a century earlier, the Romantic poet wrote:

Das wird die goldne Zeit sein, wenn alle Worte – *Figurenworte* – Mythen – und alle Figuren – Sprachfiguren – Hieroglyphen sein werden – wenn man Figuren sprechen und schreiben – und Worte vollkommen plastisieren, und musizieren lernt. (Schultz 437)⁸⁶

The glass beads allow one to literally create “linguistic figures,” hieroglyphics full of hidden meaning, which one can enigmatically write and speak.⁸⁷ The Castalians praise the “freispielende Plastizität der Spielsprache” (*GPS* 14), which allegedly makes it possible to

⁸⁴ These games are so much like natural language when written down that one can even speak of another person’s “spieltechnische[] Kalligraphie” much as one might describe another person’s handwriting (*GPS* 156).

⁸⁵ Hesse uses the word “Hieroglyphen” on a number of occasions in the novel, e.g., also on p. 375, p. 448.

⁸⁶ *Naturwissenschaftliche Studien 1798-1799*, fragment 15.

⁸⁷ Hesse is clearly tapping into the early Romantic idea of “hieroglyphics as a magical semantic cornucopia capable of expressing ‘all nature in a few images’” (Koelb 26). The 20th-century author would naturally have had a modern understanding of hieroglyphics as a mainly phonetic system, but he chose to work with the early Romantic notions.

express every conceivable idea in one common language, including ideas beyond empirical reality. Knecht writes in the previously mentioned letter to Tegularius that he has discovered “daß unser königliches Spiel wirklich eine lingua sacra, eine heilige und göttliche Sprache ist” (*GPS* 125). The glass bead game is clearly for many in Castalia, and for Knecht at this time in his life, a sacred language able to reach beyond phenomenal reality to access a world outside simple objects and representations. The glass bead game appears to be Novalis’ dream come true.⁸⁸

But what is it exactly about this game that makes it so similar to yet so different from other languages? How is it, according to many in Castalia, a universal language capable not only of expressing knowledge of the empirical world, but of transcending it and giving one insight into phenomenal as well as non-phenomenal reality? How is it better at achieving its goals than other language systems based on symbols? The narrator of the story hints at an answer to these questions in his introduction of the game’s history. He explains that in the beginning as the glass bead game was still being developed, “das Spiel hatte für jede Fakultät, jede Disziplin und ihre Abzweigungen eine eigene Sprache und Regelwelt” (*GPS* 35). The glass bead game was, at first, simply another type of language with which one attempted to describe empirical reality. However, at some point, it morphed into the “Inbegriff des Geistigen und Musischen, zum sublimen Kult, zur Unio Mystical aller getrennten Gleider der Universitas Litterarum” (*GPS* 37). The game no longer simply

⁸⁸ Siglind Bruhn comments on what she calls the theme of “cipher notation” directly in reference to the problems associated with language during the Age of the Feuilleton. She argues: “This kind of notation is presented as the only medium potentially capable of counteracting the pervasive force of corrosion, owing to the fact that it creates no products that are temporally and spatially defined and thereby destructible, but only their codes. As a script invented to capture signifiers for contextual units, it preserves a symbolic essence. At any time (be it hours or eons after its creation), such an essence must be brought to new life in an act of devoted interpretation and perhaps ‘performance’” (216). This rational explanation basically attempts to explain the magic behind the game as language. However, it seems more useful for the project at hand to simply point out the numerous direct connections that Hesse makes between the glass bead game and early German Romantic ideals.

depicted various forms of knowledge. It mysteriously became the summary and epitome of all knowledge. The narrator defines the game essentially as a

Zeichen- und Formelsprache, an welcher die Mathematik und die Musik gleichen Anteil hatten, in welcher es möglich wurde, astronomische und musikalische Formeln zu verbinden, Mathematik und Musik gleichsam auf einen gemeinsamen Nenner zu bringen. (*GPS* 37)

Science and art were unified under one system in this language. The various disciplines finally shared a common denominator, thus making it possible to express and connect the knowledge entailed within each subject in the same terms, i.e., to achieve a “Synthese” between all fields of study and art (*GPS* 36).⁸⁹ Still, the reader struggles to imagine exactly how this super-language functions and successfully articulates all scientific and artistic experience.⁹⁰ It is not until the narrator compares the glass bead game to another, more familiar game that the reader may even begin to understand the former’s complicated nature.

The historian explains in one crucial passage:

Ein Leser, welcher etwa das Glasperlenspiel nicht kennen sollte, möge sich ein solches Spielschema etwa ähnlich vorstellen wie das Schema einer Schachpartie, nur daß die Bedeutungen der Figuren und die Möglichkeiten ihrer Beziehungen zueinander und ihrer Einwirkung aufeinander vervielfacht gedacht und jeder Figur, jeder Konstellation, jedem Schachzuge ein tatsächlicher, durch eben diesen Zug, diese Konfiguration und so weiter symbolisch bezeichneter Inhalt zuzuschreiben wäre. (*GPS* 131)

⁸⁹ The narrator offers a similar description in an earlier passage. He asserts the goal of the game is the “lebendige Schönheit des Geistigen und der Kunst mit der magischen Formulierkraft der exakten Disziplinen zu vereinigen” (*GPS* 13).

⁹⁰ Even the following description offered by the narrator in which the game is compared to language once again does little to clarify: “Diese Regeln, die Zeichensprache und Grammatik des Spieles, stellen eine Art von hochentwickelter Geheimsprache dar, an welcher mehrere Wissenschaften und Künste, namentlich aber die Mathematik und die Musik (beziehungsweise Musikwissenschaft) teilhaben und welche die Inhalte und Ergebnisse nahezu aller Wissenschaften auszudrücken und zueinander in Beziehung zu setzen imstande ist. Das Glasperlenspiel ist also ein Spiel mit sämtlichen Inhalten und Werten unsrer Kultur, es spielt mit ihnen, wie etwa in den Blütezeiten der Künste ein Maler mit den Farben seiner Palette gespielt haben mag” (*GPS* 12). Almost all explanations of the glass bead game remain vague.

In other words, the glass bead game is like an extremely complicated version of chess. In chess, pieces are allowed to move in certain ways based on arbitrary rules and any given move is deemed either legal or illegal. A move has meaning within the context of the particular game it is made in. Just as with natural languages, both players know the rules and certain moves may even be considered aesthetically pleasing by onlookers. This connection between chess and language, and the idea of language games in general, is not a novel one, though. Anyone familiar with Ludwig Wittgenstein's work has encountered the argument that chess and language share a number of similarities. Interestingly, Wittgenstein was acquainted with Schopenhauer's general philosophy and thus was influenced, albeit in the loosest sense of the word, by the same Romantic tradition as Hesse.⁹¹

Indeed, recalling some of Novalis' claims about how an ideal language should function elucidates the way in which one can imagine the glass bead game successfully expressing knowledge in all disciplines while simultaneously managing to transcend empirical reality. One must think of Novalis' famous claim in his *Monolog*:

Wenn man den Leuten nur begreiflich machen könnte, daß es mit der Sprache wie mit den mathematischen Formeln sei – sie machen eine Welt für sich aus – sie spielen nur mit sich selbst, drücken nichts als ihre wunderbare Natur aus, und eben darum sind sie so ausdrucksvoll – eben darum spiegelt sich in ihnen das seltsame Verhältnisspiel der Dinge. (Schultz 426)

First, as mentioned in the introduction, Novalis is alluding in this passage to an idea that modern readers are relatively familiar with: language is a system of signs. Furthermore, it is the relationship between various signs rather than the relationship between signifier and signified that makes language meaningful. Second, Novalis claims that the relationship between mathematical signs (based on rules of logic), linguistic signs (based on rules of

⁹¹ See A.C. Grayling's *Wittgenstein: A Very Short Introduction* for a summary of Wittgenstein's life and philosophy, as well as an overview on the manner in which Schopenhauer influenced Wittgenstein's theoretical ideas.

grammar), and even nature (based on natural laws) should all mirror each other. That is to say, these systems use different signs to encode information, but the way in which the various signs stand in relationship to each other is identical across disciplines. Now the glass bead game begins to make some sense. Novalis believed that a utopia would be created when the various arts and sciences in the world move beyond the limits of their materials – the particular signs used to store information – and reflect each other. This is what supposedly occurs with the glass bead game. Many Castalians believe that it is possible to express all the relationships between various objects in the world they have created one super-language capable of encoding all knowledge. Mathematical formulas and musical compositions can now allegedly be expressed through the same medium. If one takes this idea a step further and includes Schopenhauerian philosophy into the mix, it makes sense to claim that if the glass bead game expresses all relationships in the empirical world between the various Representations, it is also simultaneously describes in a sense the one Will, something that transcends the phenomenal world.

v. Knecht's disillusionment and the failure of the glass bead game

Knecht notices, however, that not everyone in Castalia seems to appreciate the amazing game for what he sees it as in his youth. He mentions to his mentor, the Musikmeister, for instance, that “auch ein Teil der Leiter und Lehrer keineswegs in jenem hohen und heiligen Sinn Spieler waren und in der Spielsprache nicht eine lingua sacra sahen, sondern eben eine geistvolle Art von Stenographie” (*GPS* 130). These Castalians feel that the game is simply a highly developed, complex, and clever form of shorthand, rather than a sacred or mystical linguistic tool, which allows one to access a non-phenomenal reality or absolute truth. The narrator acknowledges that this view is not uncommon in the Province

and that Castalians have actually always held differing opinions regarding the metaphysical importance of the game. In a period he describes as one during which “das Glasperlenspiel formal vielleicht seine höchste Kultur erreicht hatte,” the historian explains:

[E]s gab Spieler, welche vom damaligen Stil wie von einem verlorengegangenen Zauberschlüssel sprachen, und andre, die ihn als äußerlich mit Schmuck überladen, decadent und unmännlich empfanden. (*GPS* 263)

The game is constantly changing and Castalians are not always in agreement as to what it can accomplish. At any given time, some may feel it is as magical as Knecht does in his youth, while others may see it as nothing but a complex game prone to needless ornamentation.

Unsurprisingly, some of the most vigorous critiques of the game come from people who are not technically citizens of the Province. For example, the ever skeptical Plinio Designori argues as a child:

Das Glasperlenspiel [ist] ein Rückfall in die feuilletonistische Epoche, ein bloßes verantwortungsloses Spielen mit den Buchstaben, in welche [man] die Sprachen der verschiedenen Künste und Wissenschaften aufgelöst [hat]; es besteh[t] aus lauter Assoziationen und spiel[t] mit lauter Analogien. (*GPS* 99-100)

For Plinio, the game does not actually reach beyond its symbolic limits to portray universal truths. Instead, it is nothing but play with analogy and association. One can hint at artistic and scientific facts through an arrangement of glass beads, but one cannot literally translate mathematical formulas or musical motifs into the game language. In other words, a particular combination of beads may be *like* Pythagorean theory, but it is not equivalent to it. Pater Jakobus is another outsider who would likely agree with Plinio’s description of the game as an irresponsible form of play for adults. When first meeting a young Josef Knecht

in the monastery Mariafels, the religious man sees “im Glasperlenspiel nur ein ästhetisches Dandytum” (*GPS* 184).⁹² It is an excessive, aesthetic pleasure with no true value.

Knecht’s mentor, the wise Musikmeister, mentions similar criticism of the game from members of the Order to his student. He explains:

Sie sagen, es sei ein Ersatz für die Künste, und die Spieler seien Belletristen, sie seien nicht mehr als eigentlich Geistige zu betrachten, sondern seien eben frei phantasierende und dilettierende Künstler...Daß das Spiel Gefahren hat, ist gewiß.
(*GPS* 83)

The older man acknowledges that the game may lend itself to meaningless, amateurish play and warns his young friend of the danger.⁹³ Many in the Province clearly do not believe the glass bead game is capable of giving an individual any kind of metaphysical insight into the structure of the universe.

As frequently happens, the Musikmeister’s words make a strong impression on his student, and one finds Knecht questioning on a number of occasions throughout his life whether the glass bead game is indeed the answer to his quest for knowledge of reality beyond the empirical world, or whether it is simply a very complicated game. Likely thinking back to his mentor’s description of the game as a replacement for art in a Province marked by a lack of creativity – remember the narrator’s description of Castalia as a place

⁹² It seems that his opinion of the game changes over time, though, as he gets to know Knecht better and learns more about the game world.

⁹³ The Musikmeister goes on to explain that there are certain types of people in Castalia and each one may have a different understanding of the game: creative characters might take the freedom of expression incorporated into the structure of the game to an extreme, while scientists may be too rigid in their game creations for the games to reach their full potential. He then tells Knecht, “[j]eder von uns ist nur ein Mensch, nur ein Versuch, nur ein Unterwegs,” implying that the faults found in glass bead games lie with their creators and not within the game itself (*GPS* 84). Although seeming to acknowledge here that “perfect” games may be possible, I will demonstrate in the next section that the Musikmeister really has less faith in combinations of glass beads, when the goal is accessing a non-phenomenal reality, than he does in one of the game’s most influential disciplines: music.

known for studying but not creating works of art – the famous Magister Ludi asks himself at the beginning of his career:

[W]ar dieses Spiel wirklich das Höchste, war es wirklich die Königin im geistigen Reich? War es nicht, trotz allem und allem, am Ende doch nur ein Spiel? War es seiner vollen Hingabe, eines lebenslänglichen Dienstes wirklich wert? Dies berühmte Spiel hatte einst, vor Generationen, begonnen als eine Art von Ersatz für die Kunst, und es war, für viele wenigstens, im Begriffe, allmählich zu einer Art von Religion zu werden, einer Sammlungs- Erhebungs- und Andachtsmöglichkeit für hochentwickelte Intelligenzen. (*GPS* 144)

Knecht realizes that the game began as a type of art, a substitute for the real thing after the mistakes made during the Age of the Feuilleton. In the beginning, the glass bead game was created with a specific purpose in mind, but Knecht wonders whether it has actually fulfilled this purpose now, or whether it has morphed into a “type” of religion instead. In other words, he asks himself whether the glass bead game is a mysterious reflection of some sacred truth or non-phenomenal reality found only through art, or if it is another kind of replacement, i.e., a stand-in for religion. His predecessor, the Magister Ludi Thomas von der Trave, feels strongly that the game does not only stay true to its original goal but actually surpasses it. He tells a young Knecht, “[u]nser Spiel aber ist weder Philosophie, noch ist es Religion, es ist eine eigene Disziplin und im Charakter am meisten der Kunst verwandt, es ist eine Kunst sui generis” (*GPS* 150). Knecht spends his entire career exploring whether the former glass bead game master’s claim is actually true. He goes back and forth between faith and doubt in the game’s abilities.

Trying to negotiate the competing opinions regarding what glass bead games can accomplish, Knecht acknowledges, “daß auch das Glasperlenspiel seinen Diabolus in sich stecken hat, daß es zur leeren Virtuosität, zum Selbstgenuß künstlerhafter Eitelkeit...führen kann” (*GPS* 256). He attempts to come to terms with this fact while still holding on to his

youthful trust in the game's ability to access a non-phenomenal reality. Knecht heeds the warnings he receives from mentors and friends and constantly struggles, "[Spiele] vor dem Entarten zu bloß dekorativen Akten [zu] bewahren" (*GPS* 43). The Magister Ludi strives to make each game meaningful and does all he can to avoid superficiality. But how can Knecht avoid this pitfall? The narrator of the story hints at the way in which he believes it very well may be possible "die Hieroglyphen des Spiels davor [zu bewahren], zu bloßen Buchstaben zu entarten" (*GPS* 39). The historian argues there is one way to make sure that an arrangement of glass beads in a particular game retains some hidden meaning beyond that which one may find in natural language. He explains that the "Kunst des Kontemplierens und Meditierens" (*GPS* 38) holds the key to the glass bead game's magic. That is to say, the games alone do not carry metaphysical meaning, but rather, the players who create them bring something irreplaceable to the experience. It is only when a well-written game and a well-balanced person who practices meditation on a continual basis come together that something miraculous occurs.

The Musikmeister tells Knecht basically the same thing and explains:

[J]e mehr wir von uns verlangen, oder je mehr unsre jeweilige Aufgabe von uns verlangt, desto mehr sind wir auf die Kraftquelle der Meditation angewiesen, auf die immer erneute Versöhnung von Geist und Seele. (*GPS* 108)

Knecht takes his mentor's message seriously and spends a great deal of time mastering this art of meditation. He hopes that balancing his mind and soul will bring the necessary prerequisites to his game creations and ultimately allow him to understand something beyond the empirical world.

Despite successfully mastering the art of meditation, Knecht nevertheless becomes “kristisch gegen seine eigene Tätigkeit” (*GPS* 314) and mentions to Tegularius shortly before leaving the Province:

[W]ir legen in unserm Glasperlenspiel jene Werke der Weisen und Künstler in ihre Teile auseinander, ziehen Spielregeln, Formschemata, sublimierte Deutungen aus ihnen und operieren mit diesen Abstraktionen, als wären sie Bausteine. Nun, dies alles ist sehr schön, das bestreitet dir niemand. Aber nicht jeder kann sein Leben lang ausschließlich Abstraktionen atmen, essen und trinken. (*GPS* 305)

Knecht discovers that there is something missing from his life as glass bead game master.

The game is so heavily based on abstract ideas – on ways of translating each discipline’s knowledge into a super-language – that a person necessarily distances himself from the concrete and empirical world, which acts as the foundation for the various disciplines.

Knecht comes to realize that losing himself in the intangible world of the glass bead game might not be the best means of accessing a non-phenomenal reality after all. Although perhaps somewhat counterintuitive, Knecht feels that a balance must be struck between the theoretical intellectualism of the Province and the groundedness of the empirical world in order to find the answers to his questions regarding the nature of reality *beyond* the phenomenal world.⁹⁴ In other words, he must initially take concrete nature into account in order to discover something above or beyond it.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Once again, this is best understood when viewing Knecht’s comments through the lens of Schopenhauer’s philosophy of the world as Will and Representation. If the many Representations and the one Will are simply different ways of viewing a single reality, as Schopenhauer argues in his *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, then it makes sense that Knecht may feel the need to balance his search for the Will by taking the many Representations into account as well – in this case, the empirical reality of the world beyond Castalia’s border.

⁹⁵ Josef Mileck alludes to this idea when he explains, “[c]ultivated for its own sake in Castalia-like isolation from tangible reality and life at large, Geist can only deteriorate into a purposeless activity, doomed to perish in its own sterility” (170). This dichotomy between *Geist* and *Natur* can be found in a number of Hesse’s works, as can the idea that a perfect work of art (the glass bead game being considered a kind of art) must necessarily strike a balance between these opposing poles.

Eventually, Knecht becomes entirely disillusioned with the glass bead game and explains to his friend Alexander after having finally decided to leave Castalia for good:

Ich bin seit einer Weile an der Grenze, wo meine Arbeit als Glasperlenspielmeister zur ewigen Wiederholung, zur leeren Übung und Formel wird, wo ich sie ohne Freude, ohne Begeisterung tue, manchmal sogar ohne Glaube. (*GPS* 443)

Knecht promised himself when taking over the post of glass bead game master that, should he ever become bored or dissatisfied with the game, he would give up his position and stop playing. After years of studying the intricacies of the game language, Knecht reaches this point and decides to leave Castalia for the more concrete and natural world of his friend Plinio Designori.

Interestingly, it seems that Knecht may have known, at least unconsciously, as a young man already that he would come to this conclusion regarding the glass bead game. A hint is found in one of his early poems.⁹⁶ “Beim Lesen in einem alten Philosophen” ends:

Schulen Kastaliens sind nicht mehr...Der Alte ruht
Im Trümmerfeld, die Perlen in der Hand,
Hieroglyphen, die einst viel besagten,
Nun sind sie nur noch bunte gläserne Scherben.
So rollen lautlos aus des Hochbetagten
Händen dahin, verlieren sich im Sand...” (*GPS* 476)

The fear that the glass bead game will one day become meaningless proves a valid one, and Knecht finds himself compelled to turn his back on this particular attempt to access the non-phenomenal through the language of the glass bead game. The hieroglyphics, which once

⁹⁶ Just as White and White argue that the fictional autobiographies “show [Knecht] to be constantly evolving, widening his horizons, and unconsciously preparing himself for the time when he will have to transcend both the territorial bounds and the intellectual limitations of contemporary Castalia” (943), the poems seem to do something similar. They are less mature manifestations of his development, but they are a first step in the general direction. In the same vein, Hilde Cohn claims, “[Hesse] tells the story of a man whose essential qualities are clearly present from the beginning and whose main development consists in an increasing clarity and consciousness of himself” (348). She may see less of what she calls “development” in the novel (indeed, she argues against the assertion that *Das Glasperlenspiel* is a type of *Entwicklungsroman*) and more of what she may call “awakening,” but in the end, both the Whites and Cohn support the same general idea. The seeds for Knecht’s departure from Castalia were there from the beginning.

held such mysterious, existential potential for Knecht, have turned into empty beads devoid of any magic. But how and why did this happen? One cannot argue that Knecht did not devote his entire being to the game, just as one cannot claim that he did not master it. Someone might try to make the case that Knecht lost his inner contemplative balance and strayed from his meditation exercises (perhaps because he found himself too busy with the Province's administrative duties), which in turn led him to create meaningless games. This explanation, however, seems unlikely to anyone who reads the numerous comments Knecht makes about the importance of meditation throughout his lifetime.⁹⁷ But if Knecht did everything right, why is it that he failed to achieve his goal of accessing something beyond empirical reality through this super-language? Why did the glass bead game fail?

The answer lies within the game itself. When mentioning the various disciplines incorporated into the game, the narrator emphasizes one in particular: music (*GPS* 12). He explains that during the development of the game, centuries earlier, “war es die Verbindung mit der Musik welche dem Spiel [einen] Fortschritt brachte” (*GPS* 35-36). The narrator even goes so far as to claim, “das Glasperlenspiel [ist] in erster Linie ein Musizieren” (*GPS* 43). Knecht also understands the overwhelming importance of this art form and writes to Tegularius in an early letter, should the glass bead game end up being “nur eine formale Kunst, eine geistreiche Fertigkeit, eine witzige Kombination...dann war es besser, dies Spiel nicht zu spielen, sondern sich mit...guter Musik zu beschäftigen” (*GPS* 125). In fact, this art is what initially brings Knecht to Waldzell when the Musikmeister interviews him as a young boy and discovers his talent for music. Hence, music is not only one of the main, if not the

⁹⁷ Knecht emphasizes the importance of Eastern religion and meditation early on in his third autobiography; he follows the path of contemplation with Elder Brother, especially when learning about the I Ching; he continues to meditate throughout his life, etc. If nothing else, the fact that the most influential person in his life, the Musikmeister, encourages Knecht to make meditation a part of his daily routine makes this explanation implausible as Knecht almost always followed his mentor's instructions without fail.

most essential, foundation of the glass bead game, but it is also the impetus for Knecht coming into contact with the game and Castalia in the first place. Although Knecht's language studies *seem* to play an indispensable role in Knecht's life, it is, in fact, music that makes all the difference.⁹⁸ Music is what makes the glass bead game special on both a general and personal level for Knecht, and music is why both the glass bead game and Knecht ultimately fail to access a non-phenomenal reality via the medium of language. The next chapter of this dissertation will explore this thesis in more detail and demonstrate that the Musikmeister's words "weg von den Worten und hin zur Musik" should be deemed the mantra of the entire novel (*GPS* 280). An examination of music in *Das Glasperlenspiel* will also lend useful insight into formal aspects of the novel, Hesse's possible goals in writing the novel, and will ultimately show why the novel as a whole fails to achieve its main goal: to be a type of glass bead game itself, a musical composition of words. In the end, this will all tie into the larger claim that the Romantic dream of writing music ends after the Second World War.

⁹⁸ It appears that Knecht may never become fully aware of this fact himself. Rather than become a musician, as he threatened to do on numerous occasions throughout his life, he claims he wants to return to the poetry of his youth when leaving Castalia. Perhaps this naive conclusion simply reinforces the cyclical nature of the novel. Knecht does, after all, repeat his own story at least three times in the autobiographies written during his school years. And although his sudden death has been interpreted by some as a "fulfillment" rather than a "loss" (*Götz* 519), it is also possible that the cycle is merely destined to repeat itself indefinitely never find resolution.

CHAPTER THREE

Hesse's *Glasperlenspiel* and the power of music

I. The musical solution

It comes as no surprise to Hesse scholars that music plays an important role in *Das Glasperlenspiel* given this particular art form's reoccurring appearance in many of the short stories, novels, and poems, which the author wrote before publishing his masterpiece in 1943.⁹⁹ Hesse mentions real and imagined musicians in a number of earlier works, consistently alludes to famous musical pieces in his stories, and even attempts to write a few libretti in his time.¹⁰⁰ However, the exact function of this art in Josef Knecht's life has, for the most part, been overlooked or misunderstood by scholarly criticism, despite Mark Boulby's early acknowledgment that "*Das Glasperlenspiel* is...Hesse's ultimate tribute to music" (643). In the following section, I will demonstrate how music actually achieves almost all the goals set for *language* within Hesse's early and later works, and how it guides Knecht on his path to enlightenment more significantly than meditative exercises or even the glass bead game itself.

I will also show that music is not only essential to understanding the content of the novel, but it influences formal aspects of the work as well. Just as the protagonists of

⁹⁹ For a collection of shorter, lesser known pieces written by Hesse, which deal almost exclusively with music, see: Volker, Michels. *Hermann Hesse Musik: Betrachtungen, Gedichte, Rezensionen und Briefe*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976.

¹⁰⁰ See Mileck, Joseph. *Hermann Hesse. Life and Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. Mileck explains that although Hesse attempted to write a few libretti, nothing actually came of them (44).

Hesse's novels are captivated by this specific art, it appears that the author himself held special regard for it – this interest stemming from his undeniable fascination with early German Romanticism, as well as from his own personal disappointments with the written word. Given the highly autobiographical nature of many of his works, it is reasonable to assume that Hesse himself shared some of his characters' linguistic frustrations, as I have proposed in the first chapter. Perhaps he, too, wished to access something beyond mundane empirical reality but had difficulties accomplishing this with language alone. Hence, it is possible to understand him as drawing on Novalis' 150-year-old desire to literally write linguistic "compositions" – musical pieces with words – so as to synthesize these two important art forms and transcend phenomenal boundaries.¹⁰¹ I will show in the second part of this chapter that Hesse does indeed try to write musically to a certain degree, i.e., he attempts "transmedialization" or musical ekphrasis, as Siglind Bruhn has argued in her book *The Musical Order of the World*. This, in turn, will support the larger claim I make about *Das Glasperlenspiel* in this dissertation: Both Hermann Hesse and Josef Knecht endeavor to access an absolute through a unique synthesization of language and music – and both fail. These failures ultimately prove to be one of the last experiments in German literature to

¹⁰¹ As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, Hesse's attempts to "synthesize" the two disciplines take the form of the early German Romantic desire to turn language into music. I am not focusing in this dissertation on the common occurrence of words accompanying music, such as in opera pieces or Lieder. Hesse, himself, does not seem to emphasize this latter form of synthesis much in his life either. Although he occasionally tried to write libretti, these attempts all failed. Moreover, his libretti were meant to support the music rather than vice versa. For instance, with reference to the libretto he wrote for the proposed opera *Bianca*, Hesse explains, "[d]iese Dichtung ist ein Versuch, die romantische Oper zu erneuern. Verse und Gesang gehen durch, ohne unterbrechende Prosa" (Michels *Musik* 138). In other words, Hesse did not wish to interrupt the music with recitativo.

achieve this particular kind of marriage between language and music and results in the end of the long Romantic period in German literature.¹⁰²

II. Music as the key to communication

As previously mentioned, Hesse sets up a number of goals for language within his novels, only to demonstrate that language actually fails to achieve any of them. Most surprising is the fact that, although almost all his fictional characters and quite possibly most of his readers expect language to facilitate communication between people, words almost always lead to misunderstandings and confusion, especially in *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Almost as unexpected is the fact that language, which is often used by Hesse's characters to describe empirical reality, is also incapable of accomplishing this particular task. Finally, coming to the forefront in Hesse's final novel, the goal of language as art – of literature – to help one access a reality beyond the phenomenal realm, also presents itself as unattainable. This final failure of language is the most important one for comprehending the complexity of Hesse's masterpiece and in supporting the main thesis of this dissertation: There is a radical shift in German literature shortly after the publication of Hermann Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Despite language's shortcomings, a different art form, not based on words, does indeed successfully achieve a number of these linguistic goals. *Music* is the key to communication, to describing empirical reality, and to accessing the absolute in Hermann Hesse's works. However, it is a music completely independent of language, rather than language aspiring to become music, as Novalis had once dreamed would someday be possible.

¹⁰² Thus, I demonstrate that music in *Das Glasperlenspiel* plays a much more significant role than many scholars have hitherto acknowledged. See, for example, Ralph Freedman's claim that music functions primarily as a "symbol" in the novel (283).

i. The beauty of non-instrumental, 18th-century music

First, it is important to examine what kind of music Hesse proposes as a solution to most of language's problems. This will help to explain *how* and *why* music achieves certain goals when words fail to do so. Unlike other themes and ideas in this author's long career, the type of music he extols changes very little over time. Hesse consistently praises 17th- through early 19th-century baroque and classical music, while condemning later romantic pieces and modern 20th-century works, especially most non-instrumental music.¹⁰³ We find, for example, the protagonist in *Der Kurgast* objecting to the musical preferences of his fellow health spa guests.¹⁰⁴ He complains:

[I]ch [wünsche], sie möchten richtige Musik spielen statt all dieser Kunststücke, Bearbeitungen und Arrangements. Und doch wünsche ich auch diese eigentlich nicht. Es wäre mir um nichts wohler, wenn statt diesem unterhaltenden Auszug aus *Carmen* oder aus der *Fledermaus* etwa ein Schubertquartett oder ein Duo von Händel gespielt würde. Um Gottes willen, das wäre noch schlimmer. (*Kurgast* 42)

The fictional author is obviously dissatisfied with the late 19th-century operatic choices *Carmen* and *Der Fledermaus* and, although it is a bit confusing at first as to whether he prefers the earlier, instrumental works of Schubert and Händel or not, a later passage in the story sheds light on this specific point. The character thinks to himself while listening to a woman play piano that “[sie]...ein lebenswürdiges Menuett aus dem achtzehnten

¹⁰³ Hesse and his literary figures do seem to make an exception for certain kinds of church music, but these fictional characters almost exclusively focus on the musical nature of the religious words rather than the actual meaning of them. For instance, one finds Goldmund contemplating in *Narziss und Goldmund*: “Und sehr liebte er die Kirchengesänge, namentlich die Marienlieder. Er liebte den festen strengen Gang dieser Gesänge, ihre immer wiederkehrenden Anflehungen und Lobpreisungen. Er konnte ihrem ehrwürdigen Sinn anbetend folgen oder konnte auch, des Sinnes vergessend, nur die feierlichen Maße dieser Verse lieben und sich von ihnen erfüllen lassen, von den langgezogenen tiefen Tönen, von den vollen tönenden Vokalen, von den frommen Wiederholungen. Im innersten Herzen liebte er nicht die Gelehrsamkeit, nicht Grammatik und Logik, obwohl auch sie ihre Schönheit hatten, sondern mehr liebte er die Bilder- und Klangwelt der Liturgie” (*Narziss* 43).

¹⁰⁴ One should not become confused by the fact that the health spa guest appears to change his mind about these “Kunststücke” further on in the novel. He thinks to himself when listening to a typical resort performance, for example, “[z]uweilen gewinnt und bezaubert mich auch die Musik selbst” (*Kurgast* 74). It is important to note, however, that he seems more pleased with the music at this point in time because he is no longer actually listening to it. The music has merely become a way to pass the time (*Kurgast* 74).

Jahrhundert mit ungeübten, aber kräftigen Händen vergewaltigt und totgeschlagen [hat]” (*Kurgast* 71). Clearly, the resort guest appreciates 18th-century music, but he does not enjoy hearing it performed by someone who does not share his profound admiration. The violent metaphors of death and rape used to describe the experience make it clear how strongly he feels about his musical preferences. Thus, it now becomes obvious that the man would rather his peers play bad opera than that they ruin beautiful Schubert or Händel pieces. The other health spa guests are not able to do “richtige Musik” justice.

Given the health spa guest’s general dislike for opera and late 19th-century music in *Der Kurgast*, it comes as no surprise to find Richard Wagner leading a procession of “guilty” composers through the depths of hell in Hesse’s novel *Der Steppenwolf*. In a late scene, Harry Haller finds himself in one of the many rooms of Pablo’s Magic Theater with Mozart, his great idol. Haller hears the composer’s *Don Giovanni* in the background and comments with enthusiasm, “[e]s ist die letzte große Musik, die geschrieben worden ist” (*Steppenwolf* 399).¹⁰⁵ He continues by stating, “[g]ewiß, es kam noch Schubert, es kam noch Hugo Wolf, und auch den armen herrlichen Chopin darf ich nicht vergessen...o ja, auch Beethoven ist ja da, auch er ist wunderbar” (*Steppenwolf* 399). This latter claim seems at first to contradict the previous assertion that Hesse’s characters tend to disapprove of Romantic music. However, Haller immediately qualifies his opinion and explains, “[a]ber das alles, so schön es sei, hat schon etwas von Bruchstück, von Auflösung in sich” (*Steppenwolf* 399). Although this particular music appeals to Haller in some sense, it also already foreshadows a degeneration of music, which, according to a number of characters in *Das Glasperlenspiel*, will continue well into the 20th century and beyond.

¹⁰⁵ Although Haller praises an opera in this section, it seems likely that his admiration is directed more toward the composer himself than operatic music in general.

Mozart's reaction is to magically wave his hand and transform the theater into a large canyon meant to represent the underworld or some form of hell. The two characters observe a procession of people dressed in black, led by Johannes Brahms and Richard Wagner. According to Mozart, both men are paying the price for "[d]as dicke Instrumentierung," which was so popular in their time (*Steppenwolf* 400). The composers walk and seek retribution for creating music burdened by unnecessary notes and wild ornamentation.¹⁰⁶ Mozart himself appears dissatisfied with the direction music took after his time and tells the narrator, "ich habe das Metier [Musik] aufgegeben, ich habe mich zur Ruhe gesetzt. Nur Späßes halber sehe ich zuweilen dem Betrieb noch zu" (*Steppenwolf* 399-400). In other words, anything after classical music is either punishable or, at the very least, not to be taken seriously.

Hesse also comments briefly on more modern 20th-century music in one of his lesser known short stories "Ein Abend bei Doktor Faustus." In this piece, Mephistopheles has created a machine that can play sounds from the remote past and distant future, which Doktor Faustus wishes to demonstrate for a house guest, his friend Doktor Eisenbart (Michels *Musik* 304). After listening to strange singing and poetry,

eine Musik [brach] los, eine wilde, geile, sehr taktfeste Musik, schmetternd bald, bald schmachtend, eine ganz und gar unbekannte, fremdartige unanständige, bösertige Musik, von heulenden, quäkenden und gaksenden Blasinstrumenten, durchschüttert von Gongschlägen, überklettert zuweilen von einer singenden, heulenden Sängerstimme, welche Worte oder Verse in unbekannter Sprache von sich gab. (Michels *Musik* 307)

¹⁰⁶ It is interesting that Haller, an intellectual and poet, thinks to himself in response to what he has heard from Mozart: "Mir war recht elend geworden. Ich sah mich selbst, einen todmüden Pilger, durch die Wüste des Jenseits ziehen, beladen mit den vielen entbehrlichen Büchern, die ich geschrieben, mit all den Aufsätzen, mit allen den Feuilletons, gefolgt vom Heer der Setzer, die daran hatten arbeiten, vom Heer der Leser, die das alles hatten schlucken müssen" (*Steppenwolf* 401). One can read this passage as a reflection on the state of literature at the time *Der Steppenwolf* was written and Hesse's personal desire to *not* write the typical, meaningless pieces so popular in the age of the Feuilleton, as the narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* refers to the period. Hence, Hesse extrapolates on his literary views through a musical analogy, something which occurs more and more frequently over the course of the author's career.

This wild music is completely strange and foreign to the damned scholar and his colleague. They wonder together whether future man has gone completely insane or if perhaps, demons have come to rule the earth (Michels *Musik* 308). It is unclear whether this violent, evil, disagreeable music is supposed to represent late jazz music or even possibly Schoenberg's twelve-tone music, but this point is not especially relevant to the discussion at hand. What is important is that the two listeners can find no recognizable structure to the music and do not enjoy listening to it. This lack of organization and familiarity will prove to be the key to understanding why Hesse raises classical and baroque pieces, music based on strict convention, to a special status in many of his works, while damning music of later periods. In fact, I will demonstrate later in this chapter that this specific characteristic ties directly into comments made regarding music, language, and communication in *Das Glasperlenspiel*.

In his last novel, Hesse continues to pay tribute to 17th-and 18th-century music as “[die] echte[] Musik” (*GPS* 26) and calls particular attention to Johann Sebastian Bach, mentioning the baroque composer on at least ten separate occasions in the story and even attributing a poem titled “Zu einer Toccata von Bach” to Josef Knecht (*GPS* 476).¹⁰⁷ Hesse's characters also continue to praise “klassische Musik” (*GPS* 26) and to condemn the same romantic and modern music in *Das Glasperlenspiel* as they did in his earlier writings. Thus, we find the historian of Knecht's biography describing the 19th and 20th centuries as the “Zeit, wo die Sucht nach Dynamik und Steigerung alles Musizieren beherrschte und wo man über der Ausführung und der ‘Auffassung’ des Dirigenten beinahe der Musik selbst vergaß” (*GPS* 24). This time period, according to the narrator of the novel, was

¹⁰⁷ Hesse also depicts the music by other baroque and classical composers in a positive light, e.g., Purcell (*GPS* 91, 173, 174, 178, 349), Scarlatti (*GPS* 129, 210, 374), Froberger (*GPS* 49, 103, 129, 385), Pachelbel (*GPS* 30), Schütz (*GPS* 30), Mozart (*GPS* 41, 44, 46), Händel (*GPS* 44, 174), Couperin (*GPS* 44, 91), Monteverdi (*GPS* 49, 73), and Prätorius (*GPS* 49), to name but a few.

characterized by the desire of various conductors to constantly outshine all previous performances of certain musical pieces with their own interpretations. These conductors pushed their orchestras to play faster and louder, and whatever magic may have been found in the original compositions, was lost in this competition to outdo other performances. The narrator also critiques the “Kult der Vorherrschaft des harmonischen und der rein sinnlichen Dynamik im Musizieren..., der etwa von Beethoven und der beginnenden Romantik an durch zwei Jahrhunderte die Musikübung beherrscht hat” (*GPS* 26). It is not surprising that Castalians, people who herald reason and discourage individual creativity, would disapprove of a music which places the sensual before the organizational. According to the narrator, the biggest fault of musicians from Beethoven onwards for the next two hundred years was their obsession with harmony – that is, the tendency to push harmony beyond conventional, classical limits – and the sensual dynamics inherent to music’s nature.¹⁰⁸ Finally, the Musikmeister offers one final, explicit criticism of music “im Feuilletonzeitalter,” namely that “[d]as Talent ohne Charakter, das Virtuositum ohne Hierarchie...das Musikleben beherrscht hatte” (*GPS* 81). The wise Musikmeister notes that musicians and composers from this time period lacked something he regards as absolutely essential to creating good music: morality. This idea relates to the previous comment about the overwhelming sensuality of music, which Castalians would naturally distrust. In order to compensate for this art form’s highly sensual nature, people creating and playing music, according to the wise man, must have strong characters and respect for the idea of hierarchy, for ruling and serving. Without it, music will not live up to its full potential.

¹⁰⁸ According to Theodor Ziolkowski, this 19th- and 20th-century obsession with the sensual in music is what leads characters in *Das Glasperlenspiel* to prefer older music. The scholar notes, for instance, “[f]or Knecht perfection in music is achieved in the period 1500-1800 (especially by Bach), in which a delicate balance of the intellectual and the sensual is maintained” (*Glass Bead* 65).

In summary, Hesse's characters critique romantic and modern music for a number of different reasons: Harry Haller disapproves of the "disintegration" of music beginning with Beethoven; Doktor Faustus finds future music disturbing and foreign, in part because of the strange gong sounds and loud brass instruments he hears when listening to Mephistopheles' acoustic time-machine; the biographer in *Das Glasperlenspiel* objects to the way in which 19th- and 20th-century composers pushed the limits of harmony and dynamics; and the Musikmeister misses a sense of hierarchy and organization in most music composed after 1800. What these apparently distinct criticisms have in common is the underlying opinion that instrumental music should to be strictly based on rules and conventions.¹⁰⁹

What seems to trouble most of Hesse's characters is that a listener of post-classical music "can...no longer... identify with a stable backdrop of convention upon which themes and episodes play and from which they receive their foreground profiles" (Burnham 64).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Although Hesse's characters stay relatively consistent with their musical preferences, the author himself seems more flexible. He enjoys, at least in his early days, music by Beethoven and Chopin. Hesse writes in a letter to Eberhard Goes in 1896, for example, "[i]ch liebe ihn [Chopin], wie ich außer Mozart keinen Musiker liebe" (Michels *Musik* 126). Hesse consistently mentions Chopin in his early poems and letters. Similarly, the author appreciates Beethoven's music as well during this time in his life. Hesse writes in a letter to Helene Voigt-Diederichs in 1898, "[w]enn nicht Chopin wäre, der so unbegreiflich mir aus der innersten Seele redet, so wüßte ich neben Beethoven wenig Klaviermusik zu ertragen" (Michels *Musik* 134). However, Hesse determines that there are dangers associated with romantic music as he grows older. In notes from 1912, the man cautions: "Wer wenig von Musik versteht, genießt meistens die romantische leichter. Die klassische hat keine solche Orgien und Räusche zu bieten wie jene, sie bringt aber auch nie Dégout, schlechtes Gewissen und Katzenjammer" (Michels *Musik* 140-141). Moreover, the author jokes in a letter to his wife, Ninon, from 1928 about leaving a concert after listening to the Mozart and Bach pieces before Beethoven's 5th symphony was performed so that the "1. Teil des Konzerts gerettet [wurde]" (Michels *Musik* 153). In the end, Mozart and earlier musicians really do seem to be the composers Hesse admires most. In a dairy entry from 1920, Hesse writes: "Über diesen Tag, über diese Seite meiner bunten Lebensblätter möchte ich ein Wort schreiben, ein Wort wie 'Welt' oder 'Sonne', ein Wort voll Magie, voll Klang, voll Fülle, voller als voll, reicher als reich, ein Wort mit der Bedeutung vollkommener Erfüllung, vollkommenen Wissens. Da fällt das Wort mir ein, das magische Wort für diesen Tag, ich schreibe es groß über dies Blatt: MOZART. Das bedeutet: die Welt hat einen Sinn, und er ist uns erspürbar im Gleichnis der Musik" (Michels *Musik* 150).

¹¹⁰ For a detailed description of the shift in listening and compositional practices which occurred at this time, see: Burnham, Scott. *Beethoven Hero*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

The music scholar argues quite convincingly that the "turning point in music history" (4) took place with Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony and that Beethoven "liberate[s] music from the stays of eighteenth-century convention" (xvi). Although Burnham depicts these changes in a positive light, Hesse's characters appear dissatisfied with the direction that music took after Beethoven.

In other words, people can feel disoriented when listening to 19th- and 20th-century music because they no longer know what to expect.¹¹¹ This is one reason why Hesse praises all earlier instrumental music, which is deeply rooted in and based on convention – this music allows artist, performer, and audience to communicate with each other because a common cultural code exists among them. The standard practices of baroque and classical music, such as the rules governing harmonic chord progressions, allow people familiar with this type of music to easily process the information conveyed in a particular piece. There is a framework and structure found in this music, which closely resembles the rules of grammar governing natural language. Thus, highly conventionalized music can be seen as an ersatz or replacement for language, which fails to support communication. This kind of music is like language in all the right ways, but does not share any of language’s faults.¹¹²

Although continuously praising 17th- and 18th-century music and critiquing language’s inability to allow people communicate with each other, Hesse does not really make the connection between the two ideas, i.e., he does not propose music as a solution to this communication problem, until writing *Das Glasperlenspiel*. In earlier stories one finds, at most, an occasional passage *alluding* to this idea. In *Narziss und Goldmund*, for example, Goldmund finds it necessary to comfort one of his female companions when she becomes upset. The narrator describes the situation and writes, “[m]it Worten tröstete er sie nie, nur mit seinem Streicheln, nur indem er ihren Kopf an seiner Brust hielt und leise sinnlose

¹¹¹ This seems to explain Josef Knecht’s predilection for conventional music and traditional glass bead games, as well as in his dissatisfaction with some of the games created by his friend, Tegularius, who tends to favor less conservative compositional techniques in his games (*GPS* 156).

¹¹² For example, listeners of highly conventionalized music do not expect individual notes to directly point to objects in the empirical world (an erroneous belief often associated with language, which leads to a number of problems, as discussed in the first chapter).

Zaubertöne summt“ (*Narziss* 118). Goldmund knows that words will not console his friend. Instead, humming a melody – making music – is the most practical way to communicate a sense of security to another person.¹¹³ Nevertheless, this scene does not unequivocally support the idea that music fulfills language’s goal of communication better than words. The direct resolution of this problem does not occur until Hesse writes the biography of Josef Knecht.

ii. Music aiding linguistic communication: Pater Jakobus and the Designoris

There are two different ways in which music aids or replaces verbal communication in *Das Glasperlenspiel*. The first, and less radical, is when Josef Knecht uses music as an introduction or opening to a verbal conversation with another character, who is not yet ready to completely let go of the idea that communication occurs only through language. This is often the case with people from outside the Province, such as Pater Jakobus or members of the Designori family. The second way music solves this particular language problem is by *directly* expressing ideas and emotions through the medium of music without any words at all, as if often the case with Knecht and the Musikmeister.

Knecht’s first assignment for the Order after completing his required studies is to travel outside the Province to the monastery Mariafels. Officially, he is there to tutor the monks in the basic rules of the glass bead game. Unofficially, his mission is to convince an important monk named Pater Jakobus of Castalia’s merits in the world so that the religious man can help Castalia win representation in Rome. Knecht finds his tasks especially difficult at first because he is considered an outsider by most of the monks in the monastery,

¹¹³ This humming, although akin to singing, is more similar to instrumental music because it is independent of language.

and he feels extremely uncomfortable in their company. Furthermore, Pater Jakobus, “der zu Anfang die Worte ‘kastalisch’ oder ‘Glasperlenspiel’ nur mit ironischer Betonung, ja ausgesprochen als Schimpfworte benutzt hatte” (*GPS* 184), has a significant amount of disdain for Castalia, and Knecht is unsure how to win him over. It is clear that Knecht will have to converse with him using language – it is the most acceptable means of communication for men of the “real world” – but Pater Jakobus does not seem open to hearing the message Knecht would like to convey.

It is not until both discover a shared love of music that Knecht is able to get the older man to actually listen to what he is trying to tell him about the intrinsic worth of Castalia. One evening, when walking by the monk’s room, Knecht hears the man playing a sonata by Purcell, “ohne Virtuosität, aber taktfest und sauber gespielt” (*GPS* 173). Knecht thinks to himself that the music is “einsam und weltfern, und so tapfer und unschuldig, so kindlich und überlegen zugleich wie jede gute Musik inmitten der unerlösten Stummheit der Welt” (*GPS* 173). This music seems to belong neither to Castalia nor to the rest of the world. It is innocent and childlike – neutral in some mysterious way – thus making it the perfect impartial meeting ground for men from such different backgrounds as Knecht and Pater Jakobus. It is a voice in a silent world, a form of communication when words alone will not suffice. Pater Jakobus seems to sense the same calming magic in the music and explains to Knecht, “er spiele jeden Abend eine halbe oder auch eine ganze Stunde, er beende sein Tagewerk mit dem Einbruch der Dunkelheit und verzichte in den Stunden vor dem Schlafengehen auf Lesen und Schreiben” (*GPS* 174). The monk realizes on some unconscious level that there is perhaps something more honest and truthful about this music than there is about language, which is why he wishes to end his days by playing sonatas

rather than by reading and writing. This common interest in Purcell leads the men to talk all night about music and eventually paves the way for other conversations about Castalia and the history of the world.

The two have a number of discussions, and Knecht does eventually seem to convince Pater Jakobus to support Castalia, despite having to rely on language to do so. However, although depending on imperfect words to communicate, the actual connection and most meaningful exchanges occur between the two men on the many evenings they make music together. Knecht visits Pater Jakobus frequently and

[brachte] häufig sein Klavichord oder auch eine Geige mit[], dann setzte sich der Alte ans Klavier im sanften Licht einer Kerze, deren süßer Wachsduft den kleinen Raum erfüllte gleich der Musik von Corelli, Scarlatti, Telemann oder Bach, die sie abwechselnd oder gemeinsam spielten. (*GPS* 210)

In the end, it is music that allows the men to even attempt linguistic communication.

One finds something very similar occurring with Plinio Designori's son. Toward the end of his time in Castalia, Knecht visits his childhood friend when he has the time and occasionally finds himself alone with Plinio's son, Tito. He speaks to the boy sometimes, but Tito often displays "Ablehnung und Trotz" (*GPS* 373) and "zeigt[] sich gelegentlich ausgesprochen unartig" (*GPS* 374). Knecht's words seem to have little effect on the young man. One afternoon, though, Knecht asks Tito whether he enjoys music and after playing a piece from Scarlatti on the piano, the Magister Ludi pauses, and "da er den Knaben aufmerksam und hingeeben fand, began er ihm in kurzen Worten zu erklären, was in einer...Glasperlenspielübung ungefähr vor sich gehe" (*GPS* 374). Tito is clearly more willing to listen to Knecht's words after this musical interlude. Although Knecht must resort to language to communicate with Tito, music made the boy much more receptive to the message being conveyed.

Knecht is well aware of the way in which he manipulates music to his own advantage. After leaving the Province forever to become Tito's private tutor, Knecht must find ways to communicate successfully with the young man. He decides one morning to use "Sportkameradschaft" (*GPS* 466) to connect with Tito. Nevertheless, Knecht is very aware "[e]s [ist] ein Mittel unter mehreren, und keines der wichtigsten, die Musik zum Beispiel würde viel weiter führen" (*GPS* 466). Knecht has absolute faith in music's ability to make his conversation partner more sensitive to the messages he finds himself necessarily trying to convey through an imperfect linguistic medium. In his dealing with people from outside of Castalia, music makes a type of communication through words at least partially successful.¹¹⁴

One finds something similar occurring with Tito's father on one occasion, but rather than preparing Plinio Designori for a conversation by playing music *first*, Knecht turns to music as a last resort after what appears to be a failed linguistic encounter. As seen in the previous section, Designori continually attempts to speak with Knecht over the years and almost always leaves such a discussion with the impression that the two men have been speaking two completely different languages. After another such conversation dealing with Designori's general depression, Knecht decides to play some music for his friend. In fact, he plays the very same Purcell sonata that the Magister Ludi and Pater Jakobus had bonded over years before. Designori, although very frustrated before hearing the music, "hatte...ein verändertes und erhelltes Gesicht" when finally departing (*GPS* 349). In this case, rather than prepare his conversation partner for future linguistic communication by playing music

¹¹⁴ The supreme importance of focusing on music rather than sport is, however, lost on the Magister Ludi. He uses music to his own advantage on numerous occasions throughout the novel, but never seems to *fully* realize how vital it is to his well-being. Thus, one finds him making comments about wanting to write literature after leaving Castalia – rather than remarks, for instance, about wanting to become a musician – and swimming to his death in a physical competition with young Tito Designori, instead of playing the flute he brought along as his sole possession from the Province. Had he only stuck with the musical education of the boy, he may well have lived a number of years longer. Knecht, in all his wisdom, fails to see that music is the essential foundation of his life and drowns before he can even begin teaching the boy.

first, as Knecht often did with Tito and Pater Jakobus, the glass bead game master plays music and attempts to communicate by these alternative means with Designori only *after* words fail him. It is likely that Knecht recognizes Designori's extreme dependence on the belief that language should allow one to communicate all ideas – the two were known for having numerous and lengthy linguistic battles in their youth and Designori was always the superior debater – and the Magister Ludi probably suspected that approaching Plinio first with music might actually create a mental block in this particular character. Hence, only after Designori finally realizes, at least on an unconscious level, that words were not helping him communicate with his friend does Knecht successfully replace linguistic conversation with musical communication. Designori could not put into words what Knecht was telling him through the Purcell sonata, but he obviously received the message. Knecht's desire was for Designori to find some inner peace and to alleviate his friend's suffering. The expression on Plinio's face when leaving assures the reader that this, indeed, is what occurred.

iii. Music replacing language: *Der Musikmeister*

Although using music as an *aid* to linguistic communication with some characters, Knecht finds himself able to forgo language entirely when conversing with one person in particular in Castalia. It comes as no surprise that Knecht's mentor and friend, the Musikmeister, is a man open enough to the idea of musical communication that he and Knecht entirely *replace* language with music during some of their encounters. Indeed, a musical dialogue occurs during their very first meeting. The older man interviews Knecht as a young boy so as to determine whether Knecht has the potential to successfully study in Castalia. The boy is "verwirrt" and "bezaubert," and "konnte...nichts [sagen]" (*GPS* 52). Words completely fail the young man. In response, the Musikmeister plays the beginning of

a popular melody on the piano. Knecht immediately recognizes it, continues to play the tune, and the Musikmeister accompanies him, adding first one voice, then another, and another. They repeat the melody and “[v]iele Male spielten sie das Lied, es war keine Verständigung mehr nötig und mit jeder Wiederholung wurde das Lied ganz von selbst reicher an Verzierungen und Rankenspiel” (*GPS* 52). When the narrator writes that there was no need for “Verständigung,” he specifically means that there was no verbal communication necessary. Knecht and the Musikmeister need no recourse to language in order to decide what notes to play, but they are in full “agreement” and are “communicating” with each other through music alone.

This episode is clearly unlike the ones mentioned previously because music is not being used as a way of leading into a verbal discussion but is instead a replacement for it. The narrator notes namely, “die vier Stimmen zogen ihre ihre dünnen, klaren Linien, *sprachen miteinander*, stützten sich aufeinander, überschnitten sich und umspielten einander in heitern Bogen und Figuren” (*GPS* 53).¹¹⁵ A great deal is being said in this scene without either character actually speaking any words. In fact, the two are so engrossed in their shared experience, in their musical “conversation,” that “der Knabe und der Alte dachten an nichts Andres mehr, gaben sich den schönen verschwisterten Linien hin und den Figuren, die sie in ihren Begegnungen bildeten, in ihrem Netz gefangen musizierten sie” (*GPS* 53). After this intimate and all-consuming event, Knecht once again “brachte kein Wort heraus” (*GPS* 53). The boy still had no use for language. Everything important had already been communicated through the music.

Although the Musikmeister and Knecht do have a number of verbal discussions over the years – as we have seen in the previous section, no one in Castalia is able to give up

¹¹⁵ My italics.

language completely -- this kind of musical communication between the young man and his mentor continues for a lengthy period of time. In fact, the bond forged between them through music is so strong that eventually, *any* kind of communication between the two is heard by Knecht as music. Towards the end of the Musikmeister's life, the old man gradually distances himself more and more from language until he refuses to speak at all. Knecht visits him and recounts the experience to his friend Carlo Ferromonte in a letter. He writes:

Wegnistens habe ich das, was von ihm ausstrahlte oder was zwischen ihm und mir wie rhythmisches Atmen hin und her wogte, durchaus als Musik empfunden, als eine völlig unmateriell gewordene, esoterische Musik, welche jeden in den Zauberkreis Eintretenden mit aufnimmt wie ein mehrstimmiges Lied eine neu einfallende Stimme. (GPS 284)

Although the Musikmeister does not actually play any music on this occasion, he has become, through the frequent musical conversations between him and Knecht over the years, a literal "Personifikation der Musik" for Knecht (GPS 284). Thus, even the rhythm of their breathing is perceived by Knecht as music, which is to say, he and the Musikmeister communicate in their own, unique, musical way one final time. Knecht understands that his mentor is dying, but that the old man is content, satisfied, and ready to let go of life. The Musikmeister needs no words to express these ideas and his mere presence alone allows Knecht to hear the music that would have communicated this information.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ It is not the case that the Musikmeister never uses music as a way of making his mentee more receptive to a verbal message, as Knecht himself does with Tito or Pater Jakobus. However, this only occurs when Knecht is feeling unbalanced and disturbed by his Castalian studies or duties. For instance, the Musikmeister visits Knecht "in eine Zeit, wo Josef, von seiner Aufgabe ermüdet und zermürbt, große Mühe hatte, das Gleichgewicht zu bewahren" (GPS 104). The Musikmeister receives unsatisfactory answers to a number of questions and then decides to use music to make Knecht more responsive. The older man seems well aware of what he is doing and "[g]eduldig ließ er sich Zeit, [Josef] in den Zustand der Bereitschaft und Empfänglichkeit zu versetzen" (GPS 105).

III. Describing empirical reality through musical analogies

I have shown that music often allows for much more meaningful communication between people in *Das Glasperlenspiel* than language does. Similarly, music frequently enables characters to describe certain aspects of empirical reality much more efficiently than direct linguistic references to the world do. This phenomenon, unlike the previously described ability of music to aid in communication, *does* occur throughout most of Hesse's works. The most common way one finds Hesse's characters drawing on music to describe the phenomenal world is through musical analogies. These characters, just like the author himself, find themselves necessarily bound to imperfect language when attempting to portray some aspect of reality. In an effort to overcome their linguistic limitations, they allude to music, albeit through words. That is to say, they verbally – for they often have no other choice – compare something in the world to some feature of music. Although many of Hesse's characters are not fully aware that they are compensating for language's shortcomings through musical comparisons, the author is completely conscious of his actions. He writes in a letter to C.G. Jung in September, 1934, “[f]ür Ihr Geheimnis haben Sie das Gleichnis der Chymie, so wie ich für meines das Gleichnis der Musik habe, und zwar nicht irgendeiner Musik, sondern eher das der klassischen” (Michels *Materialien* 96). Interestingly, one finds Hesse and his characters employing this method of description most often with respect to certain themes: they use musical analogies when trying to depict the makeup of Castalian society, the degeneration of the world in general, and of course, the abstract glass bead game.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ It seems counterintuitive at first to discuss Hesse using language to describe music in order to depict what language cannot express on its own, but when contextualizing this idea in the larger framework of this project, one realizes that this is simply another way Hesse attempts to “combine” music and language with the overall goal of accessing something absolute through literary works of art, such as *Das Glasperlenspiel*.

i. Romantic analogies in Hesse's earlier works

In his earlier works, Hesse often uses musical analogies in a manner echoing early German Romantic descriptions of the cosmos as music. Especially in “Klingsors letzter Sommer,” one finds a number of references to music, which are meant to describe the universe – the state of the phenomenal world – better than direct referential use of language alone could. However, unlike Novalis’ poetic visions of the way in which the natural world and music harmoniously mirror each other, Klingsor’s world as described through musical analogies seems more dissonant.

The artist critiques one of the most fundamental building blocks of empirical reality relatively early on in the story: time. He lies in bed one night and complains, “[w]arum gab es Zeit? Warum immer nur dies idiotische Nacheinander, und kein brausendes, sättigendes Zugleich?” (*Klingsor* 299). At first, it is unclear why Klingsor would wish for the consecutive nature of actions and events in time to be simultaneous instead, and it is nearly impossible to imagine what a world in which everything occurs all at once would be like. However, the artist follows this statement with another comment, which draws on music, to clarify. He thinks, “[d]as ganze kurze Leben hindurch konnte man genießen, konnte man schlafen, aber man sang immer nur Lied um Lied, nie klang die ganze volle Symphonie mit allen hundert Stimmen und Instrumenten zugleich” (*Klingsor* 299). Suddenly, through this comparison to music, the reader begins to understand how and why Klingsor wishes the basic nature of time to change so drastically. It is relatively easy to imagine various life events as individual songs, some sweet, some sad, and each one following the next. However, it is *also* easy to imagine these songs being played simultaneously and creating a magnificent symphony of life. Klingsor wants all of life’s experiences to happen at once because they

would be more powerful and significant than when they occur one after the other, just as a harmonic composition is only complete when all the individual voices are played together rather than separately. This musical analogy allows one to understand how Klingsor would wish to change the phenomenal world if it were possible, something difficult to imagine on its own or through mere linguistic description.¹¹⁸

In general, Klingsor does not seem to have the most optimistic outlook regarding the future of the world. Very frequently, the artist refers to the phenomenal world in terms of a “ferne Tonart” (*Klingsor* 313), an unfamiliar musical key. He is more specific later on in the story as to which particular mode he is referring to and mentions “die Tonart Tsing Tse” (331), a key found in Chinese music, described and discussed in Lü Buwei’s *Spring and Autumn*.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Klingsor cites a portion of this text in the story, and one discovers that Tsing Tse is the musical key associated with the “Untergang” of the world (*Klingsor* 331). Klingsor, however, does not seem perturbed by the fact that the phenomenal world is degenerating and reaching its end. This counterintuitive reaction remains confusing to readers until one examines another musical analogy made by Klingsor. He says:

Nie war die Welt so schön, nie war ein Bild von mir so schön, Wetterleuchten zuckt, Musik des Untergangs ist angestimmt. Wir wollen sie mitsingen, die süße bange Musik, wir wollen hier beisammen bleiben und Wein trinken und Brot essen.
(*Klingsor* 328)

¹¹⁸ Hesse mentions this idea of changing the basic nature of time in *Der Steppenwolf* as well. In this story, Haller contemplates the music that he loves – pieces by Mozart and Bach – and thinks to himself, “diese Musik war so etwas wie zu Raum gefrorene Zeit” (*Steppenwolf* 345). Later on, he finds a sign posted on one of the doors in Pablo’s magic theater, on which is written: “Inbegriff der Kunst – Die Verwandlung von Zeit in Raum durch die Musik” (*Steppenwolf* 384). It is difficult to imagine exactly what Haller means with these enigmatic claims. One possible interpretation could be that Hesse draws on the distinction Arthur Schopenhauer makes between the world as Will and the world as Representation in these passages. Music, a direct link to the world as Will, calls into question and confuses concepts such as space and time because the Will exists independent from the empirical world’s natural laws and the principle of sufficient reason.

¹¹⁹ Lü Bewi’s *Spring and Autumn* is a classical, encyclopedic Chinese text from around 239BC (*New World*).

One would presume that the end of the empirical world would normally be considered an extremely negative event, which people would generally dread and fear. Klingsor, however, appears to attach some positive connotations to phenomenal reality's demise – a reaction difficult to relate to until the man compares this gradual degeneration to music. It is not terribly difficult for someone to imagine, for instance, music that is sad and frightening, perhaps composed and played in a minor key, but also beautiful and sweet at the same time. It is only through the allusion to music that Klingsor can describe the phenomenal world and express his feelings about it.

This general depiction of the natural world in its final days occurs in one of Hesse's next novels, *Narziss und Goldmund*, as well. Whereas Klingsor's references to music stay somewhat abstract, foreign, and distant – the story taking place in a rather surreal world with characters who would like to confound time and space – Goldmund's dying world has a stronger resemblance to the phenomenal reality that readers know. Moreover, references to the death of the world, to “das Lied der Vergänglichkeit” (*Narziss* 225), are to be taken more literally, as Goldmund finds himself wandering through lands ravaged by a plague of some sort, which is actually killing a number of people.

Goldmund travels from place to place and notices, “[e]s war dunkel und wild in der Welt geworden, heulend sang der Tod sein Lied” (*Narziss* 226). Goldmund perceives his surroundings as disturbing music, but surprisingly, rather than fleeing from this sound, “Goldmund hörte es mit offenen Ohren, mit brennender Leidenschaft” (*Narziss* 226).¹²⁰ Like Klingsor, who felt drawn to the “Musik des Untergangs” because of its sweet sound,

¹²⁰ Although Hesse uses the word “Lied” and writes about death “singing” in this section, one should understand these possible suggestions of vocal music more as allusions to melodic “tunes” without words. Just as Goldmund hums a melody to comfort a friend earlier in the story, he hears death's music as melody in these scenes rather than as music accompanied by words.

Goldmund wants to hear this music of death. However, while Klingsor's attitude toward the music seems calm, accepting, and almost peaceful, Goldmund listens with "burning passion." In fact, as he continues his journey through plague-stricken lands, he is "berauscht vom Todeslied, hingegeben an das laut schreiende Leid der Welt, trauig und dennoch glühend, mit weit offenen Sinnen" (*Narziss* 226). Although sad and violent, the music Goldmund associates with his surroundings attracts the young man. He listens with "open ears" and "open senses," and the music used to describe the outside world resonates with and resembles his inner emotional landscape as well. It would be overly simplistic, however, to claim that Goldmund is depressed and wants to die because he lost his partner, Lena, to the plague a few days earlier. On the contrary, his openness to the music of death is of a far more primal nature and is best understood in the context of comments made by Friedrich Nietzsche with reference to music in some of the philosopher's early writings.

The words "wild," "Leidenschaft," "berauscht," and "glühend" all call to mind the Dionysian festivals described in the first chapters of Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.¹²¹ Goldmund feels drawn to this music, just as the 19th-century philosopher claimed the ancient Greeks were attracted to it. However, Hesse does not only allude to this music through Goldmund's reactions, but he literally brings it to life within the plot of the story. In other words, Hesse takes the technique of using musical analogies to describe empirical reality when referential language alone fails one step further in this tale and tangibly incorporates this particular music into the story line. Specifically, Goldmund frequently stumbles upon actual festivals resembling Dionysian celebrations during his travels. He is drawn to these gatherings and

¹²¹ See the introduction to this dissertation for a general account of the Dionysian and Apollonian in art in Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

[o]ft floh er zu den heftigen Festen der Lebenslustigen, überall klang die Fiedel des Todes, er lernte ihren Klang bald kennen, oft nahm er teil an den verzweifelten Gelagen, oft spielte er dabei die Laute oder tanzte beim Pechfackelschein durch fiebernde Nächte mit. (*Narziss* 225)

The people participating in these events lose themselves in the wild music, dancing feverishly throughout the night. Goldmund takes part in the celebrations as well, either by dancing or playing the lute. It is especially interesting in the context of Nietzsche's Dionysian and Apollonian dichotomy that one finds Goldmund playing an instrument closely related to the lyre, which happened to be Apollo's instrument of choice. Perhaps this is a sign that Goldmund has not and will not completely succumb to the untamed Dionysian side of his personality. He clearly feels attracted to the darker, more feral aspects of the empirical world, but he is not ready to commit to them completely.¹²²

This is not, however, the only scene in which Hesse concretizes a descriptive comparison of the phenomenal world to music. The idea of death personified through music – a music representing the current state of Goldmund's world – is found once more in material form during Goldmund's travels. The man wanders into a monastery one day and discovers a large wall painting. It seems that just as the narrator of the story and Goldmund often find themselves using musical analogies to describe the empirical world around them because language does not capture its true essence, the painter of this mural found himself in a similar predicament – the best way he was able to capture the sorrow and suffering of the time was by incorporating corporeal manifestations of music into his art work. Goldmund notices:

¹²² It is also interesting that Hesse describes death as playing the fiddle in this scene. It is very possible that the author took this idea from a painting by Arnold Böcklin, who Hesse directly associated with the city of Basel, titled "Selbstporträt mit fiedelndem Tod" from 1872.

[e]s war da der Totentanz an eine Mauer gemalt, da tanzte der bleiche knöcherne Tod die Menschen aus dem Leben...alle nahm er mit, und beinerne Musikanten spielten auf hohlen Knochen dazu auf. (*Narziß* 226)

This mural alludes once again to the Dionysian-like festivals Goldmund encounters on his journey in that the characters are dancing with death. However, Goldmund does not seem completely satisfied with the painting. He thinks to himself:

[G]anz anders klang in ihm das wilde Lied des Todes, nicht beinern und streng, sondern eher süß und verführend, heimwärtslockend, mütterlich. Da, wo der Tod seine Hand ins Leben streckte, klang es nicht nur so grell und kriegerisch, es klang auch tief und liebevoll, herbstlich und satt... (*Narziß* 226)

Goldmund is attracted to this visual depiction of the music of death, but it does not resonate as strongly with his inner, emotional being as the actual festivals representing and celebrating the end of the phenomenal world do. While the artist seems appalled by the thought of death and the music he associates with it, Goldmund still feels strangely attracted to it. This concrete, artistic depiction of the phenomenal world through music not only highlights differences between Goldmund and the unknown artist, but it also indirectly comments on the inability of all art forms other than music to adequately describe phenomenal reality and Goldmund's personal, emotional reactions to this reality.

Hesse never entirely departs from this idea of music describing the degeneration of the natural world, but it does not play a central role in *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Only when the narrator describes the unpleasant state of society during the Age of the Feuilleton does Hesse return to the comparisons between music and the phenomenal world first found in "Klingsors letzter Sommer." Indeed, the author practically quotes his earlier short story word for word in these descriptions. Thus, the narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* likens 20th-century Europe to the "wunderbaren chinesischen Märchen" in which "die 'Musik des Untergangs' ...wie ein langdröhnender Orgelbaß...jahrzehntelang aus[schwang]" (*GPS* 22). One finds two musical

analogies in this single statement: the narrator compares the state of society at this time to the music of doom, while comparing the length of time these dire circumstances lasted to a sustained organ note. Choosing to relate the tenor of this age to a note played on this particular instrument is an especially apt analogy. Just as an organ note will resonate for a significant amount of time even after a performer has released the key which produces it, the factors which came together to create this general mood of demise in 20th-century European society left their mark on Hesse's fictional world in *Das Glasperlenspiel* decades after they had already vanished. Furthermore, referencing a bass note specifically in this comparison between the empirical world and music suggests that the aforementioned negative factors were essential and foundational aspects of society. Just as all notes in a harmony build off of and relate to the bass note in the chord, the conditions resulting in this degeneration of the world were basic building blocks of society.

The narrator also discusses the "alten Tonarten" (*GPS* 27), the sad Chinese musical keys, first mentioned in Hesse's earlier Romantic story. He explains to the reader of Knecht's biography that "die Dichter...furchtbare Märchen von den verbotenen, teuflischen und dem Himmel entfremdeten Tonarten [erzählten], zum Beispiel der Tonart Tsing Schang und Tsing Tse, der 'Musik des Untergangs'" (*GPS* 27). Although Hesse recycles material from his earlier story for this novel, the narrator's reaction to the music of despair is quite different from Klingor's. Klingor, the artist, accepts the sad state of phenomenal reality, manages to find some sort of aesthetic beauty in it, and even feels attracted to the music he intimately associates with it, whereas the narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* condemns the people of this age and therefore, the music of doom as well. The narrator is temporally and spatially removed from this world and finds no correlation between the "Musik des

Untergangs” and Castalian society. It is a music belonging exclusively to the Age of the Feuilleton.

ii. Castalia’s musical hierarchy

It is not the case, however, that the empirical reality of Castalia is never depicted through musical analogies or closely associated with a particular kind of music. On the contrary, readers’ very first encounter with Joseph Knecht reveals that the boy sees the phenomenal world around him, the empirical reality of Castalia, as music as well.¹²³ While listening to the Musikmeister play a fugue on the piano, the youth “sah die ganze Welt in diesen Minuten vom Geist der Musik geleitet, geordnet und gedeutet” (*GPS* 54). Knecht recognizes music as a way of organizing and understanding reality, an idea very similar to early German Romantic notions of music as a mirror to the natural world. In the same vein, Knecht writes a poem titled “Das Glasperlenspiel” just a few years later and mentions the “Musik des Weltalls” (*GPS* 484), a phrase alluding to Novalis’ *Die Lehrling zu Sais* and the idea that all of phenomenal reality is akin to music.¹²⁴ Even when the young man does not directly mention music, others recognize similarities between this art form and the empirical world depicted in his poetry. For instance, many years after the poem “Stufen” was written, Knecht’s friend Tegularius comments on the piece:

Ihr hättet aber ebensogut und noch besser ‘Musik’ oder ‘Wesen der Musik’ darüber schreiben können...es [ist] recht eigentlich eine Betrachtung über das Wesen der Musik, oder meinetwegen ein Lobgesang auf die Musik...Es setzt...Musik und Leben einander gleich... (*GPS* 412)

¹²³ One may argue that Knecht has, at this point, not yet entered Castalian society. However, his conversing with the Musikmeister and being brought into this man’s sphere of existence brings the youth into contact with the Order. Thus, the thoughts he makes at this moment can be read as statements regarding Castalia rather than the outside world.

¹²⁴ The teacher in *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* mentions in one passage, for instance, “ein Akkord aus des Weltalls Symphonie” (Schultz 95).

As a young man, Knecht holds Romantic views of music as a reflection of every aspect of empirical reality. Music is life. It is a way of interpreting the world. It is a way of depicting phenomenal nature when language fails.

However, music does not only function as an analogy in this novel, as a way of understanding an established reality, as a mere reflection or description of Josef Knecht's world, but rather, Knecht's reality is literally founded on and guided by a particular kind of music. To be specific, Castalian society is structured like and based on certain kinds of baroque music. Just as the Nietzschean music in Hesse's *Narziss und Goldmund* found concrete form in actual Dionysian festivals, Knecht's feeling that his world is "vom Geist der Musik geleitet" literally materializes. The boy comes to the realization that music actively determines the world around him while listening to the Musikmeister play a fugue – an extremely rule-driven, organized, compositional technique. It is this highly structured music that acts as a model for Castalian society, while the constant battle between freedom and limitation always inherent to music is analogous to the individual's struggles within the Castalian Order.¹²⁵

Knecht, even as a young boy, immediately senses the existence of two poles within this music; "er ahnte hinter dem vor ihm entstehenden Tonwerk den Geist, die beglückende Harmonie von Gesetz und Freiheit, von Dienen und Herrschen" (*GPS* 54). He does not, however, feel burdened by this opposition until fully entering a society based on the same organizational principles. The Province's strict hierarchical Order is very similar to the stringent rules guiding baroque music, fugues especially, and the individual's struggle to ascertain a certain amount of freedom within the system is similar to the difficulty a number

¹²⁵ See the introduction to this dissertation for a more detailed account of the struggle between limitation and freedom in music and language.

of baroque composers faced when attempting to produce a musical piece, which was both creative and adhered to this particular kind of music's self-imposed structural limitations.

The narrator of the story acknowledges early on in his biography the challenge every individual faces when entering Castalian society and offers a very idealistic and theoretical account of the way in which the Order is both simultaneously free and limited. He explains, as a justification for writing Josef Knecht's biography:

Uns ist nur jener ein Held und eines besonderen Interesses würdig, der von Natur und durch Erziehung in den Stand gesetzt wurde, seine Person nahezu vollkommen in ihrer hierarchischen Funktion aufgehen zu lassen, ohne daß ihr doch der starke, frische, bewundernswerte Antrieb verlorengegangen wäre, welcher den Duft und Wert des Individuums ausmacht. Und wenn zwischen Person und Hierarchie Konflikte entstehen, so sehen wir gerade diese Konflikte als Prüfstein für die Größe einer Persönlichkeit an. (*GPS* 10)

According to the historian, the Order offers a person with the proper attitude, resilience, and upbringing the opportunity to grow and develop further as an individual. He acknowledges that one may find oneself in variance with the Order's rules at times, but he claims that these occasional restrictions of one's freedom are actually beneficial to the development of the person.¹²⁶

In fact, the narrator and other Castalians frequently warn that an unrestricted amount of freedom can have disastrous consequences for the individual. When portraying a student's "free" years of university study, the narrator rationalizes:

[D]ieser Frühling der Studienfreizeit [ist] nicht selten eine Zeit intensive Glückes, ja beinahe Rausches; ohne die vorangegangene Zucht der Eliteschule, ohne die seelische Hygiene der Meditationsübungen und ohne die mild geübte Kontrolle der

¹²⁶ It is important to note that the narrator's idyllic description of Castalia as a society in which a perfectly harmonious balance between freedom and limits has been achieved, is really only in reference to people who obtain the highest positions in the Order. Most Castalians find themselves fully restricted throughout their lives. He explains, "[die] 'Normalen' [werden] niemals 'freie' Fachmänner...sondern unterstehen zeitlebens den Regeln des Ordens" (*GPS* 64).

Erziehungsbehörde wäre diese Freiheit für solche Begabungen eine schwere Gefahr und müßte vielen zum Verhängnis werden. (*GPS* 115)

These “faustischen Naturen,” as the historian likes to refer to them, are constantly in danger because of the freedom they experience during this phase of their education.¹²⁷ The narrator uses Knecht’s friend, “[der] schwierige[] und problematische[] Charakter...[der] verwöhnte[] und ängstliche[] Nurkastalier” (*GPS* 293), Fritz Tegularius, as a negative example of what a desire for too much freedom can do to a person in Castalia. Other members of the Order often claim that Tegularius suffers from a disease, and the narrator explains that “[w]as man seine Krankheit nannte, war schließlich...eine im tiefsten unhierarchische, völlig individualistische Gesinnung und Lebensführung” (*GPS* 294). In other words, Tegularius remained too much an individual by Castalian standards and “gab nichts auf Harmonie und Einordnung, er liebte nichts als seine Freiheit” (*GPS* 295). This man could not mature past a certain point and could never obtain a higher position in the Order because he did not respect the necessity of obedience to society.

Knecht, on the other hand, tries throughout his life to find the idealistic balance proposed by the narrator between an individual’s personal freedom and his duty to the hierarchy. The comparison between music and Castalian reality is made once again when the Musikmeister contemplates Knecht’s possible role within the Order. After meeting the future Magister Ludi for the first time, the narrator explains that the Musikmeister’s personal assessment of the young boy was to test, “ob dieser Knabe in seinem ganzen Wesen das Zeug zum Musikanten im höhern Sinn habe, zur Begeisterung, zum Sicheinordnen, zur Ehrfurcht, zum Dienen am Kultus” (*GPS* 56). The wise Castalian believed that studying Knecht’s

¹²⁷ It is noteworthy, however, that by not mentioning exactly *how* these young men are endangered, a shadow of doubt is cast on these Castalian justifications for limiting a person’s freedom, and it becomes easier to understand why Knecht has so many problems existing in this controlled atmosphere in the future.

musical abilities would give him direct insight into whether the boy would be able to serve the Order and fully integrate himself into the world of rules and regulations that the Province so highly praised. In other words, the Musikmeister senses, just as Knecht does at this moment, that Castalian society and this particular kind of baroque music mirror each other in significant ways. In theory, if the boy can play it, he can live it.

Although the youth is aware of the close connection between baroque fugues and this particularly Castalian manifestation of phenomenal reality, he underestimates the difficulty of balancing his human desire for freedom with the need for strict rules and limits within this music as well as the within in the Order. He does not become completely conscious of the sacrifice to personal independence demanded of him until he meditates on a distinct phrase recommended by the Musikmeister:

Beruft dich die hohe Behörde in ein Amt, so wisse: jeder Aufstieg in der Stufe der Ämter ist nicht ein Schritt in die Freiheit, sondern in die Bindung. Je höher das Amt, desto tiefer die Bindung. Je größer die Amtsgewalt, desto strenger der Dienst. Je stärker die Persönlichkeit, desto verpönter die Willkür. (*GPS* 151)

Knecht understands that the higher he moves in the Castalian hierarchy, the more he limits his freedom of choice. Nevertheless, he follows his mentor's instructions and participates in the ritual ceremony required to become a full member of Castalia's elite after which the Musikmeister calls for a choral prelude by Bach to be played in celebration, reinforcing once again the connection between Castalian society and baroque music. The young man, however, is not pleased to discover afterward that he is to be sent to Mariafels on his first mission and concludes, "[n]un also sollte er seine Freiheit verlieren" (*GPS* 152).

The Musikmeister tries consistently over the years to convince Knecht of the merits of serving the Order and of the disadvantages to having too much personal freedom. In one of the most enlightening passages found in the biography regarding Knecht's personal nature

and inner struggle to find a balance between freedom and servitude, the Musikmeister explains to him:

Du trägst den Namen Knecht, mein Lieber, vielleicht hat darum das Wort ‘frei’ so viel Zauber für dich. Nimm es aber nicht zu Ernst...[Der Mitglied des Orden] läßt sich innerhalb der Hierarchie immer an den Ort stellen und zu der Funktion bestimmen, welche die Oberen für ihn wählen...Inmitten dieser scheinbaren Unfreiheit nun genießt jeder Electus nach seinen ersten Kursen die denkbar größte Freiheit...Der zum Lehrer Geeignete wird als Lehrer verwendet, der zum Erzieher Geeignete als Erzieher, der zum Übersetzer Geeignete als Übersetzer, jeder findet wie von selbst den Ort, an welchem er dienen und im Dienen frei sein kann. (*GPS* 74-76)

Knecht’s name literally meaning “servant” is not only one of the many ways that *Das Glasperlenspiel* alludes to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, but it also signifies the central role in the novel of his inner struggle to perform his Castalian duties while still retaining some sense of autonomy.¹²⁸ His mentor acknowledges this character trait and attempts to convince his student that one can only be free within a set system of rules. Any other kind of freedom, for example the freedom a non-Castalian experiences when choosing his career, is only “illusory,” as he finds himself a slave to greed and power (*GPS* 75).

Knecht listens to the Musikmeister and continually endeavors to follow his mentor’s directions. Nevertheless, he eventually decides to break free of his life within the Order after obtaining the highest position possible and writes a letter to the elite requesting to leave the Province. Even this late in life, after having spent so many years serving his fellow Castalians, Knecht frames the knowledge that his appeal will be denied in terms of a battle between freedom and servitude. He thinks to himself, for instance, “loslassen würde man ihn nicht...Täte es die Behörde, so würde sie...zugeben, daß das Leben in Kastalien...[einem Menschen] Verzicht und Gefangenschaft bedeuten könne” (*GPS* 377). Knecht does not universally claim that all Castalians must feel trapped within the Order, but that it is *possible*

¹²⁸ See, for example, Joseph Mileck’s “The Prose of Hermann Hesse: Life, Substance and Form” for more information regarding the connections between Josef Knecht’s name and Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*.

to regard one's position in this hierarchical system as a type of sacrifice – and this is exactly the Magister Ludi's situation, which therefore awakens in him the desire and need to break free of this controlling society.

However, it is not only the empirical reality of Castalia which is determined by a system of boundaries and limitation but the world outside the Province as well. Once Knecht finally notifies his peers of his intention to leave, he meditates on his actions and comes to a surprising conclusion. He thinks to himself, "daß nämlich die 'Willkür' seines jetzigen Handelns in Wahrheit Dienst und Gehorsam war, daß er nicht einer Freiheit, sondern neuen, unbekanntem und unheimlichen Bindungen entgegenging...nicht Herr, sondern Opfer!" (*GPS* 418). In the process of trying to break free of Castalian rules and regulations, Knecht immerses himself in a new, hitherto unknown system. The most honest departure from his unflinching obedience to Castalia is, in the end, just another form of submission. Specifically, he binds himself to the world outside of Castalia by responding to an inner call or need to become a private tutor to his friend's son, Tito.

Knecht realizes something important about the fundamental nature of phenomenal reality at this juncture. He reflects on his entire Castalian journey and realizes:

Es waren lauter kleine oder große Schritte auf einem scheinbar geradelinigen Wege gewesen – und doch stand er jetzt, am Ende dieses Weges, keineswegs im Herzen der Welt und im Innersten der Wahrheit, sondern auch das jetzige Erwachen war nur ein Augenaufschlagen und ein Sichwiederfinden in neuer Lage, ein Sicheinfügen in neue Konstellationen gewesen...So war sein Weg denn im Kreise gegangen, oder in einer Ellipse oder Spirale, oder wie immer, nur nicht geradeaus, den das Geradlinige gehörte offenbar nur der Geometrie, nicht der Natur und dem Leben an. (*GPS* 417)

Knecht comes to the conclusion that life does not progress in a straight line, as most people presume, but rather, that its essential nature is cyclical.¹²⁹ After leaving one sphere of

¹²⁹ The cyclical nature of life is reinforced in the story through the inclusion of the various "Lebenläufe" at the end of the novel, each of which represents a new, but similar version of Josef Knecht's biography.

existence, a person simply enters into another. Knecht has not successfully attained insight into metaphysical principles, he has not discovered the “inner truth of the world,” but has simply moved on to another, different empirical realm.

Josef Knecht also makes one final reference to the music guiding Castalian life during this moment of epiphany. Specifically, he asserts, “wenn er jetzt für kastalische Begriffe Abfall und Untreue beging, wenn er, aller Ordensmoral entgegen, scheinbar im Dienst der eigenen Persönlichkeit, also in Willkür handelte, so würde auch dies im Geiste der Tapferkeit und der Musik geschehen” (*GPS* 418). This is not to say that Knecht was not truly attempting to attain a new degree of personal freedom by leaving Castalia, but rather, that this desired autonomy and independence is akin to the freedom all music strives for within its self-imposed system of rules. Just as baroque music eventually moved beyond its particular conventions and transformed into a classical system of regulation, so, too, does Knecht leave Castalia’s society to enter into a new system of governance, to enter the world outside of the Province.¹³⁰

Hesse uses musical analogies and literal manifestations of them to describe the degeneration of empirical reality and the structure of Castalian society when words alone will not suffice. However, the most obvious and productive way in which the author draws on music to portray phenomenal reality is when the subject he wishes to depict does not actually exist for the novel’s reader. Explicitly, when Hesse attempts to illustrate certain

¹³⁰ It is appropriate given Knecht’s belief in the cyclical nature of life that one would discover in his autobiographies music guiding and determining other societies as well. In “Der Regenmacher,” for instance, one finds an obvious example of music literally restoring order to a chaotic and frenzied group of people. One night, the rainmaker and his fellow villagers see what appear to be falling stars. The villagers are terrified and the only way the rainmaker knows “die Todesangst zu leiten, zu organisieren, ihr Form und Gesicht zu geben und aus dem hoffnungslosen Durcheinander von Tollgewordenen eine feste Einheit, aus den unbeherrschten wilden Einzelstimmen einen Chor zu machen” (*GPS* 523) is through music. He cries out words in a particular rhythm, claps his hand, and performs a kind of dance. Eventually, the villagers “wurden vom Chorgemurmel und Verneigungsrhythmus der gottesdienstlichen Handlung bezwungen und mitgerissen” (*GPS* 524). Music literally orders this chaotic group of people.

characteristics of the glass bead game, he turns to musical analogies to aid in this difficult task.

iii. The ultimate musical analogy: the glass bead game

The affinity between Castalia's favorite pastime and language was established in the previous chapter. Similarly, the significant influence that music played in the game's historical development was mentioned briefly as well. However, the essential nature of the glass bead game remains vague and elusive, and the narrator struggles to depict this empirical phenomenon in linguistic terms. Thus, the reader of *Das Glasperlenspiel* finds the historian turning to musical analogies once more to help portray this mysterious diversion, which Castalians take so seriously.

Perhaps the earnestness with which Castalians approach the glass bead game is due, in part, to its complicated nature. Knecht hints at the difficulties associated with mastering the game in notes written about his friend Tegularius. In these comments, the Magister Ludi praises Tegularius' skill at creating glass bead games and states, “[d]ie Technik unsres Spieles beherrscht er so wie ein großer Musikant sein Instrument” (*GPS* 155). Any person who has ever attempted to learn a musical instrument immediately senses through this comparison the amount of dedication, practice, and talent which must be required to become a truly exceptional glass bead player. This intuitive analogy immediately allows a reader of the novel to grasp how intricate and complex the glass bead game is, without requiring a significant amount of explanation or background knowledge regarding its inner structure.¹³¹

¹³¹ Despite Tegularius' admirable glass bead game abilities, Knecht agrees with the narrator of the story and other members of the elite that Tegularius is not an ideal candidate for a high position in the Order. He writes, for instance, “T. darf niemals zu einer leitenden, repräsentativen oder organisatorischen Stellung gelangen, es wäre für ihn und für das Amt ein Unglück” (*GPS* 154). Hence, skill in creating glass bead games is not enough

The narrator does feel it necessary to sketch or outline the most basic structure of the game at certain times, though, as well as the processes by which games are created. He finds this objective also most easily met by comparing the game to music. Thus, he frequently uses the word “komponieren” when mentioning the creation of particular games by individuals (*GPS* 155/264). Similarly, he describes the organization of one of Knecht’s early games by making musical comparisons. He explains, Knecht “baute ein Spiel von zwar moderner und persönlicher Struktur und Thematik, vor allem aber von einer durchsichtig klaren, klassischen Komposition und streng symmetrischer, nur mäßig ornamentierender, altmeisterlich anmutiger Durchführung auf” (*GPS* 211). Although it contained “modern” themes, this game was very similar to classical compositions because these themes were organized symmetrically and simply. Knecht’s early style was thus very different from Tegularius’ first games, in which

...die Synthese und Harmonisierung der gegensätzlichen Stimmen nicht in der üblichen, der klassischen Weise aufs Letzte gebracht [wurde], vielmehr erlitt diese Harmonisierung eine ganze Reihe von Brechungen und blieb jedesmal, wie ermüdet und verzweifelt, vor der Auflösung stehen und verklang in Frage und Zweifel. (*GPS* 156)

Glass bead games are based on certain conventional structures just as musical compositions in various periods are, and the games are able to deviate from these norms in either acceptable or unacceptable ways. The reader therefore instinctively senses the inherent play between freedom and limitation intrinsic to every game, without actually needing tedious descriptions of every nuance of play.

to be promoted through Castalia’s ranks. Tegularius is missing some of the inner balance required of high Order members.

Indeed, the tension between order and freedom is one of the narrator's main focuses when describing the structure of the glass bead game and how it relates to music. He explains, for instance:

Zu allen Zeiten stand das Spiel in engem Zusammenhang mit der Musik und verlief meistens nach musikalischen oder mathematischen Regeln. Ein Thema, zwei Themen, drei Themen wurden festgestellt, wurden ausgeführt, wurden variiert und erlitten ein ganz ähnliches Schicksal wie das Thema einer Fuge oder eines Konzertsatzes...Beliebt war bei einer gewissen Spielerschule lange Zeit namentlich das Nebeneinanderstellen, Gegeneinanderführen und endliche harmonische Zusammenführen zweier feindlicher Themen oder Ideen, wie Gesetz und Freiheit, Individuum und Gemeinschaft, und man legte großen Wert darauf, in einem solchen Spiel beide Themata oder Thesen vollkommen gleichwertig und parteilos durchzuführen, aus These und Antithese möglichst rein die Synthese zu entwickeln. (GPS 39-40)

In other words, the game is very closely related to musical compositions, especially baroque fugues and classical pieces. Moreover, certain players enjoy the challenge of balancing the naturally opposing poles found in all music: original, imaginative, and creative freedom versus restrictive, restraining, and limiting organization. Predictably, the narrator writes of these particular players with an undertone of pride as they strive to achieve the same equilibrium he deems necessary for a successful career within the Order.

To readers who are perhaps less familiar with compositional techniques, the narrator offers one final, and more intuitive, musical analogy between the glass bead game and music with regard to the interplay between limits and freedom. He speaks of the material used to create the games, i.e., the "sämtlichen Inhalte[] und Werte[] [der] Kultur" and asserts:

[D]ieses ganze ungeheure Material von geistigen Werten wird vom Glasperlenspieler so gespielt wie eine Orgel vom Organisten, und dies Orgel ist von einer kaum auszudenkenden Vollkommenheit, ihre Manuale und Pedale tasten den ganzen geistigen Kosmos ab, ihre Register sind beinahe unzählig, theoretisch ließe mit diesem Instrument der ganze geistige Weltinhalt sich im Spiele reproduzieren. Diese Manuale, Pedale und Register nun stehen fest, an ihrer Zahl und ihrer Ordnung sind Änderungen und Versuche zur Vervollkommung eigentlich nur noch in der Theorie möglich...Dagegen ist innerhalb dieses feststehenden Gefüges oder, um in unserem

Bilde zu bleiben, innerhalb der komplizierten Mechanik dieser Riesenorgel dem einzelnen Spieler eine ganze Welt von Möglichkeiten und Kombinationen gegeben, und daß unter tausend streng durchgeführten Spielen auch nur zwei einander mehr als an der Oberfläche ähnlich seien, liegt beinahe außerhalb des Möglichen. Selbst wenn es geschähe, daß einmal zwei Spieler durch Zufall genau dieselbe kleine Auswahl von Themen zum Inhalt ihres Spieles machen sollten, könnten diese beiden Spiele je nach Denkart, Charakter, Stimmung und Virtuosität der Spieler vollkommen verschieden aussehen und verlaufen. (*GPS* 12-13)

The narrator compares the game to an organ, an instrument mentioned previously in connection with the degeneration in society. In this case, an organ is an apt analogy to the infinite number of games one can create with the limited material – the empirical knowledge of the world – available to a glass bead game player. This musical instrument has a set number of keys but the potential combination of notes is endless.¹³² Even if two players were to theoretically choose the exact same “themes,” the way in which they played the game would be entirely different. Just as no two performances of a Bach fugue are identical, no two games are executed in the same manner by players who differ in character, mood, and ability. In summary, although the structure of the game is nearly impossible for Hesse to describe with words, due in part to the fact that this game does not actually exist in the readers’ world, musical analogies aid in conveying the essence of the game, in intuitively portraying its organization and the importance of the interplay between limits and freedom inherent to it.

The narrator employs musical analogies to describe the general structure of the glass bead game, as well as to portray the processes by which games are created. He also turns to

¹³² Hesse’s choice of an organ over any other musical instrument to demonstrate this aspect of the game is especially appropriate for a number of reasons. First, most readers, even those who are not very musically inclined, can easily grasp the idea that there are a set number of keys available on this instrument but that there are multiple ways of combining them. It may be more difficult to imagine this particular characteristic of music on a string or wind instrument if a person is not familiar with how to play them. Furthermore, the connection to baroque music is established once again with this analogy since organ pieces were very popular at this time. Finally, choosing an instrument often found in a place of worship, demonstrates the respect and value attributed to the game by many Castalians, the narrator included.

similar analogies when attempting to depict the development of the game over time, i.e., when describing the transition from the game's humble origins to the complex form it has attained by the beginning of the 25th century. This mutability is crucial to understanding how the game continues to capture and reflect the spirit of an empirical world marked by constant flux and change. The narrator explains:

Und wenn man den anfänglichen Zustand des Spieles mit dem späteren und heutigen vergleicht, so ist es ganz ähnlich, als vergliche man eine musikalische Notenschrift aus der Zeit vor 1500 und ihre primitive Notenzeichen, zwischen denen sogar die Taktstriche noch fehlen, mit einer Partitur aus dem achtzehnten Jahrhundert oder gar mit einer aus dem neunzehnten mit ihrer verwirrenden Überfülle an abgekürzten Bezeichnungen für Dynamik, Tempi, Phrasierung und so weiter, welche oft den Druck solcher Partituren zu einem schweren technischen Problem machte. (*GPS* 29)

The degree to which the game changes over time becomes very apparent when comparing it to the way in which musical notation gradually became more complex between the 16th and 20th centuries. Early musical notation was extremely rudimentary and did little more than briefly sketch the general outlines of a musical piece, while later notation strived to capture nearly every minute detail of a piece's proposed performance. Similarly, while the earliest glass bead games simply touched on and hinted at the vast wealth of empirical knowledge in the world, later games become capable of incorporating, transforming, and recording a greater amount of information. It follows that the more intricate the game play is, the more likely it can fully portray phenomenal reality. Furthermore, this analogy reinforces the Castalian tendency mentioned in the previous section of this chapter to extol rules and regulations and to discourage creativity in the Province's youth. Early musical notation, being as elementary as it was, required a musician to innovatively interpret a piece whenever performing. He, rather than the composer, decided whether to add trills or how forcefully to

play a certain section.¹³³ Much 20th-century music, on the other hand, theoretically deprived the musician of a certain degree of freedom in that he had to follow more stringent guidelines regarding tempo or dynamics when performing than his predecessors, a characteristic many rule-driven Castalians would likely appreciate.

Although this analogy seems relatively straight-forward and appears to praise the development in complexity of the glass bead game over time, a closer reading suggests a less optimistic attitude toward Castalia's esteemed pastime. The narrator appears to approve of the more multifaceted glass bead games of his time and would also have to admit that the reduced creativity needed to perform many types of 20th-century music is something generally supported in the Province. Nevertheless, he writes of this music – music from the Age of the Feuilleton – in a disapproving tone. For instance, he mentions the “verwirrende[] Überfülle” of abbreviations in musical notation from this time period and even brings up the technical difficulties associated with printing these scores. In other words, the narrator praises the glass bead game of his day, which he likens to musical notation from the Age of the Feuilleton, a time he heavily critiques in other passages of the biography. This connection between the game and a time period so frowned upon by Castalians alludes to the possibility that all may not be as ideal as suggested with respect to the current state of the glass bead game. This kind of indirect, unconscious criticism is especially characteristic of the narrator, a man known to deny and ignore an inner sense of truth when it affects his opinion of the Province, as demonstrated in the first chapter of this dissertation. This musical analogy, therefore, not only describes a development and transition associated with a phenomenal object in the world – the glass bead game – but also foreshadows criticism

¹³³ One should acknowledge that performers did not have full creative license over a piece, however. There were, naturally, certain conventions to follow even when “adding” one's own to a composition.

leveled at Castalia and its prized game later on in the story, as well as Knecht's eventual dissatisfaction with the game.

Although Hesse almost exclusively employs musical analogies in his works to describe aspects of empirical reality which language alone fails capable of portraying, he also demonstrates music's innate ability to express phenomenal truths entirely independent of language. In other words, Hesse intimates in a few instances that music itself, rather than musical *analogies*, gives one insight into the empirical world. Doktor Faustus' friend in "Ein Abend bei Doktor Faustus," for instance, comments after hearing the terrible music of the future, "[e]s ist schauerhaft! Es kann gar kein Zweifel darüber herrschen, daß die Menschheit, von deren Leben wir da ein Probestück gehört haben, irrsinnig ist" (Michels *Musik* 307-308). This man has discovered an important characteristic of humanity by listening to its music. He has gained useful insight into the nature of the future phenomenal world from this particular art form alone.

Hesse is even clearer that music is the best means of representing empirical reality in *Das Glasperlenspiel*. The narrator of Josef Knecht's biography blatantly claims:

So wissen wir, um große Beispiele zu wählen, ja keineswegs, ob etwa Johann Sebastian Bach oder Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart eigentlich auf eine heitere oder auf eine schwere Art gelebt haben...wir lesen dies doch eigentlich keineswegs aus ihren Biographien und den überlieferten Tatsachen aus ihrem Privatleben, sondern wir lesen es einzig aus ihrem Werk, aus ihrer Musik. (*GPS* 46)¹³⁴

The narrator unmistakably articulates the idea that mundane facts about people may be captured through language, but the true essence of their lives – their personality, their emotions, all aspects of their being in phenomenal reality – can only expressed through their

¹³⁴ Once again, as mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, one finds the narrator unconsciously undermining his own project in this passage. Although he argues that words can never capture the true essence of a person, he nevertheless writes a biography of Josef Knecht.

music. Listening to the music composed by Mozart and Bach gives an individual more knowledge of these men's empirical existence than language ever will.

IV. Absolute music

I have demonstrated that descriptions of music and musical analogies in Hermann Hesse's works not only aid in facilitating communication between people, but that they also allow literary characters to describe certain aspects of phenomenal reality better than language does. It comes as no surprise that this particular art form also achieves the third goal set for language. Music often allows the characters in Hesse's stories to transcend empirical reality – it makes it possible for them to access the absolute. However, music's successful transcendence of phenomenal boundaries only occurs within the context of Hesse's stories. If one understands Hesse himself as wanting to access the absolute in early German Romantic fashion by turning language into music – through “transmedialization,” to use Siglind Bruhn's term – the attempt fails. I will demonstrate in the following section that Hesse believes over the course of his entire literary career that music is the key to grasping what lies beyond the empirical realm. Furthermore, I will show that his writings, especially *Das Glasperlenspiel*, aspire to become music and endeavor in this way to approach the absolute. Finally, I will establish through a closer examination of the underlying tenor of his final masterpiece, as well as through the ending of the novel, that Hesse failed to achieve his ultimate goal. With this failure, Hesse plays a primary role in determining the end of the long Romantic period in literature after the Second World War.

i. Writing about absolute music

In *Narziß und Goldmund*, Narziß attempts to impart on Goldmund some of his practical wisdom regarding art and its ability to transcend the phenomenal world. He explains:

[Der Denker] weiß, daß unser Verstand und sein Werkzeug, die Logik, unvollkommene Instrumente sind – ebenso wie ein kluger Künstler recht wohl weiß, daß sein Pinsel oder Meißel niemals vollkommen das strahlende Wesen eines Engles oder Heiligen wird ausdrücken können. Dennoch versuchen es beide, der Denker und der Künstler, auf ihre Weise. Sie können und dürfen nicht anders. (*Narziß* 285)

Narziß makes a number of relevant points in this passage, not only with reference to Goldmund and his future endeavors as either a man of reason or of art, but also indirectly within the context of Hesse's literary career and what one can hope to achieve through writing. Hesse's character refers to the innate desire within all men to depict what lies beyond empirical reality, a desire that Hesse likely shared. Narziß also puts forward the idea that man is doomed to failure when approaching this goal through reason or through art, two things relegated to the phenomenal realm. He notes that man nonetheless continuously strives to achieve this hopeless goal, however unsuccessful his attempts may be. More important than what this figure says, however, is what is left unsaid. Narziß speaks of all art, but uses only painting and sculpture as examples. He makes no mention of either literature or music. From this omission, one could plausibly argue that Hesse makes exceptions for these two art forms. Indeed, much like Arthur Schopenhauer, Hesse puts music in a category all its own: it is *the* art form, which allows one to access the absolute. Nevertheless, the 20th-century author continues to *write* with the hope that he can transform his words into music and thus, exceed the natural limitations of his restricted profession. Hesse probably felt

compelled by this desire, despite acknowledging through his character Narziß that he was likely to fail.

Hesse writes about characters intuiting the absolute through music in many of his works, although he never uses this term himself. Instead, one finds characters using a number of different words – Hesse was struggling, after all, with the fact that *language* has difficulty accessing something transcending empirical reality – to hint at this occurrence. In “Mozarts Opern,” Hesse writes, referring to the experience of listening to Bach and Mozart, “auch wir hingegebenen Hörer haben die Oberfläche des Scheins durchstoßen und unser Ich verloren und eine Stunde *das Göttliche* geatmet” (Michels *Musik* 75).¹³⁵ In a poem titled “Orgelspiel,” once again focusing on this particular instrument often mentioned in *Das Glasperlenspiel*, the poet claims a person listening to organ music “ahnt *das Schöne*” (line 180). In a short note written in 1907, the author mentions a “paar großen Musiker” and states, “ihre Verkündigungen sind *das Reinste, Heiligste und Edelste*, was von Menschen ausgehen kann” (Michels *Musik* 138). In a similar vein, Harry Haller compares Mozart to “[das] *Ewige*” (*Steppenwolf* 217) and thinks to himself one evening that one hears “in einem Takt alter Musik die ganze kühle, helle, hart lächelnde *Weisheit der Unsterblichen*” (*Steppenwolf* 254).

In his works before *Das Glasperlenspiel*, Hesse writes about music accessing the absolute – *das Göttliche, das Schöne, das Reinste, das Heiligste, das Edelste, das Ewige* – in unmistakably Schopenhaurian terms. Just as the 19th-century pessimistic philosopher posited that music is the only means by which man may momentarily escape from the suffering and torments of the world by coming into contact with the Will – his version of the absolute –

¹³⁵ All italics which follow in this paragraph are mine.

Hesse's characters share a similar attitude.¹³⁶ For instance, in one of the author's earliest novels from 1909, *Gertrud*, one finds the main figure, the musician and composer Kuhn, pondering:

So begierig ich auf manchen anderen Wegen nach Erlösung, nach Vergessen und Befreiung suchte, so sehr ich nach Gott, nach Erkenntnis und Frieden dürstete, gefunden habe ich das alles immer nur in der Musik....das hat für mich immer wieder einen tiefen Trost und eine Rechtfertigung alles Leben bedeutet. O Musik! (*Gertrud* 8)

Music alone offers this character the ability to forget and free himself from the pain of the empirical world as well as affording him the possibility of redemption, peace, and knowledge. The "Trost," comfort, and respite from the sorrows of existence in the world of Representation are only presented to a person through music. Indeed, music alone seems to justify this character's entire existence.

Similarly, the first person narrator in the short essay "Musik," written in 1915, believes that only music allows one some semblance of happiness in life. On these lines, he proclaims twice in one paragraph, "[w]as wäre unser Leben ohne Musik!" (Michels *Musik* 43). And once again, with reference to an organ playing, Hesse states in the poem titled "Orgelspiel":

Das Vollkommene aber ist hienieden
Ohne Dauer, Krieg wohnt jedem Frieden
Heimlich inne, und Verfall dem Schönen.
Orgel tönt, Gewölbe hallt, es treten
Neue Gäste ein, verlockt vom Tönen,
Eine Frist zu rasten und zu beten (lines 76-81).

People feel drawn to this sacred organ music, which allows them a moment's relief from the struggle and strife associated with life in the phenomenal sphere of existence.

¹³⁶ See the discussion on Schopenhauer in the introduction to this dissertation for a general exposition of his philosophy.

Hesse continues to write about music with Schopenhauer in mind and has later characters express comparable ideas about music as a way of escaping harsh reality and coming into contact with something absolute and beautiful. Thus, as previously seen, the protagonist in *Der Kurgast* complains at the beginning of his stay about the concerts his fellow health spa guests perform. He notes with reference to one concert in particular, “[w]as diesem Konzert hier fehlte, war bloß das Herz, das Innerste: die Notwendigkeit, das lebendige Bedürfnis, die Spannung von Seelen, wartend auf Erlösung durch die Kunst” (*Kurgast* 42-43). The people staying at his spa, with the exception of our narrator, have no idea how transcendental music can be, or how its meaning in this world is to offer a brief moment of peace to listeners.

Harry Haller, on the other hand, undoubtedly understands and appreciates this intrinsic quality of certain music. He remembers one evening, for example:

Es war bei einem Konzert gewesen, eine herrliche alte Musik wurde gespielt, da war zwischen zwei Takten eines von Holzbläsern gespielten Piano mir plötzlich wieder die Tür zum Jenseits aufgegangen, ich hatte Himmel durchflogen und Gott an der Arbeit gesehen, hatte selige Schmerzen gelitten und mich gegen nichts mehr in der Welt gewehrt, mich vor nichts mehr in der Welt gefürchtet, hatte alles bejaht, hatte an alles mein Herz hingegeben. (*Steppenwolf* 210)

Haller comes to terms with the fact that he must suffer in life because he has briefly glimpsed, through music, the beauty of “[das] Jenseits.” Although his existence in the empirical world is marred by pain and suffering, perhaps more obviously than with any of Hesse’s other literary characters, he finds it possible to continue living because of this brief musical encounter.

This underlying Schopenhauerian pessimism prevails in Hesse’s late work, *Das Glasperlenspiel* as well, but it is hidden deep below the surface. The author continues to praise music above all other arts, but he does so without putting it in the context of man’s

gloomy empirical existence on earth, in large part because the bulk of the novel – Knecht’s biography – takes place in a future, apparently utopian world of *Geist*. Schopenhauer’s influence only becomes obvious when one examines Knecht’s death at the end of the story, as I will do later in this chapter. Moreover, music is not often *directly* depicted as the singular means by which to access the absolute in this novel because the narrator and nearly all other Castalians are obsessed with the Romantic idea of “symphilosophieren,” made possible in the Province through the glass bead game.¹³⁷ Hesse, himself, seems to fall prey to this idea to a certain degree by attempting to “compose” music with words, another facet of the story I will examine shortly. Given these circumstances, readers find Josef Knecht often drawn to the metaphysical truth in music, only to be redirected by the Order to focusing on the glass bead game instead.

The narrator is the first character in the novel to mention music. While portraying the historical importance of this art form in the development of the glass bead game, the historian illuminates the mystical and magical qualities music has had on people over the course of time. He explains, “die Musik [ist] in vorgeschichtlichen Zeiten ein Zaubermittel gewesen, eines der alten und legitimen Mittel der Magie...[u]nd dies ursprüngliche, reine und urmächtigte Wesen, das Wesen eines Zaubers, ist der Musik sehr viel länger erhalten geblieben als den anderen Künsten” (*GPS* 29). Rather than simply express the idea that music played an important metaphysical or religious role in the past, the historian describes its influence somewhat condescendingly as “magical.” In other words, he acknowledges music’s cultural significance, but he does so from the privileged position of a person living in

¹³⁷ One encounters the Romantic idea of “symphilosophieren” very frequently in Friedrich Schlegel’s *Gespräch über die Poesie*. For instance, Andrea says with passion during his presentation, “Philosophie und Poesie, die höchsten Kräfte des Menschen...greiften nun ineinander, um sich in ewiger Wechselwirkung gegenseitig zu beleben und zu bilden” (183-184). In general terms, “symphilosophieren” represents the idea of a play or synthesis between the various arts.

a society which no longer attributes as much value to “unreasonable” pursuits. While music is still respected and studied in the Province, most Castalians seem only to view it as an element of the glass bead game.

Knecht’s first meaningful encounter with music is expressed in similar terms, but without the narrator’s obvious condescension. Instead, the young boy – an early version of his adult self just as early civilizations were precursors to Castalia – is excited by his first glimpse, through music, at something transcendental. Knecht meets the Musikmeister for the first time and after playing a fugue together with the old man, the boy is astounded by this “magischen Vorgang” (*GPS* 55), the “Sichöffnen der idealen Welt” (*GPS* 55-56), and refers to the old Musikmeister afterward as a “Zaubermann” (*GPS* 57) or “Zauberer” (*GPS* 58). The narrator acknowledges, perhaps somewhat begrudgingly, how important this encounter is for Josef Knecht and writes, “es ist bezeichnend, daß dieser erste Anruf [des Geistes] nicht von seiten der Wissenschaft kam, sondern von seiten der Musik” (*GPS* 48). Knecht’s inherent musical abilities are what first win him entrance into the esteemed Province of Castalia, and music continues to play a pivotal role in his Castalian existence. It is interesting to note, though, that however excited Knecht is as a young boy at the prospect of meeting the Musikmeister for the first time, “[e]s gab in der Welt nur eine einzige Person, welche dem Knaben Josef vielleicht noch sagenhafter und geheimnisvoller gewesen wäre: das Glasperlenspielmeister” (*GPS* 49). Although music turns out to be the foundation of Knecht’s entire existence – it gains him entry into Castalia, it shapes his later glass bead games, etc. – the future Magister Ludi is completely enamored with the idea of the glass bead game even at this early age.

Nevertheless, during his school years, Knecht focuses in large part on his musical education. So much so, in fact, that “[e]s hatte eine Weile den Anschein, als habe Knecht sich entschlossen, nichts als Musiker zu werden” (*GPS* 93). He incorporates his passion for this art form into every aspect of his academic life and even writes an autobiography, in which he explores the relationship between theology and music (*GPS* 120).¹³⁸ Gradually, however, Knecht is drawn into the cult of the glass bead game. In the beginning, he still holds onto the feeling that music somehow “magically” allows him insight into another world. He writes a letter to his mentor, the Musikmeister, in which he claims, “[d]a ich dem Sinn des Glasperlenspiels nahe zu sein meine, wird es für mich und für andre besser sein, wenn ich das Spiel nicht zu meinem Beruf mache, sondern mich lieber auf die Musik verlege” (*GPS* 127). After studying the game for a few years, Knecht is convinced that he is close to understanding the essence or meaning of the game. This supposed understanding clearly pales in comparison to the mystery and magic that music still holds for the youth.

Knecht’s brash declaration regarding the significance of the glass bead game is eventually forgotten and the young man shifts his scholarly focus in the following years. He does not yet completely forsake his musical studies or the belief that music allows one access to something transcending empirical boundaries, but he slowly begins to appreciate the complexities and possibilities of the glass bead game. Eventually, the game reaches the same status for Knecht as music, and he focuses most of his attention on “die edle Spielwelt, deren Zauber ihm von seinem Leben so untrennbar und so unentbehrlich schien wie der der Musik” (*GPS* 195). After this point, Knecht becomes preoccupied with the idea of incorporating music into the game, rather than playing music for its own sake.

¹³⁸ The narrator explains that this autobiography, unfortunately, has been lost.

This academic attitude toward music is typical for most Castalians. Plinio Designori points out and complains early on, “[w]ir analysieren zum Beispiel...die Gesetze und Techniken aller Stilarten und Zeiten der Musik und bringen selber keine neue Musik hervor” (*GPS* 100). Designori, although interested in mastering the honored game as well, does not succumb completely to the Castalian obsession with glass beads which so often results in the devaluation of all other disciplines. It is likely that this man, always destined to be an outsider in the Province, maintains enough distance from this fixation on the game to objectively evaluate its repercussions on art forms such as music.

Thus, it seems appropriate that it is an encounter with his old friend Designori, which eventually reminds a much older Knecht of the transcendental power of music. Ironically, it is while trying to describe the benefits of the glass bead game to Designori that Knecht inadvertently and semi-consciously stumbles upon the actual importance of music in his life. The Magister Ludi explains to the man from outside the Province:

[E]in rechter Glasperlenspiel [sollte] von Heiterkeit durchtränkt sein wie eine reife Frucht von ihrem süßen Saft, er sollte vor allem die Heiterkeit der Musik in sich haben, die ja nichts anderes ist als Tapferkeit, als ein heiteres, lächelndes Schreiten und Tanzen mitten durch die Schrecken und Flammen der Welt, festliches Darbringen eines Opfers. (*GPS* 348)

The easiest way for Knecht to explain what he believes is the proper attitude of a true glass bead game player is through a comparison with music. The more mature Knecht has replaced his naïve use of the word “magic” to describe the experience of hearing and playing music with “Heiterkeit,” an inexplicable and ineffable serenity achieved by only a few men. This “Heiterkeit” is in direct opposition to the “Schrecken und Flammen der Welt,” one of the only direct allusions to Schopenhauer’s philosophy within the novel.¹³⁹ In other words, a

¹³⁹ Unsurprisingly, given his uncritical acceptance of the Castalian “utopia,” the narrator actually has a very anti-Schopenhaurian attitude regarding music and the nature of the empirical world. He explains, “[d]ie

more mature Knecht acknowledges, albeit within the context of the glass bead game at first, the ability of music to help one transcend empirical boundaries and attain a momentary sense of relief from the world's suffering.¹⁴⁰

Knecht's emphasis on the musical becomes most apparent, however, in the following passages. At the end of their conversation, in response to his dejected friend, Knecht recommends listening to some music before retiring for the evening. As previously mentioned, Knecht decides to play a piece from Purcell, the same piece that allowed him to bond with Pater Jakobus years earlier. The narrator describes the scene and writes:

Sanft und streng, sparsam und süß begegneten und verschränkten sich die Stimmen der holden Musik, tapfer und heiter schritten sie ihren innigen Reigen durch das Nichts der Zeit und Vergänglichkeit, machten den Raum und die Nachtstunde für die kleine Weile ihrer Dauer weit und weltgroß, und als Josef Knecht seinen Gast verabschiedete, hatte dieser ein verändertes und erhelltes Gesicht, und zugleich Tränen in den Augen. (*GPS* 349)

This sonata allows both men to escape their momentary troubles and focus only on the music currently being played. Time and space, history and the phenomenal world, all fade away through this music. Both Knecht and Designori part ways moved by the profound significance of the experience. In fact, although the narrator never makes an explicit connection between this episode and Knecht's later rejection of Castalia and the glass bead game, this is *the* moment in the novel when Knecht returns to prizing music above the glass bead game, thus giving up on his personal project of "symphilosophieren," i.e., the idea of

vollkommene Musik hat ihre Ursache. Sie entsteht aus dem Gleichgewicht...Die Musik beruht auf der Harmonie zwischen Himmel und Erde, auf der Übereinstimmung des Trüben und des Lichten" (*GPS* 27-28). Rather than argue that music allows one to access something absolute such as the Will, which gives one a moment respite from the negative aspects of the phenomenal world, the narrator believes that perfect music is a direct result of the balance between good and evil, light and dark.

¹⁴⁰ As previously mentioned, Knecht lives in a utopian society, thus necessitating few references to the practical problems of the world. In this passage, Knecht is likely referring to the sorrows he knows men outside Castalia often experience, especially since he is speaking to Designori. It is also possible that Knecht is more aware of man's possible suffering because of his own inner conflicts throughout his life.

equating music and language within the game.¹⁴¹ Knecht “has not forgotten his longing for the absolute,” but he has come to the realization that the answer can only lie in music, not in the glass bead game (Bandy 306).¹⁴²

ii. Writing absolute music: transmedialization

Just as his protagonist, Josef Knecht, underwent a process of enlightenment regarding the possibility – or impossibility – of “symphilosophieren,” Hermann Hesse followed a similar path while writing *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Although he began this novel with the intention of literally “composing” a novel with words, a form of “symphilosophieren,” Hesse eventually gave up on this endeavor sometime during the process. The author set this goal for himself, one inherited from German Romanticism, many years before ever imagining a Province named Castalia or the story of the famous Magister Ludi, Josef Knecht. He also made various attempts to achieve it before writing his masterpiece. But it was not until failing to turn his words into music in his final novel that Hesse gave up on the Romantic dream completely.

Although a writer by profession, what Hesse really loved about his craft are its inherently musical qualities. As early as 1897, one finds Hesse comparing poetry and musical style in a letter to his nephew, Karl Isenberg:

¹⁴¹ This episode occurs directly before the chapter in the novel titled “Vorbereitungen,” which deals with Knecht’s preparations to leave the Province forever.

¹⁴² Siglind Bruhn notes something similar in her *The Musical Order of the World*. She claims, “[t]he idealized parallelism suggested in this image – of music on the one hand, the glass bead game on the other – confirms a correspondence that has been resonating throughout Hesse’s compound work. By hinting that the concrete game as it has developed within the Province of Castalia must eventually perish along with its players, while music will not, the study Josef Knecht declares his most beloved art as even closer to the spirit that informs his world than the game that serves as its acknowledged symbol” (216). Music is the only means by which someone can access the absolute.

Für meinen Geschmack mag Dir meine Liebe zu Chopin bezeichnend sein – aber nur für die Musik. In der Dichtkunst liebe ich, so sehr ich Rhythmus und Wohllaut verehere, mehr den durch einzelne Worte, einzelne bedeutende Lautformen sich ergebenden Takt, als die vollendete, komplizierte Klangtechnik, die mir bei Chopin imponiert. (Michels *Musik* 128)

In this passage, the author extols the rhythm and acoustic sound produced by particular words. While clearly distinguishing between his musical and poetic predilections at this point, preferring Chopin's more complex sounds in music over a comparable style in writing, he nevertheless has already begun thinking about language's musical characteristics around the turn of the 19th century.

Hesse continues to note the similarities and overlap between the two disciplines throughout the course of his career and begins to praise the musical nature of language above all else. Using "magical" terminology similar to Josef Knecht's, Hesse claims, "die Musik, und zwar ganz besonders die Musik der Prosa, ist eines der wenigen wahrhaft magischen, wahrhaft zauberischen Mittel, über welche auch heute noch die Dichtung verfügt" (qtd. in Limberg 131). More than the literal meaning of words, it is the way they sound and approximate music which makes certain combinations of them allegedly capable of testing the boundaries of empirical reality.

Hesse's thoughts on the relationship between music and language become more concrete over time as he begins to ponder the possibility of literally mimicking music through language. In another letter to Isenberg from 1934, Hesse writes:

Ich möchte nichts Bestimmtes hören, sondern womöglich ein Schrittchen weiterkommen in dem Problem, ob und wie Musik, oder doch die Erinnerung an Musik, auf intellektuellem oder dichterischem Weg reproduzierbar ist. Also z.B.: wie weit die Analyse einer klassischen Musik in Worten heute möglich ist. (Michels *Materialien* 92)

Although Hesse only mentions attempting to analyze music or reproduce the subjective feelings one has when listening to a particular piece of music, a number of scholars would argue that he has actually already shifted his efforts at this time to creating works of literature which are based on musical structures.¹⁴³ Interestingly, Hesse does not seem willing to admit to anyone that his ultimate literary goal may be to compose linguistic symphonies, i.e., to turn his words into music in an attempt to access something transcending empirical reality. He merely hints at this desire in the above letter to his nephew and actually *denies* the prospect of this endeavor when writing to others. For instance, he explains to his friend Alice Leuthold in a letter approximately one year later, “natürlich kann man eine Musik nicht in einem Gedicht nachzeichnen, höchstens ihren ‘Inhalt’, das heißt: das, was der Hörer sich vorgestellt hat” (Michels *Materialien* 116). Similarly, he writes to C. Clarus in 1935 regarding “Zu einer Toccata von Bach,” a poem attributed to Josef Knecht in *Das*

Glasperlenspiel:

Natürlich kann man Musik nicht in Versen wiedergeben. Sondern, was in den Versen steht, ist nicht die Toccata, sondern mein subjektives Erlebnis, meine Assoziation beim Hören dieser speziellen Musik, die sich seit Jahren bei jedem Wiederhören wiederholt hat. (Michels *Materialien* 116)

Hesse undeniably rejects the possibility of imitating music through words in these passages and offers by way of explanation that it is only possible for authors to capture the memory or subjective experience one had when listening to a particular piece of music. But how does one reconcile the disparity between what Hesse was supposedly trying to do in his own writings, according to contemporary scholarship, and what the author himself claims a person is capable of doing through language in letters to family and friends? Why does he deny his attempts to write poems and novels based on musical structures (in order to access some

¹⁴³ Scholars such as Siglind Bruhn, Theodore Ziolkowski, Hermann Kasak, and Matthias Schulze have all argued that musical structures underlie a number of Hesse’s works.

transcendental truth), when it seems so obvious to his readers that this is exactly what he was trying to do?

As I see it, there are three possibilities. One, Hesse does indeed try to achieve this goal in a number of works, but he feels that he has somehow failed because his stories have not actually allowed him to access something absolute. In other words, he openly refutes the possibility of transforming language into music so that he does not have to acknowledge his own failure. A second explanation is that Hesse was deep in the process of writing *Das Glasperlenspiel* at the time these letters were written – a process which took him a little over eleven years – and was likely fraught with the highs and lows which often accompany such a massive enterprise. It is quite possible that he was simply feeling a bit overwhelmed at this time, and that he therefore renounced his own efforts to turn his masterpiece into literary music. Indeed, he admits as much to Alice Leuthold in the aforementioned letter. He writes, for example:

Das Glasperlenspiel scheint ein richtiges Alterswerk zu werden, ich kannte diese Arbeitsweise früher gar nicht, diese tropfenweise Destillieren und dieses monatelange Überdenken und Meditieren, bis eine Zeile geschrieben wird. Ich sitze jetzt schon das dritte Jahr an diesem Werk, und noch ist von dem was ich mir darunter vorstelle, kaum ein Viertel oder Drittel notiert. (Michels *Materialien* 116)

Hesse admits that he has never been in a situation like this before, and one can easily sense the frustration underlying his words. This general dissatisfaction translated into an open rejection of his overall goal because he really did temporarily feel it impossible to achieve.

A third option is that Hesse undertook this endeavor in a Romantic mindset, knowing from the onset that he would never attain his goal, but placing less importance on the product than on the process. That is to say, he ascribed to the early German Romantic idea of infinite

perfectibility and continued to strive toward achieving the impossible.¹⁴⁴ As Robert Norton explains in *Hermann Hesse's Futuristic Idealism: The Glass Bead Game and its Predecessors*, the early German Romantics believed that “[w]hile [art’s] ultimate goal can never be completed attained or even known...the important factor is the search itself” (16-17). Art, according to this view, continually aims to become a perfect representation of something unknown and perhaps transcendental, but it never succeeds. The success or failure of the attempt, however, is irrelevant because the product of artistic creation is less important than the creative process. As Novalis’ Klingsohr notes: “[d]er Stoff ist nicht der Zweck der Kunst, aber die Ausführung ist es” (*Ofterdingen* 228).

In order to determine which of these scenarios are the most likely explanation for Hesse’s apparent attempt to fulfill the Romantic dream of composing music with language in *Das Glasperlenspiel* but his outright rejection of this goal in his letters to friends, it will be helpful to examine some of his earlier works in more detail. Does Hesse *really* try to write novels and poems based on musical principles? Does he indeed aspire to Novalis’ decree, “[m]an muß schriftstellen, wie komponieren” (527)?

One of Hesse’s early poems, “Feierliche Abendmusik,” written in 1911, not only has a title directly referencing music, but is divided into three sections, each with its own “musical” heading. The poem thus appears to be trying to imitate, at least in part, the structure of some kind of musical composition. The first 14 lines of the poem occur after the musical tempo marking “Allegro,” meaning fast and bright. The idea that this section of the poem should be read quickly and with excitement is supported by the exclamation points

¹⁴⁴ In very broad terms, the idea of infinite perfectibility refers to the early German Romantic view of “poetry as an absolutely ‘progressive’ realm involved in a process of endless development” (Behler 4). In other words, poetry is always in a process of becoming. For more information regarding this idea, see Ernst Behler’s *German Romantic Literary Theory*.

found in lines 8 and 14. There are also a number of powerful action words within the body of this section, e.g., “zerreißt” (line 1), “glühenden” (line 1), “taumelndes” (line 2), “mitgeweht” (line 3), “flieh” (line 4), “verweht” (line 8), “losgerissen” (line 9), “treibt” (line 9), “jage” (line 12), “reißt” (line 13), and “falle” (line 14), each supporting an image of rapid movement. In this first part, the life and relationship of the speaker to divinity is described using a storm metaphor.

The second section of the poem is found under the subtitle “Andante,” which means at a walking pace. As in the first part, both the structure and content of the poem support the new tempo marking. There are still a number of verbs and adjectives implying movement, but they are less violent than the ones occurring in the first section, e.g., “lacht” (line 17), “flattert” (line 19), and “strömt” (line 21), to name but a few. The andante section of the poem is also longer – 21 lines rather than 14 – requiring a person to take more time when reading it. The added length gives one the impression that this second part of the poem moves at a slower pace than the first section. Furthermore, the content reiterates the more measured reading speed in that the speaker appears to be describing the calm and beauty of divine nature after the storm.

Finally, both the content and structure of the third and final section of the poem subtitled “Adagio,” meaning slow and stately, also support the musical tempo marking to a certain degree. A number of tranquil words occur in this section, such as “träumt” (line 45), “schatten” (line 48), and “küßt” (line 53), which create an aura of peace in the reader and encourage yet an even slower pace when reading. There are a number of periods and commas and even a semi-colon found at the end of various lines, slowing the reader down further. Moreover, this section is the longest of the three, as it is comprised of 22 lines. The

imagery of the section is calm and serene. The speaker of the poem describes being at peace with the world and God during the late hours of the night.

Despite the notable and obvious references in this poem to a musical performance, it seems likely that Hesse is just trying to capture his subjective impressions and the imagery he associates with a particular kind of music through words, rather than actually attempting to structure the poem musically. That is to say, he wants to give the reader a sense of his feelings while listening to this music, but he is not trying to imitate the music per se. Other than the brief references to musical tempo and the utilization of punctuation, word choice, and strophe length to support the tempo markings, there is little in way of musical structure to be found in the poem. One does not, for instance, detect a standard three-part sonata-form structure – the third section is clearly not a recapitulation – nor does one find anything resembling a leitmotif or an attempt at linguistic counterpoint. Hermann Kasak claims, “wir [empfinden Hesses] Dichtung...dem Musikalischen verwandt,” but the emphasis in this statement should be on the “verwandt” rather than the “Musikalischen” (7). At the beginning of the 20th century, Hesse still seems to have had rather modest aspirations regarding the musical possibilities of language.

However, the author appears to become more ambitious as his writing develops over time. Although denying his desire to create music with words in letters to friends and family, Hesse more openly admits this goal through his literary figures. As previously mentioned, a great number of Hesse’s fictional characters are autobiographical in nature. Michael Limberg points out that one character in particular is an especially close imitation of the author himself, the protagonist in *Der Kurgast* (109). The resort guest, a writer by profession, makes a direct comment regarding what he would like to accomplish with his works – a

comment that can be extended to Hesse himself. This goal directly relates to an author's ability to translate musical techniques into his linguistic medium and literally perform music through language.

Wäre ich Musiker, so könnte ich ohne Schwierigkeit eine zweistimmige Melodie schreiben, eine Melodie, welche aus zwei Linien besteht, aus zwei Ton- und Notenreihen, die einander entsprechen, einander ergänzen, einander bekämpfen, einander bedingen, jedenfalls aber in jedem Augenblick, auf jedem Punkt der Reihe in der innigsten, lebendigsten Wechselwirkung und gegenseitigen Beziehung stehen. Und jeder, der Noten zu lesen versteht, könnte mein Doppelmelodie ablesen, sähe und hörte zu jedem Ton stets den Gegenton, den Bruder, den Feind, den Antipoden. Nun, und eben dies, diese Zweistimmigkeit und ewig schreitende Antithese, diese Doppellinie möchte ich mit meinem Material, mit Worten, zum Ausdruck bringen und arbeite mich wund daran, und es geht nicht. Ich versuche es stets von neuem, und wenn irgend etwas meinen Arbeiten Spannung und Druck verleiht, so ist es einzig dies intensive Bemühen um etwas Unmögliches, dieses wilde Kämpfen um etwas nicht Erreichbares. Ich möchte einen Ausdruck finden für die Zweiheit, ich möchte Kapitel und Sätze schreiben, wo beständig Melodie und Gegenmelodie gleichzeitig sichtbar wären, wo jeder Buntheit die Einheit, jedem Scherz der Ernst beständig zur Seite steht. (*Kurgast* 111-112)

In this passage, the health spa guest confesses a longing to be a musician rather than a writer because he feels that music alone allows one to depict some metaphysical truth about the structure of the universe. Many scholars have read the protagonist's use of the phrase "[die] Doppelmelodie" metaphorically, claiming that this musical image refers to the two poles or natural tendencies latent within any individual. Ralph Freedman explains, "[t]he interaction of *Geist* and *Seele* is woven into the fabric of Hesse's major novels" (279). This interaction or conflict between *Geist* and *Seele* is most plainly articulated in Hesse's *Narziss und Goldmund* and finds expression thematically as well as structurally. It also resembles acknowledged dichotomies within music between organization and improvisation, freedom and limit, subject and object – oppositions described and developed in Theodor Adorno's *Die Philosophie der neuen Musik*. According to many scholars, music in particular is an apt metaphor for the duality in nature as it somehow "deepens the double melody of life and

catches it in art, [while] painting acts directly in halting experience, in freezing the aesthetic reflection in timeless portraiture” (Freedman 283).

Putting aside what the “double melody” refers to for the moment, it is important to note that music is often privileged by Hesse’s characters above all other arts and deemed the only artistic medium capable of portraying this natural polarity. Thus, the writer in *Der Kurgast* explicitly conveys the yearning to turn his words into music. He expresses frustration at his inability to accomplish this feat and believes that he will never be able to “write” the double melody of life or nature. His goal is “etwas Unmögliches...etwas nicht Erreichbares” (*Kurgast* 112). Nevertheless, the resort guest “versuch[t] es stets von neuem” and concludes that something positive is yet to be gained from his failed attempts: his writing is in fact better in a way. The constant struggle to reach this unattainable goal “[verleiht] seinen Arbeiten Druck und Spannung” (*Kurgast* 111).

Seeing as Hesse likely felt the same way about writing as the protagonist of *Der Kurgast*, it is fair to say that he *does* actually try to write a musical composition in words by the late 1920s. As previously mentioned, his novel *Narziss und Goldmund* revolves around this idea of duality. It is also a concrete example of the health spa guest’s goal. In this story, Hesse attempts to capture a notion of musical polarity – the “Melodie” and “Gegenmelodie” (*Kurgast* 111) – in the structure and syntax of the work.¹⁴⁵ Joseph Mileck gives a detailed account of this phenomenon in his article “*Narziss und Goldmund: Life’s Double Melody*” and like many of his fellow scholars, supports the general interpretation that Hesse believes man to be “caught between the sensual and the spiritual” (127).

¹⁴⁵ The health spa guest’s musical goal remains a bit vague. “Gegenmelodie” is not a technical term in music but refers perhaps to the technique of “melodic inversion,” a contrapuntal derivation, in which one voice mirrors the other, i.e., if one melody has a rising major third, the other melody has a falling major third.

Within this context, Mileck argues:

In *Narziss und Goldmund*, life's basic dichotomy with its constellation of polarities found its appropriate and just as conscious expression in a thoroughly contrapuntal manner: setting is bipartite, movement fluctuates, personae are paired, actions and attributes are coupled, attitudes are opposing, emotions are polar, and mode of expression affects a primary two-beat rhythm. Manner itself becomes matter! (*Narziss* 134)

Mileck makes two distinct claims regarding the musical nature of *Narziß und Goldmund* in this passage. First, he asserts that something akin to melodic inversion occurs within the novel and gives a number of examples to support this idea. He contrasts the personalities and appearances of Narziß and Goldmund (*Narziss* 135), for instance, and points out that half of the novel takes place in the monastery, while the other half transpires in the world outside of the monastery (*Narziss* 134). He clearly reads these occurrences as manifestations of Hesse's "Melodie" and "Gegenmelodie."

Second, Mileck moves away from statements regarding tonal relations to assertions relating to rhythm, i.e., he argues that the novel follows a two-beat rhythm. He supports this claim most effectively when closely analyzing Hesse's language at the beginning of the novel:

The first paragraph emphatically establishes the two-beat rhythm that pervades the novel. The paragraph comprises two sentences, the first of these sentences consists of two major segments, and the second of these segments is introduced by a pair of parallel principal clauses and followed by two parallel clusters of five principal and subordinate clauses. This coupling of sentences and paired clustering of clauses is too patterned to be anything but design. (*Narziss* 136)

According to Mileck, Hesse adds a performative dimension to the structure of his sentences, incorporating the notion of duality by creating and upholding a "two-beat rhythm" through

the division of his sentences into various pairs and couplings.¹⁴⁶ Although the scholar admits that “[t]he entire novel is not as thoroughly mannered as its opening paragraph,” he argues nonetheless that “this two-beat pulsation remains the prevailing rhythm of its style” (*Narziss* 136).

While stretching his argument at times and finding thematic and syntactical pairs in the novel where it would be better to argue coincidence rather than design,¹⁴⁷ Mileck does convincingly support the general claim that Hesse was attempting to incorporate certain musical ideas into the structure of *Narziss und Goldmund*. The fact that the author only utilized one contrapuntal method – melodic inversion – and perhaps only a very basic rhythm, does not definitively diminish the attempt in any way. It could simply mean that Hesse’s writing had not yet reached the level of sophistication necessary to thoroughly transform his words into more complex music. Moreover, his partially successful efforts seem to reinforce the idea that he identified closely with his protagonist in *Der Kurgast*. Just as the resort guest knew he would be unable fulfill his linguistic dream of writing music, one could argue that Hesse acknowledges his Romantic heritage and its process- rather than product-oriented nature in this particular attempt.¹⁴⁸ On this reading, the author knew that he would not be entirely successful in this particular endeavor, but found some benefit in the attempt regardless.

¹⁴⁶ This idea that the structure of Hesse’s language has musical qualities has been supported by other scholars as well. Hermann Kasak claims, for instance, “Hesses Sprache hat einen unverkennbar musikalischen Akzent” (8).

¹⁴⁷ Mileck mentions, for example that Goldmund agrees as a school-aged youth to visit *two* young girls with his friends one day, that he then declines the next *two* invitations from his friends, that he becomes sick *twice* while at Mariabronn, that he drinks the monastery’s medicinal wine *twice*, etc. (*Narziss* 135). These doublings could likely be attributed to simple coincidence.

¹⁴⁸ Mileck supports this interpretation as well. He writes, “Hesse believed or wanted to believe that true art neither derived from nor dealt with drab life at large, but was inspired by and depicted a romantically ideal world behind appearance, a realm accessible primarily in dream or poetic imagination” (*Narziss* 131).

Although these optimistically tainted speculations seem possible out of context, doubt is cast on these interpretations – that is, that Hesse’s literary skill was not yet up to the task of structuring a work musically, or that he cared little about actually accessing something transcendental through his writing but placed emphasis in early German Romantic style on striving to achieve an impossible goal instead – when taking other works written prior to *Narziß und Goldmund* into account. This argument becomes particularly problematic when one examines the structure of Hesse’s 1927 novel *Der Steppenwolf*.

In his article “Hermann Hesse’s *Steppenwolf*: A sonata in prose,” Theodore Ziolkowski contends that Hermann Hesse “has devised a novel which consciously adheres to the rigid structure of ‘sonata form’” (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 122). The scholar begins his analysis by pointing out that although the structure of *Der Steppenwolf* demonstrates no obvious, classical divisions, it does indeed have an internal organization. Ziolkowski claims that the novel can be divided into three main sections: “the preliminary material, the action, and the so-called ‘magic theater’” (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 115). The first section can then be further separated into the introduction, the opening passages of the book, and the “Traktat” (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 115). By looking closely at the various authors of these first sections – i.e., Haller’s neighbor, Haller himself, and an unknown omniscient writer – and the various themes introduced in each section, Ziolkowski persuasively argues that these segments correspond to the standard exposition-development-recapitulation structure of sonata-form (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 120-121).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ An example of Ziolkowski’s detailed analysis follows:

“In the novel the difference in keys is approximated by the contrasting attitudes of Harry Haller as *Steppenwolf*, on the one hand, and as *Bürger*, on the other: the first represents, as it were, the tonic, and the second the dominant. The ABA structure of the sonata, which is achieved through the general repetition of the exposition in the recapitulation, is imitated by Hesse insofar as the exposition and recapitulation are views of Haller from the outside and largely theoretical; this gives them the effect of unity. The development, however, differs from these in tone and style since it is written by Haller himself, and it stresses the practical significance

Ziolkowski then moves on to the second section of the novel, the actual action. He has a more difficult time arguing his main point in this context and must admit, “[i]t would be gratifying if we could demonstrate that this second part conforms strictly to the form of the second movement of the sonata, but that would be an extension of the truth” (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 128). However, the scholar does reveal a number of musical techniques which are transposed into a literary medium within this portion of the novel, which nevertheless allow him to maintain his overall argument. He asserts, for instance, that almost all of the occurrences in this part of the story can be interpreted on two distinct levels, what he refers to as “double perception” (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 123). All incidents relating to Haller can be read as real and actual happenings, or as drug- or alcohol-induced hallucinations. The interpretation chosen corresponds then to whether an event is understood from a bourgeois perspective – something actually happening in empirical reality – or as something descended from a “supernal plane,” a world beyond phenomenal reality (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 123). Through this technique, Hesse produces “the effect of simultaneity or concomitance of the two planes or melodic lines...a highly musical device corresponding closely to counterpoint” (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 123). In other words, just as is the case with the polarity in *Narziss und Goldmund*, *Der Steppenwolf* exhibits a kind of “Melodie” and “Gegenmelodie” in writing. This phenomenon, in combination with a number of frequently occurring leitmotifs and the fact that “the structure of many modern sonatas is far less rigid than that of the classical sonata,” persuades Ziolkowski to state that “the second part [of the novel] is equivalent to the second movement” (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 128).

of the two themes for his own life. The resolution of the tonic and dominant in the recapitulation is an obvious parallel to the proposed reconciliation of Steppenwolf and Bürger in Harry Haller. In view of this rather close correspondence between the musical form and the first part of *Steppenwolf*, it seems safe to assert that the preliminary material of the novel reveals ‘first-movement form.’ (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 120-121).

Finally, the scholar deals with the final segment of the story, Haller's experiences in Pablos' magic theater. In this last section, Haller enters various rooms in the theater and partakes in a number of surreal episodes. Ziolkowski asserts that the "sideshows pick up various other motifs from the novel," transforming and playing with them much as a composer will do at the end of certain musical piece with the motifs and themes found throughout it (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 130). Thus, Ziolkowski argues, in general:

Der Steppenwolf might be compared to a sonata in three movements. The first movement shows unmistakable first-movement form, or the so-called 'sonata-form'; the second movement, through it does not reveal any form typical of the adagio of the sonata, employs the highly musical device of double perception or counterpoint throughout; the third movement, finally, is constructed according to a pattern remarkably similar to a finale in variations. As in the modern symphony, the themes are not limited to one movement alone, but appear in all the parts, thus creating an effect of structural unity in the whole: the second and third movements are based, respectively, upon the first and second points of the 'Traktat.' Although the word abounds in so-called 'musical' devices, like leitmotiv and contrast, it does not depend upon such hazy concepts in order to attain its musical effect. Instead, it reveals a structure which, consciously or unconsciously on Hesse's part, corresponds in general to a specific musical form and, in certain places, seems to adhere rigidly to the accepted pattern of musical composition. To this extent it might be permissible to designate Hesse's *Steppenwolf* as a sonata in prose. (Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 133)

Despite Ziolkowski's convincing study into the musical nature of Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf*, he remains slightly hesitant and reserved with his overall claim, saying only that it "might be permissible" to call *Der Steppenwolf* a sonata in prose. Similarly, he casts doubt on the validity of his argument by questioning whether Hesse applied a musical structure to his novel "consciously or unconsciously." It seems highly likely, however, that Hesse did indeed attempt to write a musical composition with words, especially when taking a letter written by the author from 1930 into account. In this note, Hesse writes, "[*Der Steppenwolf*] ist um das Intermezzo des Traktats herum so streng und straff gebaut wie eine Sonate und greift sein Thema reinlich an" (qtd. in Ziolkowski *Steppenwolf* 115).

It has become evident that Hesse's earlier work, *Der Steppenwolf*, is in fact even more "musical" than his later *Narziss und Goldmund* and that the author was indeed consciously organizing his novels at this point in time to emulate musical structures. Thus, it seems safe to say that Hesse's literary skill in the late 1920s was sufficiently sophisticated enough to structure a longer prose text musically. Nevertheless, the questions remain: Was Hesse satisfied just *trying* to write musical sonatas in words, knowing that he would never be able to fully achieve his goal, or was he actually attempting to transcend empirical boundaries through language? Did he write *Narziss und Goldmund* out of frustration because *Der Steppenwolf* failed to achieve a goal the author truly aspired to attain – although closely resembling a sonata, the "second movement" of the text is far from perfect – or simply as another Romantic exercise, which extols the process far more than the product? The answers to these questions can be found by closely examining the structure and underlying tenor of Hesse's masterpiece, *Das Glasperlenspiel*.

Perhaps because of its length and complexity of theme, there is some academic disagreement as to whether this particular novel does indeed follow a musical structure as many of Hesse's earlier works clearly do. Most notable is Theodore Ziolkowski's claim that the story is not so much organized around musical principles as that it follows an "architectonic" order (*Glass Bead* 40). It is somewhat surprising to find the scholar, who so convincingly argued for a sonata-form organization to one of Hesse's earlier works, asserting that this later novel does not follow a musical structure. Ziolkowski contends instead that the form of *Das Glasperlenspiel* is based on Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt's theory of the three powers: state, religion, and culture (*Glass Bead* 66).¹⁵⁰ Although convincingly arguing

¹⁵⁰ For more information regarding Burckhardt's theories of history, see Jacob Burckhardt's *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*.

that Burchkhardt's historical hypothesis plays a vital role in the form of the novel, Ziolkowski does *not*, however, sufficiently demonstrate that Hesse was not attempting to perhaps simultaneously incorporate both historical theories and musical principles into the structure of his masterpiece. The two are not mutually exclusive.

Furthermore, Ziolkowski admits that “[b]ecause Hesse’s attitude toward the aesthetic ideal (Castalia) changed during the eleven years of its genesis, the novel is not free of structural flaws” (*Glass Bead* 39). In other words, it seems plausible that Hesse may have been trying to organize his tale around different principles and theories at varying times during the writing process, which in turn resulted in an inconsistent, perhaps “structurally flawed” novel. This would explain why so many scholars are convinced that music does indeed play a fundamental role in the organization of *Das Glasperlenspiel*, despite Ziolkowski’s assertion that it does not.

The long period of time required to write the novel and the consequential irregularities in form would also explain why scholars, almost all agreeing that the novel is organized around musical principles, actually disagree as to which musical ideas in particular serve as the foundation of the novel’s structure. Some references to the form of *Das Glasperlenspiel* remain rather vague, such as E.R. Curtius’ claim that “[a]ll [Hesse’s] themes...are taken up again and treated contrapuntally in this work” (14) or that the glass bead game is a “motif” around which “a whole world had to be built up” (15). G.W. Field simply states, “[t]he glass bead game...is a sort of improvisation in which ‘genuine’ music themes are ‘played’ in variations architectural, mathematical, poetical, etc., comprising a sort of encyclopaedic counterpoint of all the arts and studies” (105). These scholars concentrate chiefly on the glass bead game itself as a motif, theme, or improvisation and simply mention in passing that

the novel has a musical organization. Still others merely focus on the most obvious structure of the novel and make random statements alluding briefly to music, such as Hilde Cohn's claim that the "three autobiographical studies present three variations of the 'finale' of the narrative" (350). Or there are those who choose to examine only one small section of the novel, e.g., the poem titled "Zu einer Toccata von Bach," and simply point out that there are "[s]everal...instances of musically descriptive diction in the poem" (Crosby 344).¹⁵¹

In contrast, Siglind Bruhn and Matthias Schulze explore the musical organization of the novel as a whole, each with their own, often contrasting view as to which musical principles in particular serve as the structural backdrop to *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Bruhn attempts to demonstrate in her study *The Musical Order of the World: Kepler, Hesse, Hindemith* that both Hesse's masterpiece, as well as Paul Hindemith's opera *Die Harmonie der Welt*, performed for the first time in Munich in 1957, are hopeful quests for "universal harmony" in a world ravaged by war.¹⁵² In order to achieve her goal, the scholar examines both the novel and opera in relation to the medieval quadrivium and trivium (9-10), eventually coming to the conclusion that "Hesse's work consists of two interlocking strands...[e]ach of [which] in turn consists of five components" (79).¹⁵³ Moreover, she

¹⁵¹ Crosby offers a few examples of this musical diction in his article. He claims, for example, that "Hesse's image [of light bursting forth from the jagged clouds] can be said to serve-unintentionally, perhaps as a verbal description of an aural-visual musical effect: the jagged 'outline' of the Baroque instrumental flourish consistently used by Bach in the introductory measure of his toccatas" (344). In a similar vein, he states, that the phrase "'[e]s wandelt sich...,' suggest[s] modulation, and 'Wölbt Welt um Welt zu...Siegeshbogen,' ...suggests both the 'arch' of the musical phrasing and also Bach's cumulative climaxes in the toccatas" (344). While Crosby makes interesting and valid points, these few examples do not support an overall claim that the poem is musically structured.

¹⁵²Bruhn explains the origin and development of the idea of universal harmony in the first chapter of her book.

¹⁵³ Bruhn's notion of interlocking strands or a "double-helix whose strands reflect the focal issues in the dual title" (11) should sound familiar by now as it seems to closely resemble the "Melodie" and "Gegenmelodie," which Josef Mileck described in *Narziss und Goldmund*, as well as Theodor Ziolkowski's idea of "double perception" in *Der Steppenwolf*.

claims that “novel insights” into the meaning of the novel can be gained when one of these strands, in particular, is “laid out in analogy to a five-movement musical piece” (79).

In fact, Bruhn argues that much of Hesse’s novel is an example of what she calls *transmedialization*, “a generic description for what in the field of comparative arts is called ‘ekphrasis’: the re-presentation in *one* medium of a content previously represented in *another* medium” (10). In other words, the scholar believes that much of *Das Glasperlenspiel* is a literary representation of a musical structure, i.e., that Hesse literally composes a literary symphony with words. In order to prove her point, Bruhn first demonstrates that the obvious structure of the novel into three main sections – the introduction, the life of Josef Knecht, and his posthumous writings – is, in fact, a deceptive division and that the novel is actually comprised of two main “strands”: the story of Castalia and the glass bead game, which she refers to as the “World of the Mind” (79), and Josef Knecht’s personal history. Each of these strands is then divided into five sections.¹⁵⁴ The “World of Mind” consists of the historian’s introduction, Knecht’s circular letter to Order, the reply to the letter, conversations between Knecht and Designori over the years, and Knecht’s posthumous poems. The second strand consists of Knecht’s biographies: the longer tale of his life as a Castalian, the three autobiographies included at the end of the novel, and the one missing autobiography about a Swabian theologian named Knecht, which Hesse did not finish and did not include in the

¹⁵⁴ Bruhn demonstrates that each individual strand can be divided into five sections, but also argues that the novel on a whole should be divided into five sections: the Latin motto at the beginning of the novel, the historian’s introduction, the biography of Josef Knecht, the poems that Knecht wrote as a young boy, and finally, the autobiographies included at the end of the novel (78-79).

final draft of his novel (79).¹⁵⁵ The first strand, in particular, can be read as a five-movement musical piece (11).

Bruhn performs a number of detailed musical analyses in her study to support her overall argument, “stating not only the appearance of themes and motifs, formulas and cadenzas, but recording their frequency, distribution, length, and interrelatedness” (57). In the historian’s introduction, for instance, she notes two themes (the “age of the Feuilleton” and the “glass bead game”) as well as three motifs (“music,” “Chinese wisdom,” and “spirituality”). She tracks this thematic material throughout the entire introduction and contends that the historian’s

...treatment of the material is reminiscent of instrumental works in the Italian *canzona* tradition of the 16th and 17th centuries. These pieces also display clear sectionalization, and their themes often grow out of one another, with the result that there is neither a recapitulation of the original juxtaposition nor a concluding synthesis. It would seem that the chronicler had modeled the ‘musical structure’ of his introduction after the keyboard and lute pieces that play such an important role in the lives of his tale’s characters. (62)

Without going into more detail regarding Bruhn’s thematic analysis of the novel, it suffices to say that the scholar believes to have sufficiently demonstrated in her overall study that *Das Glasperlenspiel* on a whole “exhibits typical features of a symphonic movement” (80).¹⁵⁶ Hesse’s masterpiece is, according to Siglind Bruhn, clearly “a work that is at once literary and musical” (29). While convincingly arguing at times that the novel demonstrates a number of structural characteristics which can be mapped onto a generic template of symphonic organization, Bruhn’s tedious and complicated divisions, subdivisions, and re-

¹⁵⁵ Bruhn argues that this “fourth” life is indispensable to understanding the overall structure of the novel (29). For more information on the history and content of the fourth, missing autobiography in *Das Glasperlenspiel*, see Mark Boulby’s “Der Vierte Lebenslauf” as a Key to *Das Glasperlenspiel*.”

¹⁵⁶ See pp. 238-239 in Bruhn’s book for a broad thematic summary of Hesse’s novel.

divisions of *Das Glasperlenspiel* make some of the scholar's musical analyses seem forced, thus weakening her overall argument.

Matthias Schulze also argues in *Die Musik als zeitgeschichtliches Paradigma: Zu Hesses Glasperlenspiel und Thomas Manns Doktor Faustus* that “[d]ie Musik...Ausgangspunkt für die sprachliche Konstruktion der Texte [ist]” (17), but he differs from Bruhn regarding the way in which he feels Hesse was attempting to imitate a musical structure in his novel. The goal of Schulze's study is to compare and contrast two novels, both published in the 1940s, in order to demonstrate the way in which these authors' literary engagement with music can be used to comment on the historical period during which they were writing – a national socialist Germany.¹⁵⁷ This comparison between Mann's *Doktor Faustus* and Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* colors his entire analysis, and leads Schulze to read both works as responses to a “Wagnersche Endzeit” (127), a somewhat surprising context within which to place Hesse's novel, given the author's general dislike for Richard Wagner.¹⁵⁸

Although Schulze mentions some of the typical generalizations concerning Hesse's employment of musical principles in *Das Glasperlenspiel* – e.g., the statement that “[d]ie einfache und klare Sprachmelodie des Romans...[erinnert] an die Musik Bachs oder Mozarts” (57) or the claim that one can understand Hesse's writing as a “Musizieren mit Worten” (25) – the scholar also offers more concrete insights into the musical structure of the

¹⁵⁷ In the conclusion of this dissertation, I argue that Mann and Hesse actually had very different goals when writing these two novels. Specifically, I will demonstrate that while Mann was directly engaging with the political situation of the time, Hesse was not.

¹⁵⁸ Hesse's musical preference for baroque and classical composers over romantic and operatic composers was discussed early in this chapter. Schulze seems aware of the unorthodox connection he makes between Hesse and Wagner and pre-empts critique on this point by asserting that Wagner's influence on Hesse was “natürlich [eine] ungewollte” (68).

novel as well. First rejecting Werner Dürr's proposition that *Das Glasperlenspiel* follows the structure of a fugue because "Knechts Lebenslauf ganz im Mittelpunkt steht...was musikalisch auf Homophonie hindeutet" (Schulze 58) and because Dürr cannot logically incorporate the three autobiographies found at the end of the novel into his analysis (Schulze 59), Schulze suggests instead that the organization of the novel is based on a "Sonatensatzform" (61).¹⁵⁹

The scholar first notes that Knecht's story is divided into twelve chapters of relatively equal length (59), followed by another four after the story concludes – Knecht's posthumous works. He divides these 16 chapters into four groupings of four chapters each and claims that they represent the exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda often found in sonataform musical compositions. Although noting that "[d]as stärkste Argument für eine angenommene Sonatensatzform ist...das erneute Erscheinen des wichtigsten Opponenten Plinio im neunten Kapitel, also zu Beginn der Reprise" (61), Schulze offers little proof to support the assertion that the first four chapters have characteristics typical of an exposition, the next four of a development, etc. More damning than his lack of evidence or the completely chance comparisons he makes between the novel and random musical principles, such as the observation that the twelve chapters "eine Versinnbildlichung des stufenweisen Durchschreitens einer Tonleiter bis zur Oktave zu sehen" (59), is the fact that Schulze does not include the chronicler's long introduction at the beginning of the novel in his reading at all, making him just as guilty as Werner Dürr of neglecting significant parts of the novel, which do not happen to fit his analysis.

¹⁵⁹ This interpretation of the novel differs from Bruhn's in that she argues that only the introduction truly follows a strict sonata-form pattern.

Schulze does attempt to account for the problems related to his formal interpretation of the novel by adding the weak caveat, “[n]atürlich hat diese Gattung [die Sonatensatzform] eine historische Entwicklung durchgemacht, die keine eindeutige Deutungsmöglichkeit zuläßt” (60). Although failing to actually strengthen his overall argument by pointing out that the particular musical structure supposedly mirrored in *Das Glasperlenspiel* is difficult to emulate because it has changed significantly over the course of its history, Schulze nevertheless hints at a possible solution to our dilemma: i.e., the problem of understanding why so many scholars argue that the novel follows a musical structure but fail to agree on which structure in particular Hesse wanted to reproduce in words. Contrary to Schulze’s claim, it is *not* the case that sonata-form changed so much over time that Hesse had trouble imitating it through language, but rather that Hesse’s goals while writing *Das Glasperlenspiel* changed dramatically over the course of the eleven years he spent working on the novel. *This* is what makes it impossible to convincingly argue that the novel follows one set musical form over others.

Thus, to reiterate, while Hesse may not have been trying to turn language into music when writing early poems such as “Feierliche Abend,” the author clearly contemplates composing musical works through words by the time he writes *Der Kurgast*. He obviously attempts to achieve his goal in later stories such as *Narziß und Goldmund* or *Der Steppenwolf*, as well as in his masterpiece *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Each attempt, however, seems problematic and imperfect in its own way, and one has to ask whether Hesse was consciously striving to reach an unattainable goal (but nevertheless enjoying the process in early Romantic fashion) or whether he felt (truly hopeful of possibly transcending empirical boundaries through words at the onset of each project) that he failed each time to achieve his

main objective. In the final section of this chapter, I argue that the truth lies somewhere in the middle. While occasionally acknowledging that he would never be able to reach his goal, Hesse did not always and consistently share the positive early German Romantic attitude embodied by authors such as Novalis. That is to say, it is likely that Hesse was not satisfied just *trying* to access the absolute through words, but that he was genuinely disheartened that he would not be able to help language achieve its third and most important goal. This less optimistic outlook is captured in a statement made by the health spa guest in *Der Kurgast*.

This fictional author explains:

Dies ist mein Dilemma und Problem. Es läßt sich viel darüber sagen, lösen aber läßt es sich nicht. Die beiden Pole des Lebens zueinander zu biegen, die Zweistimmigkeit der Lebensmelodie niederzuschreiben, wird mir nie gelingen. Dennoch werde ich dem dunklen Befehl in meinem Innern folgen und werde wieder und wieder den Versuch unternehmen müssen. (*Kurgast* 113)

It seems likely that Hesse also realized at various times and to varying degrees that he would not be able to write the double melody of life, thus accounting for the contradictions which arise when comparing the author's personal letters to friends to his actual novels. Although Hesse may at times have felt it impossible to write linguistic "compositions," he nonetheless felt compelled to try repeatedly. These attempts differed greatly from the early German Romantic goal of infinite perfectibility, however, in that they were regularly marred by an underlying pessimism. Hesse "[musste]...dem dunklen Befehl...folgen."

This general attitude of wanting to accomplish an impossible task and only consciously admitting the hopelessness of the endeavor is best depicted not in *Der Kurgast*, though, but in *Das Glasperlenspiel*. As previously mentioned, Hesse and the narrator of Josef Knecht's biography seem to have a great deal in common. The historian's sporadic frustration at not being able to write a completely accurate biography and his intermittent

denial of the difficulties associated with his project are similar to what appears to be Hesse's attitude toward fiction writing. The narrator of *Das Glasperlenspiel* is perhaps the most autobiographical figure within Hesse's later works.

To put this idea into a larger perspective, the fictional and actual authors of Knecht's story share a way of thinking partially reminiscent of both optimistic Jena Romantics as well as more pessimistically-oriented philosophers. In fact, Hesse's internal struggle between the dream of accomplishing an impossible task, on the one hand, and his possible feelings of resignation and defeat when constantly failing, on the other, are one manifestation of the way in which this modern author is heir to a broader Romantic movement, one which includes Novalis and Schlegel *as well as* Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

Although balancing the oppositional stances of these 19th-century thinkers throughout his career, sometimes writing works which seem to sincerely strive to follow a musical structure, sometimes writing works that do not, Hesse appears to make a concealed shift towards a more negative outlook regarding language's third goal while writing *Das Glasperlenspiel*. This shift not only explains why scholars disagree regarding the musical structure of the novel – it is plausible that Hesse began writing with a strict musical form in mind, explaining why the introduction is similar to a sonata-form composition, and then later gave up, vindicating Ziolkowski's assertion that the novel is not structured around musical principles – but it also calls into question a number of optimistically colored interpretations of the novel as a whole. Although many scholars argue that *Das Glasperlenspiel* is a utopian novel of sorts, justifying and supporting the claim through comments made by Hesse himself, a closer examination of the novel, which takes the general tenor, the surprise ending, and the

previously established ambivalence of the author toward his goal into account, makes it apparent that Hesse actually wrote a very pessimistic novel.¹⁶⁰

V. The end of a dream

I have already established that early Jena Romantics such as Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel heavily influenced both Hesse's early and late works. Similarly, I have briefly mentioned that more pessimistic German philosophers, such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, inspired Hesse's novels to varying degrees over the course of his literary career. The most blatant tribute to Schopenhauer's ideas occurs in Hesse's "Klein und Wagner." At the end of this short story, the protagonist Klein steals a boat, rows out to sea, and decides to commit suicide. While drowning, the man has an epiphany:

Im grauen Regendunkel über dem Nachtsee sah der Untersinkende das Spiel der Welt gespiegelt und dargestellt: Sonnen und Sterne rollten herauf, rollten hinab, Chöre von Menschen und Tieren, Geistern und Engeln standen gegeneinander, sangen, schwiegen, schrien, Züge von Wesen zogen gegeneinander, jedes sich selbst mißkennend, sich selbst hassend, und sich in jedem andern Wesen hassend und verfolgend. Ihrer aller Sehnsucht war nach Tod, war nach Ruhe, ihr Ziel war Gott, war die Wiederkehr zu Gott und das Bleiben in Gott. Dies Ziel schuf Angst, denn es war ein Irrtum. Es gab kein Bleiben in Gott! Es gab keine Ruhe! Es gab nur das ewige, ewige, herrliche, heilige Ausgeatmetwerden und Eingeatmetwerden, Gestaltung und Auflösung, Geburt und Tod, Auszug und Wiederkehr, ohne Pause, ohne Ende. (*Klein* 288-289)

Although most of Klein's thoughts are formulated within a religious framework, his references to God make more sense and are more fully comprehended when one supposes him to mean Schopenhauer's Will rather than a Christian deity. Man's innate desire to die, to return to that from which he came, in addition to the fact that the return is not sustainable, reminds one Schopenhauer's remarks regarding man's incessant longing to return to the Will

¹⁶⁰ As argued in a previous section of this chapter, there are very few direct references or allusions to pessimistic philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer in this novel. However, I contend that Schopenhauer's philosophy informs the general tenor of this novel, especially toward the end of Knecht's biography.

and his impossible yearning to remain there indefinitely. It is easy to understand Klein's thoughts regarding the perpetual "Ausgeatmetwerden" and "Eingeatmetwerden" of the universe as Schopenhauer's Will repeatedly manifesting itself in the world as Representation. Moreover, these Representations, Klein's "Menschen und Tieren, Geistern und Engeln," find themselves struggling with each other, hating each other, and not recognizing each other as manifestations of the one Will. Clearly, "Klein und Wagner" is Hesse's most open acknowledgement of Schopenhaurian philosophy in his writing.

There are similar allusions to Schopenhauer's philosophy in other works, such as *Der Kurgast*. The resort guest complains, for instance, about the overimportance many people place on the idea of the individual. He believes:

[A]lles Leiden, alles Böse [besteht] nur darin, daß wir einzelne uns nicht mehr als unlösbare Teile des Ganzen empfinden, daß das Ich sich zu wichtig nimmt...es gab eine Menge von Menschen, deren ganzes Leben ein Kampf, ein kriegerisches Sichbehaupten des Ich gegen die Umwelt war...[und] den in Leiden differenziert Gewordnen war es verboten, in diesem Kampfe ihr Glück zu finden. (*Kurgast* 61-62)

The protagonist of this story argues, much like Schopenhauer does in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, that the principii individuationis causes the highest manifestation of the Will – man – to struggle and suffer a great deal.

Adding a Nietzschean twist, Hesse maintains a comparable line of thought in *Der Steppenwolf*. When Haller goes to a ball to meet Hermine, he experiences "das Erlebnis des Festes, der Rausch der Festgemeinschaft, das Geheimnis vom Untergang der Person in der Menge, von der Unio mystical der Freude" (*Steppenwolf* 359-360). Surrounded by music and dancing, Haller discovers joy in the momentary rejection of the principii individuationis. It is an "Aufhebung der leidvollen Individuation" (*Steppenwolf* 248).¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Josef Mileck has tracked the influence that more "negative" 19th-century philosophers had on Hesse as well. He states, for instance, while discussing *Demian* in his article "The Prose of Hermann Hesse," "[t]he immediate

Klingsor reads Schopenhauer upon awakening one morning (*Klingsor* 232) and Mozart explains to Haller, “das Leben ist immer furchtbar” (*Steppenwolf* 401). But one does not find Josef Knecht, Plinio Designori, or the Musikmeister making comparable comments. On the contrary, many people read *Das Glasperlenspiel* as a utopian novel of sorts, despite Knecht’s sudden and tragic death at the end of his story. Matthias Schulze declares when describing the Castalian Order, “mit Hesses neuem Reich, wird Utopie offen angestrebte und umtriebig beworbene staatliche Wirklichkeit” (52). Ignacio Götz interprets Knecht’s unfortunate demise as a type of “fulfillment” rather than “loss” (519). I.A. White and J.J. White make essentially the same claim when asserting that “Josef Knecht dies in the fulfillment of his role as supreme Castalian” (941). Hilde Cohn sees in this ending “the seeds of faith, hope, and continuation” (357). Stephen Bandy summarizes this general interpretative trend among his peers and explains that “[m]ost readers...have assumed that Knecht’s death is fitting and necessary” (300). Many read Castalia as a fictional utopia and Knecht’s death by drowning as a positive sacrifice for the sake of Tito’s future.

Hesse himself is partially responsible for these optimistic interpretations. In a letter to his son Bruno from 1944, Hesse writes, for instance, “[d]as mit dem Tod von Josef Knecht sehe ich so an: Dieser Tod ist kein Zufall, sondern er ist ein Opfertod, und der junge Tito wird dadurch tiefer angefaßt und fürs ganze Leben verpflichtet, als es auf irgendeine andre Art hätte geschehen können” (Michels *Materialien* 235). In a letter written later in the same year to Rolf von Hoerschelmann, the author reiterates his point: “Knecht Tod kann natürlich viele Deutungen haben. Für mich ist die zentrale die des Opfers, das er tapfer und freudig erfüllt. So wie ich es meine, hat er damit auch sein Erzieherwerk an dem Jüngling nicht

reaction was as extreme as the initial impulse; the assertive Nietzschean activism yields suddenly to a Schopenhauer-like passivity, restless quest to a quietistic acceptance, self-realization to a yearning for self-obliteration” (166).

abgebrochen, sondern erfüllt” (Michels *Materialien* 241). In other words, Hesse claims that Knecht’s death deeply affects his friend’s son and shapes the young man’s future more than Knecht could ever have done had he survived.

However, although Hesse openly supports the argument that *Das Glasperlenspiel* is in essence an inspiring story with a positive ending, there is once again room to doubt the sincerity of his claims. As previously demonstrated in the section on transmedialization, Hesse’s letters to friends and family are not always the most genuine articulations of his beliefs – or, at the very least, one can often find an underlying ambivalence in them. It is not uncommon for Hesse to proclaim one thing in a letter, perhaps for unknown or unconscious personal reasons, and to contradict this claim in his actual writing. The most evident clue that his statements in these letters regarding Knecht’s death may not represent the entire truth can be found in the phrase “Knecht Tod kann natürlich viele Deutungen haben.” Indeed, Hesse repeats this idea in a much later letter from 1953 to an anonymous reader of *Das Glasperlenspiel*. He explains, “[i]ch habe kein Bedürfnis, Erläuterungen zu meinen Dichtungen zu geben, es soll jeder Leser das aus ihnen nehmen, was ihm annehmbar und verdaulich ist” (Michels *Materialien* 291). The reader is essentially told to return to the text itself and to find an interpretation on his or her own.

When taking Hesse’s advice and examining the novel in the broader context of his earlier works, one comes to the conclusion that Knecht’s death and the novel on a whole represent anything but a promising and optimistic utopia. Most obviously supporting this argument is the fact that Knecht dies by way of drowning at the end of his story. This particular death setting immediately calls to mind in the avid Hesse reader Klein’s drowning at the end of “Klein und Wagner,” which is one of the most blatant incorporations of

Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy in Hesse's works.¹⁶² Furthermore, if one steps back for just a moment to look at the entire novel and the way in which the author framed *Das Glasperlenspiel* with an introduction by a fictional chronicler at one end and Knecht's posthumous works on the other, one comes to realize that Knecht's death did little to change Castalia. Josef Knecht leaves the Province toward the end of his life for a number of reasons but mainly because he has discovered that the glass bead game will not allow him to transcend the boundaries of the empirical world and give him insight into the true, transcendental nature of the universe. Only music can do this. However, two hundred years after Knecht's death, at the time we find the historian writing Knecht's biography, Castalians still praise their glass bead game above music or any other art. There still appears to be a rift between Castalia and the world outside the Province. *Geist* and *Natur* have not been reconciled. And a stringent, oppressive hierarchy still exists within the Order. In fact, very little has changed in the centuries since Knecht "sacrificed" himself for Tito and the greater good of the world. His death has obviously not been as influential as Hesse prophesized in his letters.

Although many scholars have misread Hesse's novel as a utopian vision for the future, there are nonetheless a handful who have uncovered the underlying pessimism within the novel. Theodore Ziolkowski openly states, "[i]t is primarily this introduction, along with the motto, that has given rise to the mistaken notion that *The Glass Bead Game* is a utopian novel" (*Glass Bead* 46). In a similar vein, G.W. Field remarks, "the world of the

¹⁶² I must disagree with Matthias Schulze's interpretation of Knecht's death. He claims, "[d]er Tod im See ist ein 'Aufgehen' in einer 'All-Einheit' von Welt, die, wie Kleins Schicksal in 'Klein und Wagner', in engster Verbindung mit Siddhartas positiv als 'Om' gedeutetem Ende steht" (140). The phrasing used by Hesse and the negative tenor inherent to this particular passage depicting Klein's death clearly point to a Schopenhaurian reading.

‘Glasperlenspiel’ is imperfect” (106). Mark Boulby writes with regard to “Indischer Lebenslauf,” one of the autobiographies at the end of Knecht’s biography, “it is the Schopenhauerian undertone of the main novel which is here suddenly orchestrated in full here” (*Mind* 308). And Stephen Bandy explains, “[o]ne is left with the unsettling suspicion that [one] has not fully appreciated the ironic undercurrents of the work – that there arises from its chapters a subtext which, at every point, casts its shadow over the surface of the narrative” (299).

This negative outlook on life hidden well beneath the surface layer of the story can be explained, at least in part, by examining the genesis of the novel. Much like the fictional narrator of Knecht’s tale, Hesse was faced with an impossible task: that of turning language into music. The fact that he tried so desperately to achieve this goal, while simultaneously undermining the actual possibility of it through the subtle Schopenhaurian allusions, is likely a result of the tumultuous time period during which he wrote the novel. The political atmosphere of Europe at the time, with Hitler’s rise to power and the start of the Second World War, is distinctly different from the ordered, intellectual Castalian dream portrayed in *Das Glasperlenspiel*. Hesse was likely escaping from the horrors of upcoming war by writing, and he set for himself a beautiful, if impossible, goal. He imagined bringing to life Novalis’ Golden Age in a decaying and degenerate world. The underlying pessimism in *Das Glasperlenspiel*, as well as Hesse’s final attempt at achieving his goal, coincide and are determined by his actual surroundings. Hesse must have felt much nearer to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche than to Novalis and Schlegel by the time he published his novel in 1943.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Surprisingly, Hesse does write one more piece after publishing *Das Glasperlenspiel* in which he attempts to turn language into music. Specifically, he composes a short piece titled “Ein Satz über die Kadenz” in 1947. Hesse himself describes the piece in a letter to the composer Will Eisenmann as “weniger ein Versuch das Phänomen der Kadenz zu erklären, als ein spaßhafter Versuch dies Phänomen in einem einzigen Satz Prosa

gewissermaßen nachzuahmen” (Michels *Musik* 113). I tend to believe that Hesse’s phrase “spaßhafter Versuch” was written with a touch of bitterness and irony. Regardless, however, of whether Hesse was really attempting to innocently play with language at this late point in life or making fun of himself for seriously attempting to compose music with words in previous phases of his, the important thing to note is that he does *not* genuinely attempt any kind of transcending transmedialization with this work.

CONCLUSION

Music in literature after the Second World War

I. Hesse's personal failure

Hermann Hesse was the last great heir to the Romantic dream of writing absolute music. Throughout much of his literary career, the popular author struggled to liberate language from its inherent limitations – its intuitive but erroneous ties to objects in the empirical world – by literally transforming it into music. Just as Novalis, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, to name the strongest adherents to this long Romantic tradition in German literature, believed that absolute music – a music completely independent from language – allows listeners to transcend empirical boundaries and mysteriously access something beyond the phenomenal realm, Hesse continues down this trajectory and makes multiple attempts to overcome his language crisis by writing about music. Keeping with his Romantic heritage, Hesse appears to suggest that only language which has become music will be capable of depicting the true nature of reality and perhaps even herald in a kind of paradise on earth. Thus, Hermann Hesse engages with music in his works both thematically and structurally. He writes *about* music while also trying to compose linguistic symphonies.

At the same time, Hesse fights in many stories to strike a balance between the various dichotomies intrinsic to all art. He contrasts form and content, freedom and limitation, organization and improvisation, and intellect and spirit. Always privileging one side of a dichotomy over the other in his early works, Hesse attempts to establish an equilibrium in his

final novel by inventing not only an imaginary game representative of all art forms, but an entire, fictional realm in which the game exists. Simultaneously praising order in the form of Castalia's hierarchy and the baroque music that most of his characters admire, but also extolling musical improvisation and unintentional writing, Hesse makes one last effort in *Das Glasperlenspiel* to write the perfectly well-balanced musical novel.

As can be seen by the multifarious ways in which scholarship has interpreted Hesse's masterpiece in the sixty plus years since its publication, Hesse falls short of achieving his grandest goals. Although he clearly and successfully points to a number of problems associated with the medium of language, he fails to completely overcome or solve them in his works. Words do not become musical notes and a pure, sustained balance between opposing forces or ideas is not created. In the end, although Josef Knecht leaves the Province forever, it appears that Castalia's strict order, uncreative tendencies, and sterile atmosphere survive, separate and distinct from the movements and inclinations of the rest of the world. Although Hesse suggests in the novel itself and in later letters to friends and family that Knecht's death represents a new beginning (by affecting Tito in such a way that the reader assumes the child will eventually complete Knecht's mission and successfully synthesize the two opposing worlds), the very "presence" of the historical narrator within the novel contradicts this supposition. That is to say, despite continuously warning fellow Order members that Castalia cannot survive as a one-sided, intellectual realm, Knecht's prophesy does not come true. The chronicler, writing more than 200 years after Knecht's death in a Province that is very much alive and not very different from Knecht's Castalia, demonstrates by merely existing that Knecht's ultimate mission failed. Nothing much has changed in the

Province and “[a]m Ende mußte sich Hesse der Einsicht in die Unmöglichkeit seines Unterfangens fügen” (Schulze 144).

Interestingly, Hesse sensed that he may encounter difficulties achieving his main aims from the onset of the project. He writes in a letter to Helene Welt in 1934:

Ich weiß, daß dieses Stück, die Einleitung meiner neuen Dichtung, nur sehr wenige erreichen wird, aber auf diese wenigen kommt es für mich diesmal an, und ich war gar nicht sicher, ob sie sich wirklich finden würden, ob nicht der Boden meiner Dichtung und Idee eine romantische Mentalität sei, wie sie zu Zeiten des Novalis, Schellings und Baaders sich von selbst verstand, heute aber ausgestorben ist. (Michels *Materialien* 100)

Hesse implies that he has indeed found a few people receptive to the introduction of his last novel. However, he acknowledges that he is writing in a time and place very different in a number of ways from the world in which authors such as Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel lived. It is this dramatically changing world that eventually makes it impossible for Hesse or anyone writing after him to fulfill early German Romantic dreams associated with absolute music or to believe in quite the same way in a future utopia.

II. The atrocities of war and its effect on art

Hermann Hesse wrote about possible ideal worlds and futuristic utopias while the actual world around him was crumbling. Around the time that the author began working on *Das Glasperlenspiel*, Hitler came to power and the world witnessed the formation of the Third Reich. Although writing from relative safety in his home in Switzerland, Hesse nevertheless was frequently confronted with news of Germany’s role in the Second World War and the country’s eventual defeat. It is safe to conjecture that the daily atrocities this author heard recounted would only reinforce his desire to write about and escape in a

protected world of rules and regulations – Castalia.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, it is also likely that this fictional safe haven could not completely withstand the onslaught of harsh reality on its creator over time. However, putting aside hypotheses into Hesse’s emotional state at this moment in history, it is indisputable that the Holocaust and Second World War left an impression on a number of different artists of the time and influenced the way that these men wrote, performed, painted, and composed. In other words, one can argue at the very least for a type of caesura occurring in 1940’s German literature.

Like many divisions of literature into specific time periods or epochs, though, this particular break is better described as a transition from an early German Romantic faith in the power of absolute music to a post-fascist obsession with truthful depictions of the empirical world. Although I maintain that Hermann Hesse was the last great heir to a specific Romantic heritage, he was not, however, the only author writing about absolute music or attempting musical ekphrasis at this time. At least one other equally famous writer was creating musical compositions with words in the 1940s: Thomas Mann. Nevertheless, Mann’s transmedialization efforts were not Romantic in origin and were therefore very distinct from Hesse’s. I argue that Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* is a transitional work between the long Romantic period in German literature and the post-fascist, postmodern works which were yet to come.

Academic scholarship has, in the past, often grouped *Das Glasperlenspiel* and *Doktor Faustus* together, claiming at times that the novels are “the two indubitable post-World War II German classics” (Bloom 1), but also arguing that Mann and Hesse are both “Erben der Romantik” (Schulze 51). Indeed, Thomas Mann himself writes in an introduction to Hesse’s

¹⁶⁴ Josef Mileck argues that “Knecht’s world...became [for Hesse] a necessary mental retreat from Europe’s troubled times” (*Biography* 92).

Demian that he sees a number of parallels between *Das Glasperlenspiel* and *Doktor Faustus* (Bloom 22). Without a doubt, the two novels do share common ground: for example, both deal with the life stories of exceptional men, Josef Knecht and Adrian Leverkühn; both are written by third-person narrators with vast but not unlimited knowledge of the protagonists; both center around different types of instrumental music (classical and baroque music in Hesse's case – Schoenberg's twelve-tone-music in Mann's story); and both are arguably organized in ways that mimic musical structures.¹⁶⁵

However, whereas Hesse's novel clearly keeps with the Romantic fantasy of depicting the "true" nature of reality by accessing *transcendental* truths through a completely absolute music, Mann's story begins to destroy the very notion of absolute music. The instrumental, dodecaphonic music around which Mann's novel centers, although largely independent from language,¹⁶⁶ is not depicted as completely free from other empirical ties.¹⁶⁷ While early German Romantics dreamed of a music capable of mirroring the non-phenomenal essence of reality, the music depicted in Mann's novel attempts to reflect the true nature of the *empirical* world. Specifically, scholars have argued that Mann uses Leverkühn's twelve-tone compositions to point to the structure of 1930's and 1940's German society.

¹⁶⁵ Matthias Schulze offers detailed analyses of the musical structures of both novels in his *Die Musik als zeitgeschichtliches Paradigma. Zu Hesses Glasperlenspiel und Thomas Manns Doktor Faustus*.

¹⁶⁶ Adrian Leverkühn composes purely instrumental works, but actually believes language and music belong together. He explains, "Musik und Sprache...gehörten zusammen, sie seien im Grunde eins, die Sprache Musik, die Musik eine Sprache, und getrennt berufe immer das eine sich auf das andere, ahme das andere nach, bediene sich der Mittel des anderen, gebe immer das eine sich als das Substitut des anderen zu verstehen" (*Faustus* 163).

¹⁶⁷ Although Daniel Chua argues in *Absolute Music: And the Construction of Meaning* that absolute music was never really divorced from other discourses and therefore never really existed, I maintain that a notable shift occurred regarding the term in 1940's German literature.

In his *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, Mann writes that music “nur Vordergrund und Repräsentation, nur Paradigma war für Allgemeineres, nur Mittel, die Situation der Kunst überhaupt, der Kultur, ja des Menschen, des Geistes selbst in unserer durch und durch kristischen Epoche auszudrücken” (41). For Mann, music is largely a means to an end: a way to represent phenomenal reality. Influenced heavily by Theodor Adorno’s philosophical views, Mann’s discussions of music in *Doktor Faustus* enter into the political sphere. Some scholarship even goes so far as to suggest that by “[i]mporting Adorno’s negative dialectic into Leverkühn’s aesthetic theory, Mann cannot help but suggest that art is complicit with a capitalistic system which, according to Adorno, has the same roots as fascism” (Cobley 53). According to this view, Mann and Adorno perceive of music, capitalist culture, and fascism as more or less interconnected.

Hence, one finds in Mann’s Faust novel music mirroring an empirical, political reality rather than an abstract, transcendental one. Leverkühn’s music is only absolute in the sense that it is sometimes free of language and still represents a self-enclosed system. The protagonist composes twelve-tone pieces and frequently asserts that musical counterpoint is the ideal method for composing modern music.¹⁶⁸ This particular compositional technique can be seen as the perfect metaphor for society at the time because it corresponds to the failed democratic system in which Leverkühn lives. Counterpoint, “[t]ranslated into political terms...presents itself as the most attractive aesthetic model in that it reflects the ideal plurality of the democratic community” (Cobley 56). In a democratic society, each individual theoretically exists and acts as an autonomous agent. Similarly, counterpoint “requires the simultaneity of independent voices; in political terms, individuals can be

¹⁶⁸ Many of the basic techniques in dodecaphonic music have analogs in traditional counterpoint, such as the use of inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion.

integrated into a collectivity without having to sacrifice their singularity” (Cobley 56). The dissonances, which so frequently occur in Leverkühn’s musical compositions, represent these individuals in that each note of a dissonant chord is realized and heard singularly without disappearing in one of the conventional and illusionary harmonic triads of past music.

However, according to some scholars, this ideal itself is an illusion. The sense of an individual’s autonomy is actually a case of alienation resulting from bourgeois society. Individuals in the society are not autonomous, just as the notes in the Leverkühn’s dissonant chords are not *really* free. Instead, “the organic principle of counterpoint is being reconfigured into a totalizing system which Mann presumably wants us to associate with fascist totalitarianism” (Cobley 66). The row dictates nearly everything in modern twelve-tone music. Dissonant chords are not a result of notes choosing to retain their singularity but are a result of a completely totalizing system. In the same way, people in Germany in the first part of the 20th century were not really free and independent as they believed but were actually controlled by the totalitarian political system.

Thomas Mann was working on *Doktor Faustus* at the same time that Hesse was completing *Das Glasperlenspiel*. However, although music plays a central role in both novels, and despite each author adding a performative dimension to his work by basing his novel’s structure on music, Mann and Hesse were nevertheless attempting to reflect different aspects of reality. While Hesse clearly adhered to his Romantic heritage and dreams of transcendental realms, Mann took instrumental music and entered it into a political discourse, thus destroying any hopes this music may have had of being “absolute” in the Romantic sense. Later German authors continue down this general path and incorporate discussions and depictions of music in literary works of the late 20th century into other discourses. One

overwhelmingly frequent association made by these writers is the connection between music and the sensual or physical.¹⁶⁹

III. The physical and sensual in literary depictions of music

After the violence of the Second World War and the Holocaust, it is not surprising that German writers would find it difficult to dream of utopian worlds and transcendental realities. This general phenomenon affected all aspects of art, including the way in which authors wrote about music. Far fewer novels were written with music as their main theme, and the stories that one does find are characterized by a tendency to view music negatively and in close relation to phenomenal reality. Specifically, postwar authors such as Elfriede Jelinek and Patrick Süskind emphasize the physical and the sensual aspects of this art form in their works and the dangers associated with it.

In *Die Klavierspielerin*, Jelinek's protagonist Erika Kohut has a very destructive relationship to music.¹⁷⁰ Having been forced by her domineering mother to become a pianist, Erika suffers under the constant pressure to excel. She finds no solace in music and instead feels that music "schafft...das Leid erst herbei" (Jelinek 32). She compares her art with "Giftgas" (Jelinek 34) and calls music a "Blutsaugerin" (Jelinek 124). The woman feels oppressed by her situation and turns to voyeurism and self-mutilation. Moreover, intimate connections are made between music and the body in the novel. Erika describes herself at

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* is the most famous transitional work from this era, but there are also other 1940's authors who seem to have created musical compositions with words – both intentionally and unintentionally. One of the most well-known examples is Paul Celan's *Todesfuge*. First published in Germany in 1948 and seeming to employ certain fugal techniques, Celan describes life in Nazi concentration camps in this poem. Some interpretations suggest that Celan alludes to the death music specific prisoners were forced to play in such camps while other prisoners were waiting their turn to enter into gas chambers. This musical structure of this poem, however, does not attempt to access something transcendental, but rather, it helps set the general mood of the poem.

¹⁷⁰ Music also plays a central role in Jelinek's *Die Ausgesperrten* and *Clara S.*

times as a “lebendige Instrument” (Jelinek 47) and draws parallels between “[d]as Fleisch” (Jelinek 81) and music on more than one occasion. Erika’s issues are not resolved in any clear manner at the end of the novel and the reader is left with a disconcerted feeling.

Although a bit less graphic and violent, Patrick Süskind’s one act monologue *Der Kontrabaß* deals with similar themes. The contra bass playing actor in the play has a very ambivalent relationship to music and often feels threatened by the influence that the instrument has on his life. It is “mehr...ein Hindernis als ein Instrument” (Süskind 34). The man often personifies his bass and feels trapped by the instrument’s power. Speaking directly to the audience, he explains:

Wenn Sie Gäste haben, spielt er sich sofort in den Vordergrund...Wenn Sie mit einer Frau allein sein wollen, steht er dabei und überwacht das Ganze. Werden Sie intim – er schaut zu. Sie haben immer das Gefühl, er macht sich lustig, er macht den Akt lächerlich. (Süskind 35)

Typical of many postwar works of literature, music is brought into the sphere of the sensual in *Der Kontrabass*. The protagonist’s large, awkward instrument, which embodies his general feelings of inadequacy, interrupts even the most intimate experiences of his life. As a result, the man directs his sexual frustration back onto the musical instrument. He mentions metaphorically raping the instrument on a daily basis (Süskind 39) and concludes that “[d]er Kontrabaß...das scheußlichste, plumpeste, uneleganteste Instrument [ist], das je erfunden wurde...Manchmal möchte ich ihn am liebsten zerschmeißen. Zersägen. Zerhacken. Zerkleinern und zermahlen und zerstäubern” (Süskind 49). The man feels completely trapped by his position in life. Music, represented by this one particular instrument, is often represented as base, earthly, and negative.

Even when the bass player attempts to describe music positively and hints at its transcendental qualities, the man can never completely free this art from its empirical bonds.

When describing the woman that he loves, the protagonist claims:

Also: Sopran – jetzt Beispiel – als das entgegengesetzteste, was sich zum Kontrabaß denken läßt, menschlich und instrumentell-klanglich... göttlich, hoch da droben, in universaler Höhe, ewigkeitsnah, kosmisch, sexuell-erotisch-unendlich-triebhaft (Süskind 13).

Although declaring that this woman's soprano voice reaches beyond the phenomenal world and becomes something universal and eternal, the bass player undermines and qualifies his assertions almost immediately. This cosmic voice is at the same time sexual, erotic, and libidinal.

In essence, few endeavors are made in postwar German literature to bring music back into the realm of the absolute, and the ones that are made, fail. After the Second World War and its barbaric, physical violence, German authors seem to have found it impossible to dream of one particular art being capable of breaking all empirical boundaries and accessing something absolute. Hermann Hesse was clearly the last great Romantic to attempt such a feat. However, it is important to note that although Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* fails to achieve its most ambitious goals, Hesse's works on a whole should not be deemed general failures. Despite falling short of the author's utopian fantasies, the fact that Hesse's novels and short stories remain so popular – especially among hopeful, revolutionary adolescents – demonstrates that these works still play an important role in society today. In Hesse's own words:

Die Bücher der Dichter bedürfen weder der Erklärung noch der Verteidigung, sie sind überaus geduldig und können warten, und wenn sie etwas wert sind, dann leben sie meistens länger als alle die, die über sie streiten. (qtd. in Limberg 137)

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