Wittgenstein and Poetry:

Negotiations of the Inexpressible

Submitted by

Michael David Rose

to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

September 2016.

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

(Signature) …………………………………………………………

Abstract

This study performs a reading of Wittgenstein's thought that integrates his sometimes sidelined remarks on aesthetics and belief, and emphasises consideration of language use on the level of practice. It analyses the many ways that Wittgenstein engages with the inexpressible or the limits of expression through comparison with poetry as a practice. The potential of a Wittgensteinian method of literary analysis concentrating on grammatical structures, exemplary forms of expression and quotidian meaning-making is shown by viewing several poets' work in connection with specific forms of the inexpressible.

This thesis consists of three parts. The first chapter surveys previous applications of Wittgenstein to aesthetic appreciation and analysis, and considers common interpretations of his earlier and later work. Incorporating a wide range of Wittgenstein sources allows a new reading to emerge that gives appropriate weight to his hitherto under-researched writings. This reading is tested in Chapters 2-5, in each case studying a poet or poets alongside a philosophical text or topic. Chapter 2 uses the negative theology of Pseudo-Dionysius to probe the ineffable; through Cora Diamond's resolute reading of the *Tractatus,* Kei Miller's 'Church Women' series and John Burnside's intimate ineffable of 'Parousia', a grammatical understanding of inexpressibility emerges. Chapter 3 compares John McDowell's minimal realism in *Mind and World* with Wallace Steven's Supreme Fiction, demonstrating how Stevens' – and Wittgenstein's – rich conception of experience can close off a number of philosophical lacunae. Chapter 4 concentrates on the poetry of Jorie Graham, whose conception of the self is saturated with language. Parallels with Wittgenstein's methodology are drawn, and some reminders issued to curb the excesses of postmodern accounts of subjectivity. The focus in Chapter 5 moves to the use of cartographical metaphor in *Philosophical Investigations* and Kei Miller's poetry. The constraints of specific discourses on our thinking are examined, together with poetry's potential for laying bare or reinvigorating the pictures by which we navigate. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses a selection of poetic projects completed alongside my research, to extend the reading of Wittgenstein into the area of creative practice.

This thesis demonstrates Wittgenstein's prolonged engagement with the limits of expression and with poetry, as well as the profit of a Wittgensteinian approach to poetry.

It thereby questions a number of current responses to Wittgenstein's work, and displays its own original creative outcomes.

It thereby questions a number of current responses to Wittgenstein's work, and displays its own original creative outcomes.

TABLES OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

That this doctoral project developed from a long-pondered ambition to a reality is in very large part thanks to the funding I received in the form of an AHRC grant, for which I am extremely grateful. It would also have been far poorer without the support and guidance of my supervisors, Professors Regenia Gagnier and Andy Brown. I owe them both considerable thanks for their ideas, difficult questions and generosity of time, especially given the wide-ranging nature of the research.

Other scholars have been gracious in offering feedback on technical aspects of my chapters, or providing me with unpublished texts or personal advice. I would particularly like to thank Professors Bernard Harrison, Tim Knepper, Kei Miller and Michael Luntley. Many of the ideas in the thesis emerged from correspondence and discussion with others, among which the Critical Theory Reading Group and presentation and teaching opportunities in Exeter's College of Humanities were key.

Similarly, the arts projects connected with this thesis have relied on collaborations of many kinds, including funding from *Bridging the Gaps* and the College and Kickstarter. The artists I have worked with have been generous and inspiring, including Jaime Robles and Suzanne Steele of Exegesis, Isabel Galleymore, Sharanya Murali and Wei Hsien Wan of Spindlebox Press, and all the contributing artists of 'Wor(l)ds in Collision'.

No Ph.D. comes happily to fruition without the mental and material support of friends and family. Far too many people to name have made my time at Exeter joyful and worthwhile; several have provided proofing assistance for these chapters. I am grateful to you all. Of particular and obvious importance is Esther, who proved my best friend, muse and time-management consultant; I couldn't ask for a better life companion and partner-in-crime. Finally, nothing at all would have been accomplished without the patient care and support of my family, to whom this thesis is dedicated, with love.

Figures

Abbreviations

Wittgenstein:

BT	The Big Typescript
CV	Culture and Value
LC	Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief
LE	Lecture on Ethics
NB	Notebooks
OC	On Certainty
PG	Philosophical Grammar
PI	Philosophical Investigations
PO	Philosophical Occasions
RC	Remarks on Colour
RFGB	Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough
TLP	Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus
Z	Zettel

Other:

CMZ	Kei Miller: The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion
CP	Wallace Stevens: Collected Poems
CR	Stanley Cavell: The Claim of Reason
DRDP	Cora Diamond: The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy
IAO	Alex Blazer: I Am Otherwise
MW	John McDowell: Mind and World
PDC	Pseudo-Dionysius: Complete Works
WL	Marjorie Perloff: Wittgenstein's Ladder

Introduction

My fascination with Wittgenstein began with two inspiring teachers at the University of Warwick, Professors Michael Luntley and Tim Thornton, who introduced me to the philosophy of Wittgenstein, and in particular the astounding, to me, implications of his remarks on rule-following and private language in *Philosophical Investigations.* These considerations have remained part of my research and poetic practice ever since, both as aspects of my process and as explicit sources of technique and inspiration. I initially considered the possibility of devising a grammar of theology that accommodated Wittgenstein's insights, elements of which survive in the discussion of ineffability in Chapter 2 of this thesis. As my plans for further research developed, I was often struck by how rarely and reluctantly analytic philosophy as a discipline engaged with the literature and poetry that interested me, despite the obvious applicability of Wittgenstein, in particular, to the subject. As I read more of his posthumously revealed notes and letters, the importance of poetry for his thinking became ever clearer, though it remained a challenge to connect his two seminal texts, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, to this other material. Eventually, I came to see that the points at which language appears to hit its limits – capturing aesthetic appreciation, experimentations in poetic form and effect, religious or mystical experience, and certain perennial questions of philosophy – were a continuity in Wittgenstein's writing, a challenge to look beyond the apparent necessities of our means of expression, the pictures that hold us captive. Instead of attempting to answer questions that elude the language in which they are posed, we might try to make clear what led us to ask those questions in the first place. Some of these questions are stimulated by traditions of language, such as theological terms enshrined in dogma, some by the deep metaphors that structure our language, others by the pictures we have of how language work, which may be partial or historical. Ultimately, our questions arise at the level of practice, since meaning is generated in our repeated use of language and by the values we attach to our activities.

Two intertwined motivations therefore underlie this thesis. I first intend to propose and demonstrate a reading of Wittgenstein that makes better sense than available treatments of Wittgenstein's works as a whole, with particular emphasis on aesthetics and the notion of practice. These elements of Wittgenstein's philosophy remain under-researched, meaning that my reading will contribute to a better understanding of

Wittgenstein's growing cultural importance outside philosophy, as well as what his writing still has to offer the Academy. Secondly, because my own interest lies in the field of poetry, which also supplies the bulk of the case studies I use to develop this reading, I hope that the reminders I assemble here can provide the basis of a method of literary analysis. Wittgenstein's intense attention to the operations of grammar and varieties of use can draw our attention to aspects of a poet's work that might otherwise be subsumed under wider theories of their practice. In this thesis I decided it was most apposite to focus on poets sharing something of Wittgenstein's philosophical and cultural heritage, though I decided against studying the poetry of a particular period, since, as will be discussed, the individual styles and voices of specific poets appealed to my sense of what Wittgenstein could offer. The inexpressible provides the linking thread between these ambitions, as a shared concern of Wittgenstein and the poets discussed. By laying out the logic and language of the inexpressible – its philosophical temptations, grounding practices and grammatical techniques – the thesis also contributes new possibilities for thinking about the inexpressible and our attitudes towards it.

Wittgenstein's Style

Interpretations of Wittgenstein's work are extremely various and hotly debated, not least the 'Tractatus Wars' and the Theory-Therapy debates over *Philosophical Investigations*. His contributions to several areas of philosophy and beyond are still being measured, and – as this thesis contends – there are still further contributions to be made. A large part of the difficulty of summarising Wittgenstein's thought comes from his style of writing, as the discussion of competing readings in Chapter 1 makes clear. Austin E. Quigley has characterised Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as 'a peculiar aggregate of loosely related paragraphs which offers no detailed statement of intended goals, no sustained elaboration of a narrative thread, and no triumphant summary of achieved conclusions' ('Wittgenstein's Philosophizing and Literary Thinking' 209).

The extent to which this is experienced as a frustration or an inspiration may vary significantly. I generally follow Stanley Cavell in seeing Wittgenstein's style as integral to his thinking – perhaps even constitutive of it (*CV* 24e) – and alongside Cora Diamond and Marjorie Perloff, Cavell functions as a recurring critical ally in my analysis. Like Cavell, Wittgenstein can be thought of as comparing many different ways in which we approach the limits of expression, to show how and when we can change direction from

what looked like an inevitable course (James Loxley and Andrew Taylor 'Everyday Achievements?' 3). This, of course, stands in contrast to most philosophers, for whom 'the ordering of the words is (mere) grammar or syntax' (Timothy Gold 'The Literal Truth' 153).

An important aspect that remains under-researched is the relationship between the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, and the continuing publication of Wittgenstein's collected posthumous remarks in, for example, *On Certainty*, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* and *Culture and Value*, as well as unedited manuscripts, lecture notes from students, letters and memoirs. Arethese materials to influence our understanding of his published philosophical views, or are they entirely separable, and of chiefly biographical interest?

Throughout, I argue that it is possible to steer a middle course. By giving proper weight to Wittgenstein's background and unpublished notes, without giving a merely historical account of his writing, the flexibility and complexity of his thought as a coherent whole can be discerned – a philosophy of continual effort and activity. This avoids either the temptations of speculative philosophising that he explicitly warns against, but also some of the limitations and assumptions of dissipative, therapeutic interpretations. The thesis as a whole attempts to perform the proposed reading by considering individual case studies within the chapters and assembling a series of reminders about our practices. As Rupert Read argues in 'Throwing Away the "Bedrock"', Wittgenstein's philosophy is best considered as having a non-technical vocabulary (84); as such, the term "practice" as I use it operates as a method and a reminder, rather than a solution. Only in our activities does our language find meaning, and these practices can be diverse, disguised and conflicting; in the patterns of their ebb and flow we glimpse the broader forms of our understanding.

Wittgenstein: Between Romantic and Modern

As will be discussed in the coming chapters, these glimpses – real or imagined – may best capture how the inexpressible intrudes on our everyday speaking and acting. Where language is challenged by new pictures, nonsense (hidden or plain), unsettleable competing images, or altered attitudes towards objects or persons, the limits of our expressions are brought into view. Such a description naturally calls to mind the capacities and traditions of poetry, especially Modernist poetry's questioning and revealing of form and estrangement of language, and the transformative language of Romanticism. Although this thesis does not depend on either a Modernist or a Romantic

reading of Wittgenstein, these are instructive avenues of thought given Wittgenstein's cultural background and aesthetic preferences. At various points in the chapters I therefore make use of the Romantic or Modernist concerns of the poets discussed.

Others have explored Wittgenstein's formative background in considerably more detail than I can here, notably *Wittgenstein's Vienna* by Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Marjorie Perloff's *Wittgenstein's Ladder* and 'Avant-Garde in a Different Key', and Ray Monk's *The Duty of Genius*. Yet the importance within that background of arts and culture would be difficult to overstate. 'In hardly any other European city was the urge towards culture as passionate as in Vienna', writes Stefan Zweig, Wittgenstein's near contemporary. 'You were not truly Viennese without a love for culture, a bent for both enjoying and assessing the prodigality of life as something sacred' (*The World of Yesterday* 42, 51). Romanticism, Modernism and the particular qualities of the Viennese avant-garde and Jewish intellectualism had their confluence in the city, producing art of a scarcely surpassed sophistication and popular impact. Wittgenstein is thus a figure at the crossing of several traditions, thriving and dying. He lived in the late years of Romanticism, and often invoked masters of the period as his aesthetic ideals; he also lived in the years of High Modernism, and could be variously conceived as aligned with aesthetic or critical modernism through his cultural context in Vienna (for further discussion of these streams see Janik and Toulmin *Wittgenstein's Vienna* and Dimitris Gakis *Contextual Metaphilosophy*). His philosophy shares many of this latter movement's challenges to form and responses to war, as argued in Marjorie Perloff's *Wittgenstein's Ladder* and Rupert Read's 'Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations" as a War Book', while his style has been connected with Romanticism, particularly the interlocutor voices discussed further in Chapter 1, as a form of poetic meditation (John Koethe *The Continuity of Wittgenstein's Thought*).

Poetic Case Studies and Chapter Structure

The poets I have selected for this thesis stand at similar crossing points between literary and cultural movements. Following an overview of current scholarship into Wittgenstein, each chapter centres around a poet or poets, and a different aspect of the inexpressible discoverable in Wittgenstein's work. Very brief summaries are given below, though since the chapters are designed to function semi-independently, I present them here not in the order of their appearance in the thesis, but on the basis of a poetic inheritance traced between the poets, beginning with Wallace Stevens. This will, I hope,

serve to justify the choices of poets made, as well as illustrate the multiple ways the concerns of each chapters hang together.

Wallace Stevens is most often conceived of as a late-Romantic poet. Simon Critchley in *Things Merely Are* argues for Stevens as following a critical form of romantic idealism, driven by the finitude and power of the imagination; Joseph Carroll asserts that for Stevens 'Romanticism was not a remote historical episode. It overlapped with his own life, and it formed the immediate historical background to his life's work as a poet' ('Stevens and Romanticism' 87). His modernity, both historically and formally, as a reaction against the Enlightenment goals of factual certainty, is well charted, for example by Charles Altieri (*Wallace Stevens and the Demands of Modernity*) or by the essays in *Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism*. Stevens' repeated challenges to traditional philosophical questions through the powers, failure and nobility of poetry make him an ideal interlocutor for academic philosophy, particular of the stream that take Wittgensteinian considerations in alternative directions. In Chapter 3, Stevens' idea of the Supreme Fiction is paired with John McDowell's seminal *Mind and World* to consider the apparent problem of finding meaning in the world, or of grounding what we say in our living outside language. Combining McDowell's 're-enchantment' and Stevens' deflation of mind/world dualism through the capacity and responsiveness of the imagination enables a Wittgensteinian picture of continually renewed practice and expression to emerge. What had seemed to be the inexpressible beyond our language, or the meaningless underlying it becomes an integrated and active part of our practices.

Chapter 2 addresses the idea of the inexpressible, or ineffable, particularly as it applies to the final propositions of the *Tractatus*. Using the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus as a model of negative theology – contemplating and preserving the ineffable through denial and deferral of attributions to the divine – this chapter seeks to understand Wittgenstein's conception of the mystical, and shows how neither ineffabilist nor resolute readings of the *Tractatus* account for his respect for, and exclusion of, the inexpressible in his writing. By showing the grammatical techniques deployed in ineffability talk, a domesticated notion of the inexpressible is proposed, for which the *Überwindung* (surpassing, over-coming, moving beyond) of poetry provides an arena of experimentation and expression. The 'philosophically astonishing' is shown to inhabit rather than exceed language (*OC* §622). Two poets are harnessed to support this investigation: Kei Miller and John Burnside. John Burnside is an acknowledged follower of Wallace Stevens, and can be considered to be addressing similar questions

of world-making, value-making and the writing of the real, though Burnside is more politically and ecologically involved (Tom Bristow *The Anthropocene Lyric*). He can therefore be considered as continuing elements of Steven's late-Romantic, Modernist process, tinged with a more Heideggerian than Nietzschean spirit, though maintaining an interest in Wittgenstein's work ('Words to touch the invisible'). His continual uncovering of the ineffable within the ordinary rather than something excluded from it provides, nonetheless, a useful illustration of Wittgenstein's insistence on remaining within the realms of ordinary language, without denying it its character, eeriness or cupidity. Kei Miller is less obviously connected to Wittgenstein and Stevens' cultural inheritance than the other poets here, though I will show how his different background still allows significant and expanded considerations of the same themes. Miller's poems and essays centre on the problems and potential of post-colonial writing, and the establishment of a Caribbean literary heritage. His political and environmental concerns, particularly in *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion,* invite the reader to question forms of language within and beyond poetry. Miller's writing is most often described as musical, honest and moving – and set in contrast to the over-intellectualisation that besets much contemporary poetry. In this chapter, his series of 'Church Women' poems provide a vivid illustration of the language of mysticism in quotidian action, as metaphor and narrative tell stories of faith performed, projected and lost. I read in Miller's accounts of a lost and mourned faith many reflections of Wittgenstein's own life and attitude towards the ineffable.

Chapter 5 returns to Kei Miller's work as a means of exploring Wittgenstein's use of metaphor in *Philosophical Investigations*, in which poetry plays the role of a refresher of language and revealer of conflicting modes of discourse. The inexpressible is characterised as a philosophical urge and frustration, through an interpretation of Wittgenstein's remarks on 'perspicuous representation' (*PI* §122) and philosophy as poetry (*CV* 28e), paralleled through Miller's Cartographer and Rastaman, and their misaligning worldviews moderated through poetry, music and shared moments of life; thought escapes the confines of the head (*Z* §605).

The final poet considered is Jorie Graham, another follower of the path set by Stevens. Her work and process are formally challenging, and I identify points of contact with Wittgenstein's techniques of allusion, conversation, allegory and repetition with variation, at times with specific reference to the philosopher (e.g.: 'From Wittgenstein's Tractatus' in *Materialism*). Yet, Graham also sees herself as living in an age of distrust

of our own hearts and bodies, with the 'still operative inheritance of the desire for Romantic fulfilment' ('The Glorious Thing'). The unsettleable movement between the authoritative 'I' of subjectivity and sincerity, and the socially constructed and active 'I' 'that falls in love, falls out of love, gives birth, loses loved ones, inhales when passing by a fragrant rosebush--the "I" that has no choice but mortality' ('The Glorious Thing') provides the force of much of her writing. In this fashion it parallels Wittgenstein's moves back and forth between our everyday experience and the caricatures we draw of it when we attempt to philosophise. The poem in Graham's hands, like Peter Gizzi's description of the book, becomes a 'strange object to discover ourselves. / The flesh-bound volume is also the reader, and is wounded' ('Correspondences of the Book' 183). The idea of an inexpressible within language generated by our own immersion in it is interrogated here, including through the use of this image of wounding. Meanwhile, my reading of Wittgenstein provides a number of reminders of the pictures we use in talking about our inner life, as alternatives to some flights of philosophical fancy.

Since this thesis concerns both poetry and practice, and moves incrementally from traditional philosophical analysis in Chapter 1 towards literary analysis and case studies in Chapters 4 and 5, the final chapter resides more firmly int the realm of practice, and discusses my own poetry projects that express aspects of this research. Alongside the critical work here, I produced collaborative and inter-disciplinary work of various kinds, to put into practice (or at least poetry) some of the ideas considered. Chapter 6 introduces some of these projects and draws connections with specific areas of the preceding chapters. The installations, poetry collections and events provided alternative ways of testing the themes tackled in the thesis, and aim to operate as further stimulus to thinking on the varieties of the inexpressible. Two collections of poems are provided as appendices to illustrate my practice.

The Limits of this Study and Suggestions for Further Research

Through these several strands of enquiry, I have attempted to put forward a refined reading of Wittgenstein that is more accommodating to his work as a whole, in particular his interest in poetry, aesthetics and ethics. Naturally there are many points on which more could be said, but space and expertise are limited; much of the discussion is internal to existing Wittgenstein scholarship. I do not, for example, elaborate on the many available readings of Pseudo-Dionysius, especially after Derrida, or on the history and vitality of Caribbean literature much though such a discussion might enrich the

current task. I have used only small selections from the poets' creations, and could equally have used other writers. My reading of Wittgenstein is deliberately not definitive or complete, and relies, where not on the established research of others, on the interpretations and understandings of a particular kind of mind and background. However, given these acknowledged limitations, I have aimed to provide a coherent and productive picture that challenges some descriptions of Wittgenstein as more 'single-minded or rigid in his work' than is merited by his writing as a whole (Eran Guter 'Critical Study: An Inadvertent Nemesis' 299).

It would be rewarding to pursue this readings in connection with other poets and traditions, and the possibilities of reading Wittgenstein's work in a more literary way. Indisputably, though his influence on professional philosophy has fluctuated over time and in different fields, his wider cultural reception continues to flourish, inspiring artists and attracting critical literary interest (Ben Leubner 'The Limits of my Language' 11). In the introduction to *Wittgenstein's Ladder* Marjorie Perloff provides a considerable list of novels, plays and poetry collections that have emerged 'under the sign of Wittgenstein' (6), to which could be added many more. 'The Wittgenstein Vector' discussed in Chapter 6 is a further addition to this tradition.

Chapter One: Wittgenstein, Aesthetics and Practice

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to give an overview of the variety of interpretations and applications of Wittgenstein's work, focussed through the themes relevant to this thesis – aesthetics and ethics, conceptions of language and practice, the nature of Wittgenstein's texts, and the limits of language and expression. While largely concentrating here on Wittgenstein's writings and the most common accounts and critiques thereof, I will indicate connections with the material in later chapters, and where the practice-oriented conception of his philosophical project that I ultimately favour contributes to the analysis to come.

There are generally two ways of seeing Wittgenstein's place in the philosophy of aesthetics. On the one hand his influence is felt in many fields and schools of thought, with his concepts of family resemblance and language games frequently cited in discussions of the nature, judgement and anthropology of art. On the other hand, he published nothing and privately wrote very little on the subject, at least in the form of books, essays, or direct arguments. In the 2004 anthology *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, for example, there are no contributions by Wittgenstein, and he is only mentioned twelve times in its 571 pages, the great majority of these being confined to two articles – 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', by Morris Weitz (of which see more below) and Stephen Davies' response, 'Weitz's Anti-Essentialism'. Wittgenstein's famous concepts, especially 'family resemblance', are cherry-picked and often misapplied, both in analytic philosophy and in other fields (Guter 'Critical study: An Inadvertent Nemesis' 296). In this chapter, I give an overview of instances where Wittgenstein's work has been cited or influential in aesthetics, but will argue for the necessity of a much more integrated view of his work, both early and late. While pointing to key readings of the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, with particular reference to the aesthetic, I also draw attention to the persistent and vital search for integrity, clarity and particularity in his work, across multiple fields, including religion, culture, philosophy and ethics. The importance of the ethical and the mystical, which has long been recognised in Wittgenstein's earlier writing, but is more

difficult to comprehend in his later, is shown to be a continuing presence but modulated by developments in his conception of language and his philosophical project. Throughout, the close connection between ethics and aesthetics is evident, as is Wittgenstein's sustained interest in the limits and illusions of our language – both supposed and structural. The importance of poetry to his thinking, and its potential as a philosophical tool, is emphasised. This in part supports the claims made later in this chapter that studying Wittgenstein through a Romantic lens can be fruitful, and that the practice-oriented reading suggested can address some short-comings in the most common current treatments of his work. This chapter thereby lays the groundwork for discussions in later chapters, in which particular cases of the inexpressible, or the apparent falling short of language, are explored through the juxtaposition of poetic craft and philosophical analysis.

Wittgenstein and Aesthetics

Multiple interpretations of Wittgenstein's work in relation to aesthetics exist, with considerable influence on the comparatively late and restructed consideration of literature within analytic philosophy. As will be discussed in the sections below, some have taken a very strong line on Wittgenstein's supposed mantra of 'meaning is use' (*PI* §43); others have engaged with his holistic notion of the art object and its experience, and some have returned to the harmony of ethics, aesthetics and silence in the *Tractatus*. Connections can be drawn between his views on ethics, aesthetics, religion and 'seeing-as'. Some readers have taken Wittgenstein's work to have a strictly propaedeutic role in aesthetics (e.g. Malcolm Turvey in 'Is scepticism a "natural possibility" of language?'), while others, notably Stanley Cavell, have attempted to apply a Wittgensteinian view directly to the 'practice of humanistic inquiry ... namely, interpreting art works' (Turvey 117). These readings have been variously productive, but often incompatible and problematic. My own intention over the coming chapters is to offer a reading and an application of Wittgenstein that insists on remaining piecemeal and incomplete, by staging connections between philosophical problems and poetic craft (often responses to these problems, or their formulation) and showing how an awareness of different techniques and contexts can provide both protection from philosophical pitfalls and an enriched understanding of the poetry to be discussed.

Wittgenstein has often been invoked by what one could call the anti-essentialists on the nature of Art, most famously William Kennick and Morris Weitz. According to Kennick, words reflect our life requirements, so the mystery of the artwork is nothing more than our habitual imprecision. The quality of something being 'Art' – so often connected to its being in some sense inexpressible – is not a genuine connection with something higher or beyond, but an experience of coming up against the limitations of our own available vocabulary. The artwork is something out of the ordinary, but not therefore indescribable or exposing us to something beyond language. Indeed, should we genuinely find a use for extending our vocabulary, there is nothing to stop us doing so – as we do in areas of specialisation, such as among 'teatasters and winetasters' (Kennick 'Art and the Ineffable' 312-13).[1] To assume that our vocabulary is *of necessity* inadequate for describing the experience already presumes that we do know what would satisfy the description we wish to give – that we know enough about what the experience of the artwork is, to be able to say that it is beyond description. So either claiming that something is inexpressible is really just an expression of wonder in the face of the object (and not real aesthetic appreciation at all), or we should simply make greater effort to describe it, and the practical requirements of our society will decide, in the long run, whether the words we used are useful enough to keep. Kennick's approach has the appeal of demystification, and a feeling of rigour, applying a Wittgensteinian critique to the sacred cows of super-sophisticated criticism or mysterious auras of authenticity and creativity. However, while it rightly brings into question whether Art might have an essential quality – and an inexpressible one at that – this dismissal of the importance of the experience of an artwork seems at odds with Wittgenstein's own sense of the reverence and individuality due to aesthetic appreciation. As will be discussed below, although he insisted that art-criticism was a matter of technique and knowledge as much as revelation or simple expressions of emotion, expertise is not equivalent to possessing a formula for assessment (*LC* 9). A dismissal of our feelings of awe or inexpressibility in the face of artwork may be correct as a critique of some forms of philosophy or art-journalism but not as a way of describing or understanding our relation to art.

---

[1] Kennick's choice of example may be an oblique reference to *PI* §610: 'Describe the aroma of coffee. – Why can't it be done? Do we lack the words? And *for* what are words lacking? – But how do we get the idea that such a description must after all be possible? Have you ever felt the lack of such a description? Have you tried to describe the aroma and not succeeded?'

Morris Weitz argued that the logic of the concept of Art precludes the kind of necessary and sufficient definition that traditional theories sought, preferring to see it as a family resemblance concept, drawn from Wittgenstein's analysis of games in *Philosophical investigations* §§65-75. In 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', Weitz makes the case that 'the inadequacies of the theories are not primarily occasioned by any legitimate difficulty such e.g., as the vast complexity of art, which might be corrected by further probing and research. Their basic inadequacies reside instead in a fundamental misconception of art' (27), and 'that if we actually look and see what it is that we call "art," we will also find no common properties – only strands of similarities' (31).

Both Weitz and Kennick react against the notion of some ineffable residue to artistic experience – either because isuch exceeds our definition, or the possibilities of language – even though such a grasping still commenly finds its expression in writing in this field, for example in Rafael De Clercq's 'Aesthetic Ineffability' of 2000:

> [M]uch of what we find of significance in art, and in aesthetic objects in general, cannot be rendered in words (without remainder) and so can never become fully our own. This observation, which I take to be in line with common sense, could also be phrased as follows: language, at least in its literal mode, is not able to capture fully the content of an aesthetic experience; aesthetic experience, therefore, may be said to put us in touch with the unsayable or 'ineffable'. (87)

Although De Clercq does move on from this opening to make a case for something more Wittgensteinian in tone – that the ineffable merits a 'banal' sounding solution, in the manner of a word repeated over and over again (95; *PI* p214) – the notion remains that art connects with something beyond description; that because we feel that we cannot say everything, there must be something that we cannot say, some piece of information that by its nature resists informing us. It is this shadow of a conception of language as essentially information-giving that creates the apparent conundrum.

Both Kennick and Weitz take up Wittgenstein's insistence in *Philosophical Investigations* that language is tailored to a particular purpose such that, what on occasion looks like a boundary of expression turns out to be the limits of a particular practice rather than something generally inexpressible; the possible precision of our expression reflects our interest in making certain distinctions, both in terms of our natural history and capacity and the particular game we are playing. Likewise, some concepts – of which Art is Weitz's chief candidate – evade a general definition, because the ways in which they can be used or experienced are non-uniform and evolving.

Without conflating the works of Weitz and Kennick, it would be fair to label them as chiefly interested in an anti-essentialist critique of aesthetics, drawing on Wittgenstein's later insistence on distinct language-games and the 'countless' different types of sentences that make up our language use (*PI* §23). In 'Problems and Prospects of Wittgensteinian Aesthetics', Richard Eldridge has dubbed this approach a 'classical Wittgensteinian Aesthetics' (252), together with W.B. Gallie's analysis of theories of art as making sense as part of an irresolvable but creative *conflict*, rather than as something for which a definitive solution exists ('Philosophy and the Historical Understanding' 177).

Is aesthetics then no longer a discipline that might attain the status of a science, or be explained in terms of psychology? Wittgenstein thought the latter idea laughable (*LC* III §7). Some have taken this to be the end of the discussion, that if we must give up on the idea of a definition of art, we ought also to give up on the hope of a *philosophy of art* and treat aesthetics as merely a particular discourse with no connections or authority outside of itself. But several attempts have been made to preserve the space of a philosophical consideration of the aesthetic, without committing to what Daniel Kaufman calls a 'new wave' of definitional accounts of art ('Family Resemblances, Relationalism and the Meaning of Art'). The most successful approaches involve linking the aesthetic with other areas of Wittgenstein's thought.

Béla Szabados insists that Wittgenstein's remarks 'about music and composers in his diaries and notebooks are in themselves interesting', but that scholarship has largely still dismissed them as 'a curiosity'; rather they 'deserve to be taken seriously and to be related to his philosophical perspective' (*Wittgenstein as Philosophical Tone-Poet* 13). This point has been made influentially and at length in *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (Janik and Toulmin). The authors argue, for example, that the philosopher's cultural background made it inevitable that logic, ethics and aesthetics were interrelated, since 'their activities were likewise overlapping'. The ideal of intellectual and creative specialization, separating the philosopher from the artist, was a much later invention, foreign to pre-1914 Austria (26). The notion of the professional philosopher or philosophy as a profession was, after all, something Wittgenstein abhorred, even while making his living through appointments at Cambridge. As Cavell has argued (for example in 'Must we mean what we say') resistance to professionalization or systemisation of thinking is a common reaction to modernity in late-Romantic philosophy and poetry, to which one can legitimately connect Wittgenstein, as I will

argue later in this chapter and informs the discussion in Chapter 3. I attempt to include Wittgenstein's private writings not as equivalent to, but as contributing to our understanding of, his philosophical texts, without succumbing to a merely biographical account. This more holistic treatment will assist in avoiding some of the more superficial elements of an anti-essentialist reading, which can at times seem to offer an intellectually unjustified shrug in the face of our common aesthetic experiences.

Richard Eldridge argues that although the anti-essentialist effort emerges from a correctly Wittgensteinian suspicion of theory and definition, it in fact commits a similar error by simply helping itself to the concept of Art and then, by showing many different and incommensurate examples of what we call art, claiming that they have no one thing in common ('Problems and Prospects' 256-7). But here Art becomes just an empty place-holder philosophical concept of the kind Wittgenstein warned against, that is analysed only after it has been assumed, when in fact we should first study the various histories, practices and conversations around art, to clarify our thinking. We should not presuppose the artistic behaviour or production that we want to see and only test examples of art against these criteria – this would beg the question and exclude many forms of art, both existing and potential. To be sure, there are some basic human modes of behaviour and capacity that join us – what Bob Plant has argued constitutes Wittgenstein's 'minimal naturalism' (see *Wittgenstein and Levinas*, especially chapter two) – but Eldridge considers this an incomplete account and seeks a more 'abstract' viewpoint ('Problems and Prospects' 258). He seems to be replacing both essentialism and anti-essentialism with a phenomenology of art with a Kantian flavour, concentrating on 'the capacities we exercise in making, responding to, and criticizing art' (257). He suggests that there might well be such a thing as an essence of art, but that it exists only within a historically informed study of actual examples, grounded in the notion of teachability: 'If there are practices of the heterogeneous embodiment of a distinct artistic value that *are* teachable and learnable by persons in general, given their primitive natural responses, then art as a distinct kind of stuff can find a place in all human life' (252). However, this view has two problems: it risks becoming essentialism of grammar, where teachability – which is to say, shared and consistent concepts of art – is the single necessary property, and also risks making that same essence so general as to be empty. For the former, Eldridge misreads §271 of *Philosophical Investigations* ('*Essence* is expressed by grammar') by ignoring the italics (251). Where Eldridge treats grammar as a mutable, shareable replacement for essence, Wittgenstein is

indicating that the word 'essence' is being *mentioned*, not used or defined. That is to say, grammar is not how essence is expressed (even historically), but that what essence is – what counts as essence – is expressed by the grammar of our use. This can be usefully paired with *PI* §371 – 'Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is' – to show that grammar is a framework for understanding and need not be essentialist. For the latter, although Eldridge is right to insist on the importance of discussing art within a historically informed context, the notion of essence that his argument entails is left a little empty – it remains either of limited use (except, perhaps, to announce that the subject of discussion is art) or is reaching towards a transcendental account of the necessary conditions for our talking about art. The latter kind of explanation, despite some Kantian echoes in Wittgenstein's work, as explored by, amongst others, Newton Carver in *This Complicated Form of Life*, is not at all what Wittgenstein is after. To quote Ben Tilghman, 'Wittgenstein is not showing how human understanding, and, *a fortiriori*, art and ethics is possible as if there really were serious difficulties standing in the way. He is, rather, clearing away those philosophical theories that if taken seriously would lead us to believe that all understanding of human matters – be they ethical, artistic or what you will – is impossible' (*Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics* xxi). Tilghman argues further that the approach that analytic philosophy has tended to take to aesthetics is on a meta-level, seeking theories and essences, rather than engaging with 'the point of view of those participating in the activity' (14). Wittgenstein's professed method rejects such theorising in favour of paying close attention to examples, their differences and connections, but it is difficult to marry this with the traditional practice of philosophy, especially the analytic kind. Tilghman suggests that exactly Wittgenstein's own station within analytic philosophy provides a clue as to why responses to his work have often retained the very approaches he was combating, and he himself found it so difficult to say anything at all about aesthetics (p13; *CV* 26e: 'In art it is hard to say anything, that is as good as: saying nothing').

An example of how an analytic approach can overstep this mark is Tilghman's own 'Literature, Human Understanding and Morality', in which he correctly claims that only as humans in action can we understand art (literature in the case of his essay), and that much of what we talk about or feel through art can only be understood against the background of our language and society. But he relates this solely to the *content* of literature (204), and leaves unaddressed questions of form, performance and practice, and so on. Like so much analytic philosophy of aesthetics, some extractable material is

posited that counts as the stuff of art, to be given a meaning or purpose through analysis (in this case moral examples). A more productive reading might be to think of fiction 'or at least certain kinds of fiction, as being already engaged in the kind of grammatical investigation with which Wittgenstein was concerned in his philosophical work' (David Schalkwyk 'Fiction as "grammatical" investigation: A Wittgensteinian account' 287). With this comes the possibility that one constructs several 'maps' from a reading, none of which need to correlate or have any one element in common. (For this sort of reading in literal action on the *Tractatus*, see the discussion of 'The Wittgenstein Vector', an art installation, in Chapter 6).

An alternative response might be to regard aesthetic discourse as having not one essence but several; interlocking in different ways within specific contexts or artworks. In a family resemblance manner, many sets of rules may be in play simultaneously, some overlapping, some contradictory. Sonia Sedivy has argued for this kind of model in 'Art from a Wittgensteinian Perspective: Constitutive Norms in Context'. If we are able to hold that there really are rules to our aesthetic practices, but that these are not reducible to one particular set, we are able to account for how it is that we can offer explanations about our aesthetic preferences, yet can never force one another into agreement with our view. Likewise, we can account for changes in artistic taste over time, as one set of rules gains precedence over another. Such a model 'explains the historically contingent nature of art practices in a way that relational definitions or disjunctive explanations do not' (67), creating space for plurality, disagreement and cultural specificity without having to admit a stark relativism between opinions or cultures. It remains possible to argue over matters of art, though we had better keep in mind that the set of rules we adopt to guide or express our responses to art are historically and socially contingent. Wittgenstein's remark §24 in *Philosophical investigations* thus becomes equally applicable to questions such as 'What is Art?': 'If you do not keep the multiplicity of language-games in view you will perhaps be inclined to ask questions like: "What is a question?"'Only within a particular language game can such questions make sense. We can well ask 'Is *this* a painting?', but asking 'What is painting?' seems to assume a context-free essence to such activities, making the questions almost senseless, attempting to 'operate above and beyond a language-game in which intelligibility is ensured' (G. L. Hagberg *Meaning and Interpretation: Wittgenstein, Henry James, and Literary Knowledge* 33).

Sedivy is certainly right to emphasise that Wittgenstein's anti-essentialism runs deep, and her reading of the family resemblance concept is effective. Often family resemblance is taken to mean that all the elements of a set share in some but not all of the characteristics that confirm membership of the set, as if there existed some underwriting *Urphänomen*, to use Goethe's term in the way Wittgenstein applies it in *Remarks on Colour* (III §203) – the 'primary phenomenon or prototype supposedly underlying all instances of a given type' (Louis A. Sass, 'Wittgenstein, Freud and the Nature of Psychoanalytic Explanation' 257). But no such object exists, or need not; putatively universal explanations are exactly what Wittgenstein's insight allows us to escape. Family resemblance concepts do not 'reach back' to a common ancestor, but are continually intertwined through use. As Sedivy notes, Wittgenstein combines the family resemblance concept with another, that of a rope through which many threads run, none of which can be considered the original or the essential one (*PI §67*; Sedivy 70). This has two consequences: we are spared the impoverished essentialism of a single factor common to a practice such as aesthetics, and there remains the possibility of the rules being applied rightly or wrongly in given cases (a rope can be of better or worse production; strands must have sufficient commonality that they can be twisted together). However, Sedivy goes on to claim that a genetic model further undermines a historical understanding of resemblance, providing an essential but not singular common underpinning to family resemblance. Her model relies on an outmoded notion of genes, ignoring how their transmissions, interaction and expression are deeply intertwined with environment and experience, rather than something pre-determinate. [2] It appears to me to be an unnecessary step. The argument for a *coherent* as well as multifaceted notion of what constitutes aesthetic discourse – a perspicuous representation of our practice – is valuable, but gains nothing from calling these elements essences. Sedivy attempts to tie together a great variety of concepts under one way of thinking, whereas multiple but complementary ways of thinking best fit Wittgenstein's rope analogy.

---

[2] In fact, as Stuart Shanker has discussed in 'A Picture Held Me Captive' in *Wittgenstein at Work* London Routledge 2004, 246-256, Wittgenstein's own use of a seed analogy in *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology I* (904) to represent human development as a combination of potential and growth, has turned out to be more accurate than first thought, as the notion of a static, standard human genome is gradually overturned. See, for example Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World*.

In *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief,* Wittgenstein is at pains to show that there are very many things going on in aesthetic appreciation, including technical knowledge, techniques of judgement, fashion, experimentation, comfort and discomfort, cultural sophistication and decline, and 'an extraordinary number of different cases of appreciation' (*LC* I §21). The traditional terminology of aesthetic philosophy is relegated to only a small part of what such appreciation consists of, and Wittgenstein warns against the confusion that supposedly crucial categories promote; rather than getting into complex arguments about definitions of key terms we should look at how words are learnt and used. The words Good, Beautiful and so forth are most often first used as 'interjections', and linked to particular forms of behaviour, such as appreciating food or responding (socially appropriately) to music:

> We are concentrating, not on the words 'good' or 'beautiful', which are entirely uncharacteristic, generally just subject and predicate ('This is beautiful'), but on the occasions on which they are said – on the enormously complicated situation in which the aesthetic expression has a place, the expression itself has almost a negligible place. (*LC* I §5)

Indeed, he considered it notable that 'when aesthetic judgements are made, aesthetic adjectives such as '"beautiful", "fine", etc., play hardly any role at all' (§8). We would consider someone who just kept repeating that a piece of music was beautiful, but could offer nothing more, such as some technical analysis, comparison with other pieces, or explanation of a personal response, to be a hapless or boring judge, no matter how sincerely they insisted on the beauty of the melody (§8, §17). Further, Wittgenstein seems to draw a distinction between the mere terminology of aesthetics and lived aesthetic experience, where the myriad kinds of objects and behaviours involved are studied in their diversity (Terry Diffey 'Wittgenstein, Anti-essentialism and the Definition of Art' 44). Like religious belief, our aesthetic response shows not so much in our agreement with a fact or standard, but in our behaviour – both in individual instances and across long spans of time (*LC* 53-55).

This is not, however, to resort to a behaviourist view of aesthetic experience, with everything we associate therewith reduced to descriptions of codified behaviour. Although Wittgenstein sometimes gives voice to a behaviourist perspective – sometimes as a tempting but clumsy alternative to his philosophical effort – he refuses to reduce one category of experience to another (e.g.: *PI* §§281, 304, 580). In *Philosophical Investigations,* Wittgenstein explicitly confronts behaviourist questions in

§307: '"Are you not really a behaviourist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human behaviour is a fiction?"' His response is to question the foundation on which behaviourism rests, namely that our 'mental processes and states' are beyond explanation and should rather be reduced to things we can explain, that is, physical behaviour (§308). This already assumes that we in some way know what these mental states are – that they are something inaccessible going on inside us – so as to exclude them from our investigation; meanwhile, to merely ignore mental processes would allow only a very poor description of human behaviour.

Similarly, a description of the behaviour of someone having an aesthetic experience can be extremely valuable, and help the philosopher to resist abstracted speculations about the true nature of such encounters, without replacing one with the other. In *Lectures and Conversations,* Wittgenstein again mentions behaviourism: 'Here is the point of Behaviourism. It isn't that they deny there are feelings. But they say our description of behaviour *is* our description of feelings' (IV §7). Specifically, Wittgenstein is referring to *logical* behaviourism, particularly influential in the inter-war years, in which 'statements about the mental are *reducible* to statements about behaviour and dispositions to behave' (P.M.S. Hacker 'Wittgenstein and the Autonomy of Humanistic Understanding' 42). This differs from *eliminative* behaviourism associated with the psychology of B.F Skinner and J. B. Watson, in which the mental becomes a folk-fiction that should be replaced with physical descriptions of process and behaviour (Rowland Stout *The Inner Life of a Rational Agent*). Either approach would, for Wittgenstein, without warrant, obscure the differences between two very different grammars. To describe behaviour need not be any less rich than the language we have available to us; to talk of one's feelings or thoughts only seems less valid than to talk of an action or a gesture if we already presume that one is private and non-physical, the other public and measurable. Sometimes, to describe a gesture is the best possible way of capturing someone's feeling; sometimes to explain someone's feelings is the best way to account for their actions, and this can often be captured by perfectly accessible details, such as explaining someone's laughter through the joke they have heard (§7); the effect of a painting, or the meaning of an expression, can be explained through combinations of context, description, associations and imitation (§§10-12). 'Remember the impression made by good architecture, that it expresses a thought. One would like to respond to it too with a gesture' (*CV* 26e).

26

The relationship between behaviour and feeling, particularly as between expression and the self, is examined in greatesr detail in Chapter 4. Wittgenstein's conception of the self is extremely difficult to define, with interpretations running from 'I' being relegated to a non-referring grammatical form (Glock *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* 160-164) to Stanley Cavell reading it as an insistence on a self that emerges from its own disrupted and uncertain agency (*The Claim of Reason*). By analysing Jorie Graham's formally and topically self-excavating poetry – particularly in juxtaposition with Alex Blazer's account of Graham's work – I hope to demonstrate how Wittgenstein's denial of the picture of an inner/outer divide is neither reductive nor limiting. By avoiding both a prioritisation of the physical over the mental, and language over other forms of experience and expression, this reading of Wittgenstein seeks to retain what might be called a humanism without essentialism. Creativity of expression, exemplified in the play and challenge of poetry, is key to this picture, which shows the value of the incomplete, the gesture, in addition to the defined and circumscribed explanation.

How, though, are we justified in taking a gesture, say, as an explanation? There seems an immediate problem about what counts as a sufficient explanation, since a gesture is of a completely different order from a definition or a rule; it cannot represent, exhaust or make unmissable what it tries to explain (and indeed, is often used where exactly such things seem out of reach). Should not an explanation be compelling and reliable? This same question seems to be what haunts the responses mentioned above that still seek an essence at the heart of aesthetics – that there must be some singular kind of thing that counts as an explanation and that has the right properties to demand our assent. And it is exactly this conception of explanation that Wittgenstein sees as inappropriate to aesthetics.

Throughout *Lectures and Conversations*, and indeed in much of his later writing, Wittgenstein argues against this explanatory worry, presenting it as driven by a species of scientism and a misunderstanding of the varieties of explanation, perpetrated when we reduce it to a single type. In this respect, examples from the arts are used by Wittgenstein precisely because they 'point *away* from rationalistic conceptions of human behaviour in general on which one can (in principle) always *say*, if asked, what one is doing, and *how* – that is, provide one's (relevant) beliefs, desires etc.' (Graham McFee 'Wittgenstein, Performing Art and Action' 92). Our behaviour in responding to music or describing it to someone else instructively fails to fit the model of placing our experience under a given rule or concept. And yet we can still give and understand

explanations. In *Culture and Value* Wittgenstein writes 'the simplest explanation is sometimes a gesture; another might be a dance step' (79e). On the one hand, it is very easy to imagine that one might convey the sweep and gravity of Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto with a pirouette or some apt bodily convulsion, on the other, one might be reluctant to call this an explanation when it might better be called an intimation, or translation, or impression. But what exactly is unsatisfactory here? Partly it is because we often have in mind the kind of explanation that is sought in natural science – an explanation ought to classify what it explains, and be independent of it; an explanation also ought to be reliable. But aesthetic responses muddle this model. Wittgenstein in *Lectures and Conversations* imagines a tribe who put on records for particular purposes, and these are interchangeable, as long as the effect is the same: 'certain music makes them walk like this. They play a record to do this. One says: "I need this record now. Oh no, take the other, it is just as good"' (LC IV §9). Is this ridiculous?[3] It would certainly be counted as strange behaviour in anyone who wanted to show an appreciation of music, and indicates that Wittgenstein roundly rejects a causal account of art experience. We must avoid the temptation of an 'ascent to explanatory generality' driven by an empiricist model of perception and interpretation (Hagberg *Meaning and Interpretation: Wittgenstein, Henry James, and Literary Knowledge* 5).

What then is going on in aesthetic discourse, if we are not looking for a causal or definitive account? Perhaps Wittgenstein is at risk of reducing aesthetic judgement to nothing more than a boo-hurrah response. If we express ourselves about art but there is nothing to guarantee the same response between people or occasions, does it communicate anything more than like or dislike? This seems hardly likely, since else aesthetics would not occupy its important place in Wittgenstein's thinking, nor be considered a 'very big and entirely misunderstood' subject (*LC* 1). That full explanation or mere pleasure may seem the only options we have again relates to the narrowness of types of explanation that we are primed to accept in philosophical conversation. In fact, what constitutes an explanation legitimately varies with the field of enquiry, and

---

[3] Wittgenstein clearly intended it to be alien to our normal lives, though it is also worth noting that in some cases we do in fact use music like this, even if it would appal Wittgenstein to think so. Classic FM, for example, continually markets particular music for such functions as 'relaxing' or 'soothing', looping a small number of familiar pieces and performers until they lose all meaning; films endlessly reuse musical tropes to reliably prompt us emotionally for what is happening on-screen. Likely this sort of enjoyment or reception would not count as the kind of appreciation that we have in mind in aesthetic judgements or experience, though they do belong on their outskirts, and contribute to a description of how a particular culture relates to music. Cf. *LC* I §35: 'In order to get clear about aesthetic words you have to describe ways of living.'

arguments in aesthetics can be just as important and precise as in other areas. We need to bear in mind, however, that 'our response to disagreement varies from one type of case to the other, depending on the *significance* of our agreeing or failing to agree, on the place of agreement and disagreement in a context of life, rather than simply on the extent or frequency of agreement or its opposite' (Lars Hertzberg 'On Aesthetic Reactions and Changing One's Mind' 95). Although Wittgenstein undoubtedly placed great weight on our primitive or visceral responses – seen most clearly in his *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* (e.g.: p137-9) – he resists the temptation to see these as being purer or more certain than our linguistic or more sophisticated responses. As I will argue in Chapter 3, our notions of justification are less simple than is usually assumed; modes of expression and measurement are not unproblematically hierarchical, nor are our claims made in isolation from the pictures and priorities of our life and language. Rather, what Hertzberg calls the significance of our judgements (what Wittgenstein would more likely call this *consequences* – cf. *PI* §§30, 207, 238, 268, 486 etc.) are equally seen in our instinctual behaviour *and* the wider, more complex elements of our life; which of these is more important, immediate or informative will vary depending on a particular case. As Hertzberg notes, a reaction can be immediate, considered, malleable, physical, and may be considered by others to be irrelevant or deeply meaningful. Sometimes we attribute our behaviour to our circumstances or our social role, at other times these can be bracketed off as marginal. Sometimes a blush is social, sometimes personal; nothing determines this in advance (Hertzberg 103). In *Lectures and Conversations* Wittgenstein tries out a variety of concepts to characterise aesthetic responses. These include appreciation (I §18), realms of experience (II §5), (dis)content (II §9), disgust and discomfort (II §10). Wittgenstein's remarks are minimally elaborated in the text, being the compiled notes from students in the lecture, but several approaches to aesthetics tinged by his account have applied these notions, especially the latter three, to describe how we come to see an artwork in a particular way. In different ways, these take on a supposed gap in how explanations in aesthetics work through Wittgenstein's concepts of 'seeing-as' (taken from *Philosophical Investigations* p195 onwards), and non-rational persuasion (as explored in *On Certainty*).

Mark Rowe has discussed the possibility of 'Criticism without Theory' in terms of seeing-as, or aspect perception. How we see an object can radically shift, without requiring any change in the object or our knowledge of it – most famously described via

the 'duck-rabbit' of *PI* p. 194. Having used this phenomenon to undermine first Cartesian models of perception and then *Gestalt* psychology (see in particular *PI* 196-204), Wittgenstein discusses the apparently strange combination of seeing and thinking that goes on in such cases. Most often, the moment of sudden aspect shift is emphasised by commentators as most easily applicable to our responses to pictures (e.g.: Joachim Schulte *Experience and Expression* 54-57), but this is only one part of this idea. Rowe reiterates that it is not always a case of a sudden switch from one aspect to another, one ultimately present in the picture (like the duck-rabbit), but can be a matter of non-representational organisation (e.g. seeing a row of dots as grouped 1-5, or 2-4, or 3-3) or a matter simply of degree of association – *now* this music feels right, or *from this point of view* the picture tells us something new, or *read this way* the poem comes alive ('Criticism without Theory' 74-5). This may be a matter of demonstration or response or description, rather than explanation. The central drive of Rowe's arguments is that there is nothing to explain, if we are looking for some underlying theory or unifying notion, but by placing many examples together something comes into view.

This has particular implications for how we think about the role of the critic. We do not hold art up to a universal standard or set of rules, nor is taste simply a matter of enjoying what is well-regarded. Wittgenstein certainly thinks that there is such a thing as a person of good judgement, but this will show in connections made between examples, technical understanding and the ability to convey an impression. 'In what we call the Arts a person who has judgement develops. (A person who has a judgement doesn't mean a person who says 'Marvellous!' at certain things.) [...] We distinguish between a person who knows what he is talking about and a person who doesn't' (*LC* I §17).

As touched on above in notions of explanation, a critic does not seek to *replace* the artwork with an explanation, but moves the viewer into a position from which to see the work differently. This can work to make the apparently incomprehensible accessible and refresh the overly familiar. An instance of my own experience of the effect of putting together examples could be Barnett Newman's painting 'Queen of the Night II' (1967). Shorn of representational or cultural context, Newman's abstract fields of colour, often with 'zips' across their surfaces, can reflect blankly back at the viewer, epitomising the kind of art that many people find boring because it is hard to find the right way to see them. 'Queen of the Night II' is a deep purple rectangle, stood on its narrow edge, with a thin lighter strip running down it close to the left hand side. But

putting the piece together with its title, referring to Mozart's 'Die Zauberflöte' (1791) and its most famous aria, the imposing column of purple becomes expressively majestic, the zip as piercing as a high C or a beam of light, without ever becoming representational. This effect was enhanced in the 2002-3 exhibition of his work at the Tate Modern, when the piece was positioned along a darkened corridor, prompting the viewer to walk up to it as if approaching a throne. Nothing about the artwork has changed, but the context within which we view it is transformed in a way that an informed critic could describe or propose. Alternatively, a skilful critic could provide 'an insight which can remove the thick glaze of familiarity from a well-known text' ('Criticism without Theory' 79), or open our eyes to things to which we had previously not paid attention, or the right kind of attention – 'though, of course, our eyes were open already' (Oswald Hanfling 'Wittgenstein on Language, Art and Humanity' 91). This may take the form of additional background knowledge, or putting two apparently unrelated works together, or changing the setting or presentation of the piece; many things might be gained by, say, comparing a Bosch altar triptych and a Dalían dreamscape, or explaining the developments in oil paints and Van Gogh's pictures, or isolating for analysis the drama and foreshadowing of Milton's line-breaks in the opening of *Paradise Lost.*[4] Rowe makes a comparison not unknown in Wittgenstein scholarship, likening the effect of such insights to a new joke: 'like good jokes they point out unseen but obvious connections between things with which we are thoroughly familiar' ('Criticism without Theory' 80). With a direct inheritance from Wittgenstein's remark that 'a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of jokes' (quoted in Norman Malcolm's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* 27-8), several writers make use of the strange mechanisms of jokes to escape from the rigidity of analytic philosophy. See, for example, David Schalkwyk's 'Fiction as "grammatical" investigation: A Wittgensteinian account', Roger White in 'Throwing the Baby out with the Ladder', or indeed, the Wittgenstein-inspired poetry of Rosemarie Waldrop. The latter is discussed in forensic detail by Marjorie Perloff in *Wittgenstein's Ladder* (205-8), noting Waldrop's skilful parody of Wittgenstein's style, though the critic seemingly fails to spot the quite joyful accumulation of childish *jokes* of the level of 'when is a jar not a jar'. This strikes me as odd, given that this tone provides a further resonance with Wittgenstein and his serious engagement with this level of fooling, not to mention his

---

[4] Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe [.]
(see Thomas N. Corns, *Milton's Language* for in-depth discussion.)

own fondness for such humour in his correspondence with Gilbert Pattisson (see Raymond Monk *The Duty of Genius* 294-5).

Most often, the kinds of jokes that philosophers are thinking of (and make) are of the logical variety, as catalogued by J. Allen Paulos in *I Think Therefore I Laugh*.Certainly the categorical confusions and grammatical contradictions jokes of this sort highlight are part of what Wittgenstein must have meant by his comment. To use Paelos' example, by pointing out that from saying 'I have a pain in my foot' and 'my foot is in my shoe', it does not follow that I have a pain in my shoe', something about our bewitchment by language can be clarified; such jokes simultaneously provide the kind of 'delight' that Rowe links with critical insights ('Criticism without Theory' 80). However, I would urge that Wittgenstein's use of jokes should also be understood more fulsomely, in the way that jokes can release tension, be a form of social regulator, let us play with ideas without consequence or prick someone's pomposity.

In Chapter 3, the effect and importance of Wallace Steven's incorporation of humour – both silly and wry – into the potentially ponderous notion of a Supreme Fiction is shown; irony and wordplay can be more expressive and more human than an argument, something Wittgenstein understood and to some extent utilised in his method (Joachim Schulte 'The Builder's Language' 24-5). Jokes can alter our view of things in these ways too. They can be, if largely indirectly, a form of persuasion.

Persuasion

Persuasion couples naturally with seeing-as, since what the critic may be doing is finding the right phrase or gesture that changes the viewer's experience, rather than pointing out a rule. We can be called on to try out a new idea or angle. This means that persuasion is a much more various concept than merely rational argument, since it will depend also on its context; what is effective in one case may not be elsewhere. 'In order to find the right thing to say I may have to know you' (Hertzberg 'On Aesthetic Reactions and Changing One's Mind' 96).

The multitude of forms that persuasion may take will be examined repeatedly in this thesis, as a core part of both engagement with the limits of expression, variously conceived, and the activity of poetry. Why do we persuade rather than prove, demand, or perform? For example, Kei Miller's poetry in Chapter 5 comments on how persuasion enters where two incompatible forms of discourse meet. These and other instances connect with the construction and development of the self in language and

literature, notions of showing and responsibility, and arguments against what Charles Altieri has called 'serial structuralism' ('Wittgenstein on Consciousness and Language' 1397). The importance of 'knowing' with whom one is speaking, as mooted by Hertzberg, and of recognising speaking as a form of *activity* will be stressed again in the analysis of the closing propositions of the *Tractatus* in Chapter 2.

A development from the notion of persuasion is that of a practice-oriented reading of Wittgenstein, such as those sketched by both Richard Eldridge, as mentioned above, and Peter Lamarque. This questions the emphasis placed on rules in most accounts of Wittgenstein and language games. Undoubtedly, Wittgenstein devotes a lot of his work to the quandary of how it is that we learn and follow rules, which are neither causal nor arbitrary, and shows how important it is to know how to play the various language games of a culture (i.e.: to know how to obey, express and bend the rules). The key discussion of this is in *Philosophical Investigations* §§185-242, though it is an idea that resurfaces in many guises elsewhere. Following Gordon Baker and P.M.S. Hacker's summary of how events unfold in *Philosophical Investigations*, in §§143-84 Wittgenstein was trying to reconcile his suggestion that the use of a word is (usually) its meaning with 'the indisputable fact that we commonly understand the meaning of an expression at a stroke' (*Wittgenstein: Rules, grammar and Necessity* 23). How can something that is contextual and that develops over time be grasped in a flash? The relation with the question of how we make aesthetic judgements is easy to make; sometimes we identify a specific element or technique when discussing an artwork, but more often we seem to be captured or struck by the work as a whole, even if dealing with a complex object, an extended piece of music or an entire poem. Only afterwards do we analyse 'with a later reason', as Wallace Stevens calls it, in 'Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction' (*CP* 399). Within this, *PI* §§143-55 develops Wittgenstein's insistence that such understanding is not a mental state or process, but an activity; the close relationship of the grammar of 'to know' with 'being able' is noted, and 'understanding' with '"Mastery" of a technique' (§150). Baker and Hacker compare knowing how to go on (following a rule) with 'the dawning of an ability' (23); rather than a binary of fact possession or not, knowing becomes a self-declaration of responsibility and capacity – something that may still be tested or developed through later applications. To follow a rule is, most often, to show repeated similar actions (or precisely the same actions, in cases like following a mathematical rule); a rule would not be, Wittgenstein notes in *PI* §199, something done only once by one person.

(Though Wittgenstein qualifies this as a grammatical remark about what we mean by a rule, rather than as being a statement about the essence of rules.) Hacker and Baker slightly overstate the case when they define following a rule as engaging in 'an activity that exemplifies a regularity recognized as a uniformity' (28) since they perceive rules as inherently *normative* (29), providing a constraint on our behaviour through standards of correctness. Similarly, and representative of the majority of accounts of rules in Wittgenstein, Jose Medina stresses the normative aspect of rules, that 'against the background of a shared practice [...] the behavioural regularities of the pupil acquire *normative* significance and can be considered as indicative of his understanding or lack thereof' (My emphasis. *The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy* 181).

This same conception of rule-following runs through Eldridge's previously mentioned counter to anti-essentialist readings of Wittgenstein, one that still accommodates the insight that aesthetic response can be neither the application of definitions nor reducible to individual mental states:

> Our practices of applying and projecting terms are autonomous, rooted directly in what we do. No mediating third entities – metaphysical atoms, simple ideas, mental processes, or whatever – ultimately support them. Yet practices can nonetheless be assessed as legitimate or illegitimate. ('Problems and Prospects of Wittgensteinian Aesthetics' 252)

In order to discover the normative power of aesthetic criticism, which seems to evade explicit rules or definitions, we ought to pay attention to how words, expressions and traditions are regulated, through the study of 'perspicuous examples' (251). The stress is on the importance of selecting the right examples, ones that shed light on each other, rather than showing merely superficial commonalities (254). For example, in *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough,* Wittgenstein's comparison of ritual sacrifices in an alien culture with the gesture in our own of kissing the photograph of a loved one is enlightening without being obvious; the connections and differences reveal the particularities of use of what at first seemed like a simple case (*RFGB* 123). Eldridge's point is to show how such examples can get us closer to an understanding of what counts as aesthetic behaviour, by functioning as a kind of description of the practice, as a guide to what constitutes correctness in our behaviour.

Leaving aside the shadow of essentialism mentioned earlier, the limitation of Eldridge's account, though it is right to stress that judgement must be practice-involved (i.e. sensitive to context, and art as a continuing and developing set of practices) is the

primary status given to normativity in rules. I follow Michael Luntley's recent reappraisal of the opening sections of *Philosophical Investigations*, which questions the strength and centrality of normativity granted by mainstream readings. In *Opening Investigations* Luntley takes seriously the metaphorical implications of the 'path' metaphors that Wittgenstein used in *The Big Typescript*, the late preparatory manuscript for *Philosophical Investigations*:

> A rule compared to a *path*. Does a path say that one is to walk on *it* (and not on the grass)? Does it state that people usually go that way? (§240)

> A rule is a kind of marked-out route, a marked-out path. (§242)

> A rule –as I understand it – is like a path in a garden. Or like the pre-established squares on a chessboard or the lines in a table. (§243)

'This suggests a much more modest sense of 'rule' than many commentators allow, rule as regularity with no more normative authority as the 'right way to go' than the trodden grass of a garden path' (Michael Luntley, personal correspondence).

Luntley argues in *Opening Investigations* that both the mainstream treatment of rules (as represented by Hacker) and the anti-theoretical therapeutic branch of Wittgenstein scholarship rely on an unwarranted degree of normativity in Wittgenstein's conception of grammar. Whether grammar is conceived as a tribunal (like a ledger, *BT* §58) against which we measure an utterance for sense or nonsense, or we determine to proceed with a piecemeal investigation into whether what looked like a genuine philosophical puzzle is just a confusion of terms, what is common is the conception that grammar is normative. 'That has to be the case, for otherwise there would be no authority to the grammatical investigation that would enable it to quieten the urge to philosophize' (*Opening Investigations* 92). Both approaches are therefore 'conservative' since they work by reference to what is already there, what is done. And this accords with Wittgenstein's own method, insofar as he urged that '[t]he problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known' (*PI* 109) – which is, in part, concerning ourselves with the familiar uses of words.

Luntley's aim is to show that the view of grammar that both readings have is erroneously dependent on a view of grammar as authoritative, when in fact, if a rule is more like a path.Iit need only be a regularity. 'A rule is not, however, a norm,

something that intrinsically binds us. A rule is a regularity and it is one that we feel bound by, but that is something about *us* and should not be reified or treated as if it's something about the rule' (97 my italics). He attempts to show that although Wittgenstein certainly did argue against the pursuit of 'high theory', this need not mean the impossibility of philosophy at all, insisting both that Wittgenstein's insights left room for such work, and that 'there is a distinctive philosophical craftiness, the craft of limning the details of our sense of being comfortable with the contingencies of grammar and of who and what we are' (95). This partly depends on an account of the interrelation of grammar and the world, which theme I return to in Chapter 3, and partly on serious consideration of the path metaphor for rules. To *BT* §204 quoted above, Luntley responds:

> Clearly, both questions are to be answered in the negative. So, what is a path? It is a regularity, a way we regularly go up the garden. A rule is not a particularly authoritative proposition that qua proposition states that one must walk this way, or that one usually walks this way. Of course, we can state that we regularly walk this way and, if so, we articulate the regularity, but the path is no more than the regularity of how we go up the garden. There is no more to going up the garden path than going regularly, even if, once the path is there, we feel that we ought to stick to the path. That's just how we are; we are creatures who enjoy a sense of pattern to things, we like to find and to make patterns in our behavior. (97)

This is an important insight, and there is no reason to assume that our relationship to rules need be any more rigid or any less multifaceted than our relationship to paths. However, in pursuit of his point Luntley does do a little of the same simplifying, since a garden path or a woodland trail may emerge simply from repeated use, but a path, especially one 'marked-out' (*BT* §242) will have further consequences than regularity – the purpose of its being marked out, the parts of the garden that are shown off or hidden by it, the kind of terrain it covers and so on. More generally, while it is right that it is nonsense to say that *a* path forces us to follow it, the notion that there are paths at all is something taught, and does come with notions of correctness beyond regularity of behaviour, as Keep Off The Grass signs testify. True enough, nothing about paths instructs us to follow them in the manner of an order, but they have a grammar, nonetheless – even if the grammar is not necessarily normative, and can be merely descriptive or structuring, as Luntley suggests.

In Chapter 5, I discuss Wittgenstein's patterns of metaphor in *Philosophical Investigations*, and how paying close attention to his choices can reward us with an understanding of his particular project. His repeated use of geographic or cartographic language is telling and thematic. For the moment I want to connect Luntley's revision of the status of rules for Wittgenstein with another possibility of thinking about aesthetics, that is, the practice-oriented approach mooted by Peter Lamarque in 'Wittgenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice'. Like Luntley, Lamarque notes that the constraining power of rules is over-played in many accounts of Wittgenstein, when in fact rules are only one element of a language game, and need not be prior to or primary amongst such elements.

'Practice' here points to something similar to what is meant by 'language game', but is preferable in some cases, especially where one wants to avoid stressing language over other aspects such as training, regularity, demonstration and so on. It is also helpful sometimes to avoid the temptation to use expressions such as 'language game' as if Wittgenstein had meant them as well-defined technical terms, when in fact his uses of them were quite sparse and variable (see Rupert Read 'Throwing Away the Bedrock'). Wittgenstein himself referred to *Philosophical Investigations* as being written in 'colloquial (non-technical) prose', this being one of the difficulties of its translation (Letter to Maynard Keynes in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters* 308), and as Marjorie Perloff has noted, his Austrian-German writing style is idiomatic and colloquial (*Wittgenstein's Ladder* xiii-xv). Perhaps part of insisting that readers think for themselves, as in the preface of *Philosophical Investigations*, includes a reluctance to provide a ready-made set of tools and terms for thinking. As discussed in Chapter 6, a significant part of the poetic response to Wittgenstein and this research has been the questioning of technical terms and notations, to discover unexpected connections and ironies. My preference for the term 'practice' is therefore also deliberately flexible, drawing in different associations in different contexts.

Lamarque's account of practice readily permits that rules are important and one of our principal testing mechanisms for someone's understanding, but it 'should not be supposed, though, that initiation into the practice can only come about through the formal articulation of rules' (378). Further, he argues that rules need not be the essential or most foundational ground of a practice; sometimes we learn rules because we are taught *judgements*, and cites *On Certainty* §140. 'Wittgenstein sometimes suggests that agreement can be more basic than rules' (382). Although mainstream scholarship has

emphasised the importance of rules (Lamarque's principal target in this essay is John Rawls and his influence), this can be misleading: 'Wittgenstein asks us to dig deeper to understand what it is for a practice to be governed by rules [...][I]t is more illuminating to think of conforming to a practice as engaging in activities of a certain kind, underlain by agreements, than merely to emphasize the rule-bound nature of practices' (384).

Lamarque's chief interest is in literature as a practice, though his thoughts could easily be applied to other related areas. There is such a thing, he suggests, as reading 'from a literary point of view' (387), which is different from just plain reading. By paying attention to the particular history and context that literary reading, criticism and appreciation have, we might avoid the apparent difficulties of finding rules for this activity of "being literary" that need not apply to reading generally, nor be separated off from it. Practices can be 'nested' quite unproblematically, with rules and traditions governing when and how one is superimposed on another. Lamarque does wonder whether the 'game' analogy from Wittgenstein is quite weak on this point, since 'only in rather special circumstances can one speak of games embedded in games' (386), though I would suggest that this is an unnecessary worry. One need only note the abundance of computer games that incorporate mini-games within them, moments of games within games such as penalty shoot-outs in football, or concepts such as sportsmanship or gamesmanship within sport generally. A different limitation might be the circumscribedness that 'game' tends to bring as an association. For example, on most conceptions, a given game is capable of being recreated elsewhere, where this means that someone sees that two games are similar, or a set of rules or customs are adhered to again. Two games of football, for example, are instances of the same game, even if they are otherwise unconnected. If using game to describe a large scale practice such as literature, encompassing multiple languages and cultural endeavours, the subject is comparatively immovable, or else risks becoming so general that the term game is no longer useful for describing anything about it. That said, the possibility of making connections with a particular range of activities to constitute a nested practice, such as "being literary", may allow for more piecemeal approaches that avoid this problem.

The term piecemeal need not imply something haphazard or non-rigorous, though it does avoid the notion of highly-generalised answers to particular questions, tempting as they may be. John McDowell has described his own effort in *Mind and World* as simply assembling 'reminders' of our ordinary language use and the misleading pictures we have a tendency to build about it (95), recalling Wittgenstein's remark 'The work of the

philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose' (*PI* §127). The degree to which McDowell succeeds in remaining true to his stated programme, or strays into theory making, is discussed in Chapter 3, in tandem with Wallace Steven's poetry as a different kind of reminder, one that operates by imagery, association, irony and disjunction.

Several philosophers of a Wittgensteinian bent have tried to find the balance between avoiding the high theory of metaphysics and dissolving the notion of philosophical activity at all. It may well be that Wittgenstein underwent this same continual conflict himself, as readings by David Schalkwyk ('Fiction as "grammatical" investigation: A Wittgensteinian account'; 'Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Garden": the ladders and labyrinths of philosophy and *Dichtung*'), Timothy Gould ('Restlessness and the achievement of peace: writing and method in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*') and Marjorie Perloff (*Wittgenstein's Ladder*) have in different ways suggested.

Michael Luntley has argued that the 'reminders' element of Wittgenstein's remark is less important than the 'assembling', since the point of the kinds of examples that Wittgenstein uses is that though they are telling and revealing, they are neither extraordinary nor definitive. It is the connections we draw and the arrangement of things we already knew that make the difference: 'It is the assembly that matters, not the reminders' (*Opening Investigations* 107). Read has argued that philosophy is somewhat like meditation practice; it takes continued and repeated attempts to return from the philosophical to the 'ordinary', which itself includes the 'striving for the extraordinary' that Wittgenstein's method is supposed to soothe ('Throwing Away the "Bedrock"' 96). There are almost as many ways of responding to Wittgenstein's aversion to theory as there are readers of his later work, from mining it for fully-fledged theories, however disguised (e.g. Kripke's anti-skeptical reading of the private language argument (*Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*), to a more modest notion of philosophy (Luntley), from seeking to escape contextual philosophy as a temptation (McDowell, Read), to Joan Retallack's emphasis on his silences and '(ambivalently) self-proclaimed failure' (*The Poethical* Wager 152), to reading Wittgenstein as an 'anti-philosopher' who turns philosophy's own nature against itself (Alan Badiou *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*).

In this study I push a conception of Wittgenstein's project as a self-recognising falling short, an unending task that may provide temporary relief from the philosophical itch, but which no more dissolves the task of philosophy than a completed poem removes the urge to write verse. To conceive of the work otherwise would be to slip back into the kind of 'boredom' of metaphysics that Cavell perceives Wittgenstein and Austen to warn against. Metaphysical speculation *looks* like an engaged and productive intellectual response, but is actually the empty shuffling of concepts – 'one more of the false or fantastic excitements that boredom craves' (*In Quest of the Ordinary* 7). Without really engaging with the different circumstances in which we do philosophy or consider ethics and aesthetics – our agency, embodiment, tradition and voice – we would be merely following rules of no consequence, swapping symbols. This is why the notion of practice is so important and no more possible to philosophically define than 'appreciation' (*LC* I §20) or 'game' (*PI* §75). The solutions to our quandaries must emerge, just like the quandaries themselves, within particular practices, and be satisfied by developments both within and of the practice. I therefore argue that, by avoiding the prioritisation of rules in favour of seeing practices as simultaneously expressive, coercive, limiting, enabling, natural, historical and sophisticated, a more coherent view of both Wittgenstein's philosophy and the role of aesthetics within it becomes available. This will likewise throw some light on the kinds of examples that Wittgenstein assembled and arranged, which are striking but not definitive. We may ask, for instance, why 'the responses and comparisons Wittgenstein considers are generally responses to complete works of art', and the implications for conceptions of perception and temporality this has (Ian MacKenzie 'Wittgenstein and Aesthetic Responses' 95), or how things are altered or made problematic depending on whether we are talking about a tradition we are part of or one of a very different culture (*LC* I §§26-35).

Reading the Tractatus

Although this emphasis on practice seemingly places itself firmly alongside the later Wittgenstein's polymorphous view of language, rather than the crystalline clarity sought by the *Tractatus*, it would be wrong to suppose that the early and later material have nothing to say to each other, or that the various interpretations of the *Tractatus* cannot provide insights into what Wittgenstein's project was and how it developed. As I will argue, against both the orthodox 'two Wittgensteins' story (or even three, as debated in *The Third Wittgenstein*) and the 'resolute' reading's tendency to highlight continuities between early and later Wittgenstein, the same attitude towards the aesthetic (and

ethical and religious) drives Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*, but the conception and enactment of that attitude undergoes shifts as Wittgenstein changes his method, his working assumptions about language, and his world view.

It will therefore be of benefit to mention some examples of how Wittgenstein's earlier work has been understood, with particular emphasis on its applications of and in aesthetics. Currently two types of readings dominate how the *Tractatus* is viewed – the still orthodox 'ineffabalist' view and the 'resolute'.

The ineffabalist readings, such as those given by G.E.M. Anscombe or P.M.S. Hacker, suggest that Wittgenstein delivers a conception of a world built of facts: propositions are sense-making because they are able to picture the facts – that is, objects' situations and relations to other objects. Language is capable of picturing these relations because it has an internal order, a logic. And logic describes not facts but the possibilities for the arrangement of propositions, such that they are capable of sense. But since logic is what licenses propositions, it cannot itself be the subject of them and cannot be treated as an object; it is transcendent (TLP 6.13). It cannot be said.[5] However, the 'tautologies [of the Tractatus] shew the "logic of the world" [though] what they shew is not what they are an attempt to say' (Anscombe *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* 163). Logic can be shown (or shows itself) from the fact that we are capable of producing sense-making propositions, that there is a controlling order to the relations objects can have with each other. In trying to show this, Wittgenstein is forced to state things that are technically nonsense, but point towards something true yet ineffable, which the acute reader understands by having worked through the propositions of the *Tractatus*. The ineffable can make itself '*manifest*' (TLP 6.522) but cannot be put into words.

Growing scholarship exists about Wittgenstein's own aesthetic tastes and the circumstances in which the *Tractatus* was developed. As well as research piecing together the genesis of the text (e.g.: *Prototractatus*, a facsimile of and commentary on Wittgenstein's early manuscripts), others such as Janik and Toulmin talk about Wittgenstein's intellectual and cultural surroundings. They write of his generation in Vienna being raised 'in an atmosphere so saturated with, and devoted to, "aesthetic" values that they were scarcely able to comprehend that any other values existed'

---

[5] see also Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* 25: 'What can be said can only be said by means of a proposition, and so nothing that is necessary for the understanding of *all* propositions can be said.' [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961]

(*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 44). This hierarchy of values was unquestionably influential on Wittgenstein, not least in the importance of music and literature throughout his life and the sharp distinctions he made between true appreciation and mere enjoyment.

In Michael Nedo's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Ein Biographisches Album*, the parallel importance for Wittgenstein of intellectual clarity and aesthetic form is displayed, both in the book's content and its mode of presentation. The text is sparse, a combination of biographical notes and quotations from letters and manuscripts, arranged alongside photos from Wittgenstein's life in ways that suggest, but do not make explicit, connections and causes. Particularly interesting are the composite and comparative family portraits that Wittgenstein made, set against his remarks about family resemblance (268-9). The style seeks to emulate Wittgenstein's own writing, using compressed 'arguments' arranged strikingly, rather than a linear discussion. The tone seeks a fine balance between the practical and the contemplative, with little extraneous decoration. Examples of Wittgenstein's own artistic endeavours are given, including a simple but expressive bronze bust, made under the tutelage of Michael Drobil (251). Typically, Wittgenstein was less than satisfied with his efforts and their originality: 'At the time I modelled the head for Drobil too the stimulus was essentially a work of Drobil's & my work was again really one of clarification' (*CV* 16e). (Connecting this critique of his own originality with Wittgenstein's remarks on a supposed 'Jewish mentality' in *Culture and Value*, and how this reflected the culture of anti-Semitism and Jewish Intellectualism of fin-de-siècle Vienna has been instructively explored in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, as well as Gakis *Contextual Metaphilosophy*.)

In this formally-conscious milieu, given the intertwining of artistic and all other values, aesthetics are equated with ethics. To be a 'good' work of art was just as much about selecting the appropriate mode of presentation – with nothing extraneous or disguised – as any technical, moral or didactic content; as Janik and Toulmin put in, 'a technical perfection of form was the chief end of literature' (80). The aesthetic carries the weight of an ethical activity, both in creation and appreciation, since only in aesthetic qualities could value reside.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein's form – the propositions – attempts to make everything as clear and concise as possible, and it is in this context that he makes the claim (TLP 6.421) that 'Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.' There is no meaning *of* the world *in* the world, since values can only attach to individual objects and actions; true

value – ethical value – belongs only to artworks, which are not regarded as objects caught up in the stream of everyday use and practicality. Instead, they are viewed as if outside of time, giving a glimpse of the world viewed as a limited whole. Any meaning of the world (as opposed to its contingent parts and their practical or purpose-linked meanings) lies outside time and space (TLP 6.4312). 'The contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling' (6.45). Under this Spinozian rubric, all things that are somehow 'higher' lie 'outside the world' (TLP 6.41-642), which includes the ethical and the aesthetic: 'It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)' (6.421).

This co-placing of ethics and aesthetics is not unique to Wittgenstein – there being a flourishing, especially since the turn of the millennium, of scholarship on their interrelation – see for example, the 2004 (25.4) edition of *Poetry Today* dedicated to the theme. But if they are not only things of the same type but effectively identical, this will impact on how we talk about an aesthetic experience at all. To what extent is it correct to say that ethics and aesthetics are one for Wittgenstein? The original English edition translates the German 'Ethik und Aesthetik sind Eins' as 'ethics and aesthetics are one', whereas the 1961 revision has it as '…one and the same'. This revision strikes me as odd, since the sense of 'oneness' is actually weakened by referring it to characteristics ('the same') as opposed to suggesting an essential identity, and that they are 'the same' is attempting to refer to two things the characteristics of which Wittgenstein has put outside the possibility of expression. However, there are reasons to be dissatisfied with both translations. Kathrin Stengel has rightly pointed out that in Wittgenstein's German 'Eins' is more likely to refer not to absolute identity, but to an interworked unity: only in their 'complex unity, can ethics and aesthetics be considered individually at all' ('Ethics as Style: Wittgenstein's Aesthetic Ethics and Ethical Aesthetics' 611). A similar thought runs through Robert Eaglestone's questioning – responding to TLP 6.421 – of whether the separation of ethics and aesthetics (especially in literature) is too easily presumed, and that much of criticism's frustrated efforts to (re)unite the two comes from misrecognising their originary unity ('One and the same? Ethics, Aesthetics, and Truth'). In the *Tractatus*' case, it is important to keep in view that the unity suggested is a matter of logical form, rather than content, so that the connection between ethics and aesthetics is not one of literature showing us morally uplifting content or examples – whether didactic or more closely imagined or inhabited – as a

Nussbaumian humanism (e.g., *Cultivating Humanity*), or what Eaglestone calls a neo-Aristotelean ethical criticism, would seek ('One and the same' 536). Approaches of this kind certainly tells us something about humans and our relations to narrative, reading and so on, but are hard-pressed to answer the sorts of criticisms that Richard A. Posner makes in 'Against Ethical Criticism': that being bookish does not make us better people, that the moral view propounded in a text (whether shared by the author or not) is not a criterion for aesthetic greatness or mediocrity, and that an author's moral life should only be considered separately from an aesthetic evaluation of their work (2). Rather, on the *Tractatus* model, the ethical and aesthetic operate in the same way, as gestures towards what structures the world, but are not part of it; properly speaking they are ineffable. In both cases, they stand outside the boundaries of language, contingency and purpose; the correct contemplation of an artwork is as a limited whole, a world to itself, just as the correct response to an ethical question is not practical or measureable, but absolute. Perhaps one could say of the artwork that, like the mystical, it means seeing the world as a limited whole, to have a sense of 'the world enclosed within all the possible forms of truth statements' (Charles Altieri 'Wittgenstein on Consciousness and Language' 1419). The true or great artwork shows the possibilities of, or limits of, true expression or action within an artistic medium, form or tradition. It is complete, timeless, in the sense that what it 'says' accords with its form without any appeal to context, or conscious application of technique for effect (cf *CV* 5e). What art or ethics say is nonsense, insofar as their meaningful content cannot be delivered as propositions. Propositions – the pictures we make of fact in the world (*TLP* 2.1) – cannot encompass the means of making the pictures themselves, and so cannot say anything about the conditions of the ordering of the world, of which ethics and aesthetics are part.

This does not preclude our making ethical or aesthetic judgements within the world, but does stop us from assigning a value to the world, and places the source of such values outside it. This distinguishes Wittgenstein from Schopenhauer, whose influence on Wittgenstein's conception of the self is palpable in the *Tractatus*, since our world is not to be escaped, only circumscribed. This is important to note, since, as Russell B. Goodman argues, though 'Wittgenstein's view of the self does not, like Schopenhauer's, lead directly to his ethics, it prepares the way by placing the self outside the phenomenal world' ('Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein on Ethics' 442). But Goodman goes on to criticise Wittgenstein for there being no mechanism by which things 'in reality' can be good or bad, which misses the point of what an ethics of things

'being the case' is about: we do not decide in advance what is good and what is bad and then attempt to find a viewpoint from which to see actions or objects and judge them; rather, we form judgements within this world – about parts of it, about things that are the case – but treat our judgements (or their ethicalness) as something external to it. To be aesthetic as well as ethical is to be authentic to medium or form of expression. Here the influence of Karl Kraus is heavily felt, as Janik and Toulmin have also charted in *Wittgenstein's Vienna*; finding the correct and honest way of speaking truth was as much a matter of language as of content, and here Wittgenstein differs from the *Jung Wien* generation of aesthetes, the later flow of which he was raised in. Integrity, Kraus' perpetual watchword, comes not from heightened language, as if we could say the unsayable if only we could purify our expressions, but from recognising the limitations of *any* expression, and presenting this exacting modesty in the field or form suited to the purpose. Fineness of expression without being rooted in thought was a fraud and an insult according to Kraus, a sin he railed against in the particular form of Heine and the newspaper feuilleton (see 'Heine and the Consequences' translated with commentary in Jonathan Franzen's *The Kraus Project*). Kraus' difficult, almost unapproachable prose is designed to make the reader earn his insights and satire, as opposed to the idle ornamentation of the feuilleton style, which Kraus thought was lazy, cliché-ridden and a disguise for shallow thinking. It is in this sense that the *Tractatus* and its style represent not merely a book that talks about ethics, but an act of writing that is itself ethical: 'the point of the book is ethical' (Wittgenstein *Letters to Ludwig von Ficker* 94). Janik and Toulmin go on to claim that it was further 'an ethical *deed*, which *showed* the nature of ethics' (Emphasis in original. *Wittgenstein's Vienna* 24) by separating off the ethical from attempts to underpin it intellectually; the aesthetic form and moral content of a work are identical and thus impossible to express otherwise. As Carolyn Wilde reads it in 'Ethics and Aesthetics are One', *Tractatus* proposition 6.422 insists that reward and punishment cannot reside merely in the consequences of the action, but must be 'in the action itself' (167). The truest and most powerful effect of a text – philosophical or poetic – would not be external events, such as morals drawn from them, but the direct impact of writing or reading the text. Ethical writing is thus not instrumental or intellectual, but performative. For Kraus, operating as a social critic and satirist, the perfect satire would be 'a work which in no way changes the statements that are being satirized, but simply shows them in a light which illuminates their inherent hypocrisy' (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 90). A comparison with the *Tractatus* is quite simple, then: its aesthetic form and its ethical content are singular, and the work is, if not a satire, at least

self-undercutting, without saying anything that seems exaggerated or false within the terms of philosophical logic. It shows itself through its presentation – though exactly what it shows remains ambiguous, as the discussion to follow shows.

The question of presentation underpins much of Chapter 3 in this thesis, in contrasting and combining the analytic philosophy of John McDowell and the poetry of Wallace Stevens. As discussed in more detail there, McDowell aims at what has been called a deflationary realism about (moral) values in the world by undermining both realist and anti-realist stances (Tim Thornton *John McDowell* 63). Stevens, meanwhile, struggled with the need or desire for the world to have meaning, while still recognising that the shaping fictions we use to give our world meaning (including mythology and religion) have either ceased to satisfy, or must be rethought *as* fictions yet still meaningful. Much like Wittgenstein, Stevens saw the aesthetic, in the figure of the Poet, as the possibility of creating, critiquing and renewing the necessary fiction(s), which would be understood in different ways by different readers. In like wise, the different chapters of this thesis present a number of 'occasions' in which the boundaries of sense come under strain, and explore how different (poetic) responses use diverse strategies to continue or question communication with readers, including the ethical aspects of these activities. The diversity of contexts and methods is designed to ease or dissolve certain philosophical worries about apparently general problems, but will for that same reason not be able to provide general answers. Steven's Poet must make lively a fiction among fictions; Jorie Graham's stuttering stories must still engage a reader; Kei Miller's Rastaman must persuade in stew and song.

Reading the Tractatus

Wittgenstein admits much the same in his preface: his method cannot expect to be effective on any but the right kind of reader – one who both speaks the language of the content and is alert enough to the form to see the nonsensicality. Many early readers in the Vienna Circle took the text as a logical positivist work, in which the exclusion of the mystical from the sayable was a practical and admirable step, in line with their principle of verifiability (Frederick Copleston *A History of Philosophy: Logical Positivism and Existentialism* 5) . But this reading is now rarely taken – in part because the positivist outlook has generally become increasingly less palatable since its heyday prior to the Second World War, and in part because it involves ignoring considerable parts of the *Tractatus'* text, including much of the last section and Wittgenstein's own preface. And

even for readers who follow the injunction to read the propositions of the book as nonsense, what are we to take as the residue of our reading experience?

The ineffabalist or standard reading seeks to retain a genuine philosophical insight about language and logic; that the book shows us something that cannot be stated without incoherence, yet can be understood by a proper appreciation of its mode of presentation. The nonsense of the texts is of an 'illuminating', instructive, or transformative type (Atkinson *The Mystical in Wittgenstein's Early Writings* 97). But this still presents the difficulty of actually saying what it is that Wittgenstein's nonsense has provided. Is it a philosophical theory of the traditional kind, though presented in an unorthodox manner? Or is it a theory at all?

Cora Diamond has famously called the ineffabalist reading a 'chickening out' from the real philosophical challenge of the *Tractatus* ('Throwing Away the Ladder' 7). It is accused of attempting to retain a philosophical insight of the type that the text does not mysteriously reveal, but straightforwardly shows as nonsense – not because it is illegitimate in the positivist sense, but because the whole philosophical enterprise, including the *Tractatus*, is a bewitchment by language that we ought to be cured of by the kind of therapy that reading this self-negating text provides. The ineffabalist reading, while pledging itself to silence about what is revealed, nonetheless presumes that it is capable of taking up a view of the world from outside, as it were, in exactly the way the closing remarks of the *Tractatus* rule out (Warren Goldfarb '*Die Überwindung*: Anti-metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus*' 11).

The so-called 'resolute reading' was propounded initially by James Conant and Cora Diamond, but picked up increasingly in the 1990s by Kevin Cahill, Alice Crary, Ed Dain, Rob Deans, Piergiorgio Donatelli, Burton Dreben, Juliet Floyd, Warren Goldfarb, Logi Gunnarsson, Martin Gustafsson, Michael Kremer, Oskari Kuusela, Thomas Ricketts, Rupert Read, Matt Ostrow and Ed Witherspoon, Phil Hutchinson, Denis McManus and the late essays of Gordon Baker (see Conant 'Mild Mono-Wittgensteinianism' 111 n.3 and Silver Bronzo 'The Resolute Reading and Its Critics' 46).[6] Although many variants exist, they commonly suggest that the *Tractatus*

---

[6] The term resolute was first coined by Thomas Ricketts, and first printed in Warren Goldfarb's 1997 review of Diamond's *The Realistic Spirit*. Many other terms for the reading have been suggested, including 'new', 'therapeutic' and 'austere', depending on whether the emphasis is on the reading's unorthodox, methodological or self-limiting character. 'Resolute' is most commonly used, however, so I will use this term throughout, particularly to avoid conflating this reading with a more general therapeutic reading of Wittgenstein, which includes both those who take the resolute reading and those

propositions, either in their entirety or as result of the 'framing' prepositions that begin and end a text, are demonstratively self-defeating, and leave nothing behind; we remain 'inside', and give up on the notion of a view from outside as illusory. The Tractatus is inherently dialectical: the opening ontological claims are *revealed* to be incoherent by engagement with what they set out. They generate their own dispersal by encouraging us to think through their consequences (Goldfarb '*Die Überwindung*: Anti-metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus*' 12). They have done their work in displaying themselves as nonsense, as examples of the work philosophy ought to be doing on other sentences that are disguised nonsense – cases where our language betrays us into thinking we can say things that have no meaning, mistakes we ought to avoid making. One way of summarising the dichotomy between standard and resolute readings (which contains within it many variants) is the way that Juliet Floyd puts it in 'Wittgenstein and the Inexpressible': 'The former kind of reader [ineffabalist] sees the inexpressible as a limitation, a reflection of what is illegitimate in grammar or fails to be epistemically justifiable; the latter [resolute reader] sees the inexpressible as a fiction, an illusion produced by an overly simplified conception of human expression' (177).

I will work through the implications of attempting to express the inexpressible in the next chapter, using Diamond's appeal to an expression rooted in personhood rather than propositional sense. This can be considered separately from the issue of interpretations of the *Tractatus* itself. For the moment it will be more important to consider the implications for the text and its reception, and the 'resolute' response to questions of aesthetics.

Essentially, the resolute reading is retrospective, perhaps only making sense when seen through Wittgenstein's later work in the mode of therapy, irony and imagined forms of life. Though resolute readings do not depend on the later work for their specific arguments, it is hard to conceive of them getting purchase on the *Tractatus* without Wittgenstein's later insights, while also assuming that the earlier Wittgenstein already *had* these views, or forms thereof – which is to say that philosophy of the essentialising sort that he attacks in *Philosophical Investigations* is not 'incomplete' and standing in need of an inexpressible structure but an altogether empty form of words; a purposeless form of talking, motivated and sustained by the erroneous impression that what is uttered says anything at all. It is not that we imagine something that cannot be said but,

who find this method in *Philosophical Investigations*, but not in the earlier work. For a fuller account of the development of the term and the reading, see Silver Bronzo 'The Resolute Reading and Its Critics'.

on the contrary, that we can say things that we only imagine we can imagine. The nonsense of the propositions of the *Tractatus* is not revealing of something deeper, but that all language operates in plain sight and nonsense is plain nonsense; nothing is revealed about the hidden structuring of the world, because nothing of that sort makes sense to imagine, even if we appear to have the words for it. Realising this, through the self-dissolution of the final section of the *Tractatus*, gives us not a clinching insight or residual intellectual accomplishment but the temporary and specific therapy we need to put aside the temptation to philosophise, the release that comes from concealed, troubling nonsense being revealed as plain and manageable nonsense.

The resolute reading is of course not without its problems and detractors, notably Roger White ('Throwing the Baby out with the Ladder'), Peter Hacker ('Was He Trying to Whistle it ?' and 'When the Whistling Had to Stop'), Daniel Hutto (*Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy*), and Jaakko Hintikka ('What does the Wittgensteinian Inexpressible Express?'). The major points of contention tend to be: that the resolute reading unjustifiably does away with the say/show distinction (that they deny that which can be shown but not said), which seems to run against Wittgenstein's expressed views (e.g. in his letter to Bertrand Russell of 19th August 1919, in *Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore* 71-3); that its attacks on ineffabalist readings overstate the ineffability claims made (White 31); that there is a conflict between the way that resolute readers claim to regard the propositions as nonsense and their actual use of them in support of their arguments (Hacker 'Was He Trying to Whistle It' 110); the retrospective nature of the view, as mentioned above; the specific conception of 'nonsense' the earlier Wittgenstein held and the implications of this view – or the justification for assuming there is only one type of nonsense (Lynette Reid 'Wittgenstein's Ladder: The Tractatus and Nonsense'); and the consequences of this view for Wittgenstein's ethical (and therewith aesthetic) ambitions.

So intense have the debates between different readings been that the late nineties featured what was called 'The *Tractatus* Wars', a conflict still going on, though in a more compromising style – see for example the essays in *Beyond the Tractatus Wars* (2011), edited by Rupert Read and Matthew A. Lavery, featuring alternating contributions from either camp. I will not give a full account of all the criticisms just mentioned here, partly because it would not do justice to the increasing variety of readings being developed – from Conant's 'Mild Mono-Wittgensteinianism' to Juliet Floyd's exceptionally austere reading, which denies the possibility of the absolute

generality Wittgenstein sought to express, even in expressing its impossibility ('Wittgenstein and the Inexpressible' 185). At several points in this thesis particular arguments will be brought up, particularly in the discussion of the inexpressible in Chapter 2. Very generally, I do hold it to be an important insight that the ineffabilist reading implicitly assumes that there is a 'something' that cannot be expressed, which is already to say something about it; it assumes the generality of the limits of language (and this, if nothing else, is the residual achievement of the *Tractatus*) when such an idea makes no sense without retaining some elements of the Tractarian propositions at face value. By contrast, the resolute reading often goes too far in pressing for a deliberate and available solution to the 'chickening out' of ineffabalism. The charge that the whole book is plain nonsense (and not significant nonsense) seems a troubling position to be in, even given the very particular analysis of nonsense in Wittgenstein and Frege that Diamond gives in chapter three of *The Realistic Spirit*, and that the implied constancy of Wittgenstein's views requires ignoring a considerable amount of biographical information, including remarks in Wittgenstein's later writing about 'the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*' (*PI* §23; see also for example the Preface viii, §95 and §114).

Among the casualties of the resolute reading is the possibility – or sense – of discussing aesthetics in terms of something 'higher' or ineffable. What looks like an attempt to reach beyond language is shown to be simple nonsense – no more or less meaningful that 'piggly wiggle tiggle' (Diamond 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's Tractatus' 151) – and whatever value such an attempt has is limited to the demonstration of its hopelessness. Much like Kennick's anti-essentialism mentioned earlier, there really is no 'it' that Art is, or that it speaks to, beyond what we can express in ordinary language. This need not, of course, mean that a resolute reader has no interest in art or that artworks are no longer of value. However, it does mean that there is a difficulty in reconciling a resolute reading's treatment of aesthetics with what we know of Wittgenstein's attitude towards art – its centrality to human experience and the difficulty of saying anything better than nothing (*CV* 26e). The latter remark could, I argue, be stretched to suggest that the closer an artwork comes to achieving perfection, the closer it comes to saying nothing at all, much like philosophical theses (§128). Indeed, the idea of saying nothing at all seems to be the overriding issue for resolute readers, though not necessarily in the same way as Wittgenstein meant it. On the few

occasions when resolute readers do write about art, it tends to be on the matter of the status of the 'nonsense' of art that exceed the forms of ordinary language.

Rupert Read's treatment of Wallace Steven's '13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird', in *Applying Wittgenstein*, is an excellent study of both Steven's stretching of the language, and what it can tell us about how many of Wittgenstein's imagined language games are not intended to make us imagine something ridiculous, but to make us realise that what he has suggested – what it is possible to put into language – is, despite appearances, impossible to imagine. Many of our philosophical confusions arise from believing that it must be possible to imagine anything that can be said, whereas actually our language makes it possible to say things that we only *imagine* we imagine. Steven's dizzying and comic renditions of scale lead us to imagine that we could simultaneously see the movement of a single bird's eye and a wide mountain landscape (ll1-3), and his crumpling of grammatical forms toys with our conceptions of time. A weakness in Read's reading exists, though, in that it operates from the initial assumption that poetry or poetic language does something different from the "practical" work of ordinary language: poetry 'can *transport* us; it can make a beautiful noise […] but it cannot transport us from A to B' (*Applying Wittgenstein* 35). In other words, poetry has the ability to create certain moods or grammatical effects – in the Stevens case urging us to try to imagine things that on closer inspection turn out to be unavailable to our imagination, in the manner of Wittgenstein's philosophy – but it remains strictly speaking, useless; it does no work in the ordinary flow of life; it stands idle. Read's analysis does make a persuasive case for one way of reading Stevens' poem, but the divide that the attendant view of "poetic language" opens up is somewhat reductive, based on an idea of idleness linked to a definite outcome. This goes against Wittgenstein's own insistence on the great variety of forms of language and different games, and contradicts the very high value that he placed on poetry. The resolute reading is right, as I will argue in Chapter 2, about the nonsensical nature of ineffability claims, and does seem in harmony with a remark from the Tractarian period in *Culture and Value* about the difference between the effects of practical and ethical language: 'You cannot lead people to the good; you can only lead them to some place or other; the good lies outside the space of facts' (5e). But it is important to avoid slipping into a positivist/practicalist view of language, and not to pretend that Wittgenstein's text is cleaner and less human than it really is; its own correctness about where it oversteps the boundaries of sense feel less like a joke than a frustration – a theme I return to in

Chapter 5 and the ideal of achieving a 'clear view' or 'perspicuous representation' (sometimes rendered as 'birds-eye view') of grammar. A further indication of the *development* of Wittgenstein's thought in this area, rather than a break or a continuity, is his comment in *Culture and Value* (7e) which links two key images from the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*: 'But now it seems to me too that besides <u>the work</u> of the artist there is another through which the world may be captured sub specia aeterni. It is – as I believe – the <u>way</u> of thought which as it were flies above the world and leaves it <u>the way</u> it is, contemplating it from above <u>in its</u> flight.' (emphases in original). A notable variation in Wittgenstein's notes is that 'the work' of the artist might also have been 'the activity' and 'the function', showing how Wittgenstein considered these as all part of the same practice.

An alternative to the resolute reading that does manage to incorporate a sense of Wittgenstein's *work* in producing the *Tractatus*, and not only its end result, is that provided by Daniel D. Hutto in *Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy*, which also has similarities with the 'elucidatory' reading put forward by Marie McGinn in 'Between Elucidation and Therapy'. Wittgenstein *is* trying to show something that is not nonsense about the way language works, but he is simultaneously conscious that his own conception of language (at that time) prevents him from saying it in a way consistent with this conception. By using the 'image of a world of facts which consists of objects in combination with one another' – the metaphysical opening of the *Tractatus* that the resolute reading is obliged to consider completely meaningless – Wittgenstein is attempting to 'make clear the distinction between content (objects), structure (the arrangement of objects in determinate relationships to one another in facts) and form (the possibility of objects entering into these determinate relationships)' (McGinn 'Between Elucidation and Therapy' 500).

This distinction can be shown but not stated, since this would require being able to say something about language or the world from the outside, as it were; which ultimately means that the propositions don't say anything at all in their own terms. Nevertheless, they are carefully designed to lead us to see for ourselves something that is not ineffable, but something that we in effect already knew, through our own everyday application of language. It is not a discovery of some hidden truth but points towards something that 'lies before our eyes' (501). Hutto accepts that McGinn's elucidatory reading gets Wittgenstein out of the problem of wanting to say something impossible or from 'outside' language, but still questions whether it is legitimate to claim that he has

done so without actually saying anything; if anything at all is conveyed to the reader, language must in some way have been used inappropriately – though 'self-consciously' on Hutto's reading (*Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy* 100). It is undeniable that, no matter how the evolution of Wittgenstein's views is conceived, there is a tension between his earlier and later thinking.

In common with most, I hold that both the idea of two radically opposed Wittgensteins of the orthodox reading (e.g. Hacker's description of the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* as 'diametrically opposed philosophical masterpieces' (*Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies* 2)) and the idea of a real 'mono-Wittgensteinian' narrative are too simplistic – symptomatic, perhaps, of philosophy's love of precise definitions and in direct contrast to the contextual and variable view of the world that Wittgenstein's later philosophy is supposed to have inspired. Rather than treating the tension as a single about-face or a minor grumble to be overlooked, Hutto correctly identifies that Wittgenstein developed his thinking over time, in part in response to problems identified within his own work. He came to find his earlier work unsatisfactory not because it was simply wrong but because it no longer answered the questions that he had thought he had answered or that he now thought needed answering:

> The best way to smooth out these exegetical difficulties is to see his remarks as *attempts* at elucidation not as theory, without suggesting that they succeeded in being such. Concentrating on the *actual* status of his remarks, the [variety of other] interpretations fail to distinguish clearly what he was *trying* to achieve from the extent to which he was successful in achieving it. Clearly, he wished the *Tractatus* to be a work of clarification, yet in large part it failed in this purpose, as he later realised. That this is so is entirely consistent with the fact that he made erroneous assumptions and that he failed to express himself in the correct way. (*Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy* 101)

It is not unreasonable to hold that, although Wittgenstein was at the time of completing the *Tractatus* satisfied that he had stilled the questions of philosophy as best he could (*TLP* Preface) and that he had completed his ethical deed, he remained certain that very few people would understand it, that his efforts were imperfect and, further, that he was 'pushed by his own understanding of sense to regard [the propositions] either as statements of fact or as mere nonsense' (*Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy* 102).

His return to philosophy thereafter came with a growing and specific dissatisfaction with the view of language that had pushed him into this mode of expression.

Naturally, Hutto's account is not without its critics in turn, particularly Read, who takes Hutto to have a more limited conception of what thought and language are like than is justified by the account thereof in the *Tractatus*, and to introduce theoretical elements that do not (despite Hutto's claims to the contrary) escape Wittgenstein's injunction against theory, by being situated in specific *occasions* of use (Read 'A No-Theory?: Against Hutto on Wittgenstein' 74-5. For Hutto's argument for how occasions of use function in the *Tractatus,* see 'Two Wittgensteins Too Many').

The Mystical, Faith and Terror

My own concern here, with both Hutto's account and the resolute reading, is that analytic philosophy generally feels permitted (or compelled) to omit one aspect of Wittgenstein's worldview that has particular importance for aesthetic considerations, namely his unquestionable struggle with 'the mystical' – to include the religious, which is deeply entangled with the aesthetic and the ethical. On the one hand, most commentators simply ignore this aspect, assuming a clean separation between analytic philosophy and religious thought (or better, a religious view on the world). Hutto, for example, lists four possible readings of the Tractatus in addition to his own (positivist theory; ineffable, necessary truths; therapeutic nonsense; or a set of elucidations) but does not consider what Wittgenstein's troubled views of faith might add to the mix (*Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy* 101). The contrary holds true of those studies that have, on the other hand, taken Wittgenstein to be a straightforwardly mystic or Christian thinker. These include Russell Nieli's *Wittgenstein: From Mysticism to Ordinary Language*, which draws parallels between the *Tractatus* and Christian mystical traditions, particularly notions of a 'flight' from the world and the profanation of language, James R Atkinson's *The Mystical in Wittgenstein's Early Writing*, which emphasises Wittgenstein's desire to contemplate objects in the world without using the language that inevitably creates a separation between speaker and object, but thereby insists on a truth about things which is nonetheless supposedly ineffable (140), and Walter Glannon's insistence that Wittgenstein remained in search of some shadowy truth beyond language in 'What Literary Theory Misses in Wittgenstein' (263-4). James W. McClendon and Brad J. Kallenberg have gone so far as to argue that Wittgenstein was a committed (if unorthodox) 'Christian in philosophy' who underwent a conversion

event during the First World War ('Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Christian in Philosophy' 131).

In their favour, such accounts have clear parallels with the mystical forms of discourse exhibited in the *Tractatus*, including language that is at times specialist, literal, metaphorical or deeply ambiguous, an insistence that the methods of ordinary communication are inadequate for expressing the text's message directly, and an appeal to the author's own person for understanding rather than purely the text itself (TLP 6.54). There is also considerable biographical information from Wittgenstein's service in the First World War and after that suggests an encounter with faith of some kind, in particular through Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*, which he repeatedly recommended to friends (e.g., see his letter to von Ficker of 24/07/1915 in *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives* 91, and his continuing admiration for Tolstoy's moral teachings mentioned by Fania Pascal in her memoir of Wittgenstein, in the same volume, 55-56.)

Such claims, however, do need considerable refining, since as in most things, Wittgenstein's attitude towards faith is complex and idiosyncratic. Atkinson accurately notes that Wittgenstein in every instance uses the term 'the mystical', rather than mysticism or mystic, so it should not be inferred that he 'is referring to a body of beliefs held by mystics' (*The Mystical in Wittgenstein's Early Writing* 93). Marjorie Perloff charts his increased interest in the mystical during the period of the completion of the *Tractatus* in *Wittgenstein's Ladder* (25-32) and Bertrand Russell's bemusement at the change, when the two met again after the conflict, writing to Lady Ottoline: 'I was amazed to learn that he has become a complete mystic [...] and is thinking seriously of becoming a monk.' (20/12/1919, cited in *WL* 30). However, tellingly, Russell goes on to say that 'I think (although he would not agree), that what he likes best in mysticism is its power to stop him from thinking' (30). This seems like a particularly apposite remark given Wittgenstein's own later preoccupation with being able to stop doing philosophy, to find the right words to give himself a moment of rest from its temptations and apparent troubles (see 'Restlessness and the Achievement of Peace' by Timothy Gould). If Wittgenstein was close to adopting a form of religious faith, it was not a conversion to an orthodox Christianity, though the forms of religiosity that may have appealed were Judeo-Christian, given his cultural background and circumstance.[7] More likely, he saw

---

[7] For Wittgenstein's early life and upbringing, and his family's status as Jewish converts to Protestantism, see Ray Monk *The Duty of Genius* Chapter One; for a discussion of Wittgenstein's views on Judaism and faith in *Culture and Value*, see *Wittgenstein's Ladder* 75.

a mystical view of the world as a kind of discipline of the self (in both the sense of self-control and of judgement or punishment) that allowed one to be a better person by escaping the hypocrisy of religious moral posturing, the superficiality of everyday society, and the '*transcendentales Geschwätz*' (transcendental prattle) of ordinary life (letter to Paul Englemann, 16th January 1918, in *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* 12e). To be good was to maintain one's integrity (as Kraus urged) not so much in search of some further meaning outside the world, but as a way of accepting one's place within it without pretension, pride or dishonesty. If the *Tractatus* attempted to do more than this – to reveal a secret, unearned, to its readers, or claim a higher status through such an insight, it would no longer be the ethical deed it set out to be. Indeed, it would have invalidated Wittgenstein's own conception of the mystical, since 'Only something supernatural can express the Supernatural' (*CV* 5e).

To grasp the wider, lived sense of Wittgenstein's relationship with the mystical, I will here first briefly make a case for its inclusion as a consideration when discussing the *Tractatus*, and then show its continuing implications for understanding his perception of philosophy and how it ought to be carried out. I will draw on a dream that he wrote down among his school papers while a teacher in rural Austria. It is dated 1922, so after the completion of the *Tractatus* but before its English publication or the 'middle period' of his thought that is usually marked as beginning around 1929 and the *Lecture on Ethics*. It certainly indicates a soul far from at ease with issues of God and conscience. The text is reproduced in Ilse Somavilla's facsimile edition *Licht und Schatten*, published in 2004. Wittgenstein dreamt that his favourite sister Hermione complimented him for having a better or higher soul than others. When he woke he was filled with shame by his own smug arrogance at the imagined compliment; and worse, in atonement for the arrogance he crossed himself, but was too lazy to get out of bed and make proper obeisance. He suddenly saw his own worthlessness (*Nichtigkeit*) and felt that God was directly ordering him to get out of bed and on to his knees. Terrified, he obeyed, then rushed to the mirror, staring at his own grey reflection in horror. He realised that he had to admit to all the worst things about himself, or go mad. Eventually he went back to bed and did not dream anymore; he noted that he felt normal in the morning, but dull and tired.

On its own the dream does little to illustrate Wittgenstein's more prolonged view of religious belief or sinfulness, but the fact that he wrote it down – with some care and corrections, as can be seen in the manuscript version – suggests that he considered it a

significant or at least unsettling experience. There is even a hint of sadness in the post-script that in the morning everything felt normal, that the possibility of a religious experience had passed. The episode bears a striking resemblance to the much later series of 'confessions' that Wittgenstein insisted on making to some of his Cambridge friends (see Monk *Duty of Genius* 367), suggesting that the feelings described after the dream still clung to him years later, even if not taking such an explicit form.

Somavilla reads Wittgenstein's relationship to religious belief as twofold, consisting of both a dark, demanding threat of judgement, and the light of 'the pure spirit and the true' (*Licht und Schatten*; my translations). The dream and its aftermath placed Wittgenstein in such a twofold position: God's terrible judgement, aroused by Wittgenstein's failure to live up to an ideal of conscientious humility. Notably, Somavilla also claims that this darker side of belief was 'not only mysterious but angst-inducing' (*Licht und Schatten*). A further glimpse of this conception of faith comes from Wittgenstein's notebooks during the First World War. He records:

> [29 April, 1916:] Was shot at. Thought of God. Thy will be done. God be with me.... [5 May, 1916:] Now, during the day, everything is quiet, but in the night it must be frightful. Will I endure it?? Tonight will show. God be with me!! (*MS 103* qtd. in Monk *The Duty of Genius* 138)

McClendon and Kallenberg note of these remarks that 'Wittgenstein [prays], and requests, not safety for himself or victory for his side, but integrity in face of death' ('Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Christian in Philosophy' 137). Though I would not press the evidence as hard as McClendon and Kallenberg do, in seeking to establish Wittgenstein as a life-long Christian, it is certainly evidence that he thought of death, of being tested, and did so within an identifiably Christian framework.[8] The emphasis, however, ought to be on the demands that belief is making, for personal integrity, not on a set of rules to be obeyed, or the promise of reward. This implies an involved view of belief. It is not only something to be understood, like creedal statements, but also something that makes demands on us and can unseat us from a comfortable life. I will return to the significance of this point later, but here it is worth noting that the mysterious is taken to be something more than what remains to be cleared up by explanation. Not only is a

---

[8] Though whether this is connected with Wittgenstein's possible beliefs, or more with his possibilities of *expressing* belief, given his cultural and linguistic content, is of course open to question, particularly if recalling the remark in *Culture and Value* about how the *language* of dogma is as much part of its controlling influence as its ideas. (32-3)

belief of this sort more deeply embedded than an opinion, it marks a question over the possibility of communication between believers and non-believers, where disagreements will not be on the level of the exchange of facts. To understand someone's belief, a mystery, that is not ours, we must, to use a formulation more reminiscent of Wittgenstein's later writing "take his game into ours, so to speak" (Donald W. Hudson *Wittgenstein and Religious Belief* 164).

Clearly such considerations connect with Wittgenstein's later method and views, particularly in *On Certainty* and his lectures on religious belief, in which the consequences of beliefs or the occasions of meeting foreign beliefs provide stimuli for considering how convictions, culture and faith emerge in our living, our whole lives (e.g. *PI*§19, *OC* §§18, 137, 239, 609). Here, my aim is to show the importance of considering Wittgenstein's relationship with faith when attempting to understand his writing, both in terms of his style and form, and his likely conception of his own project. Ignoring or simplifying this aspect, as the majority of studies do, leaves out more than just biographical colouring. This connects both with the understanding of the *Tractatus* discussed above and possible approaches to the later work. In both cases, it is important to note the irresolvable discomfort of Wittgenstein's writing, both for himself and the reader. This recurring unsettability is part of what makes a poetic consideration of his work so valuable and in turn makes his philosophy so suitable for talking about the motivations and techniques of poets, whether John Burnside's obsessive probing of the "almost there" and "nearly felt" (see Chapter 2), Kei Miller's fluctuations between registers of language (Chapters 2 and 5) or Jorie Graham's hesitations and anxiety, which hint at but resist the kinds of spiritual resolution offered by religious faith (Chapter 4).

The kind of spiritual struggle that Wittgenstein recorded in his notebooks, especially in the inter-war period, might easily be paralleled with such remarks by Schopenhauer as 'The prayer, "Lead me not into temptation," means, "Let me not see what manner of person I am"' (*The World as Will and Representation,* vol I 470), with its simultaneous clinging to and rejection of Christian faith, its demands for a personal honesty that terrifies. And this terror is part of the reason why the resolute and ineffabalist readings feel so unsatisfactory, though it is rarely put in these terms.

Wittgenstein was not devout in any conventional sense. He certainly did not consider himself so to be, and was often fiercely critical of religion; Bertrand Russell records him

being surprisingly hard on Christians in his early Cambridge years, and his correspondence with Englemann reveals someone convinced of their own venality:

> I am slightly clearer in my own mind about my lack of decency. If you tell me now I have no faith, you are *perfectly right*, only I did not have it before either. It is plain, isn't it, that when a man wants, as it were, to invent a machine for becoming decent, such a man has no faith. But what am I to do? *I am clear about one thing:* I am far too bad to be able to theorize about myself' or 'I am not happy, and not because my rottenness troubles me, but within my rottenness. (Letter to Englemann 16th January 1918)

But Wittgenstein unquestionably felt himself judged, or in need of judging, as his dream recounted earlier suggests. Like Kierkegaard, whom Wittgenstein read and admired in many respects (Drury 'Recollections of Wittgenstein' 87), it was not faith Wittgenstein had, but an ardent desire for it and an inability to give up the intellectual integrity that prevented him from finding an acceptable form for it. He thought, for instance, that for Ficker's *Der Brenner* to call itself 'a Christian journal' was 'intellectual make-believe' (Letter to Englemann 5.8.21, in *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* 45e). He considered himself to be not religious, but to see everything from a religious point of view (Drury 'Recollections of Wittgenstein' 79). I take this to mean not through the lens of a particular religion, but in terms of his comments in his lectures on religion about how such deep rooted things as belief show themselves in our everyday behaviour – in our choices and limits and commitments – rather than recitations of creeds (*LC* 72). In these lectures he again does not subscribe to (a) faith, but refuses to dismiss such a way of life; rather he presents his bafflement at what is demanded of someone to really hold consequential religious beliefs (53-5). This means both the commitments that underlie expressions of belief, beyond the conceptual content of dogma, and the ways in which the possibilities of expression, especially between believers and non-believers, seem to curve in on themselves, leaving communication not impossible, but unsatisfied or misdirected.

Later Writings

If there is a genuine unity between Wittgenstein's earlier and later thought, one which survived not a sudden transformation but a gradual unpicking of the constraints of the *Tractatus*, towards the 'rough ground' of *Philosophical Investigations* (§107) and the heterogeneous epistemic holism (or alternatively what Daniele Moyal-Sharrock characterises as 'animal certainty') of *On Certainty* (*Readings of Wittgenstein's* On Certainty 2), I argue that it lies in his sustained fascination with the multifarious limits

of expression, as they feature in the *Tractatus,* his lectures on ethics, religion and aesthetics, as well as the revolutionary conception of sense-making in *On Certainty*. How are the limits of expression to be discovered or thought about, how they are put in place and how do they shape and produce our behaviour? Religion, poetry, music and philosophy are all caught up in his sensitivity to the decent response, the correct expression and the clear idea. It is thus an important question to consider not only the content of his writing but his chosen mode of presentation.

Although giving an integrated account of Wittgenstein means considering his biography and working context, I remain wary of falling under the thrall of a 'personality cult', prioritising biography and the testimony of disciples over analysis of his writing – of which Wittgenstein scholarship has on occasion been accused, for example by Randall Collins (*The Sociology of Philosophies* 36, 175), Frederick Copleston (*Contemporary Philosophy: Studies of Logical Positivism and Existentialism* 7) and W. W. Bartley III in his controversial psychoanalytical biography, *Wittgenstein*. Rather the intent is to provide a framework for contextualising some of his remarks and recurring themes that might otherwise seem unconnected or inconsequential. Although I stop short of Alan Badiou's portrayal of Wittgenstein as an 'antiphilosopher', whose challenge to the orthodoxy of thought of his time was inherently mediated by his own personality, since it is only in the confessional 'act' of expression that carries the ethical charge (*Wittgenstein's Anti-philosophy* 88), it is hard to deny that his later style and method encourage the reader into something more like a conversation than a lecture, and in such encounters one does benefit from discerning what kind of voice (or voices) one is listening to.

Philosophical Investigations in particular has been discussed in terms of its style and structure, with commentators noting the diversity of conflicting voices, the themes returned to or interrupted and several possible readings of the lines of argument. It has been described as confessional (Hent de Vries 'From "ghost in the machine" to "Spiritual automaton": Philosophical meditation in Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Levinas'), a kind of drama or performance (Eldridge *Leading a Human Life*), as proposing and demonstrating a 'self-monitoring, self-interrogative approach' at variance with normal philosophical practice (Hagberg 'Wittgenstein's Voice: reading, Self-Understanding, and the Genre of Philosophical Investigations' 502-3), as a series of linked narrative threads (Austin E Quigley ''Wittgenstein's Philosophizing and Literary Theorizing'), as seductively unorthodox and indirect, demanding 'an existence at once inside the

profession of philosophy and outside it' (Cavell 'The Wittgensteinian Event' 9), and as necessarily multi-vocal persuasion (David Stern 'Texts and Style'), even leaving aside those who would prefer to ignore the style and mine the text for straightforwardly theoretical arguments, such as Peter Strawson, whose early review of the book saw the style as a difficulty to be overcome ('Critical Notice of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations'), or more recent scholars such as Jaakko Hintikka, who see Wittgenstein's style as a reflection of his own impatience in explaining, rather than any deeper philosophical motivation (*Ludwig Wittgenstein: Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths*).

Much has been made of Wittgenstein's choice of style, as much in the conversations and imagined cases of the *Philosophical Investigations* as the clipped declarations of the *Tractatus*. Amongst many, the work of David Stern, David Schalkwyk and James Guetti takes this aspect seriously, and one can also point to significant artistic responses to his style, such as Eduardo Poalozzi's series of prints *As Is When* (1965), or Jan Zwicky's poetry collection *Wittgenstein Elegies* (1986), which reflect Wittgenstein's formal concerns as much as his subject matter. Ed Kanterian has noted the similarities in Wittgenstein's search for an acceptable mode of presentation with Nietzsche's poetry-prose, and the influence that Lichtenberg's, Weininger's and Kraus' aphoristic style had on his early work ('Philosophy as Poetry?' 103), not to mention Schopenhauer's influence, in both his solipsism (Hacker *Insight and Illusion* 75) and his gift for epigrams.

Most famously, this intellectual combat of voices takes place in the *Philosophical Investigations*, as has also been variously analysed by, for example, Stanley Cavell ('The *Investigations*' Everyday Aesthetic of Itself'), Marjorie Perloff (*Wittgenstein's Ladder*) and Ben Tilghman (*Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics*).

As Hagberg has argued in 'Wittgenstein's Voice: Reading, Self-Understanding, and the Genre of Philosophical Investigations', interlocutor voices are put to many uses in Wittgenstein's later work, as seducers, sounding boards, common sense or orthodox philosophy, guys, or mutually critiquing parallels: 'Some of the voices present here articulate positions that are and always were alien to Wittgenstein's style of thought but that he sees as being or as having been attractive to other thinkers (e.g., reductive behaviourism). On the other hand, there are numerous other voices that articulate positions and views to which Wittgenstein *himself* has felt genuine intellectual

attraction' (500). Similarly, David Stern lays out the complexity of identifying any one of the voices present as Wittgenstein's "own":

> Indeed, even if a proposition is not put in inverted commas, and does chime with a number of other passages, that does not by itself show that it is a view that Wittgenstein endorsed. For a substantial fraction of what is said there consists of attempts to express "what we are tempted to say" about philosophical problems, which is "of course, not philosophy but it is its raw material (*PI* §254) If the dissenting voice usually known as "Wittgenstein's interlocutor" speaks, often indicated by putting those words in quotation marks, or placing a double dash before them, the very fact that the passage in question set out the views that it does us actually excellent evidence that Wittgenstein did not accept them [...] However, in most cases, it is not so easy to tell the many voices in Wittgenstein's writing from his "philosophical *treatment*" (§254) of them. ('Texts and Style' 16)

For a fulsome account of different exegetical approaches taken towards Wittgenstein, see *Wittgenstein and his Interpreters*. As Stanley Cavell argues, the seductiveness and difficulty of the text lies in part in its form, refusing to resolve into a philosophy text ('The Wittgensteinian Event'), even though the majority of interpreters are tempted into treating it as a disguised presentation of a philosophical doctrine of position. Among these might be counted Michael Dummet's 'full-blooded conventionalism', Barry Stroud's naturalistic view of logic, Saul Kripke's communitarian conventionalism, Hacker and Baker's pragmatic conventionalism, and Kenny's neo-Aristotelean reading (Eldridge *Leading a Human Life* 91-107). Even the generally accepted notion of an interlocutor voice within the text underestimates the complexity of its composition. As Hagberg puts it, 'we should be wary of the singular term *interlocutor*: there are a number of voices that appear throughout *these* writings, voices manifesting distinct movements and shifts of thought that articulate grammatically fueled philosophical confusion each in its own way' ('Wittgenstein's Voice' 500).

These multiple forms of articulation and re-articulation, echoed in Jorie Graham's revisions and contradictions (Chapter 4), are more than a stylistic tic. They appear to have been fundamental aspects of Wittgenstein's thinking. The latter chapter explores the effects of such devices in poetry, in ways that illustrate how Wittgenstein complicates the notion of the author, and the importance he placed on finding the right voice as well as the right words. In his letters it is remarkable how often he complains that he cannot explain what he would like to in writing, but must do it in conversation (*mündlich*) (e.g.: letter to Russell of Christmas 1914 in *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Cambridge Letters* 91). His notebooks abound with the repetition and revision of

precise expressions and analogies, seeking the telling formulation. What it is possible to say, and how, underlies his preoccupation with exact phrases and examples; a search for clarity, but also persuasiveness and balance. Where in the *Tractatus* the attempt was to use (or show the impossibility of using) language in its most general form, divested as much as possible from mere contingency, in the later writing the focus is on the illumination afforded by particular examples, voices, and circumstances. Despite his themes and arguments operating at a level of abstraction familiar to philosophers, his technique is often to provide reminders of the unusualness of this use, however similar to everyday uses it might look (e.g. *PI* §§19, 94, 98, 108, 132). Famously, 'philosophical problems arise when language *goes on holiday*' (§38). Language when not on holiday is rarely as monosemic and clear in intent as a philosophical example would wish, and is laced with colloquialisms, jokes, abbreviations, history, slang, hesitation, circumlocution, power-relations or malapropisms, which prevent any hope for a single, definitive understanding of any utterance – at least, not of the type sought by a view of language that Wittgenstein attacks in *Philosophical Investigations* (§81), as if meaning were something read off a sentence, like deciphering a code.

Wittgenstein claims that this view simply fails to have (or makes itself blind to) its roots in the language it is trying to understand. A large proportion of *Philosophical Investigations* is devoted to pointing out the varieties of use that are available for terms for which we think we already have an exhaustive definition, examined in isolation The approach is 'self-monitoring' and 'self-interrogative', to an extent that ought to preclude the text's assimilation to a 'methodological mainstream in which generalized positions are propounded and defended' (Hagberg 'Wittgenstein's Voice' 502-3). Sometimes this reflexive and non-general method merely enumerates the many different uses of a common term, such a reading (§§156-171) or being guided (§172-3); sometimes we are shown how the application of a word that we *think* we have is actually unavailable, either because we conflate different modes of expression, like treating a pain like an object one can possess (§§244-8), or because the expression has become detached from its actual use: 'a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, is not part of the mechanism' (§271). The history, force and unpredictability of human lives and their language games are continually recalled, alongside diverse uses and different kinds of difference between cases (e.g.: §§6, 17, 335, 376, 444, 527, 531, 558; p179, p181).[9]

---

[9] Megan Quigley has productively compared Wittgenstein's treatment of language as necessarily underdetermined and entwined with our wider lives with James Joyce's determination that 'languages –

It would require more space than can be afforded here to talk in detail about the very many different readings of the *Philosophical Investigations* as a whole or the various parts of it. Most writers tend to position themselves in similar camps to those discussed in relation to the *Tractatus*, above – those who see Wittgenstein as providing substantive philosophical theories (even if these are presented in an unorthodox manner or are an incidental outcome of his work) and those who see his major insight and driver to be a therapeutic release from philosophical theorising. The latter release might be complete, like a disease cured, something open-ended like a talking cure, or merely an escape from a particular *type* of theory.[10] Alice Crary introduces a collection of essays on the therapeutic interpretation thus:

> Wittgenstein's primary aim in philosophy is – to use a word he himself employs in characterizing his later philosophical procedures – a therapeutic one. These papers have in common an understanding of Wittgenstein as aspiring, not to advance metaphysical theories, but rather to help us work ourselves out of confusions we become entangled in when philosophizing. (*The New Wittgenstein* 1)

The anti-theoretical reading is increasingly widely accepted, though it remains problematic, particularly in a context such as aesthetics, where the relations between text and reader, and between form and content, are so important. What counts as a theory can be a point of contention, and what is meant by therapy as an alternative is difficult to pin down. If the assistance Wittgenstein offers to the philosopher is not spelled out in the text but takes the form of a conversation or a relationship, issues of responsibility and commitment arise. What is the relationship between the therapist and the patient? Is a cure being applied or is it ongoing 'work on oneself. On one's conception' (*CV* 24e)? Is a privileged position assumed by the Wittgensteinian philosopher against those who are beguiled by language and the problems of philosophy? If the notion of therapy being used is similar to the relationship between psychotherapist and patient, questions about power-relations, norms of behaviour and

---

rather than God-given or quantifiable – are social games, enmeshed in the power relations of nationhood, gender, race, and sexuality' ('Modernist Fiction and Vagueness' 106). Though the authors' individual preoccupations and techniques differ widely, a Modernist treatment of *Philosophical Investigations* is certainly plausible. I agree with Quigley's highlighting of the role of vagueness in Wittgenstein's attacks on mainstream philosophy, though within reason – vagueness itself is adaptive to its particular cases of use.

[10] It would be difficult to provide an exhaustive or definitive list of which writers consider themselves as theorist or therapeutic readers of Wittgenstein, especially since a favourite criticism to make of any given interpretation of Wittgenstein is that it falls into the trap of presenting a theory. To give some examples of the key scholars in each camp, Kripke, Hacker, Luntley and Stroud in various ways attempt to distil theory from Wittgenstein's remarks, whereas Goldfarb, Hagberg, Cavell, Diamond and Hutto position themselves as working against theory.

what counts as an answer arise. It is worth bearing in mind Wittgenstein's own comment on Freud, called in the notes by Rush Rhees in *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Wittgenstein was by turns a fierce critic and admirer of Freud, praising his insights into how our patterns of thought and justification stand in need of continual examination but dismissive of Freud's systematising use of sexuality, and understanding of what makes an explanation (e.g. of a dream) 'complete' (42-49) as misguided attempts at securing scientific standing for his theories.

On the one hand this reflects the philosopher's and scientist's wish for a single *form* of explanation, as opposed to accepting that the multitude of different ways we have of explaining things is a natural and important feature of human life. All explanations will emphasise or ignore certain features, depending on their focus and method, and it is this that Wittgenstein attempted to bring into view (cf *Z* §196; Sass 'Wittgenstein and the Nature of Psychoanalytic Explanation' 257). This theme is treated as part of *On Certainty's* interrogation of our notions of knowledge, knowing, doubting and persuading. Avoiding the scientistic view of language which he arguably held in writing the *Tractatus* (Avrum Stroll *Wittgenstein* 57-64), here Wittgenstein is insistent that what counts as a justification or evidence may take many forms and need certainly not be of the scientific type; one chooses particular knots for particular purposes (*OC* §142) and at some point justification 'comes to an end' (§192). To impose a single form of explanation would break apart the way in which a given language game works – it adds nothing and 'its only effect is to *arrest* the game' (Moyal-Sharrock *Understanding Wittgenstein's* On Certainty 66).

On the other hand, Wittgenstein's reservations about Freud concern the relationship between therapist and patient. The complexities of this relationship should not be overlooked: the position of power of the therapist; the assumption of a "normal" to which the patient can return; the attractiveness of an explanation to one's thinking, which may be something very different from clarification or resolution. Even a counter-intuitive or painful analysis of one's thoughts or dreams can be preferable to a feeling of being adrift or out of control.[11]

---

[11] The complexities of the patient/therapist relation are far greater than I can do justice to here, and it remains an area where Wittgenstein's writing may be usefully applied. Relatively few texts treat it directly, though some, such as J M Heaton's *Wittgenstein and Psychology*, do

What is the model of therapy presented in Wittgenstein's writing? Eike von Savigny stresses that it is a particular kind of treatment for a particular kind of trouble: 'it is all being done in a perfectly cool, calm and collected style; there is nothing emotional about it. In the interest of insight, it is all reason and argument, even if implicitly so, designed to provoke his readers to think for themselves' ('Diagnosis and Therapy' 43). This is true enough, given that the confusion Wittgenstein addresses is in large part intellectual, and that he uses the tools and tones available to philosophy. However, this account somewhat overplays the calmness of the process. Philosophical therapy can be exceedingly hard and unsettling, if it is to escape the superficial sophistication of intellectual life that Wittgenstein abhorred.[12] Time and again Wittgenstein exclaims on the difficulty of uncovering the unseen frameworks of our thinking, of removing the lenses through which we had forgotten we were seeing the world (e.g.: *PI* §§24, 89, 103, 106, 114,120, 340).

The Wittgensteinian philosopher ought to be wary of assuming that he has attained the position from which to see 'the world rightly' (*TLP* 6.54), or even that a 'clear view... a perspicuous representation' (*PI §122*) of the language at hand is possible. Rather, it may be that we are being urged to recognise that philosophy (as a profession) is, or ought to be, 'haunted by the success of its escape from [its] obligation' as therapy (Cavell *In Quest of the Ordinary* 12).[13] We may well be on our guard against our bewitchment by language but being the therapist alert to common blind-spots and confusions is no guarantee of safety, nor of attaining perpetual release in being 'capable of stopping

---

explore how a Wittgensteinian model of the talking cure can escape some of the issues that theories of psychology encounter, including the supposed problem that psychotherapy cannot 'escape the words and concepts that make it possible' (2). For a very instructive account of how the relationship has been depicted and deconstructed in the area of contemporary British and Irish theatre writing (in ways that philosophy has not yet adequately addressed) see Ariel Watson 'Cries of Fire: Psychotherapy in Contemporary British and Irish Drama'. If *Philosophical Investigations* can usefully be treated as a dramatic, rather than didactic, text (Eldridge *Leading a Human Life*), then the presentation of the relationship of voices within the text, as well as with the reader, will be part of its effectiveness, and an area of consideration for interpreters.

[12] See for example, Raymond Monk's account of Wittgenstein's rocky relationship with the Apostles club and life in Cambridge generally (*Duty of Genius*).

[13] Cavell here draws an explicit connection between (Socratic) philosophy and poetry, with both conceived of as originally engaged in education – therapy – and in direct competition for this role in Plato's writing. He argues that academic philosophy has lost these roots and suffers thereby. It is worth noting that Wittgenstein similarly complains that people no longer see poetry as having '*something to teach them*' (CV 42e), an anxiety regularly raised in contemporary discussions of the role of poetry in society. Part of the aim of this thesis is to put such concerns, for both practices, into illuminating contexts – see particularly Chapters 3 and 5.

doing philosophy when [we] want to' (*PI* §133). The peace (*Ruhe*) that Wittgenstein seeks is 'temporary and provisional' (Gould 'Restlessness and the Achievement of Peace' 75) and it would be a mistake to assume that Wittgenstein provides a technical manual that negates language's pitfalls. I discuss this provisionality and notions of perspicuous representation in more detail in Chapter 5, in relation to cartographical metaphor in *Philosophical Investigations* and the poetry of Kei Miller.

Here my intention is only to point to the types of relation that might be conceived of when we call Wittgenstein's method 'therapy'. Despite the easiness of assuming that both the philosopher and the psychotherapist carry out talking cures, with language being their tool and focus, we could also consider it a kind of physiotherapy, where the patient learns not to understand themselves but by degrees to move or hold themselves differently.[14] And this process can be as gradual or revelatory, as confrontational or communal, as indirect or direct, as conscious or unconscious, as any of the many varied examples given in Wittgenstein's writing. An important part of this alternative description is its emphasis on practice – that knowledge, skill and language only have their place within specific practices, and that understanding a practice often requires taking part in it for a significant period, whether physically, linguistically or culturally. To recall Peter Lamarque's 'Wittgenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice' mentioned earlier, and Michael Luntley's *Opening Investigations*, there are many cases in which rules are neither more important than, nor foundational to, participation in a practice. This includes the activity of philosophy where, at least in Wittgenstein's conception, the objective is a transformation of the self rather than the gaining of new information (*PI* §§126-129). Keeping use in mind preserves us from the confusions brought on by study (§132); training and custom underpin explanation (§197-8), and the quandary of the philosopher is more like someone struggling to orient themselves within a landscape (§123). This further supports the practice-oriented treatment of Wittgenstein's work this study follows, emphasising understanding through significant engagement with a practice, even where engagement precludes an explicit understanding of its rules. This kind of engagement is exemplified in aesthetic practice, particularly poetry, which subsists on but startles our usual language habits.

---

[14] To my knowledge no literature exists charting a detailed comparison between Wittgenstein's method and physiotherapy, though some research in physiotherapy does draw on Wittgensteinian concepts or expressions, such as 'now I can go on!' (*PI* §151) in *Health Humanities* (P Crawford et al.), and the role of the physiotherapist – as an interlocutor who helps not by winning arguments but by imposing and demonstrating rules of behaviour – is occasionally mentioned in Wittgenstein scholarship, for example Sebastian Wyss' 'Does Wittgenstein have a Method?'.

Belief, Ritual and Poetry

In order to make the case for this reading, I want to return to the notion of religious belief. It is clear from the notes we have of Wittgenstein's lectures on this topic that his interest was in how a set of beliefs ought to have consequences – limiting, motivating or explaining certain actions – rather than in the nuances of dogmatic concepts or the truth of particular claims. What makes religious belief difficult to talk about is not its content, but how it hangs together through being rooted in a particular form of life. In *Lectures and Conversations,* he discusses the notion of the Last Judgement. Belief in this concept does not seem to be primarily about an 'expression of belief' (55), nor is it something to be understood or defined through 'normal reasons' (56). Wittgenstein discusses the disconnection between types of belief, especially scientific and religious, where the different kinds of argument may simply not touch each other. 'A man would fight for his life not to be dragged into the fire. No induction. Terror. That is, as it were, part of the substance of the belief' (56). Historical evidence (e.g.: for the existence of the person Jesus Christ) and scientific evidence seem to be quite beside the point for understanding what something like the Last Judgement means to a believer. Similarly, when seeking to understand a custom or belief from a culture different from one's own, Wittgenstein in *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* scorns the value of assimilating other beliefs to a single explanatory framework (i.e. Frazer's narrative of progressive rationality and science). His preferred method would be to create networks of connection, analogy, human communalities, developments over time, and (re)applied symbols.

As Brian Clack has noted in *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion*, it would be very challenging to assemble a coherent anthropological method from Wittgenstein's remarks in this collection, and at times it can appear as if Wittgenstein wanted to have his cake and eat it, too: to understand an ancient rite through analogy with something familiar; to leave the ancient rite exactly as it is and not attempt to bring it into our usual way of seeing the world; to make comparisons between cases without saying anything further; to emphasise the commonality of human experience and human ritual behaviour without positing a biological or systematic explanation of our behaviour. The most common reading of Wittgenstein's remarks is as a kind of expressivism (David MacArthur 'Wittgenstein and Expressivism'). The intellectualism and instrumentalism of Frazer are criticised, to be replaced with rituals in which we just do something that satisfies our instinctual reactions, this marking the end of any explanation or

justification. We simply ought to describe and see connections and differences between cases, rather than seeking to theorise or find root causes. Several of Wittgenstein's remarks can be interpreted in this light, particularly the comparison of burning in effigy and kissing the picture of one's beloved (*RFGB*, 123), and the satisfaction of beating the ground with a stick when angry (137). Others do not fit so simply, such as the role an historical explanation might play in how we see the (imagined) ritual of men riding other men at a festival (143). For discussion of Wittgenstein's expressivism, or otherwise, see Robert L. Arrington and Mark Addis' *Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion*, and Anthony Rudd's *Expressing the World: Skepticism, Wittgenstein and Heidegger*.

Clack argues convincingly that expressivism alone would be a very poor treatment of Wittgenstein's remarks, and in all likelihood a less than satisfactory methodology for an anthropologist interested understanding another culture (*Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 21-50). The warning expressionism gives against reductive instrumentalist accounts, and the way it challenges the priority, whether historical or logical, of a belief over a practice, is certainly useful, but it has limited scope for more positive contributions. We are at risk of a banal relativism (the impossibility of translation) or the simplistic alignment of vastly different experience with our own. Not everything is a good candidate for paraphrase into something more practically understood (*LC* 71). Not all rituals aim at catharsis or wish fulfilment (or anything at all), and in any case we could only understand what was being released or wished for given a firm understanding of the ritual in question.

Clack instead presents Wittgenstein as sketching a Spenglerian concept of 'expression-media' (*Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 161-6), by which the focus on the individual is replaced with a view of rituals and mysteries as manifesting the values and preoccupations of the society performing them. That I kiss a photograph of a loved one is not to be understood in term of my own personal feelings, but through what it says about what kinds of love are played out and represented in my Form of Life. A whole society manifests itself in its ceremonial behaviours (as well as institutions, laws, art etc.) – an extension of Wittgenstein's remarks that 'An entire mythology is stored within our language' (*RFGB* 133) and 'to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life' (*PI* §19).

There is undoubtedly value in seeing our ceremonial or aesthetic acts within a greater context of community, place and history, which avoids the threat of banality posed by expressivism. As will be argued in subsequent chapters, the deep and necessary connection between language, form of life, and the creating and appreciation of art is key to understanding Wittgenstein's position, as well as the power of art to affect us as it does. The language of poetry is not purely instrumental; neither is it arbitrary or merely demonstrative. The difficulty of combining the poetic and the philosophical can in some ways be analogous to the way that Frazer (according to Wittgenstein) relegates non-scientific ideas to the realm of mistakes rather than paying attention to what they can reveal about the humans performing the ritual (cf *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 22).

Although his account takes little or no account of Wittgenstein's later work in *On Certainty*, and thereby misses important questions about our *grounds* for acting as we do, as well as our instinctual or codified behaviour, Clack's model is usefully sensitive to the position of the witness or reader of the event, who must be in a position to understand how these expression-media manifest the society's key concerns and values. Such a witness must, therefore, be either an outsider who nonetheless has a deep understanding of the culture or an insider, perhaps late in a culture's history, able to look back on what has been (171-3).

Specifically, both Wittgenstein and Spengler seem to have in mind great artists as those who can obtain such a position. The idea of the select few capable of obtaining such a view does match onto some of the remarks Wittgenstein makes in *Culture and Value*, for example on Mendelssohn's and Mahler's different limitations as composers (4, 17, 76-7), though another pertinent example is recounted in Somavilla's *Licht und Schatten*, extracted from a letter of Wittgenstein to his sister Hermione. The parallels with both the closing propositions of the *Tractatus* and the idea of really worthwhile art emerging through an awareness, and re-valuation of one's culture's deep values, are striking.

In the letter, a culture is compared to a room made of tinted glass, through which we see the world. If we never discovered the impermeable boundaries of the room, the coloured light we receive would simply be the norm, and many people know nothing else. Those who do come up against the boundary realise that what they see is not 'pure' light, but something filtered. They may respond with laughter or melancholy – realising that their view of the world is lesser or ridiculous, or that they will never achieve unmediated

knowledge. Still others may not see the boundary as a boundary, but as just another thing within the room, so nothing changes for them. The exceptional individual, however, thinks: "I must escape into that light", and attempts to break through the glass into freedom.

Truly significant people (especially artists) are those who have engaged with the light and the boundary – in Wittgenstein's letter either through humour, melancholy or attempting to break through. The reason their work is so gripping (*'es ergreift'*)(*Licht und Schatten* 45) is that it unsettles our comfortable cultural spectrum. One could compare the notion of being gripped with Wittgenstein's remark on poetry being able to 'pierce' us – '*uns durch und durch gehen*' (*Zettel* §155), a particular image I return to in Chapter 4. In reading impactful poetry, the 'familiar surroundings of the words' (our shared Form of Life) invite us into the poet's art, but the arresting deployment of words does not lead to a swift conclusion, but lets 'our thoughts roam up and down' (§155), perhaps changing the landscape we thought it possible to explore.

This is a return of sorts to the insistence on a historically informed conception of art, as marked by Eldridge in 'Problems and Prospects', above, but with a far greater emphasis on the context and consequence of the aesthetic creation and contemplation. To understand art is to take, as far as possible, a view of the culture within which it was produced. This is not to say that art from another tradition cannot be assessed and applied according to one's own rules (e.g.: Picasso's appreciation and appropriation of African art, which was in part a reflection back on the limitations and cruelties of his Western tradition; see Patricia Leighten 'The White Peril and L'Art nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism'); understanding will always be implicated in the position from which one takes a view. But to really get to the mystery or terror at the heart of art and ritual requires an involved understanding of the human instincts, modes of expression, and inherited attitudes that a culture possesses. Connected with Wittgenstein's notions of integrity, elusive clarity and involvedness discussed above, a discussion of art in which categorisation and essence overtake experience and reverence would be as much a mistake as a philosophical discussion that takes language out of its everyday use and makes it idle. He is always seeking a path between the traditional dichotomies of practical and poetic language, spontaneity and rootedness, speech and silence, conceptual and experiential understanding, expression and silence. Examples of this effort abound in his writing, though by their nature are not biddable into a single statement of intent, and are often used only selectively by commentators. To mention a

few, the closing of the *Lecture on Ethics* which treats ethical statements as both futile and greatly to be respected; the holistic reading of the *Tractatus* I have argued for above; the discussion of seeing-as in *Philosophical Investigations*, in which our perception of an object can sometimes be an act of interpretation, sometimes something unconsciously assumed or forced from us (Malcolm Budd *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology* 77-99; Garth Hallet *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations"* 664-668), likewise Zettel §199; rule-following, also in *Philosophical Investigations*, as an intricate balance of nature, training, description and spontaneity; the remarks on how opinion and its expression are controlled through dogma and convention in *Culture and Value* (32-33); the so-called hinge propositions in *On Certainty* that traverse the border territories of grammar, remaining perfectly ordinary yet non-epistemic propositions (§151), complicating our notions of certainty and trust (§509), literal and metaphorical meaning (Avrum Stroll 'Wittgenstein's Foundational Metaphors'); the 'confessional form' of *Philosophical Investigations*, as taken up by Stanley Cavell's project in *The Claim of Reason* (Hent de Vries 'From "ghost in the machine" to "Spiritual automaton": Philosophical meditation in Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Levinas') and Bob Plant in 'The Confessing Animal in Foucault and Wittgenstein'.

In taking this integrated view of Wittgenstein's work – neither as divided into two (or three) contrasting philosophies nor as a consistent outlook with only superficial differences – I hope to demonstrate a genuinely productive method of philosophical and literary critique. In the chapters to follow I will approach some of the many points of contact between Wittgenstein's philosophical concerns and poetry, showing the value of both treating the poems discussed with a Wittgensteinian eye and how poetry can perform, accentuate or bring into question aspects of language and art as treated by philosophers and critics. The importance of poetry in particular to Wittgenstein's writing will be repeated, since this underpins much of the motivation and shape of this study. Among the many examples he gives of the arts, second perhaps only to music, he regularly draws on poetry to show the possibilities of language beyond the narrowly instrumental confines normally drawn up by philosophers (what Mikel Burley appropriately calls their culturally 'tin-eared' thinking, in 'Reincarnation and the Lack of Imagination in Philosophy' 40).

Time and again Wittgenstein invokes poetry, with reminders that our language games are not only about giving information (*Z*§160), and the impression that a poem's words make on us (§170), the special status of a musical or poetic theme (§533), the

importance of an appropriate reading (*PI* p214) and even the effects of typesetting (*Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology vol I*. 190); how words in a poem can be like pictures or a painting (*Nachlass* 18-19), the physicality of reading (39), that poetic truth and coherence with reality need not be the same thing (46), of poetic moods (*CV* 75), the cultural background needed to understand or admire a poet (*CV* 96), or perhaps most famously, that philosophy ought really to be done in the manner of poetry: '*philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur* dichten'(*CV* 28).

This last remark – the precise translation of which into English can generate considerable material alone, as discussed in Chapter 5 – provides a running reminder in what follows. What would it mean to conduct philosophy in the manner of poetry? Wittgenstein appears to have had in mind a consideration for the exact choice of phrase or meaningful gesture, and for language that prompts further thinking. His grouped remarks in the later philosophy have this feeling of guiding us over a landscape but not saving us the effort of travelling for ourselves. His writing is not poetic in the sense of being fantastical, or in its style and form – though it does aim at and often achieve 'literary qualities' (Joachim Schulte 'The Builder's Language' 25). Rather, it is poetic in the way it invites us to roam (*Z* §155) and its attempt to change a point of view rather than provide new information. Without making a misguided claim for the nature of poetry in general, as a practice and in the examples studied here, one can find instructively overlapping concerns and techniques. John Burnside's exploration of water in *Swimming in the Flood* places together poems in which it appears as threat, escape, comfort, mirror, promise, betrayal and the sublime, deepening our possible responses in a manner reminiscent of the way Wittgenstein selects and contrasts analogies in *Philosophical Investigations.* Wallace Stevens' felicitous loosening of grammar to allow meanings to proliferate,[15] and how he allows repetition and tautology to bring forward or obscure meanings[16] can illustrate the peculiar view on our habitual language that Wittgenstein often attempts to bring into view. Kei Miller's attention to the rootedness of language, as well as its potential for growth in new soils (*Writing Down the Vision*), is a reminder of the historical but underdetermined view of language and behaviour that Wittgenstein urges. Jorie Graham performs in ever-shifting ways the anxiety of attempting to say, wanting to say, fearing to say, those things that seem inexpressible or inadmissible.

---

[15] For instance, in 'The Idea of Order at Key West' (*CP* 129) in which the identities of the singer and the sea repeatedly come together and move apart, in grammar as well as sense.
[16] For instance the meditation on forms of repetition in 'Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction' (*CP* 405).

Romanticism

In some ways, Wittgenstein could be considered a Romantic, or a late example of that movement, which is one of the reasons for choosing the poets discussed here, who in different ways are connected with, but outside, this tradition. Taking Wallace Stevens as a significantly similar example of late-Romantic writing, or writing 'in the wake of Romanticism' (Simon Critchley *Things Merely Are*: *Philosophy in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens* 20), a certain heritage passes from him to both Jorie Graham and John Burnside in ways both openly acknowledged and implicit. Though Wittgenstein's writing has at various times been claimed as modernist, post-modern, scholastic, war-literature, confessional, deconstructive or as performance, there are useful parallels between his style and project and that of the Romantic poets. Mark Rowe has made this connection in 'Success Through Failure: Wittgenstein and the Romantic Preface' and 'Wittgenstein's Romantic Inheritance', as have Read (indirectly) in *Applying Wittgenstein* by discussing Wallace Stevens' '13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird', Eldridge in *Leading a Human Life*, Stanley Cavell (*In Quest of the Ordinary)* and John Churchill ('Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy'). Wittgenstein's rejection of the attempted clarity of the *Tractatus* in favour of the mingled, tangled lines of argument in *Philosophical Investigations* and the multi-stranded way of thinking he encouraged can be read as a rejection of Classical ideals of harmony and balance. The emphasis laid on the communal in the private language argument (*PI* §§241-315) is not, I suggest, a rejection of the individual, as some communitarian interpreters have claimed, but rather a rejection of the Cartesian rationalist self-transparent ego in favour of a (Romantic) subject, whose world-experience encompasses nature, language, training, change, and partial, unreflective or provisional knowing.

Romanticism as a lens may therefore be particularly productive for considering Wittgenstein in relation to poetry and personhood, as Cavell has also claimed in extended treatments of the relations between a certain kind of philosophy and Romanticism, and the idea of a Romantic philosophical tradition. Or, alternatively, one might chart a tradition of Romantic anti-philosophy, as Badiou claims in *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy,* making connections between Wittgenstein's personalisation of philosophy and Nietzsche's. This thesis could only scratch the surface of the possible applications of this way of thinking, but it will endeavour to show how the techniques and concerns of a certain kind of twentieth- and twenty-first-century poetry can enrich our understanding of a certain strand of twentieth- and twenty-first-century philosophy.

Wittgenstein's continuing contribution to both philosophy and the arts, directly or indirectly, rewards attention. Though Romanticism as a school of thought is arguably something belonging to the past – and perhaps even Wallace Stevens' placement as a late-Romantic already incorporates a retrospective or nostalgic element – the concerns and ways of seeing the world that it developed remain useful critical and creative tools. As Marjorie Perloff has claimed in *Wittgenstein's Ladder* (185), Wittgenstein bequeathed to artists of his own time and today an obsession with ordinary language, and also the question of who is speaking. With Kei Miller, we may ask who can claim to be the native speaker in a world of globalised languages, where the exile and the immigrant have the tools to make themselves heard. With Wallace Stevens, we may encounter the attraction and repulsion of a world-shaping fiction, and ask who is speaking for whom in our institutions, art and media. With Jorie Graham, we may trace and retrace the frames that give meaning to our thoughts and our selves, oscillating between the desire and the fear of laying claim to our own voices. With John Burnside, we may long for the unsayable, the unattainable, even while sinking it into the beastly and bodily realities of everyday life. Where each encounters the finality or faltering of expression, we may be reminded to look to the pictures that bewitch us and the practices within which we can create, control, or make ourselves understood.

Chapter Two: Inhabiting the inexpressible and the ineffable

Introduction

As discussed in the last chapter, the limits of language play a continuing, developing role in Wittgenstein's thought. The ultimate limit, often so conceived, is The Inexpressible. This chapter analyses what it means to attempt to speak, or speak about, the inexpressible, particularly within the philosophical framework set by the *Tractatus*. This includes both the limits of sense – what cannot be said – and nonsense, both of which play a major role in the different analyses of the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's philosophy as a whole.

Almost inevitably, especially given the realist conception of the inexpressible I claim is behind some of the more problematic readings of Wittgenstein's work, the discussion leads to a consideration of the ineffable – the supernatural or religious. In particular, the Western Christian mystic tradition, here represented by the late-antique Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, can be used to understand what Wittgenstein was responding to, and changing, in the *Tractatus* and his later work.

Admittedly, the inclusion of Pseudo-Dionysius in a thesis otherwise engaged with twentieth-century philosophy may seem a little incongruous. However, as I hope to show in the coming discussion, there are several parallels, commonly under-acknowledged, between mystic thought and the responses of twentieth-century philosophy and poetry, which the direct language of the latter makes easier to discern. Moreover, as an exercise in approaching the ineffable through precise and varied techniques, the Pseudo-Dionysian text has few rivals, though many imitators. Wittgenstein at times seems to be in harmony with the urges of the mystic, at times directly critical. Ultimately, this chapter performs something of a Wittgensteinian turn itself, by considering the inexpressible and ineffable in grammatical, rather than epistemic or ontological terms.

The language of speaking beyond meaningful language is shown to have a number of techniques and grammatical forms, and these are further discussed in relation to Wittgenstein's *Lecture on Ethics* and Kierkegaard's paradoxes of faith and indirect communication. We speak and do not speak.

But can we speak and not make sense? The different types of nonsense and their implications for interpreting Wittgenstein are scrutinised, largely through a reading of Cora Diamond's resolute reading of the *Tractatus* and subsequent work. Questions about understanding speakers as well as their speech arise, leading to a treatment of Wittgenstein's remark in *Culture and Value* about the 'background' against which what we say has meaning.

Not only does this aid in understanding the *technique* applied by the mystic (and its counterpart in Wittgenstein), but it provides an avenue of comparison with the techniques and practices of poetry. Kei Miller's series 'Church Women' from the collection *The Kingdom of Empty Bellies* provides illustrations of the same grammatical and metaphoric techniques, and with concerns similar to those of Pseudo-Dionysius, but here used not to impress mystery, but to share stories, introduce characters, and investigate from within the many facets of belief. Belief and poetry are both equally communal acts, whose mystery and ineffability we regulate, as well as being regulated by.

I briefly consider some solutions to the mystic's paradox, including the use of meta-languages and Tim Knepper's notion of 'relative ineffability' but argue in the end for a domestication of the term instead, which emphasises the importance of, and variety of, practices that attest to the various limits of expression. Domestication denies the possibility of 'the inexpressible', but only as conceived of as exceeding the situatedness of any effort to express it. This analysis does not close off the ineffable or inexpressible from our use, but reconsiders what it is that is being attempted. Only on a referential picture of language does its failure to reach outside itself become a problem.

Finally, an alternative conception of the ineffable as not the unreachable thing *beyond* the wor(l)d, but as the inescapable incompleteness *within* everyday experience is examined, through the poetry of John Burnside. This permits a slightly different view of his work than the more usual Heideggerian reading, with fruitful results, and illustrates some further points about the force and facility of poetry for addressing our limits of expression.

The Inexpressible

To ask the question 'What constitutes the Inexpressible?' is immediately problematic, and arguably of the same order of question that Wittgenstein warns about in

Philosophical Investigations §24: 'If you do not keep the multiplicity of language-games in view you will perhaps be inclined to ask questions like: "What is a question?"' The fact that we can formulate sentences in this way does not guarantee that a helpful answer can be given in the same form. As mentioned in the previous chapter, to ask 'What is Art?' can be accused of presuming the thing – or the uniformity of the thing – that is being inquired into; it is an essentialising question that blinds us to the great variety of uses of language. Immediately before §24, Wittgenstein gives a list of the great variety of language games available to us, in each of which language behaves in different ways, then says 'It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.*)' (§23).

This section will discuss the conception of the inexpressible in the *Tractatus,* in particular the different readings that are available of the final propositions, extending the discussion in Chapter 1. This will prepare the ground for further discussion of Wittgenstein's conception of the ineffable, as well as building up a late-Wittgensteinian analysis of ineffability claims.

What is meant by the inexpressible here, then, needs a little demarcation. In line with Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* project, it refers not to anything *within* our language, such as the taboo, difficulties of fine shades of expression, or the physically unutterable, but to what is placed *outside* language. On Wittgenstein's maximally generalised account of language, the inexpressible is what cannot be uttered with sense. Whether this means that there is something that cannot be said but can be shown, or gestured towards, that Wittgenstein wanted to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate uses of language, or that Wittgenstein perceived all such questions to be misguided nonsense, depends largely on one's interpretation of the *Tractatus*. Before returning to this specific question of interpretation, I will give a brief account of how talking about the inexpressible might be framed.

REALISM

Despite the fact that the inexpressible is unmistakably part of our common experience – we know, at minimum, how to use the word – it is difficult to provide a self-consistent and helpful account of what it "is". To demand to talk about things beyond the limits of language as though naming "things" – which much of the Western philosophical

tradition may be thought of doing – requires one to posit a parallel world that is sufficiently different from our own to elude description or apprehension, yet about which claims can be made (even if only the claim that it is inexpressible). This may be called the *realist* notion of the inexpressible.

Or, more modestly, one might claim to have knowledge of this world, but from a vantage point outside language. Most normally this means being able to make claims about the world as a whole – its nature or necessity – that are not possible to perceive, state or corroborate from within. This accords with the ineffabalist reading of the *Tractatus* described in Chapter 1, in which Wittgenstein attempts to give the reader an insight into the structure and logic of the world that could not be expressed in either ordinary language or his logical system.

More modestly still, one might insist on a more austere treatment of the inexpressible, and deny that the speaker who invokes the inexpressible has managed to say anything at all; all that can be experienced is a failure to communicate (whether realised or not), and the utterances, however much they may initially look like valid sentences, are little more than noise. This conception can itself be taken in a variety of ways, either as a positivist response that leads to a more limited view of what constitutes acceptable language use, or towards a challenging of the view of language that lead us into this question in the first place, which I will align with some aspects of the resolute reading of the *Tractatus*.

The realist conception of the inexpressible is that there is something of which words fall short of capturing. The inexpressible is of a different category to what could ever be reached in language. The motivation for such a conviction most often lies in the way language is viewed as a medium between us and the world, and therefore a later and less reliable aspect of the world that is really out there. What is truly 'real' is inexpressible, since an expression cannot capture the thing itself. The classic illustration of the worries this creates about knowledge may be Plato's *Theaetetus*, which Wittgenstein read and translated. In a letter to Drury in 1944, he said that 'Plato in this dialogue is occupied with the same problems that I am writing about' ('Conversations with Wittgenstein' 149). This comes a considerable time after his discussion of related themes in his 1930 series of lectures; 'Remember the trouble that the word "is" has given to philosopher' (*Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932* 4).

In the *Theaetetus*, Plato develops what will become the Theory of Forms as a means of combating the stark choices presented by Heraclitean Flux on the one hand and Parmenidean Being on the other. These latter two positions are perhaps best represented by Heraclitus' aphorisms of perpetual change and Parmenides' monist verse, respectively:

> We step and do not step into the same rivers, we are and we are not. (Heraclitean fragment, qtd. in Jonathan Barnes *Early Greek Philosophy* 117)

> What is for being and for thinking must be; for it can be and nothing can not. (Parmenidean fragment, qtd. in Barnes *Early Greek Philosophy* 133)

Either we inhabit a world of flux, in which the appearance of knowledge is an illusion, since words cannot ever refer to the same thing twice (and by extension cannot ever themselves be used twice, or be re-used by the same user), or we live in a world in which change is an illusion, since to be or not be is a strictly binary condition, meaning that there is no possibility of something becoming something else, or even any delimiting of multiple objects. Our words and thoughts are themselves an illusion, since to think or speak is a movement, a change. In either case, ultimately all communication becomes impossible, since both words and individuals are swept away in the flux, or else the idea of there being two individuals who communicate violates the oneness of the unchanging world. The *Theaetetus* addresses the problem of something's 'always slipping out and away while one's speaking and precisely because it's flowing?' (182D) by splitting the idea of knowledge from that of perception, and instead coupling it to true belief (David Bostock *Plato's Theaetetus*). This, while avoiding the uncertainty of relying on accounts based on perception, still ends up positing the necessity of an unchanging foundation of the world – the Forms. Our knowledge of the world is only commensurate with the reality of it, unlike the certain knowledge available "directly" through the Forms, unmediated by perception or language. The objects we see around us are imperfect copies of their essential form, and just so our knowledge of them is partial or secondary.

Given that words are references to things on Plato's model, they become copies of copies, further distancing us from knowledge of the true object. As Morris Partee has noted, Plato insists on treating words in the manner of objects themselves, or pseudo-objects ('Plato's Theory of Language' 113), but this in turn means that words used directly to refer – in their literal or default meaning – are closer to the truth than

metaphorical or fictional uses, since these are an imitation of normal use – a copy of a copy of a copy. This forms a large part of Plato's rejection of poetry, beyond his moral claims in the *Republic* about suitable representations of gods (97). Where philosophy attempts to find the Real behind the words and behind the objects, poetry plays with shadows of meaning, is derived from objects that never were.

Plato's realism about the inexpressible leaves our whole world as an illusion, though one in which degrees of truth permit us some kind of grasp on reality, and in which the philosopher's contemplations of increasingly higher forms of knowledge are offered as guarantors. Leaving aside the threat of an infinite regress in Plato's account, of forms reliant on further forms, all the way back to the 'Good' and the 'Beautiful', it also suffers from the almost universal problem of the inexpressible, in that once it has been determined that something beyond the possibility of our saying exists, it must simultaneously resist all efforts to communicate it. Even if the philosopher can claim that he has achieved knowledge of a higher realm, how is it that he can put this into words, or explain how he is able to think about something that is by definition beyond thought? What cannot be said – what is outside language – cannot be a "truth" since that resides in language (Atkinson *The Mystical in Wittgenstein's Early Writing* 96).

The Ineffable

This paradox lies at the heart of mystical thinking but not only as a limitation. The positing of what eludes expression can in itself be generative. To investigate the thoroughness and depth of attempts to speak and not speak the inexpressible, this section will analyses the grammar of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, a preeminent example of mystical claims of ineffability.

The works that make up the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus are attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, mentioned in Acts 17:34 as converting to Christianity following St. Paul's address on the 'unknown God'. However, it is generally believed that the Dionysian texts were actually composed much later (early-sixth century) given the Neo-Platonic tropes they contain and other textual indicators.[17] The corpus includes four treatises – *The Divine Names, The Mystical Theology, The Celestial Hierarchy, The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* and ten epistles.

---

[17] For further information see *Pseudo-Dionysus: The Complete Works*. Trans. Luibheid, Introduction.

The works of Pseudo-Dionysius comprise an extremely influential and sustained attempt to engage with the inexpressible, describing the path to God in terms of the ineffability of the deity and the inadequacy of any form of knowledge for grasping its truth. Many later texts, such as the anonymous fourteenth-century tract *The Cloud of Unknowing*, have been modelled on the Pseudo-Dionysian search for knowledge (or perhaps 'hyper-knowledge') that is not constrained by the limits of human understanding. What makes the corpus of interest to this study is the thoroughness of Pseudo-Dionysius' apophatic approach, which goes beyond the mere assertion of ineffability to insist also on the ineffability *of* this ineffability.[18]

The question of saying anything at all lies at the heart of Pseudo-Dionysius' discussion – as both a logical possibility and a moral decision. While silence is frequently hallowed in mystic writing, and speech that claims to describe the ineffable deity risks blasphemy, there nevertheless seems to be the urge, and duty, in the mystic experience to communicate itself at some level. Russell Nieli in *Wittgenstein: From Mysticism to Ordinary Language* writes*:*

> [I]t is sometimes seen that refraining from words is the first prerequisite for expressing the experience – a view which gains additional support when words are looked upon as the product of a human speech-act, in contrast to the divine action (grace) in the experience. Silence may thus be held as the only manner of symbolisation which does not profane, either by suggesting that the experience is an act of human will, or that the Reality revealed through it is like an everyday 'thing' in the mundane world. (89)

And yet, the profane speech – often very formalised – is often all we have for asserting the ineffable. It may already be too late, as Derrida insists, since to have asked the question about whether one can or should not speak is to be swept up in language that has 'started without us' ('How to Avoid Speaking: Denials' 29). Part of the interest of this conundrum is the complexity and inventiveness with which Pseudo-Dionysius responds to this paradox.

Tim Knepper has modelled the distinct levels of *grammatical* ineffability assertions in the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, which this chapter builds on: the referential, the

---

[18] Given the centrality of this text to the Christian mystic tradition, I cannot hope to do full justice to it here, or give even a summary of the many different approaches taken to it, either theological and philosophico-critical. I use it here chiefly as a seminal example of the techniques of mysticism, meaning that I do not address in detail questions of pseudonymity, differences in Christian and Neo-Platonist conceptions of God, the tradition and origin of the texts, or the 'autoerotic' nature of the ascent identified by Julia Kristeva (*Tales of Love* 108-9). For background on Christian Mysticism and apophaticism in particular, see Denys Turner's *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, particularly Chapter 2.

grammatical and the symbolic (or *within*, *at*, and *above* the speech act) (Knepper 'Ineffability Investigations' 69). The model is realist, in keeping with the Western Christian tradition, in which for all its denials, mystic thought tends to be an assertion of the attributes of an existing God, even if these assertions are negative – in contrast to, say, a Buddhist tradition of purely negative contemplation, an unlearning or emptying out (Don Cupitt *Mysticism After Modernity* 5).

REFERENCE

The referential level of language covers assertions made in terms of the qualities that an ineffable God either cannot be said to have, or exceeds absolutely. Since direct attribution of qualities to a being that is, by definition, beyond description is clearly impossible, this takes the form of negation and 'hyper-predication' (69). In each case such formulations are designed to frustrate any attempt to refer to God in terms of readily available concepts – of identifying God as some 'particular thing'. *Hyper-predication* occurs where Pseudo-Dionysius proclaims God to be beyond or above a particular property (e.g. hyper-good, hyper-being), or more broadly beyond all properties: '*hyper* all as *hyper*-beingly *hyper*-being before all' (*Divine Names*, 5.8, 824B, cited in Knepper, 'Ineffability Investigations' 69)[19] and negation occurs where predicates are serially removed from possible application to God, e.g.: 'It is neither perceived nor is it perceptible. It suffers neither disorder nor disturbance and is overwhelmed by no earthly passion' (*PDC* 141).

These methods of what might be called anti-reference are ultimately problematic, since a negation that denies any exceptions, or denies fundamental qualities necessary for a 'thing' to be picked out, fails to have any meaningful term to which it can be attached. The actual speech-acts that Pseudo-Dionysius makes are not in themselves senseless, insofar as we understand the words and the phrase, but without being situated in a discourse that successfully picks something out, they are effectively empty. Each time it appears that Pseudo-Dionysius may be able to say something through negation, this avenue is shut off by the next negation, so that although each individual step might appear to carry sense, if at no point a successful reference is admitted, there is no starting point from which to gain traction; the argument is an illusion. Chapter VI of the

---

[19] While I have used Luibheid's translation for material quoted from the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus elsewhere, in cases where the 'hyper' prefix plays an important role in interpreting the sense of the excerpt, I have used Knepper's translation, as cited, since his own translations retain the Greek term (and its subsequent multiplicity of meanings) rather than using one of the available English alternatives (e.g.: above, beyond, more than), each of which narrows the potential understanding of the text, as will be discussed shortly.

Mystical Theology is effectively a long incantation of succeeding properties the divinity does not have, being 'not a material body, and hence [having] neither shape nor form, quality, quantity or weight. It is not in any place and cannot be seen nor be touched' (140-1). There is apparently no mechanism by which Pseudo-Dionysius can refer beyond these negations without self-contradiction. So no matter how thorough this denuding of God from inappropriate attributes, no point of contact arises, and what looked like language at work may turn out to be free-floating verbiage. In its one moment of positive attribution, Chapter VI seems to point to and rule out this concern. It begins with 'So this is what we say. The Cause of all is above all' (140). Immediately the attribute of causation has been applied. However, given the neo-Platonist milieu of Pseudo-Dionsysius' writing, it must be acknowledged that cause need not mean our current notion of necessary causation, but can be treated as something more like a Platonic Form, indicating its primary status. At the same time, the opening of 'So this is what we say' brackets off what follows as something contained in language, and therefore at best an approximation of what is.

The process of negation, however, is not simply one of denial or self-devaluing speech. Both the *hyper* and negation methods have finer distinctions that can alter the implications of their application. Pseudo-Dionysius maintains a distinction between *apophatic* and *aphaeretic* negation, while *hyper* is capable of a number of different translations.

Aphaeresis is the more common technique in the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, and relates to the *steretical* (privational) use of negation, as in the examples from *The Mystical Theology* quoted above (141). Apophatic examples also appear, however, which use a *hyperochical* (pre-eminent) logic of negation. The latter technique seeks to deny the applicability of concepts, but without implying a privation, instead suggesting the inadequacy of the terms themselves. According to Turner, 'We must affirm and deny all things of God; and then we must negate the contradiction between the affirmed and the denied' (*The Darkness of God* 22). That is, we must preserve the idea of God from implied lack, and suggest not a short-coming but an excess or exceeding of the property implied. Knepper conceives this act as 'pre-eminence', though other translations also use 'superabundance' or 'super', or compound predicates, such as hyper-full, hyper-having or hyper-excess (e.g.: 'Ineffability Investigations' 70; *Negating Negation* 49; *PDC* 107). Neither is entirely satisfactory, since both imply the best, or the most, of a given predicate, whereas Pseudo-Dionysius' logic seems to demand something beyond-

the-best or beyond-conceivable-quantity. I use super-eminence as a marker for this distinction. For example, when Pseudo-Dionysius says: 'when we talk of God as being without mind and without perception, this is to be taken in the sense of [*super-eminence*] and not as a defect' (*PDC* 107) my insertion replaces Luibheid's translation's 'what he has in superabundance', since it is clear that Pseudo-Dionysius does not simply mean that God has the most/keenest perception, but that God has more-perception-than-maximum-perception.

The same *more-p-than-maximum-p* logic is in play in instances of the *hyper* prefixed attributes of God, so that *hyper* means not only 'beyond' in the negative or isolating sense, but also 'above' in a positive and excessive sense. To say that God is 'hyper-good' attempts to mean both that he is beyond the concept of goodness, and that he overflows that idea; this double implication denies a separation of God from the concept, while excluding him from identification via that concept.

ASSERTION

The second level at which Pseudo-Dionysius attempts to express ineffability is grammatical, such that it is the speech-act itself which presents the ineffability, rather than separate concepts being denied or exceeded through reference. This may take the form of direct assertion of ineffability: 'it cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding' (*PDC* 141). Or it can be what Knepper calls '*ineffability hyperbole* [… :] the assertion that God is *hyper* name and speech […] *hyper* even ineffability itself' ('Ineffability Investigations' 71).

If the claim is made that God is hyper-effable, it is reasonable to assume that this means beyond human knowability, not supremely knowable; but when it is claimed that God is hyper-ineffable, the presumption must be in favour of super-eminently ineffable, rather than merely effable. But super-eminently ineffable would become a straight-forward contradiction, on the same level as speaking about something's unknowability. It may be an alternative to return to the more-ineffable-than-maximum-ineffable idea, but to introduce constraints on the notion. The first would be something like 'conceptual ineffability'. Without requiring any *absolute* ineffability, it may be possible to state that a given thing exceeds (is hyper to) any given attempt to conceive it, since a distinction can be drawn between the idea of the ineffable thing and the capacity to conceive of it as a whole or as itself. It is possible to accept that God is beyond our ability to know (hyper-effable) while simultaneously noting that our conception of ineffability (which is a rational possibility but not something in itself conceivable) is inadequate for any

attempt to provide a definition of God. Rather it is the dizzying excess of God as knowable entity that stimulates and frustrates those attempting to comprehend his nature; hyper-ineffability is an illustration of our own limitations, rather than an attempt to overstep those limits.

THE SYMBOLIC

The third level of ineffability identified by Knepper is the symbolic, wherein metaphors are used rather than literal assertions. Not only are the claims thus distanced from being obliged to make a definite claim on the ineffable, but the ways in which metaphors are used in the corpus are deliberately contradictory, refusing the reader the possibility of conceiving of either metaphor in full.

Knepper categorises these expressions as 'above' the level of the speech act, since they operate between a number of statements that reinforce or counter each other, rather than being intrinsic to the speech acts individually ('Techniques and Rules' 20). Two forms of metaphor are particularly common in the corpus, those relating to light and visibility, and those relating to spatial movement.

God is extendedly equated with light and its beneficence in the *Divine Names*: 'Good', 'Beautiful' and 'Light' are all intertwined, and light is the mechanism by which all creatures see, by which knowledge is imparted and truth revealed. (Light here is used in the perfect, Platonic sense; the sun's rays are merely a 'dull image' for which the Good is the far superior 'archetype' (*PDC* 72). The use of light as a metaphor is explicit.) However, it would not be possible for the thorough ineffability of Pseudo-Dionysius' account to be maintained if the Light of God could be, however metaphorically, neatly aligned with our perceptual capacities. The divine light must exceed all notion of light, and thus 'divine darkness' is the subject of the hymn that opens *Mystical Theology*:

> Trinity!! Higher than any being,
>
>> any divinity, any goodness!
>
> Guide of Christians
>
>> in the wisdom of heaven!
>
> Lead us up beyond unknowing and light,
>
>> up to the farthest, highest peak
>
>>> of mystic scripture,
>
>> where the mysteries of God's Word

> lie simple, absolute and unchangeable
>
> in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence.
>
> Amid the deepest shadow
>
> they pour overwhelming light
>
> on what is most manifest.
>
> Amid the wholly unsensed and unseen
>
> they completely fill our sightless minds
>
> with treasures beyond all beauty. (135)

Repeatedly, light is shown not as the highest achievable station but something to be superseded: 'Lead us beyond unknowing and light [...] in the brilliant darkness of a hidden shadow [...] Amid the deepest shadow they pour overwhelming light' (135). As seen in the series of hyper-predicated cases, a denial of light as an attribute of God is not presented as an affirmation of its opposite (darkness) but rather a denial of light's adequacy to represent God. The metaphor both invokes and subverts darkness by making it brilliant, having it stand in for the super-eminence of light. In trying to grasp the metaphor of something so full of light that it precludes vision, and so perfectly dark that it is luminous, the reader is caught in a motion between two polarities, unable to achieve stability. This tension is directly paralleled by the paradox of removing all knowledge from ourselves in order to know more of God; chapter two of *The Mystical Theology* begins: 'I pray we could come to this darkness so far above light! If only we lacked sight and knowledge so as to see, so as to know, unseeing and unknowing, that which lies beyond all vision and knowledge' (138). This follows the conclusion of chapter one, in which Moses, in approaching God, achieves such closeness to the divine that he loses all knowledge and 'belongs completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united to the completely unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing' (137). All that remains is *epectasis* – 'a spiritual effort, the soul's straining towards the divine; a movement which requires us, however far we have reached already, to press ever onwards to a higher degree of love and of knowledge' (Edouard Jeaunaue 'Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena' 147).

Later in this chapter I will return to how these different grammatical forms of ineffability-talk are important for understanding exactly how Pseudo-Dionysius' project

functions, including Knepper's offered alternative of 'relative ineffability'. First it will be instructive to turn to Wittgenstein's own engagement with these same limits of language.

As noted in the previous chapter, it would be remiss to exclude from Wittgenstein's early thinking the importance of the ineffable or inexpressible, in the sense of the mystical mentioned in the *Tractatus* (6.44, 6.45, 6.522). However, it would also be incorrect to directly associate his writing with a specific mystic or religious doctrine, as discussed in Chapter 1. His conception of the inexpressible hinges on logical possibility. As Ben Tilghman notes, when *TLP* 6.45 says 'To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole', this is a reference to Spinoza, for whom this view means to see the world 'in its logical connections, its necessary connections, with everything else' (*Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics* 53). To view the world as a whole is also a metaphor for seeing it in its connections – its logical possibilities. For something to be a fact is for it to occupy some space within 'logical space' (*NB* 83). Where certain forms of speech or value fall outside logical space, they become unsayable. Ethics and aesthetics fall into this category, since, as Wittgenstein explores in his *Lecture on Ethics*, the grammatical structure of such statements precludes them being considered as state of affairs, or facts.

The ineffabalist reading suggests that Wittgenstein did think that by pointing out these limits of the possibility of language, something about the nature of the world or of logic could be gestured towards that could not be said; by contrast the resolute reading presents a well-constructed piece of nonsense, the analysis of which leads to the relief of seeing what looked like a serious quandary as just a trick played by language. Through an analysis of the *Lecture on Ethics*, I will attempt to show how the resolute reading's deconstruction of the ineffabalist position is correct, but how that is not the end of the story.

Ethics

The *Lecture on Ethics* – Wittgenstein's only public lecture to a non-specialist audience – took place in 1929, therefore marking a transitional point between the earlier Tractarian work and what would become *Philosophical Investigations*. It shows an abiding concern with the limits of language, though the examples are rooted in very ordinary examples of behaviour, and seek to understand our urge – our *epectasis* – to say what cannot be said, as well as define our limits.

Yaniv Ickovitz has identified in the lecture (and in the *Tractatus*) Wittgenstein's negative response to the dominant method of moral philosophy of the time, and in particular that of G. E. Moore (*Wittgenstein's Ethical Thought* 29). As the discussion to come will illustrate, this was not a case of arguing against Moore's claims or conclusions, replacing them with another theory, but of rejecting wholesale the possibility of an adequate theorising of ethics. At the heart of this rejection is Moore's idea that there is such a thing as 'The Good', independently of things-that-are-good, and that we could know it. At the outset of his *Principia Ethica*, Moore makes the apparently innocuous assertion that his project is 'the general enquiry into what is good' (2). On Moore's view, to adequately answer the questions we ask about moral issues, there must be such a thing as Goodness that is distinct from mere pleasure or instrumental behaviour (Ickovitz *Wittgenstein's Ethical Thought* 30). But Wittgenstein's move – one illustrative of his whole approach to philosophy – is not to answer the supposedly difficult questions, but to ask in turn what the framework is that leads us to ask such questions in the first place. Are the ethical claims we want to make about the world of the same type as factual claims? If not, it cannot be (as on Moore's model) that they are different insofar as they have a special kind of object as their target, since that would just be helping oneself to the thing contained in the question. Instead, we need to look at what we do and why in making such statements.

In the lecture, Wittgenstein differentiates between events in the world, or the state of affairs, and 'ethical propositions' (*LE* 6). No statement of a natural fact can have an ethical value, because facts are relative to the definite claims they make on the world, contingent on how things are. By contrast, the feeling we have for ethical matters is that they must be something more robust than such facts, that we ought to be able to make ethical claims that would hold true in whatever circumstances. 'Ethics, if it is anything, is supernatural and our words will only express facts' (7). This restrictive sense of language as requiring determinate sense clearly follows on from the model of the *Tractatus* and logical possibility. A proposition makes clear its relations to the world in its meaning, primarily through creating a picture of the world that matches what is the case. In *Culture and Value*, remarks from a similar time (November 1929) underscore this idea of language being circumscribed by factual content:

> What is Good is Divine, too. That, strangely enough, sums up my ethics.
>
> Only something supernatural can express the Supernatural.

> You cannot lead people to the good; you can only lead them to some place or
> other; the good lies outside the space of facts. (5e)

Ethical statements attempt to make direct claims, which both exceed the factual, and
contain within them their own resistance to disproof. They want to say that something is
right or wrong, irrespective of circumstance; we are 'tempted to use such expressions as
"absolute good," "absolute value"' (*LE* 7). Such expressions are incorrect uses of the
terms concerned on a determinate view of sense-making, since they try to refer to
situations that preclude change or error. Compare this to 4.023 and 4.024 in the
Tractatus: 'A proposition must restrict reality to two alternatives: yes or no' and 'To
understand a proposition means to know what is the case if it is true.' For concepts like
absolute good, these options and contingencies disappear, since the claim does not
permit alternatives, and to state the case for its truth is just to restate the whole. This
means that either we are uttering a tautology (what's good is good) or talking nonsense,
because there is no framework around the thought that would allow us to understand it:
to be absolutely good must be different in kind to being good for a particular purpose or
situation, since it is not contingent on circumstance, so either the word 'good' is out of
place here, or we are trying to describe something which is by definition beyond
description (*LE* 11).

Ethical propositions might, then, function more like similes than statements of fact,
recalling the qualities of something else as an illustration of what we mean here.
Religious language is evidently rich with such uses of symbol, allegory and allusion
(the Lamb of God, the Dove of Peace etc.) to convey characteristics and values of what
cannot be expressed directly. However, Wittgenstein argues that such attempts
necessarily fail, since 'a simile must be the simile for *something*' (*LE* 10). In other
words, if a simile is to stand in successfully for the explanation of a thing, it must in
principle also be possible to drop the simile and 'simply state the facts which stand
behind it' (10). Ethical claims appear to want to stand outside of this network of facts or
alternatives of expression – they just *are*. So how does one get to the starting point of
direct assertion when the structures of symbolic language around the object prohibit this
step? Since practical or factual content fails to satisfy what we want to say, as
Wittgenstein puts in 'all I wanted to do with them was just *to go beyond* the world and
that is to say beyond significant language' (*LE* 11).

This construction links naturally enough with the mystic construal of language as a
profanation. Not only are we attempting to go beyond what our everyday tools allow, to

do so would inherently do injury to the sacred or ethical we are attempting to express. As Nieli argues, after conversion or mystical experiences, the 'old' language of the everyday or the earlier religion is felt to be inadequate or an impropriety, leading to greater adherence to the new language, or in this case, to the desired step beyond language (*Wittgenstein: From Mysticism to Ordinary Language* 76). Ethical claims are closely related to matters of faith, not only because of the interrelation of religion and morality, but because of the form or context of their expression. We assert a certain view of the character of the world for which no possible evidence would be sufficient, for which part of the power and puzzlement of the claim is its own awareness of its excessive scope. This awareness is key, since the doubled-over intension of the statement incorporates its self-defeat into its idea of itself. This distinguishes it from claims that might simply turn out to be *wrong* (uninformed) in the ordinary factual sense. In a certain way statements of this type demand assent in order to be understood, rather than demanding to be understood in order to obtain assent. In the concluding part of the lecture, Wittgenstein appeals to a common feeling in humanity in such situations, on which basis the urge to speak ethical truths, if not their content, can be understood:

> For all I wanted to do with them was just *to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. (11)

Ethical propositions are thus ultimately ruled out as nonsense, because there is nothing that they can intelligibly refer to. No information is conveyed by such sentences: 'What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense' (12). A positivist analysis would simply stop here. However, he goes on to say:

> But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it. (12)

Unlike speculative metaphysics and wrong-headedness, which are simply erroneous, the ethical manages to retain a solemnity and importance for Wittgenstein, even while it challenges his attempt to circumscribe the possibilities of meaning. Why not ridicule it?

Part of the answer for this lies in Wittgenstein's developing view that unpredictability and error are as much part of human life as correct sense making (*Z* §604); rather than seeking to create an ideal language that would avoid such errors, his efforts become to understand our motivations and the grammar of our expressions (*PI* §264) Another part lies in the importance that he already placed on the ethical and the aesthetic in the

Tractatus, not as mere trivialities but as perhaps too important to place a communicable value on. Here the question of attempting the inexpressible crosses paths with the intellectual and passionate writing of Kierkegaard.

KIERKEGAARD

As Wittgenstein argues in the *Tractatus* and maintains in the *Lecture on Ethics,* a claim about the character of the world in its entirety can only be assessed – given meaning – from a point outside that world. Kierkegaard, whom Wittgenstein read and regarded highly (*CV* 36e, 61e) similarly takes this formulation, though his response is not of the frustration of attempts to speak, but of the paradox of faith:

> Faith is quite correctly '*the point outside the world*' which therefore also moves the whole world. [...] Consider the absurd. The negating of all concepts forces one outside the world, to the absurd – and here is faith. (my emphasis. *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* 236)

Kierkegaard's precarious position in relation to faith and the absurd shows both the allure and the problems. Statements of faith are inherently attempts to think or say more than it is possible to do. Taking on a religious belief (specifically for Kierkegaard, the paradoxes of Christianity) requires accepting a proposition you simultaneously believe to be impossible; this is faith. It must therefore be absurd, ultimately, because there is no mechanism by which to give an assessment of, or a use for, such a proposition; it cannot be coherently thought. (This Kierkegaardian stance also sheds light on Wittgenstein's remark that 'If Christianity is the truth, then all the philosophy about it is false' (*CV* 89e). This is a comment about the necessary status of a philosophy that seeks to explain faith, rather than about theologians having made errors.)

There are a number of possible responses to this stance. One could argue that Kierkegaard has a non-cognitive or expressivist view of faith, and that it can be reduced to an emotional response or attitude. This would allow for the absurdity of the position he shapes to adopt, since it brackets out faith from the rational paradoxes it seems to generate, while retaining the passion that charges religious experience. However, such a resolution would be to miss the point of Kierkegaard's central tension: to think oneself out of the necessity of thinking would be in bad faith (a refusal of the difficulty, not an embracing of it). Better, as David J Gowens has argued, to think of Kierkegaard not as urging 'expression' but 'development'; the self is not something existing that says something (absurd) of itself in speaking of faith, but develops in the act of saying but not saying (*Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* 57).

One might therefore merely take up the proposition provisionally, or transitionally. Differently from the idea of simile mentioned above, the statement *does* make a direct claim, but it is one that is offered only to set someone on the right path, and then withdrawn, acknowledging its own absurdity or inadequacy.

The notion of indirect communication, is more than simply a failed attempt to communicate, as Jaime Ferreira argues in 'The Point outside the World: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein on Nonsense, Paradox and Religion'. There is an implied sense of duping the audience of one's statements into accepting their meaning, but subsequently revoking the statement in order to guide the audience to some other realisation that could not be arrived at through direct communication alone. The comparison Kierkegaard himself makes is with a book that is written and then revoked, with the reader instructed to understand it in these terms (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* 619). It allows a 'positive role for *not* speaking' (J Phillips 'Madness of the Philosophers' 317) as a response to one's having spoken. The parallel with the resolute reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* discussed in Chapter 1 is immediately striking; if Wittgenstein's intent is for readers to throw away the text (the ladder) once they have understood what it means to do, it really is a book that is written and then revoked, at least for the individual reader:

> anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [my propositions] as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) (TLP 6.54)

An important difference is that the revocation here is done by the reader, not by the author, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The question remains as to what exactly has been achieved through indirect communication. If it is simply another, perhaps secret, way of communicating a (factual) truth, we are returned to Wittgenstein's comment noted above about similes – it should have been possible to communicate any such information directly. Instead, Ferreira posits a reading of Kierkegaard as not only demonstrating, but actively endorsing the paradox of absurdity. By insisting on the irresolvable vacillation of the attempted thought, it might be possible to escape the idea that we are always replacing one (false) idea with another, and instead only do enough to remove the initial error:

> Dispelling illusion would not be the correction of misinformation, replacing incorrect propositional claims with correct ones; it would not

be a case of getting 'it' right rather than wrong. It would be, rather, a removal of misunderstanding which insists on the absurd, the paradoxical, as nonsense; it would communicate that there is no 'it' to communicate. (Ferreira 'The Point outside the World' 40)

Is this a counsel of despair? If nothing can be communicated, are all attempts to speak of such things futile? Much hinges on the status of the speech marks around 'it'. It may be a refusal to replace the 'it' with something else of the same form, such as a theory ; it may be a rejection of the attempt to treat what is being communicated as something singular or definable; it may be a claim that arguments of this type about faith – in effect, metaphysics – are invalid, or result in nonsense.

It may alternatively be argued that the proffering of an empty 'it' performs another function, that there is some special role that nonsense can perform in particular circumstances, thereby avoiding both a failure to communicate and cognitive emptiness. Kierkegaard's absurdism, for example, attempts to find a space or an audience through ultimately nonsensical statements. Unlike the Pseudo-Dionysian mystic, Kierkegaard attempts not to escape the world but to commit to the entanglement of faith that shows itself unreachable. Similarly, some interpretations of the *Tractatus* have agreed that the propositions are nonsense, but of a particularly instructive type. Others, including George Pitcher, argue for there being very specific types on nonsense within Wittgenstein's work, meaning that paying attention to his attributing the quality of nonsense to something is very important ('Wittgenstein, Nonsense, and Lewis Carroll').

NONSENSE

In 'What nonsense might be' in *The Realistic Spirit*, Cora Diamond identifies six standard types on nonsense and contrasts these to the kind specific to the work of Frege and Wittgenstein:

1) Something said that is very obviously false

2) Something wild inapposite – where it may be unclear who or what is being spoken of.

3) Category errors (e.g. treating an abstract idea as if it were a physical object)

4) Strings of words lacking syntactic structure

5) A 'respectable' sentence but with an inappropriate or meaningless word(s) inserted into it (e.g. Jabberwocky)

6)   Gibberish lacking both proper words and syntax. (adapted from *The Realistic Spirit* 95-6)[20]

These stands in contrast with the Frege-Wittgenstein (hereafter F-W) view Diamond espouses, and also the 'falsidal' (96) view that regards all such claims as simply degrees of falsehood, rather than nonsense being a separate category.

Diamond insists on looking at the 'work' a word does in a sentence (its logical role), and how the same word can be misplaced so that it fails to do this work – for example, using a proper name in a place where only a certain type of concept (e.g. prime numbers) could have any business being talked about by the rest of the sentence. She uses Carnap's example from 'The overcoming of Metaphysics through the Logical Analysis of Language' of a category error (type 3): "Caesar is a prime number". For Carnap, who saw natural language as deficient, this sentence was meaningless because the *Wortreihe* (string of words), despite looking like correct syntax, failed to adhere to our protocols of use, including to what things properties relating to number could be applied. Metaphysical confusions – specifically in Carnap's essay on Heidegger's lecture 'What is Metaphysics' – are to be solved in this was as logical missteps The creation of an ideal language with a syntax that excluded such errors ought to be the chief task of contemporary logicians (228). A positivist reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* would naturally accord with Carnap's way of thinking, in which propositions that appear meaningful but are not statements of fact, are actually just empty and should be ruled out of meaningful discourse.

An important difference in Wittgenstein's case is, however, that he is not urging that language be corrected, only that certain apparently viable uses of it are shown to fall short of what they are purporting to do. Although we do not have a detailed response by Wittgenstein to the works of Heidegger, he is known to have responded to what he read with a great deal more sympathy than Carnap, comparing Heidegger's Being and Angst to the astonishment one feels in running up against the limits of language, and agreeing that such astonishment could not be expressed in the form of a question (*Wittgenstein*

---

[20] I would add to this list the special category of 'bullshit', as characterised by Harry Frankfurt in *On Bullshit.* This is a distinct category from lying (an untruth known to the teller for a specific purpose) and gobbledegook, since the bullshitter makes competent sentences but with no regard for their truth or content, since his only ('panoramic' 5) aim is to impress or affect the audience. Truth and falsity fall out of the picture, and the sentences are nonsense because their meaning is effectively irrelevant, rather than badly constructed. The activity might be close to Kierkegaard's absurd statements offered without intending their meaning, but without the further recognition of an underlying (ethical) purpose, or at least not one related to the content or non-content of the pseudo-statement.

and the Vienna Circle Dec 30th 1929). In the same reported remark he connects Heidegger with Kierkegaard, whose work, as mentioned, Wittgenstein thought valuable. David Cooper's 'Ineffability' provides an enlightening comparison of how Heidegger and Wittgenstein variously conceived of this astonishment, which I will draw on again later in this chapter.

Diamond's account of nonsense shows that Wittgenstein and Frege took a different path to both Carnap and the so-called natural view of nonsense, largely through the former's insistence that sense or nonsense lies at the level of the sentence, rather than the word ('What nonsense might be' 100). 'A proposition is not a blend of words [...] A proposition is articulate' (*TLP* 3.141). In type 5 sentences, the natural view holds that the sentence "There was a fubbletop at the zoo" has a meaning, insofar as finding an alternative word for fubbletop, or providing a suitable definition of fubbletop to fit that sentence would solve the problem. "There was a _____ at the zoo" has a kind of meaning, based on the meanings of the 'correctly' applied words, that can be completed by inserting 'rhino', or some such beast. The F-W view by contrast treats the sentence as the sole carrier of meaning (and thus nonsense), so the whole of "There was a fubbletop at the zoo" is nonsense – there is no work that the other parts of the sentence are doing, even if it they look to be doing their jobs properly. Substituting 'rhino' would create a new sentence, with logical sense; the fubbletop sentence has no such logic, since it cannot have been determined ahead of time what the correct logic was. The *apparent* meaning of the natural view is only a later imposition once we realise what would fit in the place that fubbletop is occupying.

Diamond's account does not address what exactly is meant by a nonsense word, however, though her examples do use things that look obviously to be of this type. If a word only receives its sense in sentences, has a word that is a nonsense word received this status in advance? The natural view allows that you have used the wrong sort of concept in a nonsense sentence; the F-W view means that no such context has been established in the first place. Some nonsense words do seem to have achieved just this, through repetition, such as the words of 'Jabberwocky', but those may be special cases. In *The Big Typescript* Wittgenstein addresses a similar question, and relates nonsense words also to the contours of our language: 'there is a *sound* to the sentence in our languages. (Hence nonsense poems like those of Lewis Carroll.) And often what we call nonsense is not something that's arbitrary' (§74). I suggest that the answer lies in the surrounding practices and the tonality of a language – the ways we announce with stage-

setting, gestures or tones that we are speaking nonsense (but that we are recognisably *speaking*, not just making noises) – though this would fall outside the exchange of logically valid or invalid sentences that the F-W reading is here concerned with. The key point is that for Wittgenstein there is no 'positive' nonsense. *Any* nonsense comes from no actual work having been done, even though it may look like it. This could be a string of nonsense words or a grammatical confusion like 'I feel Jones' pain' ('What nonsense might be' 106-7). The apparent difference between these cases is a psychological one – our familiarity with the words in the former – not a logical one. Wittgenstein was fully aware of the possibility of nonsense having an effect, but this would be a feature of its context, rather than its content. To say to someone "Milk me sugar" can cause bewilderment, but that does not mean that the nonsense sentence was an order to be surprised (*PI* 498-9). On Diamond's view, according to Warren Goldfarb, 'one cannot take Wittgenstein's metaphysical pronouncements to be striving to express ineffable truths; if they are nonsense, they are simply nonsense [...] the dissolution of concepts we thought we had' ('Die *Überwindung*: Anti-metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus'* 12).

Diamond narrates a consistent view of nonsense in Wittgenstein's philosophy both early and late, which accords with her resolute reading of the *Tractatus*, and quotes examples of his discussions of nonsense from *Philosophical Investigations* §500 as well as a lecture from 1935 ('What nonsense might be' 106-7). This is not a given, however, since Wittgenstein's view of the versatility of language, particular in matters of reference, did develop over time, so that as mentioned above, the degree to which words are considered as doing other things than referring (or failing to) and may be accompanied by non-verbal indicators or 'kinesic codes' (Adam Kendon *Gesture* 284), does vary with his writing. For example in *Culture and Value* (echoing St.Augustine and sounding a distinctly different tone from that of the *Tractatus*), he seems to find a positive role for nonsense, even if it has no positive content: 'Don't *for heaven's sake*, be afraid of talking nonsense! Only don't fail to pay attention to your nonsense' (*CV* 64e).

Diamond's argument has similarities with Hutto's in 'Two Wittgensteins Too Many' that even in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein has a notion of language as 'occasions of use' (37), since she distinguishes between something making sense according to our rules and '*making* sense', wherein the hearer of the sentence, as much as the speaker, must

take ownership of it for sense to have been transmitted (or not) (emphasis in original. 'What Nonsense Might Be' 111):

> The hearer's activity in understanding is close to the speaker's in constructing the sentence – the hearer has in a sense to make the sentence *his*, but using *the* rules. The user of language – speaker or hearer – is a thinker of senses according to the rules. (111)

Until sense has been made, a sentence literally has none, and sense is created through the communicating individuals applying and following appropriate rules. ('Rules' is used in the broad sense of rule-following in *Philosophical Investigations,* rather than as a synonym for interpretation.) Here the importance of Wittgenstein's phrasing of the conclusion of the *Tractatus* comes back into view. It is the reader for whom the sentences become nonsense, not that the sentences themselves are in advance knowable as nonsense.

Proposition 6.54 implies that all the preceding contents should be disregarded by the reader who understands them, though different interpretations disagree on whether this is because Wittgenstein considers them to be attempts to say more than can be said (as with the ethical propositions in the later *Lecture on Ethics*), or because the conclusions of the propositions operate to undermine the effort by which they were achieved (meaning that some leap of faith is required, or that the propositions are in some way metaphorical), or because understanding the propositions reveals them as nonsensical in a way that reconciles the reader to necessary (and perhaps therapeutic) failure in the aims and methods of philosophy.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the standard reading of these passages is that Wittgenstein is referring to the propositions of the *Tractatus* as nonsense, usually of a special type. Either they somehow contain the necessary information to come to see something not accessible through words, or they point towards something about language and the world only expressible outside them. But these ineffabalist readings, as argued, are forced to presuppose or put into words the thing that was meant to be ineffable. John Hyman, for example, says:

> Hence, if philosophy sets limits to what cannot be thought, if it demarcates the ineffable, it can also reveal the correct attitude for us to take towards absolute values. In matters of value, Wittgenstein holds, we must be reverent, but mute. And this is something philosophy can teach us. ('The Urn and the Chamber Pot' 149)

On the conception of nonsense that Diamond finds as a running thread in all Wittgenstein's writing, there is no such thing as a special kind of nonsense, since it is always a status accorded a sentence, based on the rules followed by both hearer and speaker. Hutto criticises Diamond's attempt to draw a distinction between kinds of nonsense based on their hearers, since 'how can uttering one bit of [nonsense] be more attractive than uttering another' (*Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy* 94). That is to say, what effect (if any) can a nonsense utterance have if there can be no aspect of the utterance that affects its attractiveness separable from the hearer's disposition? Why is *TLP* 6.54 such a continuing source of fascination, where piggle-wiggle is not? On the one hand this argument is correct in insisting that relying on a special kind of nonsense is invalid; something either says something or does not. On the other, it levels its criticism at the wrong point of Diamond's account. If we pay sufficient attention to the importance of the ownership that the hearer places on an utterance, not only the speaker's intent or rules of production, then while it is not possible that the nonsense could impart knowledge or content in some cases but not others, it remains open whether the effects of the utterance can be more than mere nonsense for the hearer, if it leads to a change in the way that the hearer looks to the world, or applies rules to it. As Bernard Harrison argues in reference to literature, utterances that appear to have no factual content can nonetheless have 'the potentiality to set the established structures of my self in motion towards change' (*Inconvenient Fictions* 3).

Diamond claims in 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*' that there is such a thing as 'understanding a person who talks nonsense'(156) that does not violate the conception of nonsense already discussed. The understanding, importantly, does not issue in a new set of propositions, since that would be a translation of nonsense, implying that it did originally have sense. Rather, the forms and rules that the speaker of nonsense *appears* to be following give the hearer an indication of what is being attempted, and permits them an imaginative empathy with the motivations and concerns expressed (160-1). 'It is not *people* but only an individual who can be judged' (Perloff *Wittgenstein's Ladder* 71). The attractiveness of ethical statements, while still failing to state anything (ineffable or otherwise) lies in our ability to say 'me too!' when someone seeks to say something beyond our ability to do so in meaningful language, such as our wonder at the existence of the world (*LE* 8). Strictly speaking such a sentence is a misuse of language, but it can draw us into seeing the

position of the speaker in a new light, perhaps one we had not previously thought of for ourselves.

In 'On Reading the *Tractatus* Resolutely' Conant and Diamond have argued that the propositions at the end of the *Tractatus* are nonsense, and convey no information, but that crucially, Wittgenstein says not "anyone who understands *them* eventually recognizes them as nonsensical" but 'anyone who understands *me*' (my emphasis) (*TLP* 6.54). This same view underpins Diamond's later article. We might come to understand something of the person making the nonsensical, ethical or ineffable claim, even while denying that they had managed to say anything. It is this notion of personhood that Diamond draws on in distinguishing between nonsense with no further consequence and nonsense that aids us in understanding someone. She argues that ethical claims have a particular standing in this setting, since they are attempts to express an attitude towards life or the world, but have no access to special content; the ethical cannot be gathered into a definition in this way:

> What I am warning against is any idea that we should take Wittgenstein's remarks about ethics to constitute philosophical analysis of a kind of discourse, rather than as remarks aimed at bringing about a kind of self-understanding though the reader's imaginative activity. ('Ethics, Imagination and the Method of the *Tractatus*' 164)

Ethics (and by extension aesthetics) are therefore unlike more simple excludable nonsense, which for Wittgenstein did include metaphysics – perhaps best thought of as attempts not to *express* but to *define* the inexpressible. These latter could safely be relegated to the world of error or meaningless chatter (or 'transzendentales *Geschwätz*' as Wittgenstein derides it in a letter to Paul Englemann of 1918) (*Letter from Ludwig Wittgenstein* 10-11), since nothing is shown about the person by these confused shufflings of empty signs. The Ethical, however, goes deep into our shared values and attitudes, even where our articulations of them lack definite sense. They are rooted in our Form of Life (*PI* §19), or perhaps better our 'patterns of life' (Wittgenstein *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology I* 211), meaning the myriad ways we might repeat or reformulate our behaviour or thinking against a common background, to differing degrees exact, unpredictable or transferrable. Michel ter Hark has argued that this concept provides an extension of the material in *Philosophical Investigations*, using Wittgenstein's later considerations of psychological indeterminacy and vagueness ('"Patterns of Life": A third Wittgenstein concept'). It is the notion of background that I want to turn to now, as a way of showing how Diamond's reading of nonsense as

making understandable a person must have its basis in our overlapping and communal experiences, leading into a renewed discussion of how we might understand attempts to express the inexpressible, both as a practice as an artistic device.

Background Practices

> The inexpressible (what I find mysterious & cannot express) perhaps provides the background, against which whatever I was able to express acquires meaning. (*CV* 23e)

This remark can be taken in a great variety of ways, depending on the context in which it is considered to have been made. On an ineffabalist Tractarian reading, the mention of the inexpressible might mean indicate the profound truths that can be shown but not said; if read as a comment belonging with the work in *Philosophical Investigations*, it could be a reminder that our ability to make meaning depends on a vast scaffolding of training, experience and practice, but that this scaffolding is often hard to see because it is so familiar and so extensive. Is Wittgenstein trying to identify what the inexpressible 'is', or to explain what it is that leads us to posit something inexpressible? In the quotation above I have replaced Peter Winch's rendering of 'geheimnisvoll' as 'enigmatic' with 'mysterious'; partly because this seems a more natural translation, and partly because it seems a better fit with both the above readings. The inexpressible is not a riddle, but a conviction about the whole.

The date of the remark is 5th October 1931, placing it well after the completion of the *Tractatus* but relatively close to the *Lecture on Ethics* (1929 or 1930), and not too long before the dictation of the *Blue Book* (1933-4), the manuscript circulated among Wittgenstein's students containing early forms of much of the material of *Philosophical Investigations*. I therefore argue that it marks a transitional period during which the concerns of the Tractatus became more embedded in questions about our everyday lives. This is supported by the remarks either side in *Culture and Value*, dated 13th September and 14th October 1931 respectively. The first runs:

> Nothing we do can be defended definitively. But only by reference to something else that is established.

> I.e. no reason can be given why you should act (or should have acted) *like this*, except that by doing so you bring about such and such a situation, which again you have to *accept* as an aim. (23e)

This denial should colour our approach to the inexpressible as background, since it should help us to avoid the temptation to see the idea of 'background' as another variation of the view from 'the point outside the world', as what stands independent

from, and in some sense guarantees our conditional utterances. The attempt to break through to a definitive explanation, much like the absolute claims of ethics, makes no sense, or cannot be made to have any sense, if there is no possibility of reference to something else. The use of *accept* is interesting, since it implies that our aims, our understanding of our own actions, might at times be imposed on us or become clear to us only from the outside, as a function of the wider framework of language within which we acted. The emphasis on action rather than speech is also notable. Nothing we *do* is being considered, not nothing we say. This clearly marks a shift from an analysis of concepts towards investigations of broader human life.

The third remark runs as follows:

> Work on philosophy – like work <u>in</u> architecture in many respects – is really more work on oneself. On one's own conception. On how one sees things. (And what one expects of them.) (24e)

It reveals Wittgenstein's continued adherence to Loos' convictions about integrity of form in architecture, coming three years after he had been involved in architecture himself by overseeing the design of *Haus Wittgenstein* for his sister. Despite his later disillusionment with Loos because of the latter's increasing tendencies for propounding theories, the remark clearly places a sympathetic emphasis on integrity and use. As Janik and Toulmin put it:

> The principles of architectural design, as Loos himself taught them, were entirely open to the future. The architect could not prescribe in advance the future forms of life or forms of culture; changes in those external forms would call for a new creative response from the architect himself; and in this sense, the theory of design which Loos taught – and exemplified in his buildings – was directed at a truly *functional* architecture. [...] style remained the servant of use. (*Wittgenstein's Vienna* 252).

This ethos was not limited to architecture, though this was Loos' prime mode of working. Robert Jensen has suggested that when Loos wrote 'Ornament and Crime' he 'may very well have had [the primitive sensuality of] Klimt more firmly in mind that any architect' ('A Matter of Professionalism' 202). The relation of architecture to use was a matter of integrity, where unnecessary decoration was a mere distraction or dissemblance. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this same vein of a search for integrity runs through Wittgenstein's writing. Seeing things and saying things clearly and honestly is a matter for philosophy, art and architecture equally, and this may involve realising one's own unnecessary 'decorations' – prejudice, habit, pretence, lack of decency.

Wittgenstein's *Haus Wittgenstein* is a model of his efforts to create the space and dimensions of a building that perfectly suited both its function and his own sense of the materials. The art-book *Wittgenstein - Biographie, Phlosophie, Praxis* (ed. Joseph Losuth) has usefully explored through photography and biography the correlation between Wittgenstein's strict ethical code and the uncompromising precision of his approach to the task. In more detail, artist David Connearn has written about how Wittgenstein's door-handles for the building not only matched the specifications of the finished rooms, but underwent an unusually particular design and production process. Evocatively, Connearn has reproduced the handles as closely as possible, and sees in them parallels with Wittgenstein's ethos and later philosophy:

> Everything about the design of the handles is indicative of a hands-on working knowledge of the material requirements – not of a cast, but of their fabrication. The radius of the bend in the right-angled handle is tight, but not arbitrary. It is the minimum radius achievable, not in a cast object, but by actually bending the material.[...] A limited design vocabulary is established: bend, house, wedge, bear, fix. Each function is then interrogated as though being defined, or searched for its minimal condition or 'rules' of operation and application, in relation to the context of 'usage' – the practical and aesthetic conventions, habits and training, which ground and inform the character of the understanding of an object's identity, utility and, occasionally, its beauty. ('Everything is what it is and not another thing')[21]

This is another reminder that the job of philosophy, on Wittgenstein's account, is not to provide new information, but to see what is already known more clearly and honestly. The emphasis is on activity and craft rather than something static and definable, and on a kind of decency over an impressive or superficial answer. The idea of the 'background' should therefore, I argue, account for this interest, for which Diamond's account of understanding the speaker of nonsense provides a useful bridge. The background is that which contextualises a failure to make sense, so that we are able to imaginatively, or momentarily, inhabit the nonsensical position as our own, to experience the same frustrated aspiration or confusion, and treat it not as an aberration but as an expression.

In this formulation, Diamond's explanation of ethical statements is relatively easy to assimilate; we tend to share similar views of what is good and ideals of perfection, so that even if 'murder is wrong' is technically nonsense, it takes very little to make the

---

[21] David Connearn regularly uses a Wittgenstein in a scholarly and materials-based creative process. He has also written essays on Wittgenstein's work on colour and contributed to a project to recreate Wittgenstein's house in Norway, which was knocked down not long after his death. His contributions to two Wittgenstein-centred exhibitions, 'Wor(l)ds in Collision' and 'Good Lines', are discussed briefly in Chapter 6.

leap to understanding. Claims over greater distances, such as between cultures, to those with severe mental illness, or into other species are more difficult. Moments of understanding may be possible, but increasingly fleeting or imaginary. When Diamond reads a similar desire and capacity to understand the suffering of another (in this case of animals raised and slaughtered in industrial farming) through the character of Elizabeth Costello in J.M.Coetzee's lecture-novel 'The Lives of Animals', the requirement is harder, and the moment of empathy further away from the possibility of expression. It become a dangerous 'exposure' ('The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy' 72). As John McDowell notes in his response essay, Costello is by necessity 'unhinged' by her inability to give a rationally convincing argument for the reality of her horror, especially at her moments of claiming to know what it is like to die as a slaughtered animal ('Comment on Stanley Cavell's "Companionable Thinking"' 134). This terminology suggests not only a form of mental dislocation, but a breaking from the cultural and human background that underpins our capacity to make sense – our so-called hinge propositions that in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein uses to show how the empirical content of our lives can – arguably in a non-empirical way – be the sure and necessary ground to our knowledge and understanding (*OC*§§ 96-7, 110). As Danielle Moyal-Sharrock puts it, 'Our basic certainty is not a knowing; it is that on which knowing is somehow based' ('*On Certainty* and the Grammaticalization of Experience' 44). Similarly, when Read reflects on derangement in 'Wittgenstein and Faulkner's Benjy', and what the consequences are for understanding persons with, for example, 'serious cases of schizophrenia' (269), we may have to give up on the idea of understanding their *thoughts*, for these will lack the necessary background or what we could categorise as content. The sufferer is left 'terribly far from us' (279), and our possibility for understanding them may be limited to what commonalities remain in ritual, embodiment or speculative imagining. This challenge can make Diamond's model of understanding the person speaking nonsense (and in turn, her resolute account of the *Tractatus*) seem less accessible, but the idea of background in *Culture and Value* can frame a reasonable notion of how nonsense of the kind described could be understood, even while being held as merely provisional or indicative of a less determinable drive, such as the running up against the walls of our cage.

Wittgenstein seems to be positing something that is on the way to, but not identical with, the concept of 'Form of Life'. The latter denotes the inextricable links between language, history, tradition, rules and instinct, knowledge of which is required for

understanding a person or a group and their behaviour – an insistence that Wittgenstein uses to remind philosophers that the meaning of words comes neither so simply nor so isolatedly as has often been assumed (*PI* §23; p174). While one ought to remain wary of treating Form of Life as a technical term, one aspect of its repeated use is certainly that is used in a set of ways that suggest there are many different forms of life, or levels at which form of life could be considered. Depending on what we are interested in, we may consider Form of Life to capture all human life (*PI* §206), or a particular nation or historical period, or a particular social group within such a setting. With 'background' Wittgenstein seems to be positing a single background – the very deepest level underlying our expressions – but also a personal or individual one, echoing *TLP* 6.54. Even if Wittgenstein had by this point moved on from this mode of thinking, he recognised that his 'thinking, like everyone's has sticking to it the shrivelled husks of [...] earlier (withered) thoughts' (*CV* 27e). Background could denote an appreciation of the complexity of human thought and expression, though not at that stage the multiplicity of background that Wittgenstein's thinking in *Philosophical Investigations* would embrace, and that *On Certainty* would elaborate on (e.g.: *PI* §§206, 240-1; *OC* §§ 213, 286, 525).

As Cooper has noted, the remark in *Culture and Value* is also distinguished from Wittgenstein's earlier concerns by the fact that the search is not for the 'transcendental conditions for the possibility of representation' ('Ineffability' 1), but for a more descriptive account of our actual practices. The background is not separated from the language act it supports, nor from the subject making the act, but stands in for the multitude of communal and contextual judgements, traditions and expectations that allow us to operate in our language. But likewise, the context that enables our action is not just there, a space into which we are received. It is activated – given meaning and shape – by the same practices that it makes possible. Our explanations will need to start from within this sphere if they are to gain any purchase on our recognised modes of living. The notion of background provides both the structural support and opportunity of contrast/correction to our utterances, since it is constituted by the same range of activities and concepts as the acts themselves. 'Our words are set against, but not set *over* against, a world which is what it is in virtue of intentional practices, linguistic ones included, whereby things stand out and take on their identities' (4).

This still leaves us with the question posed earlier, however: in what sense is this background 'inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express)'? It is

not merely a practical consideration that we are not able to say everything that contributes to our linguistic activities simultaneously, and therefore some of it has to stay in the background at any given time. What is the remainder that is mysterious? One answer, which accords to some extent with Wittgenstein's comment on Heidegger's project quoted earlier, is to consider that the way that our significations within language work usually block us from seeing the supporting background. On some occasions our usual view of things is disrupted – by a transformative experience, a bringing into view of what we had taken for granted, or the Angst-like experience of finding ourselves at the limits of our language; we are unhinged. We find ourselves unable to form a question that addresses our dislocation, and this feels mysterious and inexpressible. But the dislocation need not itself be anything esoteric at all. We must have some access to the background (and its occasional slippage) to 'measure the failure of words or even to experience the failure – or even to understand it at all' (Robert Innis 'Language and the Thresholds of Sense' 114). Similarly but distinctly, the perpetual movement between the horns of the paradox of faith for Kierkegaard can be seen in terms of background; we attempt to keep in view both our fallen, human, articulate condition and the inhuman, irrational, godly perfection that is demanded of the believer.

The remainder of this chapter includes readings of the poetry of Kei Miller and John Burnside. The former of these I use to illustrate aspects of the Pseudo-Dionysian 'mystic flight', as described by Russell Nieli in *Wittgenstein: From Mysticism to Ordinary Language*. Characters in the 'Church Women' series experience a transformative loss of ego or embodiment, and encounters with the unutterably other. And yet, they remain unmistakably human, their bodies and earthly attachments catching them in their flight, and shaping their moments of *ekstasis* in prosaic, communal ways. Kei Miller's poetry thus performs something of the regrounding and acknowledging of the human impulse towards the inexpressible that Wittgenstein begins in the *Lecture on Ethics* and continues in his later writing. We understand the Church Women, truly see them as people, even if what they reach for is nonsense or inarticulate song. This is followed by some brief suggestions for a Wittgensteinian resolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian attempt at the mystic, in which ineffability as a practice – both as a way of seeing the world and as a form of behaviour we can accommodate within our lives generally – is considered. Finally, I present a reading of John Burnside's 'Parousia' as an alternative conception of the ineffable, as intrusive rather than elusive, and

consider this a further helpful illustration of Wittgenstein's transition in thinking about the inexpressible, from external to internal to language.

Church Women

Kei Miller's poem sequence 'Church Women', is part I of his first collection, *Kingdom of Empty Bellies*. The women depicted have a complex relationship with expression (as language and song) and the various aspects of religion, including worship, scripture, community and authority. Miller makes particular use of physical direction and spatial relations, and the diverse narratives that can be told thereby about voices and the loss of voice. The slippages between the expressible and inexpressible, between registers of piety and holiness, and physical discomfort and envy, between forms of language, exploit and perform the attractions of seeking to step outside language. The poems are vignettes, glimpses of the characters in moments of elation or emotion, so the analyses here are similarly compressed, building up a series of repeated images and devices, rather than arguing for an overall theme.

> 'Uphill'
>
> Sister Maisy must walk uphill to church,
> dirt road rising sharp as a steeple,
> past the rum bar always full
> of heathen people, like her husband.
> But Maisy walks straight, knows Heaven
> is a place that don't reach easy –
> but step by step in pink bathroom slippers
> that make the uphill softer
> on her feet. Maisy dreams on a place
> flat as lake water; day and night
> she meditates on
> the scripture promising
> valleys to be exalted and every mountain
> to be made low.

In 'Uphill' Pseudo-Dionysius' mountain ascent to enlightenment is transplanted into Sister Maisy's long walk to church 'in pink bathroom slippers', begrudgingly passing those 'heathen people, like her husband' who prefer the easy road to the rum bar. The 'upness' of her path, her determination to get to 'a place that don't reach easy' – the literally raised destination of the church – enact her sense of moral worth. Indeed, the attendant righteous and positive meanings of 'uphill' in Jamaican speech build this sense of worth in from the very beginning. We are called to imagine a pilgrimage, a difficult journey made from the world of sinners to redemption. Miller undercuts Sister

Maisy's gravitas, however, by turning her thoughts to her own weary feet and physical effort, the sharp line breaks beginning to mimic her shortening breath. Thinking not of the holy destination, she dreams of the land flattened out, of how the journey would be easier if the difference between high and low were erased. Just as in mystic flight, the symbolism of direction is robbed of its simple meaning by the quality of the movement, because the further uphill Sister Maisy goes, the greater her distraction from the ultimate goal. Does she achieve greater unknowing as her thoughts stray from the unknowable she thought she knew? She dreams and meditates – both unuttered activities, though her muttering is almost audible – of a world where the distances she must currently traverse are nullified through the power ('the scripture promising') that she continues, almost without thinking, to approach. The last line of the poem, 'to be made low', is a tired exhalation of breath; unstated, she has reached the top of the hill, and no more is said. Perhaps she has turned 'silent completely' (*PDC* 139), with no further need of, or access to, language. Perhaps, out of breath, her attempts to speak at the summit become nonsense to any listener, save one who understood her journey's reason and route.

> 'Off-key I'
>
> She did not trust the pastor's wife, didn't
> believe a woman with squinted eyes could see
> Heaven and the Glory, much less reveal
> it to her. And she did not like how
> the tiny woman, baton raised, would lead
> the choir to fold songs, crease them under
> then over, form them into peacocks
>   or spiders.
>
> She didn't trust these Anansi harmonies
> crawling up her shoulders, as if to keep
> her down; the church woman would lift her voice
> (it could only manage one note)
> and power it through the ceiling
> until old sisters
> added their own
> crocus-bag sounds.
>
> The chorus floats like newspaper
> up to God's heaven where,
> smiling, He adds it to His fold.

'Off-Key I' revolves around the rituals of worship, contrasting the ornate musical performances led by the pastor's wife with the simpler view of appropriateness held by the Church Woman. As in 'Uphill', there is a relentless push upwards in this poem, as

the Church Woman resists the 'Anansi harmonies / crawling up her shoulders, as if to keep / her down', lifts her voice and 'power[s] it through the ceiling', the song eventually reaching 'God's heaven'. Vitally, her song is never ascribed words or even a tune '(it could only manage one note)', and is as unmusical as 'crocus-bag sounds'. This is in contrast with the artfully constructed music of the pastor's wife, who 'leads[s] / the choir to fold songs, crease them under' like precisely ironed trousers, or origami birds. How could something so full of human intent, craft and pride reveal God's glory? The imperfect (perhaps insincere or distracted) vision of the 'woman with squinted eyes' betrays that her sight is fixed not on God but on her own excellence. Moreover, with the apophatic lessons of Pseudo-Dionysius in mind, the formlessness of the Church Woman's song is surely a more apt appeal to the divine than the complex, preening, teasing repertoire of the choir. The choir music's repeated zoomorphism ('peacocks / or spiders') gives it energy and life, but it remains essentially earthly (perhaps soul-less), locked off from the ineffable. The Church Woman, though, chimes with the paradoxes of mystic theology, the limitation of language that seeks to express that beyond itself. '[I]n the end... one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound' (*PI* §261). However, as Wittgenstein in the same passage goes on to reiterate, 'But such a sound is an expression only as it occurs in a particular language-game' (§261). Miller outlines concisely but colourfully just such a language-game, which serves to explain both the motivation for the crocus-bag sounds and various aspects of their meanings. The Dionysian appeal to the ineffable is shown to rely on its grounding in a common (essentially effable) practice, whose earthiness is announced in the crocus-bag's rough material and agricultural associations.

This final stanza of this poem remains somewhat ambiguous. When God receives the inarticulate sound of the church woman he 'adds it to his fold', a choice of words that echoes the choir being led to 'fold songs' under the pastor's wife's instructions, and also recalls the animal qualities already attached to that music through the association of fold, flock and sheep (the Lord as the Good Shepherd.) Perhaps this degree of circularity serves to confirm that whatever our attempts to escape the physical realm, we can never escape our life as animals – we belong among the peacocks and trickster spiders. We may be in God's care, but remain tied to our created nature. The metaphor of ascent created by the raising of song is reversed or confused by God's ambiguous smile. Is the song a gift treasured, or expected tribute received? Is the smile amused or pleased? In either case, God does not speak, or need not.

'Take Off'

She closed her eyes tight
against the unbalancing,
reciting the careful instructions
that might save her life
if the plane stalled in flight.

But the sharp lifting disturbed
her horizontal comfort;
in that tummy-twisting moment
she erupted – pentecostal frenzy,

ballistic shooting psalms,
we were certain she had gone
mad. Perhaps the ascension brought her
too close
to God.

Ostensibly a snapshot of a nervous flyer, 'Take Off' contains intricate parallels with the
Dionysian ascent. Again, Miller's topic is 'ascension', literally physically, but also
(with a light dusting of irony) spiritually. The ascent is seemingly imposed on the
woman, a vertical disruption of her 'horizontal comfort'. One does not have the
impression from the description of her nervousness that taking the flight, or the very
notion of flying, is the result of her own conscious choice or free will. Her eruption
from ritual recitation of safety regulations into ecstatic language is equally involuntary:
'we were certain she had gone / mad.' She thus carries many hallmarks of the aspiring
mystic, who may be regarded by others as having 'gone out of his mind' (*PDC* 110)
'from the perspective of ordinary speech and intellect' (Knepper 'Techniques and
Rules' 19); to have become unhinged, in McDowell's sense mentioned above. The
closeness to God, whether through ascent or fear of death, has overcome her ability to
express, much as Moses must 'plunge into darkness' (*PDC* 136) in search of the higher
realms of light. Her approach to God has only gone part of the way, however, as she
retains the ability to express 'higher truths' – the language of worship – without
ascending entirely beyond speech into the ineffable. Unknowing precedes revelation.
Her elevation is, however, recorded from an outside perspective (the other plane
passengers), which informs the language of its description; quite apart from the wild
vision of her explosive speech, the poet's narrator is limited to similes that evidently fall
short of their target. The insinuation of 'frenzy' is of something like xenoglosslalia, but
still couched in such recognisable terms as 'pentecostal' and 'psalms'; even apparent
madness must be framed within appropriate rules, or placed against a common
background for both utterer and audience.

Three other poems in this sequence present the relative powers and limitations of language in different modes. 'Tongues I', 'Tongues II', and 'Off Key II' all deal with circumstances that lead the Church Women to speak, mostly in the worship context, and unpick the psychology and ironies inherent in each. Miller has described in his Bocas Prize-winning collection of essays *Writing Down The Vision: Essays and Prophecies* (2013) his upbringing in the Jamaican church, in both Pentecostal and Anglican styles of worship, before losing his faith in his late teens. His relationship to this loss is complex, as his poetry often shows, particularly in the later collection *There is an Anger that Moves* (2007). To give up his faith was not a sudden relief from error but a genuinely felt loss, something that is often portrayed as a failure rather than an achievement, yet something resolvedly irreversible. Thus, the poems described here manage to be by turns sympathetic, satirical, frustrated and sad; there is something genuinely at stake in exploring these Church Women and how they live that preserves the poems from what might otherwise become mawkish or parodic. The insider-outsider viewpoint throughout is also key to Miller's ability to observe, understand and communicate. Having grown up in Jamaica but lived in the UK for much of his adult (and writing) life, he steps between multiple camps. This facility opens up new possibilities of seeing, but can also leave him marginalised by the societies he straddles. The collision of cultures and language is played out most richly in *The Cartographer Tries to Map the Way to Zion* (2014), which provides the framework for Chapter 5. One might add to this liminal status his increasingly powerful speaking out against homophobia in his native country and elsewhere;[22] to speak love from a position of being hated requires strength, honesty and gentleness, which are all apparent in these poems.

'Tongues I'

When, during worship, the song ripens
and lyrics become inadequate,
women will strip Britain
off their tongues, allowing them to dance free;
to reach down the spirit-well
and bring back domed ceilings,
crystal windows, Roman columns, marble tiles.

---

[22] In 'Dear Uncle Brendan (and Auntie Kay), can we talk about our island, and how buggered things have become?' (2014) Miller addresses both the muddiness of his affectionate and distant relationship with the Church, and the political and moral conflicts around homophobia, HIV/Aids, the religious community and Jamaica's buggery laws.

Cabala-builders, the women
erect castles in which God
will reside, while the men watch
and stay outside.

Just as the writer's position may be outsider, insider or marginal, language itself can become foreign to its own users in certain contexts. In 'Tongues I' this loss of facility in a language figures as self-defining act, a gesture towards freedom (though still described to some extent by the 'outsider's' tongue). As the women 'strip Britain / off their tongues', the colonial language, indeed any language, as being inadequate to the act of worship, the men (including Miller himself?) 'watch / and stay outside.' Unlike the panicked ejaculations of 'Take Off', however, this hyper-lyric expression remains to some extent purposeful, a common group ideal through performance, even where 'lyrics become inadequate'. This is reinforced by Miller's use of long vowel sounds in the description of the song ('down', 'domed', 'Roman columns' etc.), slowing the pulse of the song to something more dignified than the 'ballistic' muddle of 'Take Off'.[23] The element of chant evoked in the description is instead communal, a public rather than private sloughing off of conceptual sense. While giving up on extractable 'content', the form of the song remains – an 'inarticulate sound' that is nonetheless generative since it 'occurs in a particular language-game' (*PI* §261). The language retains a certain power, even if it cannot itself say what it aims at. It performs an including and excluding role by providing the basis of a community act, and separating the voluble women from the silent (or silenced) male on-lookers.

'Tongues II'

Beware of the church woman; her tongue
sharp like serpent.

Under the shade of a broad Sunday hat,
eyes brimstone burning,

she will town-cry the soft secret rising
in Martha's unmarried belly;

gong-mouthed, she will call down
Heaven-healing

for the lewd cancer dancing
inside Billy.

---

[23] A further contrast to 'Take Off' is in the directional metaphor of 'down the spirit-well', invoking depth and internalisation, rather than ascent, though this is confounded in a typically Pseudo-Dionysian way, since the wisdom sought in the depths is brought 'up' and used to construct (i.e. build up) the 'castles in which God / will reside'.

> With her, rumours digest easy
> into sermons;
>
> Beelzebub salivates on her tongue,
> disguising himself as God.

'Tongues II' is a parable of the power and danger of speaking, and culminates in a portrayal of language as the opposite of divinity ('Beelzebub salivates on her tongue'). Words, even if conveying the truth, can be destructive – embarrassing, hypocritical, condemning – in contrast to the 'eloquent and taciturn, indeed wordless' nature of the Dionysian devotee (*PDC* 136). Using a multitude of biblical images Miller builds a contrast between the combining power of (lyric-less) song, both in 'Tongues I' and in 'Off-key I' (which immediately precedes 'Tongues II' in the series) and the divisive effects of gossip and judgement delivered under the guise of sermons. Just such an admonition is also given in Pseudo-Dionysius' Letter VI, which warns against hasty judgement and hypocrisy:

> Do not count it a triumph, reverend Sosipater, that you are denouncing a cult or a point of view that does not seem to be good [...]. For it could be that the one hidden truth could escape both you and the others [...]. This is what you will do if you trust me. You will cease from the denunciation of others and you will speak about truth in such a manner that everything you say will be irrefutable. (*PDC* 266)

Both this extract and the poem have an element of self-refutation within them. 'Tongues II' is itself a judgemental and sermonising piece – indeed is the poem in the sequence that most expresses a firm opinion about a Church Woman, rather than painting a picture more open to interpretation. It commits the sin it warns against. As a stand-alone poem this might simply reduce the spirit of the poem to self-righteousness, but in the context of the Church Women sequence, its difference to other pieces is marked, therefore seemingly self-conscious. By first spurring the reader on to concur with its judgement, the subsequent realisation of the inherent contradiction turns the poem into a further performance of the temptation of denouncing others, accomplished by the positioning of the poem within the wider whole, rather than through direct expression.

Letter VI runs the similar risk of hypocrisy, being scathing about Sosipater's rush to judge others. However, the second part of the letter presents an alternative to denunciation, or even argument. It asks for a leap of faith, and advises against making any claim that is not 'irrefutable'. Given the context of Pseudo-Dionysius' apophasis, this is in effect a recommendation not to speak at all, in recognition of the fallibility of human judgment and the limitations of language. Language cannot speak the irrefutable

without profanation. Since any assertion is, by the nature of language, potentially refutable, and any judgment, as an act of exclusion, potentially mistaken or imperfect, one should either only utter/endorse that which everyone agrees on (tautologies) or remain silent.

It is simple to make an immediate connection here with Wittgenstein's remark in *Philosophical Investigations* that 'If one tried to advance *theses* in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them' (§128). What philosophy ought to be engaged in, in other words, is to remind people of what they already know (*CV* 72e), but had forgotten or overlooked thanks to the bewitchments of language or pictures (§115) or the dullness of habit. When proceeding without recognising this, philosophy leads to error, such as when a universal law is imposed where a description of particular cases is needed, contorting or misusing language to make it fit a frame, as though wearing ill-fitting shoes (*CV* 47e). Such attempts to speak from 'outside' our language games look like access to the truth but are in fact misguided or simply nonsense. In effect, it is a council of silence in respect to the 'truth' about which Sosipater would endeavour to speak. In a non-Wittgensteinian context, this might cancel out *any* effort to speak, since philosophy is conceived of as (logically) prior to our everyday practices. In the practice-oriented method I am laying out, however, the situation is reversed, as what we call philosophy is shown to emerge from our practice: its pictures of how we and the world behave have been confusedly held up as models or reasons, rather than as descriptions of a certain range of activities, or activities that emerge from our overall view of the world (cf.: *PI* §§134, 241; *OC* §§215, 403, 410, 449). Take, for example, the idea that to have a thought is to have a picture of an object in your mind; this is often true, but to think it is *essential* to thought leads to all manner of confusion. Sometimes it makes more sense to think of ourselves thinking with our pen (*CV* 24e) or as acting only as part of a group, and the picture of thoughts happening in our heads means no more than to point to a 'box' in which thinking is happening (*PI*§293). It means something in our language but remains only a picture. Ordinary language is 'all right'. It is not speech itself that should come to an end, but the urge to talk one's way out of it, as it were, through philosophy. The philosopher's sermons will serve an evil purpose, like the devil-inspired tongue, fitting the world to a standard that become malicious with the unthinking application of (moral) standards to all situations.

Finally, 'Off-Key II' provides an image of the deep-seatedness of words in our existence, and the gap between words and the extra-linguistic world.

'Off-key II'

The police never knocked or shouted
Open Up! or flashed their warrants;
(things don't work like that here)
just boots and the door collapsing –
a confused woman holding her nightie
at the place where a sagging breast
would fall out; rubbing eyes against
the blackness (she thought it was her soul)
and the words *Jeeee Zus* was rising
out of her belly. Her son was calling
Mamma, and only when the baton hit her
she knew she had stood to save him.

That night the woman learned
how to put Heaven in her voice
how to prophesy – call down Armageddon,
flood-water, twenty plagues on Babylon – how
to brawl down Jericho or sing *It Is Well*
even though the ground refuse to shake
and the jail-walls don't turn to dust and the locks
don't break – even though
her son not coming out.

Each Sunday, the woman finds herself
in church, singing the wrong key –
Egypt and Israel are heavy
on her tongue and push the notes off-centre.
Her song will rise to the Saviour, but might bang
against the padlock of His heart.

In a moment of crisis the most divine name is invoked, more physically than consciously: 'and the words *Jeeee Zus* was rising / out of her belly'. The words are one and the same movement as the attempt to protect her son from the advancing police (and ultimately equally ineffective). Following the detailed and grounded physical descriptions of the first stanza, in the second her rage in the face of injustice and at her own impotence transfers into the bombast of religious rhetoric. Miller constructs another successful juxtaposition within the sequence, as the previous poem, 'Hallelujahs', shows a pastor using presumably similar rhetoric to powerful effect, producing 'lightning [...] ready to charge out.' However, where in that poem the context of the church service empowers his words, in 'Off-key II' the curses and pleas fall short of such an effect: 'the jail-walls don't turn to dust [...] her son not coming out.' The performative power of words is conditioned by the language game within which they operate.

The poem deals with apparent failure on two levels – the intractability of real-life events to passionate invective, and the inability of the woman's prayers to penetrate the 'padlock' on God's heart. A more complex reading is, however, also available, which sees that although the prayers and wailings do not have their immediate desired effect, they nonetheless perform a role, much like ethical propositions in the *Lecture on Ethics*. Miller again notes the communal experience of church-going, where the performance of the woman's grief finds a place to express itself.[24] This is not to say her hurt is dissipated – related tales of incarceration from scripture remain 'heavy / on her tongue' – but the ritual and repetition of 'Each Sunday' serve as an outlet and, perhaps, comfort. Further, though the prayers and hymns seem to go unanswered, this is a positive lesson in the Dionysian sense, since the search for God in that tradition is not to answer practical demands, but to offer Truth. Language fails to force God to act, because it is intimately linked to normal life; only by divesting ourselves of earthly desires, however justly harboured, can we and our songs 'ascend'. God's reaction to this song, unmoved by its pleading, is of course a counterpoint to 'Off-Key I', in which a smiling deity receives the inarticulate sounds of worship, expressing nothing but themselves.

Finally, another iteration of the confounded 'ascent' metaphor is present – the appeal projected up to heaven (set against the worldly 'going down' of the son) is frustrated by its literalness; it has not achieved the 'hyper-good' or the 'unknowing' required for revelation, but is bounced back, like the frustrated Dionysian mystic, into the difficulties, iniquities and hopes of human life.

Solutions: Meta-languages, Relative Ineffability and Domestication

Given this discussion above, how are we to think of Pseudo-Dionysius's reach for the ineffable? Its elaborate and multilayered denials of the expressibility or knowability of God at the same time seek to detach themselves from human practices, even our humanity and individuality. Even the pseudonymous nature of the author of the corpus can be read as a further sign of the failure of the word and the individual; we cannot even know who wrote the work, since they have removed themselves from the seat of

---

[24] As Kevin Corrigan has noted in '"Solitary" Mysticism in Plotinus, Proclus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius' there is a conflict, both actual and perceived, between the neo-Platonic and Christian mystic traditions, about the degree to which the mystic is alone – both in his separation from other souls, and the unreachable, annihilating communion with God. Here the stress that Miller places on the communal, even when the Church Women mostly remain unnamed, and the distant characterisation of God, are symptoms of the importance for a shared practice. The failure of the Church Women to "take off" on mystic flight is in part connected to their embedding in society and ritual; Miller treats this with his habitual mixture of tenderness and irony.

authorship, as suggested by Charles Stang (*Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite*). The images of the divine that this stranger offers are not even the suggestions and withdrawals of Kierkegaardian indirect communication, who at least in his own Pseudonymous writing as Johannes Climacus allows irony and details of contemporary Danish society to point towards an existing author (*Concluding Postscript* 617-20).

A common reading is to treat the method as a form of what Knepper calls 'apophatic abandonment' that, in its own consistency leaves only an empty notion of Godhead, with the message of failure to know the ineffable a lesson in the impossibility of achieving the hyper-knowledge of the divine.[25] Pseudo-Dionysius is a *de facto* atheist, since the only way to posit God without profanation is to insist that there can be no God, at least as far as our human ideas of being and God go. To attempt holiness is to resist all attempts at understanding, and insist only on the inadequacy of this world and our understanding. However, as Knepper has argued, this reading seems more a product of our own times, in which arguing God out of existence is a more acceptable notion. It sees the negation of all attributes of God as evidence of his nothingness but, Knepper argues, this conclusion is not justified, given a full understanding of the notion of hyper, discussed above, as excessive positivity: 'not a God that is utterly removed from all things and utterly devoid of all things, but a God that preeminently pre-contains all things' (*Negating Negation* 41). Likewise, as Don Cupitt characterises the modern and post-modern condition of theology, we are happier to treat all theology on the level of mythology, excepting personal choices to believe in particular versions (*Mysticism After Modernity* 2); this view of belief as a matter of choice is starkly at odds with both a realist idea of the ineffable, but also Wittgenstein's analysis of belief in his later writing. Our beliefs go much deeper than mere opinion or choice, and show in our ways of behaving (*PI* p178; *OC* §317).

META-LANGUAGES

Alternatively, as some other traditions have determined, if all language is inadequate to express knowledge of God, and error is inevitable, we ought to be free to use whatever language we decide to discuss God, as long as we do so in the knowledge that can only ever be a metaphor and a shortcoming. Metaphor becomes 'by default, the language of

---

[25] For examples of straightforward denial of Pseudo-Dionysius' ability to say anything, see John Hick 'Ineffability', or for the "post-modern" 'anti-onto-logical' readings, the work of John Caputo and Kevin Hart. An overview of post-Derridean readings, see Chris Boesel 'The Apophasis of Divine Freedom', as well as other essays in *Apophatic Bodies*.

the ineffable' (Conrad Ostwalt *Secular Steeples* 4) More like Kierkegaard's view, an untruth that in its withdrawal leads the believer closer to understanding can be a good, if married with sufficiently modest ambition. Wittgenstein considered something along these lines in *Culture and Value*, in how the language of religion has many 'levels', with different symbols and modes of talking suitable to different kinds of believers (37e). This may be connected with his (perhaps Kierkegaardian) contemplation of the reason for the Gospels being given in four separate and widely differing accounts, recorded in a remark the previous month (36-7e). But in the Pseudo-Dionysian case, where *no* information is given, does metaphor do anything at all? As discussed earlier, a symbol or metaphor that refuses to grant any likeness at all with the object being gestured towards does nothing. The only possibility of it having any guiding effect is through a free interpretation made by the hearer, with no restrictions, which both renders the text itself irrelevant, and opens up a corrosive and unjustified view of all meaning as requiring interpretation. The continual regress insisted on might satisfy a certain 'level' of believer in practice, but can never satisfy the mystic's own putative effort.

Knepper has suggested two ways in which a Wittgensteinian response to the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus could provide a release from the problems of self-defeat and emptiness discussed earlier, both centring on an idea of non-absolute, or relative ineffability. In 'Techniques and Rules' a collection of solutions that I have grouped under the umbrella of 'meta-language' are presented. In 'Ineffability Investigations', he invokes Wittgenstein's rule-following remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* as a means of bringing the concept of 'ineffability back to the everyday' (65). The meta-linguistic effort essentially says that while Pseudo-Dionysius does make ineffability claims, these are relative, by virtue of the language or worldview from which the claims are made being distinct from that to which they refer. If the ineffability claim is made about another realm – one of higher understanding – then the sentences in this realm will still be valid, since it is at least true that, given the existence of the other realm, our lack of ability to express anything about it need not mean that there is not someone else in that higher realm who can make such claims. If hierarchies of higher beings are part of Pseudo-Dionysius' account (which is clear given the dedication of *Celestial Hierarchies* to explaining the nine ranks of angels), then his sentences might thus be acknowledged as making sense insofar as we allow the existence of these beings. However, clearly this is still problematic, since Pseudo-Dionysius cannot coherently

make any claims about *what* such a higher level of understanding would entail, or how he came to the realisation of this hyper-level of Being. Knepper argues from numerous examples ('Techniques and Rules' 14-15) that this *is* the move that Pseudo-Dionysius makes, and that though the problems above need addressing, from Pseudo-Dionysius' own perspective he can claim to have received divine revelation while still admitting that he has no means of expressing or understanding the 'superfacts' (Cupitt *Mysticism After Modernity* 5), since he remains a (human) being. For the current purposes of interrogating attempts to say the unsayable, and the grammatical structures used in this effort, it remains interesting to interrogate whether this, or other ways of classifying the mystic's actions can be made sense of. It rests on the presumption of both the concepts of God and divine revelation, and simply posits an ineffable level of hyper-being beyond our own. The claim of having received a revelation of the ineffability of God, even without seeking to express the content thereof, conflicts with that same ineffability. Further, the distinction between semiotic systems mapped out in the previous paragraph must in this case be absolute, since any connection at all between our own level of being and any other would entail a shared character of being. Even intermediate levels of understanding, such as angels, would be of no help; they do not fit the idea of 'intermediate cases' (*PI* §122). Whatever properties are attributed (or not) to God via hyper-being, understanding would have to have some overlap with our own level of understanding to be received but further, the *structure* of that understanding (the logic of it) must coincide if such things as 'thing' or 'being' are to have any purchase. A meta-language has to have a relation of some kind with the initial language or practice for the term to mean anything.

An alternative escape would be to treat the meta-linguistic argument in a similar way to the conflictive metaphors discussed above, as a way of avoiding self-contradiction through continual deferment or rebuff of meaning. By invoking hyper-ineffable as super-eminently ineffable, at each stage where Pseudo-Dionysius acknowledges the impossibility of the assertion, this in itself counts as a performance of that ineffability, something like: "God is *so very* ineffable that even the attempt to say that ineffability is beyond our ability!" Without the meta-linguistic set-up, this would be limited to a single demonstrative gesture, but if we permit the idea of a hierarchy of linguistic clusters, such that each utterance of ineffability is made through its own denial into an utterance of the next level, there is no *prima facia* necessity to stop the string of expressions generated. ("When I said *x,* my sentence was self-defeating, but viewed from the

position that emerges from that, *x+1*, I am again bound to make that move; when x+1 fails, it automatically creates position x+2…") Clearly this performance could never successfully say the thing that Pseudo-Dionysius would like to say (without saying), but it could be seen as a way of communicating the perpetual state of unknowing to the attentive reader; the unsettle-ability of the assertions enacts the thing that cannot be said.

This view does permit Pseudo-Dionysius to go on with the discussion, provided he is happy for it never to reach a conclusion (or content), which does seem to align reasonably with the necessity of unknowing in the pursuit of knowledge. However, while this 'ratcheting up' may be effective in poetic or gestural terms, one is still left with the sense that there has to be something *behind* the shifting layers of words, whether this is the realist's ineffable 'something' or merely the derivable content of what the utterer wished to convey. Deferral mimics the search for Truth through Unknowing, but cannot become that search itself, since it relies on cognition of the text (or at least its constituent parts) to get off the ground.

Parallels can be drawn with the various interpretations of the closing remarks of the *Tractatus.* The ineffabalist reading allows that what is said is nonsense, but that it still shows us something worth seeing. This can be conceived of as a form of meta-language (as, for example, described by Robert J. Fogelin in *Wittgenstein* 102), but would meet the same objections I have just outlined. Further, at least in his later notes (1930), Wittgenstein explicitly rejects his own ladder image from *Tractatus* 6.54, which would otherwise lend some weight to the notion of someone making utterances from a 'higher' plane. In *Culture and Value* we find:

> Each sentence that I write is trying to saying the whole thing, that is, the same thing over and over again & it is as though they were views on *one object* seen from different angles. (My emphasis. 9e)

> I might say: if the place I want to reach could only be climbed up to by a ladder, I would give up trying to get there. For the place to which I really have to go is one that I must actually be at already
> Anything that can be reached with a ladder does not interest me. (10e)

Does this mean that Wittgenstein's notion of ascent has changed over time or that this should colour our understanding of the *Tractatus*? For a useful discussion of Wittgenstein's metaphors of this type, see David Schalkwyk's 'Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Garden"', and the discussion of cartographical imagery, including the notion of 'perspicuous overview' (*PI* §122) in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The answer to the immediate question in part depends on the reading of the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's

work generally. The mainstream 'two-Wittgensteins' story might chart a switch from an attempt to escape language to one of exploring its inner boundaries, with the explicit rejection of a second order of philosophical discourse coming in *Philosophical Investigations* §121; the 'mono-Wittgensteinian' story would understand this internal picture to be available also in the *Tractatus*. Diamond's account is of the latter type, meaning that the parallel drawn with Pseudo-Dionysius above would be with the person who speaks nonsense – who gives the impression of climbing or wanting to climb the ladder – but who neither makes sense nor imparts any sense to the reader, but who might nonetheless be understood, at least as a person whose aspirations and frustrations we might recognise as (potentially) our own.

RELATIVE INEFFABILITY AND DOMESTICATION

In 'Ineffability Investigations', Knepper attempts 'a recovery of the ordinary uses of ineffability [to…] dissolve the metaphysical problem' (65). Despite all the contradictions and problems that Pseudo-Dionysian ineffability writings encounter, it is obviously true that we do know what someone is talking about when the word 'ineffable' and its mode of discussion are used. Therefore, understanding what it is that happens *in such cases* may provide Pseudo-Dionysius with a reading that allows a relative ineffability in another sense than the meta-linguistic one; we can show that there is such a practice as talking about the ineffable, and we can say whether or not Pseudo-Dionysius is engaged in the same practice, irrespective of whether or not his specific claims stand up to scrutiny (and perhaps also *because* they do not). Indeed, the aim in this Wittgensteinian move is not to identify the validity of the ineffability claim *per se*, but to show how such moves are still part of our normal language games, and thereby disarm the either/or dichotomy that someone speaking about the ineffable must either be achieving extra-linguistic revelation, or be spouting pure nonsense. The rejection of such talk as simply nonsense would fit the resolute or the positivist reading of the *Tractatus*, depending on whether the nonsense spouted is considered grounds for therapy or censure.

Ineffability is usually characterised as what is unutterable, too great for description in words, or what must not be uttered. As a practice, usually in ritual, it is characterised by exactly the sorts of strategies that Pseudo-Dionysius has been shown to be deploying in this analysis: denial of properties (or the adequacy of properties), assertions of ineffability, denials of the applicability of effability concepts (either in terms of

privation or excess), the use of irresolvable metaphors or linguistic clusters, and (as the discussion of 'Tongues II' suggests) demands for trust by truth seekers, precisely on the basis of a lack of possible knowledge. It is a demand for mental and verbal silence (Webb Keane 'Religious Language'). Further, the shapes deployed in the mystic endeavour take certain recognisable forms – the use of opposites (e.g. light/dark), of ascent and descent, of repetition or reiteration (such as in the list of variations on the Divine Names (*PDC* 57)), and certain culturally powerful symbols.

Without insisting on a single definition of what constitutes an ineffability practice, especially since its connection with ritual makes it a prime candidate for the kind of family-resemblance status that Wittgenstein applies in *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, one way of considering what makes the activity feel understandable but nonsensical – and often also so mysterious – is to think of it as a kind of language game that consciously pushes against its own boundaries, much like ethical statements feel like they are running up against the bars of a cage (*LE* 12). To use a spatial analogy, the game showcases its own failure, either by exhausting what can be said within it in a way that suggests that there is more beyond this, or by circumscribing a hollow within itself it cannot fill. It is thus to some extent rule-governed; there are ways of behaving and speaking that demonstrate that I know how to continue (*PI* §150). There are rules to follow in this type of conversation, and other people will be able to alert me if I make a mistaken or irrelevant move. Understanding may take the form of a self-declaration: 'Now I can do it' (*PI* §151). There is such a thing as learning how to obey the rules of such a conversation (and how to go against them), and this may be a process of being guided by others, or come as a sudden realisation, but is in neither case separate from the practice one is attempting to enter into, or maintain.

Knepper suggests that this ordered and circumscribed ineffability provides space for a 'relative' ineffability by avoiding the temptation to look for and critique 'absolute' ineffability ('Ineffability Investigations' 75). And indeed, it does allow him to give some coherence to the positive claims that Pseudo-Dionysius makes about God (e.g. Cause of all things) without debarring ineffability entirely. Most explicitly in *Negating Negation*, the move is used to critique readings of the corpus that settle on apophatic abandonment, either on the basis of Pseudo-Dionysius' direct claims of God's ineffability, or by emphasising the 'merely' metaphorical nature of the language used to discuss God. As has been outlined here, both strategies ultimately fall short of being able to coherently read the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus. Knepper's solution in *Negating*

Negation is to preserve a perspectival ineffability, similar to that discussed (and rejected) earlier in this chapter, such that ineffability within our own sphere of knowing need not be a barrier to there being higher intelligences for whom God is not ineffable, and with whom communion is sought by the mystic, in the effort to move closer to the true absolute divinity. As a reading of Pseudo-Dionysius that is likely to be closer to the original writer's intentions, this does make sense, and Knepper provides considerable textual evidence for non-apophatic claims in the corpus text, as well as arguments for considering the corpus as a whole, rather than just concentrating on the more directly apophatic *Mystical Theology*, as most readings do:

> All this is apophatic abandonment—attempts to minimize the necessity and ultimacy of the hierarchies and hierurgies for return due to the conviction that if God is absolutely ineffable, then nothing can be literally true with respect to God, not even the hierurgical rituals that are revealed by and effect uplifting through the hierarchical ranks. Such rituals and ranks must therefore be just one among many different possible routes of access to God. And even if they are personally or communally useful, they must ultimately be kicked away like so many Wittgensteinian ladders that not only serve purely provisional purposes but also thwart higher spiritual aspirations.
>
> Although such a Pseudo-Dionysius may well be in step with our times, he is at odds with his own writings. (*Negating Negation* 71)

Knepper's alternative is to avoid claims of absolute ineffability, but this is still in exchange for retaining effability on the level of a higher intelligence (as described by Pseudo-Dionysius) inaccessible to human minds, being both 'Known *Hyper* Mind (and Said *Hyper Logos*)' (119). The apophatic abandonment reading has its wings clipped, but Knepper misses the real Wittgensteinian point that would be a potential solution to or avoidance of the troubles mentioned above. Relative ineffability treats the claims of ineffability in the same way as absolute claims, but tries to administer non-contradictory restraints, such that ineffability just means 'ineffable for you'. But as the preceding analysis has shown, such boundaries could only ever be artificial and self-defeating, since their defined imposition implies or relies on a standpoint beyond the boundary itself. The position seeks to both describe and not describe itself, since any description would violate the initial assumption of ineffability, yet it must state the limits it seeks to impose, in detail and to varied degrees, such as occurs in the listing of qualities denied the ineffable God in the *Mystic Theology*.

The problem is that the way the ineffability is made 'relative' is merely an attempted short-circuit of the existing arguments. Instead, I propose a 'domestication' of the

ineffability claims, in the manner of the series of reminders that Wittgenstein recommends as therapy for philosophical confusions (*PI* §127), and using McDowell's terminology discussed in Chapter 3. The aim is to avoid the unnecessary (and unending) creation of meta-languages, by showing that language games can and do contain their own pushing at their boundaries. Philosophy ought better to attempt to, as it were, leave everything as it is, and 'speak the language of every day' which is, and has to be, adequate for answering our questions (*PI* §120).[26]

This has two strands.

The first, through the analysis of the grammatical structures in play and by drawing connections with the same employed in other contexts (Kei Miller's poems), is to remove the temptation to think of the Pseudo-Dionysian text as unique and context-free. Instead we might consider how the same tools are used in other ways to produce other results. The way we think about the language we use stands surrounded by different practices, with attendant objectives and possibilities. Further, not all uses of words are referential, but may also be expressive, a form of gesture, and so on. Where our language stumbles is in the move towards naming absolutes, in denying or prescribing constraints on a given operation of language. Instead, by including our understanding of the practices that surround mysticism, we can know what it means to talk of ineffability, without also having to over-reach ourselves by insisting that the content of what is said is its only value. Kei Miller's Church Women are shown singing, talking and worshipping, and thereby describe a variety of interactions with the putatively ineffable, while remaining concrete, effable and entirely human. The Pseudo-Dionysian case is just such a thing, though it veils its activities in abstractions. They remain utterances made for and by humans, even if they exceed the uses and meanings of words sanctioned by our everyday practices. By pointing to how the ritual or theology is underpinned by our practices, rather than preceding and enabling them, for example by comparing its techniques with the less problematic activity of poetry, we remove its spookiness (*MW* 94) or emptiness.

The second strand is to consider the mystic's claims themselves not on the level of the meaning of individual utterances, but on the level of a practice. Wittgenstein's single

---

[26] This point has wider implications than this discussion, as a way of using Wittgenstein to critique other methods of thinking, such as deconstruction, which struggle with 'denouncing a metaphysic of presence in a metalanguage in which presence is inevitably reinscribed' (Perloff *Wittgenstein's Ladder* 71). See also Charles Altieri 'Wittgenstein on Consciousness and Language: A Challenge to Derridean Literary Theory '

mention of theology in *Philosophical Investigations* is as follows: 'Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)' (§373). I suggest that insofar as we are familiar with self-overstepping language games, such as the one being performed by Pseudo-Dionysius, we can recognise what he is attempting and why, but that this need not commit us to endorsing the content (if any) of the moves in the game. The meta-language game is neither necessary nor helpful, since it must presume that what is inexpressible in one language game is expressible in another – in other words, that 'it' is something. There is no thing that is *the* inexpressible, though there are things that are inexpressible, or not expressed, within language games. Games and practices can be nested, so that one can comment on another (Lamarque 'Wittgenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice' 386) but this relation is not one of further guarantee, but itself a feature of the use or meaning of the practice.

Corollary to the above, to understand a practice is not necessarily to exhaust it. In the 'rule-following' sense, we might 'know how to go on' without having, or being able to, in explain advance all the steps we take, or how they work. To an extent, and in some circumstances, we 'obey the rule *blindly*' (*PI* §219). In this case, we might understand the person's behaviour in making ineffability claims, as long as we don't presume that for this to be the case there must be something else underwriting the meaning that they seek, and fail, to transmit. Alternatively, it is useful to remember that some practices are based on the very possibility of their inexhaustibility, or incompleteness. In resisting resolution into a concrete (name-like) statement, some practices open up possibilities for further activity than *prima facie* understanding, without thereby falling into unintelligibility or nonsense (*Z* §160).

Clearly poetry is a prime example of this balancing act of being comprehended but not (necessarily or simultaneously) comprehensively, of suggesting and withholding what would be expressed determinately in ordinary discourse. In this respect I argue exactly the opposite to Badiou's conception of poetry as essentially a practice of naming or inventing names, with no further reference outside itself (*Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy* 108-9). Badiou treats a poem as a single proposition, one so withdrawn into itself that, echoing Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations* that naming is like attaching a label to something (§15), it becomes a mere preparation for use (§26). 'We may say: *nothing* has so far been done, when a thing has been named' (§49). Wittgenstein's point is that without being used in a sentence, a name is not a thought – as shown in the discussion of nonsense above. Badiou reads this as denying that poetry

is really thought at all. A poem is essentially an object rather than an expression – a proposition revisited in Chapter 4 of this thesis. By contrast, I argue that a poem *only* makes sense in use, in a language-game, and demonstrates that naming is far from the only use that words can have. Wittgenstein's limiting picture of language in the *Tractatus* caused him to exclude poetry from forms of legitimate expression, but not because he welcomed this or failed to see it, but because he thought thereby, from within the tension of his austere view of language, to preserve its value, and all values. The capacity and responsibility of the poet to create, confound and refresh was, I suggest, a major spur to the re-evaluation of Wittgenstein's language picture. In *Zettel* he again notes that the ineffable finds itself only within a language game: 'Why should we not *say* the unverifiable? For we ourselves made it unverifiable.' (§259), and in *Culture and Value* 'The poet too must always be asking himself: 'is what I am writing really true then?' which does not necessarily mean: "is this how it happens in reality?" (46e)'. There is considerable value, in relation to both the ineffable and nonsense, to recalling Maria Balaska's suggestion that 'If we understand meaning as the recovery of contexts of significant use, it is easier to decouple meaning from particular propositional content and understand it in more holistic terms' ('The Notion of Happiness in Early Wittgenstein' 409) – that is, as what opens us towards seeing something as significant.

In the final section of this chapter I want to look at the poetry of John Burnside, which trades powerfully on the capacity of language for being understood without being exhausted – for revealing without defining. A close reading of his poem 'Parousia', shows some of the same techniques of meaning deferral, conflictive metaphor and denial found in the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, but situated within a literary practice that can survive, indeed flourish, through the ambiguities of boundaries, the preservation of uncertainty, and the paradoxes of ineffability. What is of particular interest is how Burnside's conception of the ineffable reverses many of the ambitions and directions of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, in a way that invites an interior, rather than exterior conception of the ineffable.

Parousia

John Burnside is known for his near-obsessive unearthing of the magical and elusive in the world around us. Gemma Green describes him as 'revealing the wide open spaces between what we are able to know and touch, and what lives and breathes invisibly amongst us' ('Infinity and Beyond' 50). Jaime Robles, in her thesis on dark lyric writing, for which John Burnside is a major character, notes the 'liminality behinds

which lies an unseeable unknown charged with potential realisation' as a common feature of his poetry and prose ('Dark Lyrics' 32). Burnside has referred to his own writing as philosophical, insofar as it is 'provisional', offering the reader incomplete thoughts, spaces and pauses between words, gestures towards what is mysterious in the everyday ('Strong Words' 260). There is a Heideggerian sense of the unencompassable encounter to Burnside's poetry, marked by the importance he places on maintaining a solicitous, provisional view of the world around him, in which we live but do not settle. Though Graeme Richardson's claim that this is 'Heidegger as lyrical interlude' is excessive ('John Burnside's Poetry: No Ideas but in Somethings'), the influence is explicitly acknowledged:

> We have Heidegger to thank for understanding that the real problem for humankind is our homelessness. [...] I'd rather follow the path of homelessness to wild dwelling than accept the costly shelter of a certain kind of building – building that displaces, violates and domesticates what some have called, in translation and as a kind of shorthand, *the great spirit*. (Burnside 'Interview' *Agenda: Dwelling Places* 22-3)

Despite concluding that his 'lifelong engagement has been with Heidegger', Burnside also confirms the influence of Wittgenstein, Marx and Sartre, as well as Merleau-Ponty, Levinas and Benjamin on his poetry (24). And indeed, shorn of the incantatory tone of Heidegger, which Burnside's fondness of lingering over hollowed-out vowels and repetitions of particular images and objects (blood, bone, foxes, liminal spaces etc.) tend to generate, his writing exhibits many of the desires and demands that we find in Wittgenstein – to take a closer look at what is passing by; to appreciate the delicacies of experience rather than seek to explain them; to find the unsettling angle on our lives that reveals the unseen background. In addition, despite an openly spiritual element to his writing, Burnside resists adherence to a doctrinal belief, but dwells on (or in) the attraction and elusiveness of the ineffable. His themes are often religious, or respond to religious texts and art, such as his long prose poem 'Annunciations' in *Common Knowledge*. But these act as provocations rather than conclusions, and his settings and concerns are also ecological and political. As Scott Brewster puts it, 'in Burnside's poetry the encounter with the natural world is so often about the disappearance and the limitations of understanding' and most often occurs in landscapes of nature interrupted by man's construction or ruination, or the eruption of nature into human spaces, or the gaps between them – the 'liminal but potent waste grounds of suburbia' ('John Burnside: Poetry as the Space of Withdrawal' 329, 338).

Burnside's quest for the ineffable is therefore not the Pseudo-Dionysian one of stripping away worldly things, or removing himself from their influence. He is not looking so much for what is above, but what is behind, or immanent within. 'At its best, the lyric opens a door in the everyday and allows me to pass into the otherworld behind the taken-for-granted' (Burnside 'Travelling into the Quotidian' 61).

I here want to look at one particular poem, 'Parousia', the final piece of the 1995 collection *Swimming in the Flood*, connecting its techniques and concerns with the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus. Like many of his poems it combines a dark, unnerving, uncertain theme with a formal style that is surprisingly musical and clear, and 'suggestively confessional' (Robles 'Dark Lyrics' 29).

The title's usual (theological) meaning is the Second Coming of Christ, though a number of attendant meanings are worth noting, including 'being beside', 'arrival' (especially of an important personage), 'advent' (New Testament) and 'making a presence' i.e. preparations to receive an important visitor. It can also mean in a Platonic sense the presence in something of the Idea after which is was formed, or an incarnation. The poem's title does impel an initial religious reading – the imagined confusion and undoing of expectations of the Second Coming. In this vein Dennis O'Driscoll has noted the quantity of religious terms and associations in the poem: 'heresy', 'spirit', 'tangle of thorns' etc. ('Greek Bearing Presence: John Burnside's "Parousia"')

However, the alternative meanings of the word parousia, and the poem's churning through questions of location and presence – both within the world and within the self – allow us to also read the poem as a more generalised meditation on a world gorged on anticipations never realised, and boundaries in flux. Rather than an ineffability asserted as beyond us, this is a sense of the world itself evading our comprehension, pushing against our attempts to circumscribe it in understanding. It shifts in our pursuit of it, refusing the names we pin to it. If the Second Coming heralds the unmaking of our world, perhaps a prerequisite is our recognition of its unmakeability; that what appears solid and permanent is permeable and incomplete. Preparedness is a clearing within our usual living – the making of a presence by disrupting the usual layout of our thinking.

A considerable part of 'Parousia' consists of discrete layered images, glimpses of things and animals, including the fox, which recurs in various elusive forms throughout the collection *Swimming in the Flood*, like a scout or guide preceding the reader into

uncertain country. Unlike in the Pseudo-Dionysian hymns and rites, the images are not ordered to a hierarchy intimating ascent or progression. Rather, there is an assault on the senses pulling in all directions, increasingly plugging us into the world of the poem. Everything from sight, sound and smell to sensations of posture is called on: 'I knew I could squat/ in the fen-smell under the hedge/ or walk away through fields and timber yards' (ll. 22-24).

The game we might describe Burnside as playing becomes not that of trying to speak what cannot be spoken by retreating from the world to a better vantage point (as Pseudo-Dionysius may be conceived as doing) but to try and say anything *at all* that isn't in some fashion itself ineffable, saturated with otherness. The ineffable, the spiritual, is oozing out of the world around us, encroaching on all that we previously considered to have been fixed and comprehended. Negation here functions as 'suppression rather than denial', which Marshall Brown has argued may be a key but under-voiced characteristic of the lyric tradition of which Burnside is part ('Negative Poetics' 131). For Burnside, poetry operates as a continuing demarcation of how it is we are to dwell in this world, which, far from closing down our words to the merely possible or definable, is a *spirit* way of thinking, such that certain language use 'simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into the world' ('Strong Words' 260-1; Burnside quoting Heidegger's 'The Origins [sic] of the Work of Art').

However, the rules of the game by which Burnside proceeds are strikingly similar to the Pseudo-Dionysian approach. 'Parousia' uses proffered but withdrawn images (things are 'tricks of the light', have 'shifted closer' or are mere 'echoes'), directional tension and a refusal to be resolvable, in order to draw the reader out of the ordinary. But instead of removing the aspirant from the world, or his self, Burnside seeks to stitch him into the great tapestry of the world, the 'mystery of the real' ('Strong Words' 261). What enlightenment may come will be a thing of the world: the final section of the poem begins with the line 'All resurrections are local'.

This insistent religious vocabulary pushes us to think of enlightenment, a witnessed event or divine vision, but the poem is bracketed as speculative or doubtful: 'I could imagine', 'I think'. This is not an uncommon feature of Burnside's poetry, which invests heavily in the reader's being content to have the uncertainty or vagueness of elements of the poem stated outright. Most often this creates a careful, almost-touching, provisional atmosphere, such as in the uncompleted images of 'Creaturely' from the

collection *Black Cat Bone*: 'The fox turns in the light with something slender // caught between its jaws and no one knows / for certain what it is'. Typically the highlighting of partial and provisional knowledge is partnered with very specific and reliable detail about the natural world – trees and plants in particular are used to root the airiness of experience in the recognisable and categorisable. A quick glance through the same collection throws up barley, yew, sumac and maple, pines, beechwoods, barberry, goldenrod and alstrœmeria within the first 20 pages. This has the effect of shimmers of identifiable content that flash and disappear amongst hard and unhardened words and scenes. The question becomes whether this hazy vision is to be something whispered and loaded with magic, or whether it represents a frustrating holding-back: 'one wonders if human aspiration should be limited to such carefully schooled inhibition and hankers after direct utterance in a poetry made from the half-seen and the half-intuited' (Christopher Whyte 'Twenty-One Collections for the Twenty-first Century' 81). As with the mystic who speaks but refuses to stand behind his meaning, a poet who crafts his worlds to be seen only slantwise or in a mist, the result on the reader can be enchanting, but also deflating, depending, to use Diamond's model, how the reader applies which rules to the text. Graeme Richardson, for example, sees not enticing reticence but plodding vagueness. In 'John Burnside's Poetry: No Ideas but in Somethings' he calls attention to the frequent use of 'something' in the collection *The Light Trap* (25 times!) and complains that Burnside is a 'mystagogue' and 'preoccupied with the limits of being' without reaching the agonies or 'calculated comedy' of, say, Kafka's 'intolerable situations'.

Despite the hyperbole of the latter complaint, it does touch on how Burnside's disconnection is at the same time contained; his style remains elegant even in his dark or aversive studies and his form is more traditional than innovative (Robles 'Dark Lyrics' 29). This can make even his serial killers, spiritual seekers and under-explained images seem oddly homely; not too distant from us. In 'Parousia' the refusal to resolve is essential to the power and purpose of the writing. It escapes exhaustion in a way that both frustrates and refreshes; it permits a glimpse, but no panorama, a feeling of sense but no summary. This operates simultaneously at the level of the poetic construction (its rhythm that rises and falls in prominence, the pressing but incomplete narrative voice) and the objects in the poem itself. Everything in 'Parousia' strives to escape our grasp – sounds almost heard, tricks of the light – like a bull-fighter's cape, drawing us on then dancing away.

Eventually this slippage applies even to the ineffable within the happening. Burnside complains that 'I always knew / something was close, but all I ever saw / was blood-warm, vivid, wholly physical'. How can something so solid, certain, contain a revelation? The level of proof is wrong. If '[o]nly something supernatural can express the Supernatural' (*CV* 5e), what is most graspable is least enlightening. Doubt is enthroned where we would normally expect solid ground; the phantom becomes not what eludes our knowing but what remains stubbornly within it, or is so solid our words gain no purchase. As with the notion of background discussed above, if we try to grasp too tightly, the things normally so familiar as to go unnoticed ('streetlamps and walls/ [...] the neighbour's door') become uncanny. The poem offers us ambiguity and ordinariness, and in their combination unsettles both.

Though the later sections of 'Parousia' become more forceful ('I could understand', 'I always knew') it's not clear that these represent an escape from the imaginary beginnings of the poem – whether the entire piece is imagined, whether the imagined has become real, or whether the imagining has made things real – or even, whether part of the point of the poem is the erosion of the difference between the 'merely' imagined and the 'really' real. Boundaries of this and other types disappear, collapse and coalesce, because everything is moving; the stream that is more a border is crossed; buds crack the ice. In a dance of continual deferral and a hope that never defines itself, the ineffable becomes not an unsighted horizon but a tickling closeness. We lose ourselves in a game of confounded expectations and ever-receding stand-points, but unlike the Pseudo-Dionysian acolyte, under Burnside's spell we haven't rejected the world but sunk deeper inside it, blurring the distinction between the holy and the humdrum.

Is Burnside's ineffable, then, nonsense? It roots itself in our physical and cultural spaces, remains restless rather than silent, and the poet seems as ill-placed to make claims about the inexpressible as the reader. On the grammatical level of reference they use their own failure as the means of catching at the reader, a common experience. On the level of assertion they do the opposite, and bemoan how the expectations of revelation are disappointed because they do not disappoint or elude. On the symbolic level they frequently use readily available images, particularly religious ones, but befuddle the context or meaning: 'For the sign I have waited to see/ is happening now/ and always' (ll. 73-75);'the nailed palm healing' (l.80)). Like Wallace Stevens' '13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird', as analysed by Read (see Chapter 1), we are being

asked to imagine something that surpasses what the logic of the words and our form of life allows, or what the images are usually used to do. The poem is in that sense nonsense, or at least idle, rather than containing words doing their usual work.

This reading, though, would put the poet into the same bracket as a case of severe mental illness, whose works, at least, fall sufficiently outside our form of life to lack propositional sense, even if they appear to be understandable. Clearly such a blanket excluding of poetry from ordinary sense-making would take far too strongly the notion that language always communicates something, something determinate. Wittgenstein's remark that one should 'not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information (*Z* §160) is often quoted, but frequently without the sentence immediately before: 'The way music speaks'. It is not, then, an attempt to excuse poetry from sense-making, but a reminder that Wittgenstein came to see that there are different ways of speaking than in sense-determinate propositions, or with the aim of reference. In strictly referential terms poetry is perhaps nonsense, along with vast swathes of our ordinary speaking and practices, but this does not preclude it from conveying understanding to those familiar with the language game.[27]

Returning to the inexpressible and the mysterious in the background (*CV* 23e), this may be where the ineffable, or better the mysterious, lies in Burnside's writing. The poems only make any sense because we are familiar with so much of what is happening – the settings and their parts – yet through the practice of poetry Burnside is withdrawing that familiarity from us. Not with flamboyant inversions of our expectations, but by re-drawing, from within, limits of saying.

These limits are not of a philosophical generality, however. Burnside stops short of claiming that there are absolute limits, but instead offers provisional and contextual limits. In this instance, for this person, the moments within his poem have produced a profound uncertainty or unreasoned reverence. The mystery is often fleeting – 'animals glimpsed as they flit across our headlights' (Burnside 'Animals' *The Light Trap* 18) – doubted even before it is recognised as something unusual. This provides a neat counterpart to the later Wittgenstein's anti-intellectual view of belief – that the ritual is

---

[27] Given this line of thinking coupled with Diamond's model of understanding the person speaking nonsense rather than their words, one might go further and think of the implications of treating a text (a literary one) more like a person than a text, as famously described by Wayne Booth in *The Company we Keep*, though I do not follow this up further here.

accepted in the deed before any sense of justification comes into play (Clack *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 108). By extension, the mysterious is not something we know, but encounter. It only emerges within the context of a Form of Life, and cannot be separated from it; but that does not make it inaccessible. Poetry can provide the gestures, the stretching of concepts, that allow glimpses of other worldviews or unhinge our own. The movement between mysteries is incremental and negotiable.

Poems are demonstratively part of our everyday life – nothing is inexplicable about their materials, origins or uses – but they do not fit the kind of language use that philosophy habitually dwells on, being neither entirely information giving (*Z* §160), available to paraphrase (*Philosophical Grammar* 69) or separable from the various moods or cultural settings within which they attain their meaning and value (*Z* §§155, 170). Part of their function is to repeat and reinforce the tropes and forms that we recognise, extending a shared language of symbols and understandings of feelings. The continuing popularity of the sonnet in English might say very little about the sonnet as a form, but perhaps a lot about English and the cultures that use the language (Don Paterson *Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets* 485-494). Conversely – but necessarily in conjunction – poems can challenge or rekey these tropes, calling attention to what is taken for granted, upsetting comfortable understandings, and gesturing towards alternative pathways of thought. The effect can be excitement, defensiveness, sudden appropriation, revelation or even a 'recoil from the strangely written word' (*Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology vol I* 190). To whatever extent unwittingly, we feel the associations of the words and forms that are rooted in our language and culture, and how our uses of them are shaped by familiarity and occasions. Wittgenstein remarks on a feeling of 'disgust' at the thought of a language that lacked this historical depth. To invent a new set of words and meanings would be only to play at being a language (*CV* 60e).

Poetry can no more escape the limits of expression, and utter the unutterable, than other forms of language. It may, nonetheless, provide a profound sense of the mysterious in the reader: by using tropes that a competent language user recognises as gestures towards the ineffable; by sufficiently reinventing those tropes to sustain the mysterious and not merely point out a familiar path; by being a strong example of a practice that encourages the reader to respond in the right way. There is such a thing as the right rhythm, reading, atmosphere, or voice, small changes to which can affect the whole poem (*CV* 14-15e). Burnside's lyric writing, for example, paints a world mistily for us,

like seeing a familiar landscape after a snowfall. The smothering of landmarks, the unreliability of the ground, an eerie quiet – the effects can give us a taste of the mysterious within normal experience.

A poem exhibits a whole language, a practice, just as 'Parousia' is rooted in a Christian culture. Its mysteriousness is the ripple it causes in the background of our Form of Life, like a shake of the curtain. Someone without such a background would see no ripple, since the world is not stitched together in the same way – the meaning would either be lost entirely or at best superficial – a recognition of mystery without access to it. As will be discussed in the next chapter, commonality of background – in stories and reasons, not only knowledge – is a key feature of our interaction with the world, and what we may say, or not say, about it.

Chapter Three: Adhering to Reality

Introduction

Having in the previous chapter discussed attempts to express the avowedly inexpressible, and how a domestication of ineffability as practice, through considering poetry, can put us in a better position to understand the mystical and the ethical, this chapter moves to consider a case in which the notion of meaning-making in general comes under scrutiny. How is it that what we express in language or imagination connects with the world we inhabit? Various philosophical traditions have put pressure on the idea of meaning being something in the world, either restricting it to the exchange of symbols within a system, relying on an untenable and solipsistic Cartesian picture of the self, or treating meaning as something less 'real' than physical facts and processes. This chapter argues that a practice-oriented view of language avoids this problem by denying the supposed split between the world and our conception or expression of it, without giving up the necessary resistance required for language to be meaningful, public and robust.

To this end, I combine John McDowell's seminal account of modest realism or 'minimal empiricism' in *Mind and World* (*MW* xi), and Wallace Stevens' poetry, particularly his concern with the idea of a Supreme Fiction, and the long poem entitled 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'. McDowell is a useful case because his approach is Wittgensteinian in tone and 'diagnostic' in spirit (*MW* xi), as well as making specific reference to Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations*, for example the private language argument (18-23). McDowell has written insightfully on Wittgenstein elsewhere, including four influential essays on 'Issues in Wittgenstein' in his collection *Mind, Value and Reality*. There are, however, a number of points on which McDowell's position as Wittgensteinian may come under scrutiny, and this chapter allows some extensions and challenges to his main account. Among these, as with the previous chapter, are the effects of appreciating seriously the contribution that poetry can make to philosophical enquiry, both as a counter-example to apparent problems and as an alternative space for experimentation, refreshed imagery and practice-specific concerns. Wallace Stevens provides a very fruitful partner in this discussion, not least because of his own philosophically aware and motivated writing, but also because of his recurring themes, incorporating both Romantic and Modernist elements.

While exploring what Stevens came to see as the major theme of his poetry, the idea of a Supreme Fiction, this chapter will also provide a reading of McDowell's always-already conceptualised notion of experience, in which a partially re-enchanted world is returned to our possibilities of meaning through *Bildung*. In discussing many of the challenges offered to McDowell's account, I will suggest how a less minimal view of experience can add to the concepts he seeks to apply. Stevens' poetic encounters are key to this enrichment, just as McDowell's framework of a partially re-enchanted world provides a coherent way of understanding Stevens' aspirations Toward a Supreme Fiction. Matthew Muter has characterised this search in tellingly Wittgensteinian terms: 'Stevens [...] often wants us to relinquish the hold that certain questions have on our imaginations, precisely because they are no longer intelligible as questions outside of a religious cosmology' ('Wallace Stevens, Analogy, and Tautology' 742). Poetry is such a potent tool for this task (and thus responsible for executing it) because much of what is problematic about religious accounts of the world is dependent upon and generated by the complex articulation of linguistic modes (e.g.: metaphor, analogy, symbol) that poetry operates in. A poem is a text that we read in a certain way - a literary practice – 'and we do so because we are rewarded for it' (Robert B Pierce 'Defining Poetry' 159). It can equally challenge philosophy's traditional terrain by setting its responsive and allusive techniques against the regularity and conceptualising methods of traditional philosophy; Richard Kuhns in fact reads 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' as a specific attack on Descartes' *Meditations*. It is an affirmatively incomplete investigation, provoking the reader into response, rather than setting out conclusions. ('Metaphor as Plausible Inference in Poetry and Philosophy'). Part of the project of relinquishing old pictures, in religion as in philosophy, is to point to our experience and how it is shaped, contingently, by our pictures in language. Muter sees in this Stevens' favouring of 'pre-linguistic experience' (742), but, as this chapter will argue, the divide between linguistic and pre-linguistic is not simple and never definitive. Given the sensual quality of language itself – something Stevens celebrate in 'Notes' – and McDowell's arguments against the viability of non-conceptualised experience, these revisions of techniques and pictures must occur within language, must be modifications, not denials or prescriptions.

The chapter interweaves analysis of McDowell's position and readings of two of Stevens' shorter poems, in order to bring the chief issues, problems and their treatment into view. It concludes with a longer analysis of 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction',

read as providing the kind of rich, continuous notion of our imaginative and social engagement with the world that McDowell's account lacks.

Though broadly concurring with the account McDowell gives, this chapter does question some aspects of it. There is also a general question about whether his method is Wittgensteinian at all, since it attempts to "solve a problem" of how language and world connect (the harmony of 'thought and world' (*PI* §429)), where Wittgenstein would presumably see this as something to be addressed through reminders of discrete cases (Tim Thornton 'The harmony of thought and reality in McDowell and Wittgenstein'). By tying both McDowell's solution and Stevens' poetry to the level of practice, I hope to introduce a less theoretical, more example-driven way of seeing the supposed problem.

One aspect that might be thought missing from McDowell's account is something he might well have adapted from Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, the notion of aesthetic contemplation in which, entirely unspookily (cf. *MW* 94) and without withdrawing our conceptualisation from the world, we allow that sometimes, for some people, our conceptualisation can be provisional or have multiple aspects. This is the capacity that art, perhaps especially the verbal fluidity of poetry, exploits. Art engages our '*responsive imagination*' (emphasis in original. Carolyn Wilde 'Ethics and Aesthetics are One' 170) in a way that is neither forced from us, nor an act of interpretation. With the addition of a more comfortable attitude toward determinate meaning, though the parallel practice of poetry, philosophy may avoid the seeming necessity of certain limiting views of language.

The attempt in this chapter is not, however, to simply elide philosophy and poetry, as if once we have admitted that both are forms of word-use any distinction between them is artificial. This is the mistake of much of the critical theory that, having rejected the possibility of absolutes or metaphysics, abandons notions of difference between language usages on the basis of those same absolutist forms of reasoning (see Michael Fisher 'Stanley Cavell's Wittgenstein' and Charles Altieri 'Wittgenstein on Consciousness and Language: A Challenge to Derridean Literary Theory'). When Cavell asks at the end of *The Claim of Reason* whether philosophy could become simply another form of literature and still 'know itself' (496), this need not be a worry that philosophy can no longer make the kind of claims it would wish to make and that poetry is simply a game with no further consequence. This would indeed be the concern

of traditional substantive philosophy, but falls out of sight on a practice-oriented view of language such as that given in this thesis and interrogated in this chapter via McDowell's and Stevens' work. Rather, for philosophy to 'know itself' it will need to retain its recognisable forms and techniques even while calling these into question; its distinction from poetry does not come from some essential quality but from the how of its practice. When it is claimed that philosophy ought to be written in the manner of poetry (*CV* 28e), this does not elide the two, but demands a certain spirit and a certain care for the use of language, which philosophy and poetry both rely on to establish their particular roles in a culture. As Marjorie Perloff says, 'the possibility of reading the *Investigations* and related lecture notes as themselves poetic is hardly likely to arise' (*Wittgenstein's Ladder* 79) yet there are links between how poetry can address the world and how philosophy operates; both rely, at least in the mode that Wittgenstein has in mind, on a kind of seeing-as, rather than being bearers of new information (*CV* 28e, 67e; *Z* §§155-60; *PI* pp193-208).

In the context of McDowell's *Mind and World*, Anthony J. Cascardi's positioning of modernism as the battle to come to terms with the Enlightenment division of rationality and anthropomorphism, or mind and nature, is instructive ('Cavell and Kant: The work of Criticism and the Work of Art' 58-9). Aesthetic modernism's aim is 'to present for judgement creations that, while confounding our categories, our established way of conceiving them – even as art – still strike us as meaningful' (R. M. Berry 'Stanley Cavell's Modernism' 43).

As this chapter will outline, McDowell's project is modernist in this sense, attempting through his insistence on a modest realism about meaning in the world to accommodate us to our dominantly causal view of the world that is potentially pernicious, but only if treated as if inevitable and complete in itself. To this end, this chapter explores the role that art, specifically poetry, can play in reminding us of our capacity for, even enjoyment of, the confounding of concepts *within* our practices of applying them; we create meaning and fictions in harness but in ways that, seen in the right way, do not threaten our grasp on the world. Work in philosophy as in poetry is partly a matter of adjusting long-held perspectives, and the work does not have an ending (*Z* §447).

Sometimes poetry's representation of the ordinary can be like the attempt to see things without recognising them, or to test the ways we seem to *have* to see them (*PI* §§139-141) whether explicitly, such as with Craig Raine's 'A Martian send a postcard home',

or in Wallace Stevens' more subtle disorientation of assumed understanding, through collisions of scale, for example in 'Anecdote of the Jar' (*CP* 76) , when we are prompted to picture as if on an equal footing the jar and the entire state of Tennessee, or in curtailed grammatical forms and 'odd syntax' (Helen Vendler *On Extended Wings* 13). These demand a strange, attentive looseness to Stevens' poetry, holding things provisionally against what turns may come, such as in Canon Aspirin's tumultuous, building dream in 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' (*CP* 402-404). Importantly, in no wise are these disorientations transcendental; rather they provide a counterpoint to the forms and tones that regulate our belief systems (Brown 'Negative Poetics' 135).

In 'The Philosophical Significance of a Poem (On Wallace Stevens)', Simon Critchley uses Wallace Stevens to insist that the persistent concern of Western philosophy with 'the relation between our thoughts and the things which those thoughts might be said to be about' (269) might be approached in 'interesting and unforeseen ways' (271) through the reading of poetry, specifically in this instance Wallace Stevens' 'The Idea of Order at Key West' (*CP* 128). Indeed, Stevens has readily leant himself to philosophical discussions, partly through his own interest in the subject, sufficiently so that as early as 1967 Ronald Sukenick could complain of numerous 'slipshod' attempts to find parallels 'in thought, and even in language, with systematic thinkers', where the search for a single coherent picture overlooks the complexity and obscurity of the poems: 'philosophy cannot serve as a gloss for Stevens' almost impenetrable phrases' (*Musing the Obscure* 1) . Critchley is himself wary of cherry-picking the poetry for convenient or memorable phrases, and argues explicitly for poetry's value to philosophy *as* poetry in *Thing Merely Are*. Critchley goes on in 'The Philosophical Significance of a Poem (On Wallace Stevens)' to tease out the questions of imagination's relation to, and partial authority over, reality in this poem (to use Stevens' usual terms for this dichotomy). Stevens proves to be irreducible to either 'linguistic idealism or anti-realism' (287), since the complex relation between imagination and reality remains an inter-dependency that denies ultimate priority of one over the other.

Like McDowell, Stevens recognises the importance of constraint on our capacities, in terms of the friction that creates meaning (§*PI* 107), the effectiveness of writing, and the pleasure of the success of meaning. Life, like a poem, should 'resist the intelligence / Almost successfully' ('Man Carrying Thing' *CP* 350), through a process of guiding and challenging our craving for meaning-making. McDowell's effort, meanwhile, is to bring the world and our thinking back together, building at least partially on a notion of our

being (factually) correct about the state of the world when we speak of it. But this is not a reductive account of the relation between our linguistic practices and the 'general facts of nature'; as with Wittgenstein's efforts in his later writing, the view is that 'our natural history *constrains* but *does not determine* our concepts and language-games' (emphasis in original. José Medina 'Wittgenstein's Social Naturalism' 81).

It is, therefore, not necessarily at the junction of *truth* that mind and world meet, even if an assumption of reliability of experience underpins the possibility of language. As David Schalkwyk urges, 'the world is always already "in" language in the form of its instruments of representation. [...] In other words, in terms of its *sense*, though *not* its truth, a lie, a speculation, a wish of a work of fiction is not less beholden to the world than a factual report may be' ('Fiction as "grammatical" investigation' 289).

It is this crucial point that opens up this discussion. It seeks to remove from McDowell's account some restrictions that are shown to be problematic, while providing reminders of how Stevens' poetic project is shaped by, and comments on, similar concerns. Although it is not necessary to agree with Schalkwyk in his extension of the above quotation that 'each depends in the same way on *prior appropriations* of the world which are not yet moves in the language-game' (My emphasis. 289), his general argument supports the usefulness and versatility of fiction, since it is a world-involving practice even when not mimetic (295-7). The possibility of a fiction's being interpreted and re-interpreted, rather than merely decoded, also has implications that will be indicated in this chapter, including the pedagogical, ethical, creative and corrective. Rather than discussing a particular work of fiction, however, the point of argument here is the conception of fictions as shaping and constraining our worldview; fictions considered as, in various ways, the boundaries and backgrounds of our language games. Wallace Stevens' repeated engagement with the importance of such fictions, and the notion of a 'Supreme Fiction' – and what that might mean – provides a canvas upon which to sketch a number of comments on McDowell's realism and re-enchantment, both its potential and its shortcomings.

Stevens is a particularly apt poetic case study, because his writing does at times mimic the form of philosophy, with sequences that resemble logical arguments, and a penchant for the 'if/but' formulation of analogies that operate like hypotheses (Helen Vendler 'Wallace Stevens: Hypotheses and Contradictions'). This characteristic is more prevalent in the earlier poetry than the later, which Vendler reads as a gradual eliding of

the structure into a more direct apposition of images. Like the propositions in the *Tractatus*, the linkages between points/images are reduced or removed, so that argumentation is replace with demonstration, with similar intriguing effects. However, the questioning, testing voice remains important throughout Stevens' writing, in the retractions and self-corrections found in parts of 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction', such as the moment when the topic of the poem's prevarication – its uncertainty of whether it is, or should speak, the high-flown 'poet's gibberish' or the quotidian 'gibberish of the vulgate' – is itself performed by serial questions: 'Does it move to and fro or is it of both // At once?' (*CP* 396 ix ll. 1-4). To read the poems solely as arguments, however, would be to misunderstand the process unfolding. Merle E. Brown claims that all Stevens' 'genuine poems may be called poems "of the mind in the act of finding / What will suffice"' (*Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* 62, quoting 'Of Modern Poetry' ll. 1-2). The poems *perform*, rather than argue, such that Stevens may work through many different positions and thoughts in one poem, without the relation between the thoughts needing to be one of succession, contradiction or agreement.

Although Cary Wolfe has characterised Stevens' repetitions and probings of key ideas and expressions as almost 'systematic' ('The Idea of Observation at Key West' 263) (such as the assemblages of "nothingness" and "nakedness" in 'Notes' (*CP* 402-3)), far better, as Frank Doggett has argued in *Wallace Stevens' Later Poetry*, to think of the poet having an unrelinquishable 'sense of the world' (148) – an understanding of, and attitude toward, his environment and possibilities, from which no 'ordered, philosophical system' (148) ought to be deduced. Piecemeal and in performance, the poet finds the 'intimate discord' between name and object, word and thing, in ways that unsettle rather than argue; these are displays rather than descriptions of otherness (Michael Murray 'The Conflict Between Poetry and Literature' 75). Stevens 'never stays philosophic for very long; he is himself only when he is most evasive' (Harold Bloom *The Poems of our Climate* 216-7).

I suggest that *Mind and World* might in fact provide a framework more attuned to Stevens' concerns than first appears, especially given the distant relationship between analytic philosophy and literature (standing in some contrast to Continental philosophy, of which Critchley's Heideggerian analysis of 'The Idea of Order at Key West' mentioned above stands as a pertinent example). This suggestion applies in particular to the late poetry, as much in terms of remit as in content. Merle E. Brown's reading of 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' in *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* notably puts

the Poet in a position similar to McDowell's stated aim of providing not a theory or even a new worldview, but a set of 'reminders' to help us recognise where our treatment of language – specifically the stark modern contrast between 'natural' and 'human' – has blinded us to the availability of other possibilities: 'The poet […] would *simply have ordinary men be aware* of the affirmative truthfulness of the poet concerning [the] falseness' of the fictions about the world within which we normally live (My emphasis. Brown 116). But these fictions are not debased on account of being fictions; instead the value of the fictions themselves, the 'heroism, of their fictive efforts' is revealed by the poet's work. For Stevens, the poet is a 'potent figure' who 'gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive it' ('The Noble Rider' 31).

Mind and World incorporates the distinct but inseparable notions of imagination and reality that Stevens requires, while also arguing for a re-enchantment of nature. As I will argue, this latter notion has been under-defined in McDowell's text, and undervalued in responses to the work. I present a reading designed to chime with Stevens' Romantic outlook, in which re-enchantment is given a stronger but still not "supernatural" role, in line with Stevens' poetic project. Emphasising McDowell's concentration on context and the treatment of experience as set within a wider group of practices, such an account will be able to treat poetry as a thing in itself, rather than secondary to some more profound, disguised, intellectual content. It will also showcase the 'antidualistic function of the poet's attention to the commonplace' that Siobhan Phillips stresses in her account of the everyday temporality at the heart of Stevens' writing (*The Poetics of the Everyday* 73), and attend to the fact that Stevens thought a poet ought to 'take his station in the midst of the circumstances in which people actually live' (qtd. in Phillips 75).

The following section will give a targeted reading of McDowell's key moves in *Mind and World*. This is interspersed with close readings of some of Stevens' poems, so that the issues at stake in both streams can be usefully combined. Central to this approach is the preservation of the tension between 'being a poem' and 'doing philosophy' while holding them in dialogue. The poems are examples from Stevens' mid-to-late poetry, showing the development of his thought in this period, culminating in his long poem, 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'. The focus on this poem will demonstrate some of the commonalities between Stevens' conception of the world and what re-enchantment could be made to do for McDowell's account.

Generative Constraints

The chief concern of McDowell's *Mind and World* is to unpack the possibility and form of the justification of judgments by appeal to an extra-conceptual world, that things are 'thus and so' (26). To frame this using terminology that links with Stevens' theory of poetry, imagination must be possible, must exceed mere reality, but must also be answerable to, or adhere to, reality. In other words, we want the world to provide a check on our imagination, for fear of sliding into idle fantasy and solipsism, without making our thinking and saying reducible to a causal, mechanical element of the world, removing the possibility of it having meaning.

When speaking, therefore, about judgements, McDowell means rational moves that are in principle (if not necessarily actually) open to the assessment of others. A rational move is one made within a language, in the broadest sense, and not a private sphere of consciousness. This is what makes agreement and disagreement possible. Such a stance can give a coherent account of how we use language and form communities of thinkers, but must guard against a coherentism divorced from the physical realities of life.

McDowell can be classified as a 'modest' realist, seeking to stand in contrast to both bold realism and anti-realism without becoming merely 'banal' (Luntley *Opening Investigations* 103). He categorises the ambitions of philosophy as seeking both a 'tribunal' (*MW* xii) of experience and a vision of language that allows meaning: on the one hand, we need something raw, independent of our thinking, which will offer a standard; on the other, we need to be able to explain why this, being thus distinct, might impact on our thinking at all. We have a 'tendency to oscillate between two unpalatable positions: a coherentism that loses the bearing of empirical thought on reality altogether and a recoil in a vain attempt to the Given' (*MW* 108). For a clear account of the conception of the Given McDowell uses, see Richard Bernstein 'McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism', showing McDowell's domesticated use of Hegel and his concept of 'immediacy', in relation to the 'philosophical anxiety' McDowell claims to have identified (10-11). The Given here stands for the idea that there is an external world – simply 'given' – that we receive and then subsequently conceptualise; this is designed to provide a backstop to what and how we think about the world, and is most popularly and powerfully conceived in terms of scientific truths (laws of nature) upon which our ideas of meaning and value are imposed. Indeed, this division is in many ways the dominant feature of the modern worldview, which is what makes it so hard to think of any other arrangement existing (Michael Friedman 'Exorcising the

Philosophical Tradition'). Annie Dillard, considering our enthrallment to the meaning-free idea of the world, sums up its apparent hopelessness as:

> Nature's silence is its one remark [...] Now we are no longer primitive; now the whole world seems not-holy. We have drained the light from the boughs in the sacred grove and snuffed it in the high places and along the banks of sacred streams. We as a people have moved from pantheism to pan-atheism. Silence is not our heritage but our destiny; we live where we want to live. (Teaching a Stone to Talk 69)

What drives a positing of a Given, then, is to allow us to 'acknowledge an external constraint on our freedom to employ empirical concepts' (*MW* 6). This is supposed to give us a 'final justification' for the moves we make in the 'logical space of reasons'[28] beyond the range of our 'space of concepts' (5). If we want a radically independent world-in-itself to constrain our freedom, it must be outside our conception of it but yet be the cause of what is in our conceptualised content: pointing at something that is 'simply received in experience' (6). It can only, of course, be pointing, because it is by definition beyond the conceptualised experiences we are seeking to justify through it. This is supposed to act as a guarantor of our imagination, to enable us to ground our conceptualised experience. McDowell argues, however, that the Given proves in the end to be 'useless for its purpose' (7).

'Jouga'

This same quandary of our connection to and intimacy with an indifferent physical world occupied Stevens' thinking, especially in his middle period. From the same 1947 collection *Transport to Summer*, as 'Notes', 'Jouga' opens with the lines 'The physical world is meaningless tonight / And there is no other' (*CP* 337).

In it, the intimate relation of a guitar player (Ha-eé-me) and his instrument is described as a vortex of exchange, difference and communality; both are beasts, but 'not quite two of a kind'. The quick, circling feel of the poem replicates a noodling, jangling kind of sound ('his tap-tap-tap') rather than deliberate – meaningful – playing; certainly the impression is not of Stevens' applause for the music they are making. The poem expresses an unsatisfied and restless mood, as if the opening commitment has left things tiringly unanchored. It ends with the guitarist falling asleep, and the sounds of nature re-entering: first the 'wind and the sea', then the jaguar.

---

[28] This is McDowell's phrase – borrowed from Wilfred Sellars' 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' – to suggest the arena of rational thought ('placing things in the space of reasons'), as opposed to the 'realm of law', the causal world (*MW* 5n).

It is quite straightforward to read this poem as a return of the 'Man with the Blue Guitar' (1936), but in somewhat contorted and sardonic form. He has become 'an imbecile' whose name may be 'Jamie' voiced in the slur of a drunk or as an echo of baby-babble, with the guitar-as-wife (and vice-versa) representing the repetitive trials and conversations of marriage. Stevens' use of apparently meaningless nonsense sounds for the title and the guitarist's name is a distinctive technique of his for highlighting the meaning or mood of a poem (Irvin Ehrenpreis 'Strange Relations: Stevens' Nonsense' 219), here signalling the fine gradations between meaningful and meaningless, human and natural sounds. Echoing Diamond's nonsense speaker discussed in Chapter 2, propositional nonsense might still reveal something about the speaker, without itself being resolved into sense.

That said, Steven's nonsense sounds seem hardly arbitrarily chosen and have a number of sonic suggestions. Helen Vendler in 'Stevens and the Lyric Speaker' gives just such an interpretation, connecting the title *Jouga* to 'the marital yoke (in French, joug)' (137), claiming that 'Stevens can imagine no end to this debased conjugal union except for a merciful obliteration of its guitarist in sleep' (138). Vendler also, in 'Hypotheses and Contradictions', sees in 'Jouga' a deformation of the Spanish *jugar,* 'to play' (109) marking a parallel to the guitarist's mangled name, Jamie. This would coincide with the poem's insistence on a kind of game being played out and the sense of its not quite being able to say things as 'properly' and purposefully as it might like.

By contrast, Brian Glaser reads Ha-eé-me as more straight-forwardly autobiographical, with the stress on the 'me' and the 'Ha' denoting some self-mocking of the player/poet whose music is imbecilic ('Ambivalent Posthumanism' 212). The animal self-identity of the 'great jaguar' is contrasted to the human 'not beasts'. The distancing between the human mind and reality of nature is a burden or a failure. Thus, framed as a poem about the relation between the human imagination and the real, an alternative dance emerges. The poem begins and ends with the 'meaningless' physical world, particularised by 'the wind and the sea.' This is almost a repeat of a line in the earlier (1937) poem 'The Idea of Order at Key West' (*CP* 128-30): 'The meaningless plungings of water and the wind', in which the sea – following Critchley's account ('The Philosophical Significance of a Poem' 227) – stands in for 'the real', colluding with and resisting the woman's song: 'She sang beyond the genius of the sea. / The water never formed to mind or voice.' (*CP* 128). Stevens seems to be drawing a distinction between the inevitability of the real world, and the active, creative operations of human behaviour

(or better, human interaction). If the poem is not 'meaningless' it is only because of Ha-eé-me's playing of his guitar, whatever we may think of the noise produced.

The dichotomy closely mirrors McDowell's separation of the 'realm of law' and the 'logical space of reasons' (*MW* 5); imagination and rational thought are qualitatively different from the causal operations of nature. However, they are not, for that reason, cut off from each other. Although Stevens only later sought out ways to overcome this divide, as will be discussed, the seeds of a rapprochement are sown here. Since Ha-eé-me and his guitar (wife?) are not just music makers, but also beasts of a certain kind, they are firmly rooted in the physical world. The ending of the poem muddies the water perfectly with the introduction of the jaguar – another beast, firmly part of the natural world, yet one that 'will make a little sound' (*CP* 337). Its sound is at least its own, continuous with its life, rather than the merely 'rented' music of human language (Muter 'Wallace Stevens, Analogy, and Tautology' 760). Tentatively, in its movement, it provides the bridge between the physical world and the imaginative act of music-making; there is, in life, some quiet semblance of meaning, even though its 'little sound' may be drowned out by the jangling of a guitar – the more obvious noise of human meaning making – and only noticed once the music stops, perhaps only by the wakeful poet, while others sleep.

Stevens' discomfort with a straight dichotomy between imagination and reality is useful for understanding McDowell's objection to the idea of a Given. If the world is just 'there', without meaning, what possible relation could there be between my thinking about the world and the world itself, given that the two things are of a radically different kind? Certainly, physical forces impact on us (nature as the realm of law), and cause events which may give rise to moves in the space of reasons – but these causes cannot, according to McDowell, be justifications, only 'exculpations'(*MW* 8). A physical event may make a claim understandable – give it a context within which it makes sense – but this falls short of being a reason, insofar as it lacks the element of a claim being made about the world.

It should be stressed that McDowell undermines the endogenous as much as the exogenous Given. Not only can the idea of an independent outer world not be an ultimate justification of our actions but we must give up the idea of something Given "inside", too. It is not the case that basic experience, even something as simple as feeling pain, must be first something natural and non-conceptual, and only later

conceptualised; learning behaviour takes many forms, and the conceptual or linguistic response need not be at a further remove than an animal cry (*PI* §244). Nor are our means of conceptualisation already given, needing only to be matched up to our experiential intake; Kant's *a priori* categories are, for example, in this sense an endogenous Given, whereas we must leave open the possibility that these are also subject to revision and commentary. Such a view means a rejection of attempting to explain the nature of consciousness and its interaction with the world in terms of 'sempiternal objects or standing inner archetypes'; how we make meaning and judgements is 'something that is established *within* language games and nowhere outside of them' (Eldridge *Leading a Human Life* 174).

'Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight'

The complicated way, then, that our imagining of the world connects with its rigidity forms part of what makes expression possible – the friction between what we are capable of uttering, and the 'real world' consequences. The word both falls short and does not. The mind strives to 'attain that which is not itself' (Frank Doggett *Stevens' Poetry of Thought* 98) but in doing so already posits its target as something other. In 'Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight' (*CP* 430) Stevens explores this ongoing negotiation between poetic language and objects, as the roses both invite and escape metaphor:

> Too much as they are to be changed by metaphor,
>
> Too actual, things that in being real
>
> Make imaginings of them lesser things. (ll. 4-6)

The poem turns back in on itself multiple times, becoming a metaphor for the rhetorical device of metaphor and, perhaps, its failure. It resembles nothing so much as an impressionist painting, dealing in dashes of colour (pink yellows, orange whites, black reds, red, yellow and white) and the play of light, barely giving any sense of shape or arrangement. The roses themselves are not captured, but the experience of them: 'this effect is a consequence of the way / We feel and, therefore, is not real, except / In our sense of it' (ll. 7-8). This effect is unlikely to be accidental, given Stevens' life-long interest in painting and particularly impressionism (Michel Benamou 'Wallace Stevens: Some Relations Between Painting and Poetry' 48).

By resetting in this manner the painter's attempts to capture reality as a further expression of experience rather than objects as they are, Stevens meditates on our attempts to grasp the world through language. The perpetual elusiveness of the roses to

metaphor, their being 'too actual', means that our imagining of them is a lessening of the real object, and that they resist easy manipulation by our imagination. Except that the roses are a fiction, too, a metaphor for the relation between reality and imagination Stevens wants to talk about. The poem communicates the primacy of these imaginary roses' reality over our descriptions of them: 'sense exceeds all metaphor'. Stevens deploys his recurrent Platonic symbol for the real in the sunlight that falls on the flower, creating a further layering of ways to read the lines. How does this reflect back on Stevens' network of metaphors for the attempt to access direct reality? As James Seitz has argued in *Motives for Metaphor*, a failed metaphor can also be productive, since it calls attention not only to the likeness between tenor and vehicle but also the preserved difference; it demands the involvement of the observer in a way that brings one closer to the intended object as one falls through the surface level of comparison and is invited to reconstruct the image differently. Isabel Galleymore, who has studied how a range of poets use metaphor and the failure of metaphor for ecocritical purposes, notes how 'metaphors break down and reveal the gap between their representations and the environment itself' ('Trope on Trope' 31). The limitations of metaphor for grabbing the roses both highlight the resistance of reality to our whim and, paradoxically, demonstrate the power of metaphor to communicate that same speechliness.

Stevens emphasises the poem's existence as language by framing the whole thing as a speech act. The opening '*Say* that it is' (my emphasis) works to remind the reader that this is, after all, a poem, an expression. And what at first sight appears to be a definite claim about the way of the world in the final stanza is modified at the last to an impression: 'This is what makes them *seem* / So far beyond the rhetorician's touch' (my emphasis). Nowhere does Stevens allow us to settle either for the real subjugating the imagination, or for imagination dictating what is real. The choice of these roses as the central image is entirely apt, for they, too, are a hybrid, plants taken from nature and placed into the artificial form of a bouquet. The real and how we would like the world to be is combined in these flowers, and that union is not without limit or cost, given the fate of cut flowers.

Alternatively, the two elements of reality and imagination might be conceived of as confluent rivers, churning each other up as they meet and continue on in a third direction. In some cases, where their content is very similar, the waters may be immediately indistinguishable; in others, parallel streams of different colours and

character may flow for many miles beyond the meeting point, such as where the silted glacial waters of the Arve meet the clear water of the Rhône, at Geneva.

B. J. Legget, in 'Stevens' Late Poetry' characterises this poem as raising 'pre-verbal sense' (68) above verbal expression, as a pair with 'Saint John and the Back-Ache'. The poems are interpreted as occasions of matters-of-fact overruling a subsequent imposition of concepts. Though Legget's reading is given as one example among many different positions that Stevens adopts, so makes no claims to this being definitive, it would be an over-simplification to take this as central to what goes on in 'Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight' (and elsewhere). Rather, it provides a playground for the struggle between our desire to see the world as we would like, and the necessity of inhabiting a world that bites back.

In just the same way, McDowell in *Mind and World* is at pains to stress the necessary *partial passivity* of experience (89), because this allows us to open ourselves up to influences from the world at large. We are in need of input into our experience (the inalienable need that McDowell adopts from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* for *both* receptivity and spontaneity, which make a not 'even notionally separable contribution' to experience (*MW* 51)). But, while we must be partly passive, it follows that there is also a need for activity in judgement. Despite the welcome pressures of the external world, there is always a remainder that demands that one be held responsible for one's acts. This responsibility is the companion to our spontaneity, to the extent that such responsibility pertains to a member of the practice within which one acts. In other words, in order to be considered to be a competent user of an expression, it is a vital assumption on the part of others that one has a measure of intention in the saying of it, as is appropriate to utterances of that type. Membership of a practice involves responsibility for one's behaviour within that practice. When one makes a claim, one holds it up for judgement, within the suitable context for such a claim. Variety, a certain freedom, is required here if the concept of responsibility is to make any sense. If there were no rules for the use of the words then there would be no possibility of using them rightly or wrongly.

It is important to note at this juncture that the notion of 'concept' and conceptualisation can be used in many different ways. Two of these are relevant here: 1) concept in the very general sense of our capacity to form and interrogate our mode of existence, and 2) concept in the more everyday sense of specific concepts – ideas of objects and our

149

thinking about them. McDowell, beginning with his Kantian framework, is deploying the first type of concept, which is to say that his interest lies in the general possibility of experience. Although reference is made to some more specific ideas and activities (learning how to use words, for example) these are of the very general type. However, with the insertion of 'second nature' (discussed below), McDowell's kinds of concepts necessarily become, I argue, partly of the second type, since the capacities described go beyond our receptivity, out into the social and meaning-laden world. This shift is either not recognised or not made explicit in *Mind and World,* which has confounded some responses to the work. In Charles Taylor's 'Foundationalism and the Inner-outer Distinction', for example, conceptualised experience is conflated with linguistic or conscious behaviour, meaning that the idea that '[o]rdinary coping isn't conceptual' (111) fails to gain purchase against *Mind and World*'s underlying project, which does not rely on the higher degree of conscious behaviour that Taylor is questioning, at least not until a point at which the criticism arrives too late.

This shift is by no means fatal to McDowell's account, though the lack of explanation is a shortcoming. A more embedded account of experience is needed. The poetry of Wallace Stevens opens up just such avenues of thought, with its combination of sensual experience, and testing of conceptual and grammatical relations, seen in particular in 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'. We can chart the interrelation of the different levels of concept, from the most abstract to the very particular, and how this is not a simple accretion of detail but a shifting, developing activity, a practice of attention giving and attention calling. Further, this focus on a kind of activity, rather than an overarching theory, may prove more acceptable to McDowell than the alternatives. As Stevens invites us to consider likeness, differences and difficulties, this accords with the 'standing obligation to engage in critical reflection' (*MW* 126) that lies at the heart of how McDowell envisages a minimally prescriptive picture of our kind of experience.

Bildungsroman: Inhabiting McDowell's World

Throughout *Mind and World*, and in his defence of it in subsequent publications (see especially his responses to the essays in *Reading McDowell on Mind and World* 2002) McDowell has attempted to present his work as being thoroughly non-theoretical, avoiding the temptations of speculative or systematic philosophy. Rather, he sees his role as solely the removal of the misleading picture which has 'held us captive', leading to the common paradoxes of modern Western philosophy. As A. C. Genova in 'Review of Reading McDowell on Mind and World' has it: 'He conceives his project as: purely

diagnostic, therapeutic, non-revisionary, and non-constructive, directed to the exorcism of a wrong picture'. It is therefore quite difficult to establish a) whether removing the 'Myth of the Given' necessitates replacing it with a different picture – which McDowell denies, and b) how, if we are able to resist the imposition of a new, equally limiting picture, our new circumstances are to be described.

This latter objection is made strongly in reference to McDowell's discussion of the ontology of reasons by Charles Larmore: 'McDowell, however, is in no position to promise peace' ('Attending to Reasons' 195). It remains an open question, I would contend, whether 'peace' is truly what is at issue, however. Recalling Wittgenstein's remark in *The Big Typescript*, the objective is not to achieve stasis but a more modest form of philosophical activity: 'its task isn't to put something new in place of our language, but to remove certain misunderstandings from it' (§67). McDowell's aim is to unshackle in some sense our current view of the world from its self-imposed limitations, simply by a 'reminder' that the way we do things is in part the result of historical and contextual demands. This is chiefly achieved by paying attention to the notion of *Bildung* and a subsequent 'partial re-enchantment of nature' (*MW* 88). Following a brief account of how McDowell appropriates *Bildung*, a term with an established history in German philosophy, I want to suggest how the partial re-enchantment of nature might be accomplished, since from McDowell's account 'it does seem like some detailed exposition is needed', though this need not necessarily be the task of philosophy (Brendan Boyle 'The *Bildungsroman* after McDowell: Mind, World, and Moral Education' 174). Here again Stevens' poetry provides not only a helpful illustration of the issue but also in some ways a more effective, self-reflective response. The idea of a Supreme Fiction will be harnessed to this purpose, along with Stevens' own view of modernity and modern poetry as attempting to get beneath the paint of the world, toward the world itself: 'Modern poetry, Stevens says, undoes a painted world; he does not say that modern poetry in turn can apply only another coat of paint' (Bloom *The Poems of our Climate* 174).

Crucially, in this vein, the use of *Bildung* implies not a new and better version of how to look at the world, but a reminding (or in Hagberg's rendering 're-minding') of innate capacities of being a human in the world. If successful in this Wittgensteinian mode of instruction, we are 'made mindful of the wide range of diverse cases that we separately and within their contexts readily comprehend but of which we lose sight when ascending to overgeneralizations [...] the question that calls for the generalized account

now seems crude, insensitive, unnecessary, beside the point, unintelligibly general' (*Wittgenstein's Voice* 510). By *Bildung*, McDowell means something like 'having one's eyes opened to reasons at large by acquiring a second nature' (*MW* 84), where 'second nature' is the capacity of human beings to come to see the world (i.e. to be trained or educated) in specifically human, ethical and conceptual ways, partaking of what Aristotle calls practical wisdom. To use Richard Bernstein's formulation: 'it is our conceptual and judgmental capacities that *open us* to the world – a world that exercises a rational constraint on our knowledge' ('McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism' 15). The multiple layers of openness, responsibility and capacity inherent in the above definition make it resistant to an easy shorthand; McDowell says: 'I cannot think of a good short English expression for this, but it is what figures in German philosophy as *Bildung*' (*MW* 84). As so often, German has provided a more useful word than the English 'education' or 'training' or 'development', but this does not mean that it is an easy concept to grasp, especially if its history of use is taken into account, as McDowell implies it should be.

Rolf Selbmann, notes in *Der Deutsche Bildungsroman* that '*Im unterschied zur Erziehung liegt das Augenmerk bei der Bildung auf einem betont herausgestellten Individualismus des zu Bildenen'* (3): 'In contrast to education, it is a peculiarity of *Bildung* that it emphasises individuality in the one being educated' (My translation). Factual learning is differentiated from the expanding of an individual's understanding of the world, and it is something else again from the know-that/know-how distinction (Mitchell Green 'Empathy, Expression, and what Artworks have to teach'). There is a sense of growing into what one ought to be, without this being determined in advance, which can even involve a sense of reclamation: Todd Kontje traces the origins of *Bildung* to *Gestaltung* – giving form to with religious connotations. Since the Fall, mankind has become de-formed – *entbildet* – having 'fallen out of their unity with God' (*The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre* 1).

McDowell's use of *Bildung* marks his interest in the work of Hegel though in a 'domesticated' form (*MW* 44-5, 83). Richard Bernstein makes the case for a stronger Hegelian presence in *Mind and World* than is generally noted, particularly in the appropriation of this term: 'It is Hegel who sought to bring about the reconciliation that McDowell calls for. It is Hegel who assigns *Bildung* a central place in his understanding of human nature.' ('McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism' 18). Further, the structures

by which Hegel's philosophy develops can also be mapped onto the movements of the *Roman*, according to Michael Eldridge:

> In the *Phenomenology,* Hegel shows the reader the development of an open and intelligent mind in a complex society that lacks universally accepted values, as the main character encounters a wide variety of experiences. As is typical of a *Bildungsroman*, the center of interest is the links between the main character's successive experiences and his gradual achievement of a fully rounded personality and well-tested philosophy of life. ('The German *Bildung* Tradition')

Amongst its many associations, I would like to stress the element of self-actualisation implicit in the term *Bildung* – that the subject being thus educated is both responsive to external stimuli and limitations, and responsible for the engagement with these factors. In the case of McDowell's account we are partially passive in terms of our environment and capacities but stand under an obligation (arising both from our natural capacities and the traditions that these allow us to be initiated into) to reflect on these same ideas and practices, and our responsibility in taking them up (*MW* 126).

The strong connection between *Bildung* and the genre of the *Bildungsroman,* already hinted at above*,* is inescapable, and although McDowell does not use the term in *Mind and World*, there is something to be gained by thinking in terms of a literary model, and what this would mean for McDowell. Not that *Bildungsroman* is a much easier term to pin down than *Bildung*; it has evolved over several generations of critical movements, such that a history would be needed rather than a definition. As Todd Kontje demonstrates in *The German Bildungsroman*, even what can be regarded as one of the genre's founding texts, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* has been interpreted variously by different critics since its initial reception. Schiller, commenting on a draft manuscript, thought that the novel reflected his own aesthetic theory but failed to state its overall 'message' clearly enough: 'Er tritt von einem leeren und unbestimmten Ideal in ein bestimmtes tätiges Leben, aber ohne die idealisierende Kraft dabei einzubüßen' ("He steps from an empty and unspecified ideal into a specific active life, but without losing the idealizing energy in the process.") (qtd. in Kontje *The German Bildungs Roman* 10). Schlegel, on the other hand, saw the self-referential irony of Goethe's work as '*Poesie der Poesie*' – metafiction – which permitted a focus on the structure of the piece, and the internal discussion and stories within it, but lost sight of the individual at

the heart of the novel. Novalis in turn attacked it for its denigration of the mystical and fantastical, in preference for the prosaic and modern (Kontje *The German Bildungs Roman* 11-2).

Although the *Bildungsroman* genre itself has not been starved of critical or philosophical attention, there is a difference between the kind of work that McDowell's text invites it to do, and other treatments. As Boyle argues, 'His invocation of *Bildung* invites us to see the genre as centrally involved with the problem of how the developing subject' comes to be properly responsive to reasons – that is, the problem of how the developing subject's conceptual activity comes to be properly constrained by others and the world' ('The *Bildungsroman* after McDowell: Mind, World, and Moral Education' 178). Boyle takes this invitation to analyse, persuasively, marital choices in *Pride and Prejudice* as *both* exercises in liberation-from and servitude-to, as the gradual transformation of the characters, particularly Elizabeth Bennet, transforms not the choice that must be made, but the responsible manner in which it can be made (179-181).

In this chapter I pursue some similar themes, but with a greater emphasis on the specific forms and techniques of genre – both *Bildungsroman* and poetry. For *Bildungsroman* Michael Minden in *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* specifically, makes the striking claim that the difference between *Bildung* and *Bildungsroman* is that the former is 'basically linear' whereas the novels are in fact 'circular' (1). Though the individual develops, he also returns – either to 'home' or into the surrounding social structures, such as marriage or (in Wilhelm's case) the nobility. This circularity accords with the kind of feedback loop that McDowell envisions for the role of tradition in his model, such that we are brought into it through socialization, in a way that leads to the reinforcement of that same tradition but with the responsibility also to be rationally aware of this shaping structure. If *Bildung* in *Mind and World* meant merely a linear progression, like the accumulation of facts and skills, it would not sufficiently forcefully offer an escape from the 'exculpations' of causal effect, toward the responsibility of rational justification. Rather, the mutual critique and re-enforcement of the practice and its members allow it to sustain and develop. Further, the often episodic nature of the *Bildungsroman* appears to be a useful fit for the way McDowell sees our gradual and piecemeal introduction into (or structuring of) the World; unlike the animals, placed into an environment, the human world is partly the construction of our view on it and practices.

McDowell fleshes out his adopting of *Building* a little as 'our second nature is the way it is not just because of the potentialities we were born with but also because of our upbringing' (*MW* 87). The question that remains to be answered here is whether *Bildung* can legitimately be used for more than the refinement of our 'inner' life of thought and language – whether its formation of us as individuals also gains purchase on the world that we see, and partially construct, around us. Critics such as Michael Williams ('Exorcism and Enchantment' 106) have complained that McDowell's examples of 'second nature' in action remain within the realm of customs and learnt behaviour (e.g. ethical behaviour, *MW* 84); if his account doesn't reach further out into the world, can it be said that *Bildung* provides an escape from the Myth of the Given? Crucially, McDowell goes on to say: 'the way our lives are shaped by reason is natural, even while we deny that the space of reasons can be integrated into the layout of the realm of law. This is the partial re-enchantment of nature that I spoke of' (88).

Re-enchantment

McDowell's 're-enchantment' is problematic, as it seems to both do more and less than the stated aims of his project but provides the key to putting his 'second nature' to work. It takes the form of seeing the possibilities of conceptualisation as unbounded, such that our experience is naturally (or by second nature) (*MW* 84-6) always-already conceptualised; the possibility of meaning is therefore in some sense in the world. However, McDowell is at pains to draw a distinction between meanings (as discrete occasions of judgement) and an overall meaning or purposefulness to the world, which would be a regression to the 'spookiness' of 'medieval superstition', positing the natural world as a 'book of lessons' (*MW* 71, 109). 'The world does not have a sense, but is sense' (Muter 'Wallace Stevens, Analogy and Tautology' 748). Somewhat similar to Kant's indeterminate concept developed in the *Critique of Judgement* in relation to aesthetic judgements, the world is positioned as being purposive without a purpose (*MW* 64-66). McDowell encounters the same shifting sense of what it means to mean something that occupies Stevens in his interrogation of the bouquet of roses; something of meaning must inhere in the world that is both malleable to our sense of how language works, and confined by reality. It is fairly easy to hold one such view in mind, or the other, but not both; like the pivoted figures of a weather clock, one seems to recede just as the other comes into view.

In this section I will show some of the relevant ways in which McDowell's notion of re-enchantment has been understood or criticised, as a means of testing its value and

limitations. As will be seen, many of the questions raised about re-enchantment can be addressed with further reminders drawn from Wallace Stevens' meditations on imagination and reality, with an emphasis on 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'.

Several commentators have raised problems with the discussion in *Mind and World*. R. Bernstein's 'McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism', while acknowledging the importance of the idea of re-enchantment calls the account 'extremely sketchy and […] filled with promissory notes' (17). Bernstein questions whether McDowell, in the end, adequately provides a way to 'rethink the concept of nature', as is demanded (17). Charles Taylor's 'Foundationalism and the Inner-Outer Distinction' suggests that McDowell's account is powered by insufficient consideration of the embodied nature of thought, as presented in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and others: 'our conceptual thinking is "embedded" in everyday coping' (112). In part, this is motivated by a richer notion of 'conceptualised' than McDowell himself relies on, as discussed earlier, but it is certainly true that there is room for greater elaboration of the integration of subject and world, especially at more fluid points than the making of singular judgments. J. M. Bernstein's 'Re-enchanting Nature' suggests that McDowell's focus is too individualistic, falling short of social and political engagement. This is not just a complaint that McDowell's examples of rational behaviour ignore or underplay the concrete social structures that determine our thinking and our choices, but also the danger of the '*rationalization of reason*' (emphasis in original) (219), which is to say that the very picture of the Myth of the Given McDowell is combating *also* applies to the mode of reasoning that he finds acceptable to use, and that constitutes to a large extent the analytic tradition of philosophy. McDowell, in his response to Bernstein printed in *Reading McDowell on Mind and World*, acknowledges the importance of the social in our thinking, and in *Mind and World* historicises his argument with respect to the dominant paradigm of the scientific method. It does remain pertinent, however, to ask to what extent McDowell's intellectual framework – given its own insistence on the openness of experience to the world – ought to recognise what shaped it. What brought about not only the anxiety it seeks to still but the methods by which it judges itself capable of stilling the anxiety? As Wittgenstein points out in *Philosophical Investigations* §24, there are many different kinds of description; so even if a philosophy attempted to content itself with only being descriptive, as McDowell's methodological modesty does, ought it to limit itself to only one kind of description,

when there is 'not one thing that we can call description'? (Clack *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion* 47).

It is therefore, in part, a duality of thinking that makes Stevens' 'Notes' valuable, in which multiple layers of 'fictions' are uncovered, but also where multiple responses to that discovery (themselves varieties of fiction) are tested. We need not only to recognise the patterns of our thinking but also how those patterns replicate themselves, with results that are more than merely intellectual. First, it will be useful to go into more detail about two specific objections to 're-enchantment', both raised by Michael Williams in 'Exorcism and Enchantment'. McDowell is charged with defending the need for re-enchantment at all, and also faces a related accusation of quasi-foundationalism. I will show that McDowell's vulnerability to these attacks can be remedied by a suitably robust conception of 'second nature', connected with Stevens' 'Notes'.

Williams asserts that McDowell conflates two different antonyms of 'natural' in making his case (103) – the *super*natural (spooky) and the merely conventional. 'Here convention must be taken in the broadest possible sense as having to do with every sort of rule-governed or normatively constrained activity' (103). Though it is perfectly understandable to accent our worries about making the world seem 'magical', this in itself is not sufficient to motivate the view that McDowell claims to be attacking. If we are able to separate out the superstitious operations of the supernatural and the constructed elements of human behaviour there is no necessity to see the latter as anything other than normal human behaviour in the natural world, so why yoke it together with worries about the supernatural?

> [C]onventions, though rarely wholly deliberate creations, are none the less wholly human and, in that sense, wholly natural. But human practices, though constrained by the laws of physics and biology, are under-determined by them, and so do not simply 'belong to nature', in the sense of 'nature' that is opposed to 'convention'. This, however, is the only sense in which they are not 'natural'. (104)

Williams does support McDowell's main thrust concerning the naturalisation of human behaviour, without reducing it to causal operations (104) – but in the process raises questions about the need for any kind of 're-enchantment' to achieve this. In combating the straw-man of superstition, McDowell problematises his own position: do we need to

resort to re-enchantment, if all it does is betray a reluctance to let go of (and thereby gives credence to) the same 'spookiness' McDowell claims to be removing?

Williams' concern can in part be resolved by being cautious about overstating the degree to which McDowell's anxiety about 'spookiness' is actually about the supernatural. His phrasing is primarily intended to highlight the discomfort we tend to feel about suggesting that meanings are real and 'in the world', thanks to our dominant paradigm of meaningless nature. McDowell would agree with Williams on maintaining the difference between the perfectly ordinary non-naturalness of convention and the 'magical'; his association of meaning with spookiness foregrounds the fact that this is a conditioned worry – one that is not groundless, but also not necessary. Re-enchantment, if all it did was to appease our discomfort about meaning in the world by paying lip-service to our sense of wonder in the world, would be unnecessary and an obstacle. But the *partial* quality of McDowell's re-enchantment (reclaiming meaning but not imputing an overall or predetermined purpose) means that the partial passivity of our judgements is accompanied by, at minimum, a degree of activity. This helps to stall our recoil from 'spooky' meaning into a meaningless world, by disrupting the thought that these are binary and exhaustive options.

The second of Williams' concerns that I want to address here is that McDowell never really succeeds in dismounting the 'see-saw' (*MW* 9) of the Myth of the Given, since his ultimate justifications come back to direct experience of the world – 'manifest facts' (*MW* 29) – such that an appeal is made to the same extra-conceptual world that has previously been shown to be useless for the kinds of justifications McDowell wants. In prioritising these manifest facts, is McDowell still positing the kind of foundational requirement that he has attacked, out of a fear of a 'frictionless' coherentism? If the 'order of justification' is hierarchical and the kind of final arbitration we can expect from experience is brute causality, then we have scarcely escaped the Given, only pushed it a little out of sight.

McDowell's argument does seem to gesture toward such a hierarchy: 'The thinkable contents that are *ultimate* in the order of justification are contents of experiences, and in enjoying experience one is open to manifest facts.' (My emphasis. *MW* 29). Clearly McDowell still retains some attraction to an extra-conventional guarantor of last resort, and this appears to threaten the distinction he draws between explanations and exculpations of action. However, by its own lights the argument need not go this way,

and it is the kind of treatment of experience that *Bildung* allows that provides the possibility of escape. Appropriating §6 from section III of *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, when Wittgenstein says 'I should like to talk of the sort of explanation one longs for when one talks about an aesthetic impression', there are many forms of explanation, the aptness of each will vary on specific instances of use, not on a pre-established rule. Brute experience, while often the quickest and most obvious way of having a false assumption about the world cleared up, can be part of a multi-stream, non-linear series of justifications, adjustments and accommodations, and in its turn be subsumed into the practice within which it took place. The notion that the 'manifest fact' is the end point of justification is not quite right (or need not always be the case) since there is a difference between something being practically or contextually beyond further justification, and *by definition* beyond further justification. The former is an everyday case, the latter is something that has been placed outside of our language games, beyond use. Like the distinction between some notions of *Bildung* and the structure of the *Bildungsroman* mentioned earlier, justifications are interwoven, rather than forming a chain. They may consist of causes, but also comparisons of like and different cases, new configurations (*LC III* §9), or a new word 'thrown on the ground of the discussion' (*CV* 4e). The line between explanation and exculpation may become blurred, though it is not clear that this need be the problem that McDowell's account implies. In some cases a blurred line is the appropriate demarcation (*PI* §§71-77). An illustration of this worry may be how an apparent need for an underlying rational or causal model is a frequent part of analytic discussions of aesthetics. However much the impossibility of a deductive or essential concept of art is lauded, the suspicion remains that *really* we need some kind of Given or unconceptualised stimulus to ground our experience. Mitchell Green's 'Empathy, Expression, and what Artworks have to teach' is one such example. '[The] ability of works of art to teach us things no doubt depends on there being a reliable causal connection between the thing represented and the pictorial representation itself' (103). He further argues, in seeking to establish a model of how this relation can be define, that 'all cases of expression are also cases of showing' (103), which claim shifts into the realm of defining the activity into emptiness. I would suggest that what seemed like the key picture is being pushed beyond its actual usefulness (*Z* §240).

Instead, part of what re-enchantment ought to do – and McDowell ought not be averse to – is put the meaning back into the world, or perhaps better, pull the world into our

meanings, relieving the concern about a hierarchy of judgements that relies on the same external 'manifest facts' that *Mind and World* sets out to remove. The re-enchantment becomes not the adding in of something new (as if it were something that we have been previously able to take out of the world, or that was missing) but a renewed alertness to what actually goes into our experiences, and how deeply our specifically human way of having these experiences has its roots in the world we inhabit. We access nothing supernatural or different in kind to the ordinary, but may yet marvel that the ordinary – especially ordinary language – could, through the order and placement of words and other elements, produce startling effects: 'that just these orders of words can have been found, that these things can be said at all' (Cavell *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* 36). As Eldridge argues in *Leading a Human Life*, '[c]ulture-independent, autonomous practical reason is empty on its own. It can be exercised only within the opposed modalities of expressive freedom afforded within culture' (86). Culture is thus the source of, and the constraint on, the 'possibilities of partial expressive power' (87) by which we express meanings. In this way both brute reality and second nature (however these are to be separated) provide for our partially passive, partially spontaneous mode of living.

As the following discussion of Stevens' Supreme Fiction will illustrate, imagination adheres to reality, but is not fully determined by it, and similarly our fictions of the world (our language-games) can be tested by it but neither created nor cancelled by it; the response to a flaw discovered in a fiction is another fiction, though hopefully one more sensitive to the demands and possibilities of reality, fusing the sublime with our images (Merle E. Brown *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* 117). Fiction here need not be a derogatory term equating to a deliberate lie – that would certainly not suit McDowell's modest or minimalist realism, nor Stevens' role of the Poet. Rather the two qualities that it denotes might be that it is in some sense provisional, and has the effect of a story – linking together elements into a whole, without necessarily stating what the whole is, or demanding any particular form of relation between the elements.

As has been noted, a number of critics of *Mind and World* point to the narrowness of McDowell's conception of experience – the centrality of rational justification or the concentration on the judging individual. Where McDowell is (self-confessedly) least forthcoming is on what exactly he means to capture through his 'sketchy and unsystematic' notion of second nature (*MW* 178). Perhaps an unsystematic account is the only appropriate one since, in keeping with his Wittgensteinian outlook; further

consideration of what this constitutes would be more an anthropological endeavour than a philosophical one. Yet, the sketch given is, I argue, too tied to the rational and the abstract to do the work it is designed to do and thereby reveal the complexity and richness that is implied by allowing everything we take as 'second nature' into our picture. This would necessitate a shift from his relatively thin concept of experience to a much 'thicker' one, to make use of Gilbert Ryle's terminology from 'Reflecting and Thinking' in the way it has been deployed in anthropology by Clifford Geertz ('Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture'). A thicker concept would include descriptive content as well as explanation – explanation at the level of practice. Stevens' poetry offers this through his interplay of human voices and nature, and his glorying in experience as a general good; though as ever with Stevens', this good is ripe with complexities and obscurities that reward exploration, never more so than in 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'.

Wallace Stevens' (Dis)illusion: 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'

There is considerable debate about what Stevens' purpose for and conception of a Supreme Fiction may have been. Though first published separately in 1942, 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' also closes the 1947 collection *The Transports of Summer* and is the longest treatment of what Stevens came to regard as his chief poetic theme, a 'cardinal point in Stevens' thought' (Ronald Sukenick *Musing the Obscure* 25). It is discursive, at times a hymn of praise, elsewhere comic, didactic, uncertain or elegiac; an assemblage of elements that resists summary, though returning repeatedly to the worry of how we ought to conceive of our reality – by what 'supreme fiction' we can make sense of the whole.

The first use of the term in Stevens' poems is in 'A High-Toned Old Christian Woman' (*CP* 59) from 1922, where it seems to present poetry as a direct alternative to Christian religious belief, the difference being that poetry recognises its own fictiveness, making it a livelier replacement for the pompous and blinkered mythologies of faith: 'Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame./ Take the moral law and make a nave of it' (ll.1-2), punning on church architecture and 'knave'; poetry will tease the static authority of the church. 'This will make widows wince. But fictive things/ Wink as they will' (ll. 21-2) They shift, challenge and subvert; Stevens notably again uses nonsense sounds to meaningful effect, playfully mocking the solemnity of church incantations: 'Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk, / May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves / A

jovial hullabaloo among the spheres' (ll.18-20). Religion is moribund, unlike the creative freedom of the poet.

In 'Stevens and the Supreme Fiction', Milton J. Bates suggests that this closely follows the philosophy of George Santayana's *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* 'published while Stevens was a student at Harvard and spent time in Santayana's company' (49). Certainly Stevens' abiding concern over the possibility of religious belief in a 'secular' age, and his assertion that poetry provides a similar, though distinct function has affinities with Santayana's portrayal of poetry "*as religion*" when it interferes in practical affairs, and religion "*as poetry*" when it 'merely supervenes upon daily life' (Gerald E. Myers 'Review: *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*' 137). Both poetry and religion are human inventions, designed to give us a sense of meaning and direction but '[b]ecause many of the tenets of traditional religion – eternal damnation, for example – have become distasteful and no longer satisfy the imagination, Santayana maintains, poetry must step forward to provide us with a new mythology' (Bates 'Stevens and the Supreme Fiction' 49).

However, Stevens' later use of the term seems to be less directly contrasted to religious belief in general, but specifically to the belief of his time – inadequate, or at least so for him. Further, the confrontational tone of 'A High-Toned Old Christian Woman' has been replaced with something more considered, by turns joyful and yearning. The contrasts between imagination and reality, and consequently between diverse forms of truth and fiction, are no longer as simple (Stanley J. Scott *Frontiers of Consciousness: Interdisciplinary Studies in American Philosophy and Poetry* 74-6). The idea that theology could be treated as one fiction among others does not necessarily mean a derogatory view of it, given a positive view of the capacities of story and poetry to be more than mere lies or amusements – a view common to several other names relevant to this thesis, including Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein (*CV* 36-7e) and, in a somewhat different sphere, Tolkien in 'On Fairy Stories'. Acknowledging something's value as being linked less to its truth than to its effect generates much of Stevens' 'Notes', including what it might mean for something to be true, rather than, for example, convincing, authoritative, or simply 'there – like our life' (*OC* §§300, 317, 344, 559).

Among the various available commentaries, very few are able to explain coherently what Stevens meant by Supreme Fiction– whether the idea stayed constant in Steven's mind or evolved over time, whether the endeavour to find a Supreme Fiction was

realised, or ever realisable, or even pursued at all. Bates suggests that it might refer to a 'more discriminating belief' ('Stevens and the Supreme Fiction' 48) than religious conviction, that keeps its own fictiveness in sight. Jonathan Imber characterises it as a pursuit 'of truth in post-religious Western culture' with parallels to Husserl's phenomenological project ('The Vocation of Reason' 4). Gerald Burns, aligning Stevens with a Heideggerian re-animation of the Orpheus myth, suggests that it is a 'supreme possibility, in whose truth it is perhaps impossible to believe, though no more so than it is impossible to believe those diverse abstractions that constitute a poem' ('Poetry as Reality' 278). Critchley provides a '*therapeutic*' reading of an acknowledged fiction as redemptive in the face of the impossibility of faith ('The Philosophical Significance of a Poem' 288), while Clive Stroud-Drinkwater sees Stevens as not spurning but mourning the possibility of a Supreme Fiction, in recognition that any such fiction must continually rest in the humanness of our imagination and language ('Stevens After Davidson on Metaphor). Peter McCormick entertains 'Notes' as an example of the construction of real yet fictional worlds: 'one comprehensive referential framework among others, the compliants of which are always actual individuals existing in an actual world and not possible entities subsisting in a possible world' ('Real Fictions' 260).

Gregory Brazeal identifies one of the most common themes in these accounts, a paradoxical yearning for the comforts of a no-longer believable belief ('The Supreme Fiction: Fiction or Fact?'). He suggests that this idea stems in Stevens from a misreading of William James' 'The Will to Believe', that belief follows the decision or capacity to allow oneself to believe, and that a sufficiently compelling fiction could ingratiate itself into belief. This seems to be an uncharitable reading of Stevens' response, though the yearning, harnessed into poetic creation, is certainly present. Rather, Stevens seems to be expressing an exhaustion with, or of, the previously compelling values of his time, and to be seeking out ways to refresh or renew them – an ongoing task, or even a war ('Notes' *CP* 407). I draw a parallel with Wittgenstein's engagement with Spengler's *Decline of the West.* His cultural pessimism for the world around him, though undoubtedly motivated by the loss of his hyper-cultured Viennese world, as Marjorie Perloff has charted in *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, also originated from the scientism he saw around him, of a society that had found its 'method', one that squeezed out individuality, profundity, faith and passion. Exhausted cultural values could only be listlessly repeated, or picked up for secondary purposes, like clichés

(Clack *Wittgenstein, Frazer, and Religion* 173-4). The duty of the artist, for both Wittgenstein and Stevens, is to refresh their own culture, especially language, without merely inventing something without roots (*CV* 60e) or endorsing commonly held opinion (*CV* 5-6e). To reject an unquestioning view of science as a replacement for religion, which both Wittgenstein and Stevens seem to have held to be the spirit of the age, is not to reject science itself, only its over-application. Nor should it seek to prove something or result in something definite like a dogmatic statement. To echo Stanley Cavell's 'Must We Mean What We Say?', both philosophy and art are, and should be, 'powerless to *prove* [their] relevance; and that says something about the kind of relevance [they] wish to have' (96). Stevens' ironic mention of the Sorbonne at the end of 'Notes' is a comment on the *poverty* of such a worldview, compressed into the solely factual, the already-decided-upon (*CP* 406). We do not seek to invent a new faith and then believe it (this would in any case be to position belief too late in understanding a practice or ritual (Clack *Wittgenstein, Frazer, and Religion* 108) but to create and re-create, in a perpetual taking up and making new of what remains of our social values.

 One option would be to read Stevens' 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' itself as a *Bildungsroman*. It begins with direct demands placed on the ephebe to let go of what he thinks he knows – 'become an ignorant man again', before running through a number of 'episodes' in which the reader or the characters on show are tested, developed or ironized. It ends with what can be read as a hopeful (or ironic) note of completion and understanding – 'They will get it straight one day at the Sorbonne' – and, as Brown has noted (*Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* 109-11) is in some senses circular, since the conclusion is to a great extent exactly what was proposed at the very beginning; 'You will have stopped revolving except in crystal' (*CP* 407). The 'ephebe' addressed in the opening lines may also be the soldier addressed in closing, the word carrying the connotation of a young man undergoing military training. The reader has, perhaps, come to see things aright through the poem, in such a way that the tradition it seeks to establish can be perpetuated. The tradition is one of *Bildung*, however, not of a new set of rules; we each, individually and through society, come into our inheritance of society, understanding and narrative scaffolding.

Accordingly, Brazeal counsels against trying to define precisely what Stevens thought *the* Supreme Fiction would look like, in favour of *a* Supreme Fiction, established for each individual subjectively and only in potentiality: 'the work of creating the supreme fiction in all of its necessary, hard-won specificity would remain our own, and as yet

unperformed' ('The Supreme Fiction: Fiction or Fact?' 98). It would be, perhaps 'of as many meanings as of men' ('Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight' *CP* 430).

In this chapter I argue that Stevens' concerns with the concept included an avoidance of settling on any specified content for such a fiction, and the ongoing necessity of its application. Theology becomes a frustration when it 'fumbles around with words, because it wants to say something and doesn't know how to say it' (Wittgenstein *RC III* §317), and this is the diminished view of religion that Stevens seems to have held. Instead, we depend on our practices to give words their meanings, and for Stevens this practice is poetry. This reading thus lies somewhere between Brazeal's insistence on the essential subjective component of such a fiction (in terms of creation as well as conviction) and Burns' account, which grants a certain prominence to the poet (or at least, poetic language) that would fit with Stevens' own comments on the 'nobility' demanded of the poet (*The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words* 44). In particular it is wise to pay attention to the fact that Stevens' own most sustained treatment of this theme is entitled '**Notes Toward a** Supreme Fiction' (my emphasis), suggesting both the conscious incompleteness and specificity of his thinking. We may only be able to achieve a 'misfiring attempt to express what can't be expressed like that [...] but that isn't the end of the matter' (*OC* §37).

There may never be an end of the matter. What follows is not designed to be a systematic account of a Supreme Fiction, nor is it an attempt to give an exhaustive or explanatory reading of 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'; this would contravene the nature of both Stevens' investigation and my own. Rather, I assemble key impressions from Stevens' poem, arranging these in a way that demonstrates the versatility and thoroughness of the poem's exploration and performance of various positions. As well as deepening an appreciation of specific parts of the text, this will provide a *structure* for better understanding the whole, rather than deriving a single meaning. In the process, further connections are drawn with McDowell's more austere notion of re-enchantment, offering weight to what may be seen as an aspect of *Mind and World* needing further development (and not only through further philosophical analysis). At various points connections are also drawn with the kind of reading of Wittgenstein I favour, which variously support or develop the concerns raised above. The aspects of 'Notes' to be discussed are arranged to parallel Stevens' own divisions of the poem, under four major themes. After discussing the complex of imagination and reality, three

main edicts are addressed: *It Must Be Abstract*; *It Must Change*; and *It Must Give Pleasure*.

Imagination and Reality

> The President ordains the bee to be
>
> Immortal. The President ordains. But does
>
> The body lift its heavy wing. (*CP* 390)[29]

Stevens parodies the trappings of human authority, as the President, pampered by 'barefoot servants' (390) and surrounded by the banners of his office, absurdly issues commands to a bee, attempting to halt the changes of the seasons, in the figure of the life-cycle of an insect. The attempt to order or defy nature is doomed, and bested by the lovers, who instead are attuned to its changes and rewarded with new beginnings: 'This warmth is for lovers at last accomplishing / Their love, this beginning, not resuming, this / Booming and booming of the new-come bee' (391).

This may be read either as an example of the physical world placing a boundary on our designs, and the resistance of reality (and other lives) to our imaginative demands, or as the frustration of our tendency, especially in philosophy and science, for wanting things to obey our conceptions of them, to be defined and unchanging. We deny our limitations at our peril. Though the President is undoubtedly powerful (note his entourage and equipment) nature can resist the will of man and reality can resist mere words and titles. Stevens also questions the capacity for metaphor to impose itself, to make the thing described confirm to our association of ideas: 'Is spring a sleep?' (391). Far better, like the lovers, to align ourselves with the reality we inhabit.

Yet the influence is not all one way. The imagined and the real depend on each other:

> Two things of opposite natures seem to depend
>
> On one another, as a man depends
>
> On a woman, day on night, the imagined
>
>
> On the real. (392)

We are reminded that 'the sailor and the sea are one' (392). For Stevens, the sea often stands in for brute ('given') reality, the indifferent, moving mass against which we

---

[29] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in this section are from 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' (*CP* 380-408).

might define ourselves, the reality that delimits our self-creation by its factual indifference; the elements are 'instinctive, unwilled, perfectly spontaneous' (Irvin Ehrenpreis 'Strange Relation: Stevens' Nonsense' 227). As in 'The Idea of Order at Key West'¸ however, this is not the impassable meeting of two boundaries; the sea in the latter poem is drawn into the self through song: 'And when she sang, the sea, / Whatever self it had, became the self / That was her song' (*CP* 128). In 'Notes', the sea carries the sailor, defines him, but does not (barring stormy weather) erase him. The preceding line 'The captain and his men // are one' (392) draws the same relationship between the individual and the community/society. A continuity is drawn between our physical existence and our being attuned to our environment, between the familiar sailor's love and wariness of the sea, and our living within social structures. In *Bildung*, our induction into the community is on a par with learning how to respond to the physical world, and vice versa; the sailor does not fight the sea, but learns its moods. If our entrance into the world is (as on the McDowellian model) always conceptualised, partially passive and spontaneous, then our kinship with the world is perhaps best modelled by our kinship with others, rather than an alien realm upon which we impose ourselves. Human being are partly unpredictable not because we lack knowledge but because that constitutes part of what we regard as human (*Z* §604); since we are not bound to assume that we also have perfect knowledge of ourselves through introspection (McDowell 'Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein' 303), we remain unpredictable also to ourselves. We learn about the world as we learn about people – through instruction, instinct, physical events, stories, errors, leaps of faith. Stevens' brute reality of the sea is simultaneously partaken of, and a force of change and formation: 'The partaker partakes of that which changes him./ The child that touches takes character from the thing,/ The body, it touches' (392). The imagined and the real flow together in experience and expression: 'O my companion, my fellow, my self, / Sister and solace, brother and delight' (392). As the school of biosemiotic criticism has argued, a text, a world, a word can all be considered as environments, and our language and poetry can neither be separated from nor reduced to the natural world (Timo Maran 'Biosemiotic Criticism: Modelling the Environment in Literature').

The related worry that reality is not *entirely* open to our learning it; it resists us. In effect this is the same skeptically driven aim Cavell identifies as 'a wish for the connection between my claims of knowledge and the objects upon which the claims are to fall to occur without my intervention' (*CR* 352) as if this would provide us with a

guarantee of that same knowledge – ought, with effort, to dissipate with the re-enchantment of nature, since this partial obscurity becomes no more and no less unsettling than the fact that one can partially understand a person. We cannot learn about the world without making an intervention into it – setting sail, as it were. Decision making, particularly moral decision making, is creative, not only a calculation. In 'Missing the Adventure', Cora Diamond similarly insists that our living consists not only of applying general rules but also of taking risks, of taking ownership of our decisions, including moral ones (*The Realistic Spirit* 315-7). Description, telling stories, may inescapably be a moral decision. As Cary Wolfe asks in critiquing the sort of humanist thought that Diamond espouses: can the question of form – in literature and in philosophical enquiry – ever be decoupled from moral edification and ethical education? ('The Idea of Observation at Key West' 260). The answer to this question, from either side of a humanist/posthumanist perspective naturally exceeds the space available in this chapter. I would suggest that for Stevens, who once said 'people ought to like poetry the way a child like snow' (Letter to Hi Simons, 01/09/1940 in *The Letters of Wallace Stevens* 349), there is a complex of education, reclaimed innocence, and morality (though not morals) in a poem. How do children like snow? Generally as an excitement, an arena for games, a weirder of scenery; but the excitement lasts only for a while, until wet socks and numb fingers make the warm and dry indoors more appealing again.

Part of Stevens' conception of the role of the poet is thus as the continual refresher of language; finding new and startling ways in which to describe the world, knowing that a new poetry will always be needed eventually: 'The poem refreshes life' (*CP* 382). Since this description is also, however, a means of shaping the world, this freshness is more than mere decoration – it goes right down into our own liveliness. A world is continually renewed by our expression of it, and ourselves along with it: 'The freshness of a transformation is // The freshness of a world. It is our own, / It is ourselves' (397-8). 'World' is a rich concept for Stevens, full of characters and sensuality. This fleshes out McDowell's problematic distinction between a 'mere environment' that is inhabited (by animals) and our creation of a world through our human type of experience, and the exercising of that experience (*MW* 116).

In *Mind and World,* McDowell has been criticised as drawing too sharp a distinction between human and animal life, especially considering his insistence on the physicality of our existence, and the inseparability of experience and its conceptualisation. See, for

instance, Crispin Wright's 'Human Nature?'. McDowell seems to want to say, simply, that our human lives are the lives of animals, but that because of our *Bildung* there are ways of seeing the world that are only open to us as humans (or humans with *Bildung* of this sort). However, questions remain about where this leaves our relations with animals, infants or adults lacking our kind of outlook (say through physical or mental disability). Unfortunately this is not a suitable space to look at this in detail, though in passing I suggest that the kind of sympathy for other forms of life that Stevens presents as an important facet of full experience of the world, for example encouraging the wren, too, to 'whistle aloud' (*CP* 405), ought to be part and parcel of the re-enchantment of the world. If meaning is partly inherent in the world, it ought also to be partly (limitedly and obscurely, perhaps) inherent in its inhabitants, as meaning might be inherent in birdsong, though not for us. Accordingly, Cary Wolfe has presented Stevens' poem 'Of Mere Being' as an attempt to 'detranscendentalize, detheologize, or naturalize the meaning of the bird and its message, now no longer taken to be a messenger of the gods or the heavens' ('Elemental Relations at the Edge' 287), claiming the birdsong for poetry without reducing it to allusion to human concerns. The success or possibility of success for this strategy is beyond the current discussion, but Stevens' precise awareness of how words come to mean, disguising their meaning, is valuable. It points again to how the world-creation of language, this refreshing of reality, is no free-wheeling invention. Stevens insists on the resistance of the world to mis-description, and the power of poetry as relating to its applicability toward the world: 'The imagination loses vitality as it ceases to adhere to what is real. When it adheres to the unreal and intensifies what is unreal, while its first effect may be extraordinary, that effect is the maximum effect that it will ever have' (*The Necessary Angel* 6). Our potential for imagination (conceptualisation) is unlimited, but the success of that expression – the degree to which we are able to re-enchant the world – depends in large part on the surrounding circumstances. A poem and what it portrays are not unmediated expressions of pure emotion (as Romantic poetry has sometimes been associated with), but the writing creates a 'cool distance' that protects the poet from conflation with his own work (Marshall Brown 'Negative Poetics' 128). Rather, the poet is generatively constrained both by the experience itself (and its communicability) and the tradition of poetry within which he works.

Richard Eldridge's comment about Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument in *Leading a Human Life* also allows a fruitful comparison between Stevens' work and the

concerns of a practice-oriented reading. He suggests that *PI* §§241-315 operate also as a critique of 'the fantasy of having perfect control of one's expressiveness' (242). Where Wittgenstein undermines the idea that words can be private to the individual and still carry meaning (even to that individual), Stevens rebuilds the same connection between the imagination and reality; they depend on and exceed each other. Eldridge's use of the word 'fantasy' naturally also recalls the work of Supreme Fiction and its incompleteable form. It is a fantasy in itself and as an ambition; there is no conclusion, only continual answers to unending questions. Without this recognition of constraint and falling short, the Supreme Fiction would be at best narcissistic ('Marshall Brown 'Negative Poetics' 128), at worst solipsistic.

It Must Be Abstract

From the preceding discussion it is fairly clear that any Supreme Fiction must be abstract, rather than a defined, concrete text. There is no longer one master narrative and the Poet, having realised this void, is charged with charting the many fictions by which we live, granting us temporary mastery over reality through his descriptions (Ronald Sukenick *Musing the Obscure* 161). As well as this, however, Stevens also toys with several different elements of abstraction, turning them over in his poetry like a pleasingly hefty apple; since abstraction itself is multi-faceted, we ought to resist being held captive by one particular image of it.

'Notes' strikes an imperative tone initially, urging an abstraction from the convoluted complexities of the world: 'Begin, ephebe, by perceiving the idea / Of this invention, this invented world / The inconceivable idea of the sun' (*CP* 380). The ephebe is immediately flung into warring currents of the real and the imagined, and the impossibility of reality. The sun stands in for reality in Stevens' work (Roy Harvey Pearce 'Toward Decreation'), indicating a distinction between it and 'this invented world'; a distinction is also suggested between 'perceiving' and 'conceiving', (sense experience and thought) though this is itself complicated by applying perception to an idea, rather than something physical.

The ephebe is further urged to 'become an ignorant man again', to see the sun 'clearly in the idea of it' (*CP* 380). This has obvious Platonic overtones, recalling the philosopher-rulers of *The Republic*, or the self-unknowing of the Pseudo-Dionysian mysticism discussed in Chapter 2. The philosopher's abstracted knowledge is measured exactly in its distancing from the practical world, its closeness to the eternal and perfect.

As for Plato and Pseudo-Dionysius, the sun is the potent symbol of the good, the beautiful and real, a reality that cannot be seen through the clutter of everyday concerns. However, given Stevens' high valuation of sensual experience and the devices of language, a more plausible connection may be made with Stevens' near contemporary, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), whose phenomenological reduction of all experience to phenomena – to what is purely "given" – sought to escape the naïve view of the world of our everyday experience, in search of an experiential essentialism (Patrick Colm Hogan *Philosophical Approaches to the Study of Literature* 108). To abstract from the flow of experience, to hypostatise, could be one of the tools in the poet's kit in approaching a Supreme Fiction. Kathleen Dale has in fact described Stevens in 'Notes' as 'tracing implicitly the steps of the "epoche"' before finding ways to move beyond it ('Extensions: Beyond Resemblance and the Pleasure Principle in Wallace Stevens' Supreme Fiction' 255). Indeed, pausing only to warn against ideas of a generative, determining mind at work in the world (*CP* 381), Stevens ironizes the possibility or use of the phenomenological reduction, 'so fatal to / The truth itself' (381). He reminds us of even the scholar's restless humanity ('The philosopher desires') and the deep roots of desire in the cyclical regenerations of the world (382), which can neither be escaped nor show us a deeper truth by their absence. Instead, the poem's collection of moments and fables, variously interrelated, argue for a Supreme Fiction that moves, connects objects and finds patterns.

The rejection of a definitive narrative continues in the rest of this section of the poem, as Stevens playfully intermixes mythology (Greek and Christian) with images of wild nature and the mundane frustrations of everyday life – especially, though not exclusively, the writer's life. The freedom that this abstraction brings may be muted but characteristically satisfying in its meandering uneventfulness:

> It feels good as it is without the giant,
> A thinker of the first idea. Perhaps
> The truth depends on a walk around a lake,
>
> A composing as the body tires, a stop
> To see hepatica, a stop to watch (386)

Note, however, that Stevens rejects the thinker, not the 'first idea' itself; a world without a god need not be one without the possibility of truth, even if 'the Truth' is no longer available. It evades definition, but that prominent 'Perhaps' retains an openness

to the world that runs a little deeper than the Nietzschean relativism of multiple 'truths', which Stevens had explored in poems earlier in his career (Vendler 'Wallace Stevens: Hypotheses and Contradictions' 109-111). The Truth may not be a definition or a meaning, but an activity, a generation of ever more sensitive and 'natural' fictions (Brown *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* 115-7). Nor need we imagine that this generation might come to an end somewhere. As I argue in more detail in Chapter 5, the idea of release from the demand to find or to make ever better fictions is at best temporary. As Wittgenstein recognised in *Philosophical Investigations*, there is no off-switch for our urge for definitions, theories, metaphysical explanation. This is why, as Eldridge has argued, the text provides not a set of rules for stopping doing metaphysics, but a series of examples that will allow us to identify and dissolve the pictures we become enthralled by (*Leading a Human Life* 182). The text can only be a set of reminders, carefully assembled for a particular purpose (*PI* §127), and this exemplifies the temptation of overstatement that McDowell seeks to resist. Like a poet, the philosopher must again and again pick up language and see how it disguises differences; like a philosopher, the poet must tell not one story, but several, and severally, to keep the reader from falling back to sleep (*CV* 7e).

It Must Change

Hand-in-hand with this openness and activity, Stevens' world is thorough-goingly temporal, meaning that any Supreme Fiction that permits us to make our way therein ought to share this characteristic.

The importance of the diurnal and the seasonal cycles to Stevens' poetry is evident, both in the recurring use of such things as weather changes and sunrises, and the remarkable landscape of meanings he develops from what might otherwise be quite ordinary things to observe:

> The rising and setting of the sun are for most men at most times, as Stevens observes, no more than the meaningless recurrence of the quotidian. For only a few minds will the event gain import and the idea of 'the universe of space' or of the 'infinity of the world' or some other interesting concept be realized. (Doggett *Stevens' Poetry of Thought* 1)

The depth of commitment to specifically *cyclical* experience within his thinking would be equally hard to over-estimate. In *The Poetics of the Everyday*, Siobhan Phillips makes a compelling case for the entrenched and rich sense of repetition in Stevens'

verse being not a simple reflection of his much-reported regular life-style, but a singularly productive force. As part of a larger study of 'Creative Repetition in Modern American Verse' Phillips shows differences in the ways that Frost and Stevens applied quotidian rhythms in their poetry – the former more often to give grounding and meaning to current events through their precedents, the latter to create an anticipation of what may come, what is made possible (76). The quotidian is the seat of both meaning and the possibility of change. Bloom goes so far as to suggest that for Stevens the 'prime *materia poetica* is the weather', its shifts and cycles (*The Poems of our Climate* 186).

As discussed in Chapter 1, the normative power of language is not only a matter of express rules but also how we, as humans, respond to regularities, both our own and other persons (Luntley *Opening Investigations* 107-14). We do not act either randomly or according to unchanging laws; we create patterns, live by patterns that recur, 'with different variations, in the weave of our life' (*PI* p174). Change without form or repetition might have a flash of interest but, like too-strange poetry, will have no further or greater impact; it must be incorporated into our lives (Stevens 'The Noble Rider' 6; *PI* §199). Good writing, as Mario Vargas Llosa puts it, requires not just imagination but also 'the trampoline of reality' ('The Art of Fiction 120' *Paris Review*).

In 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' this forward-looking, yearning repetition is in constant play, guarding against fixity or linearity. To the alertness to nature's persistent patterns of life and death mentioned above we can add the reliable but impermanent qualities of flowers, days and several other features of the world:

> Thus the constant
>
> Violets, doves, girls, bees and hyacinths
> Are inconstant objects of inconstant cause
> in a universe of inconstancy. This means
>
> Night-blue is an inconstant thing. (*CP* 389-390)

This awareness of the patterns of change in the world is more than being a sensitive observer. The very possibility of language and meaning depend on this liveliness. Centrally for Stevens, the Poet and his writing must remain alive and alert, so that each repetition creates the opening and significance of the next.

Section III of 'It Must Change' argues for the necessary dialogue and development of poetry and language in the figure of the General Du Puy who, cast in bronze, becomes ridiculous, an 'illustrious ornament, / […a] setting for geraniums' (391). Bates suggests that Du Puy was 'presumably a French war hero' ('Stevens and the Supreme Fiction' 53) whose glorification is shown to be vain in comparison to the more homely good of lived experience. This chimes with Eleanor Cook's analysis, noting that *puy* is an obsolete French term meaning 'eminence' (*Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War in Wallace Stevens* 236), encapsulating the statue's glorious uselessness, having stepped outside the stream of time. Perhaps this echoes Stevens' own fear that he would be commemorated as a public figure, capable only of changing into eventual rubbish, while the life and liveliness of his poetry fell away (Bloom *The Poems of our Climate* 192). The depth and sense of fun of Stevens' wordplay is further developed, though, when one notices that Puy is also a geological term denoting an isolated, volcanically formed hill – another fitting metaphor for the poet, singular and potentially explosive, for whom inactivity equals extinction.

An additional connection might be drawn to the *Puys*, literary societies and their competitions that flourished in France in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This may seem a large step away from Stevens' own twentieth-century Hartford, and generally sedentary life – he never visited Europe, for example. However, Stevens was a voracious gatherer of news from correspondents abroad, as Alan Filreis describes in *Wallace Stevens and the Actual World*. He was also an early and enthusiastic admirer of modern French art (Benamou 'Wallace Stevens: Some Relations Between Poetry and Painting) and considered (for poetic purposes at least) French and English to be a single language (letter to Bernard Heringman 21/11/1950, in *Letters of Wallace Stevens* 698-9). It is thus certainly a reasonable and instructive connotation to remark on, even if (as is the case) I have not been able to establish whether Stevens' might have had it in mind himself.

 These *Puys* competitions may have been one of the early sources of fixed forms in poetry, since entries were submitted in written as well as oral form, and often modelled on previous winners. Their functions included:

> professional and strategic relationships, as professional guilds sought to out-do each other in wit and song. Contestants were often asked to 'graft new secular *chants royaux*, ballades, rondeaux, or religious *serventois* upon Refrains

chosen or designed by the organizers. (Yolanda Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* 156)

Closely associated with these was the *jeu-parti,* a forum for:

> competitive and playful exchange. It was a lyric dialogue in which the participants debated a dilemma posed in couplets by the first speaker, the second speaker having to answer the first while also adhering to their meter and rhyme scheme. The jeu-parti was characterized by neither party actually altering their original position, thus leaving the door open for continued debate. (Tamsyn Rose-Steel 'Church, Court, and Tavern: Games and Social Hierarchy in Some Medieval Motets')

Poetry thus becomes not a 'dead' object to be preserved and admired from afar, but a combative coming together of views and talents; it has, to appropriate the language of Kei Miller's Rastaman, 'livity' (*The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* 23). This notion of exchange, force and continual evolution chimes perfectly with Stevens' mocking of General Du Puy's statue, which has become lifeless and absurd, in contrast to the smaller honours and achievements of life. Change re-charges, just as multiplicities of meaning add flavour to our devouring of the poem. As Phillips puts it in her discussion of 'The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad' Stevens 'suspects that the benefits of timelessness, as well as the possibility of timelessness, are no more than fantasy' (*The Poetics of the Everyday* 77). This distrust of the static extends to both meanings and our lives; though Stevens is perhaps the great poet of repetitions – as Phillips argues – it is also repetition with variation, with new experiences opened up by the accumulation of instances, the filling out of significance; 'concepts are not for use on a single occasion' (*Z* §568). As the consideration of cartographical metaphors in *Philosophical Investigations* will demonstrate in Chapter 5, Wittgenstein's picture of language correlates well with Stevens' valuing of habitual landscapes revisited, the charting of weather patterns, the passing of one narrative into another, or into oblivion, for which the figure of Ozymandias stands (*CP* 395-6).

Any Supreme Fiction could thus not be fixed, a static narrative, but would be inherently and continually renewed by re-telling and interpretation. It would not be a nostalgic foundation of some past perfection, but the continual creation of the possibility of a new story, 'a kind / Of volatile world, too constant to be denied' (*CP* 397); a Supreme Fiction would not reassure us of what has been said, but of the on-going expressibility

of the world, its iterative imaginative creation. It therefore places a responsibility on us to continue this expression, as a means of becoming ourselves. This echoes the 'standing obligation to encourage critical reflection' that McDowell sees as part of our mature human experience, our 'inheritance' (*MW* 126). To the extent that McDowell is a modest realist with a Wittgensteinian outlook, it will have to be a realism that acknowledges that the central activity of language is not merely to refer to or represent facts. Instead, what we can be realist about is situated within our ongoing activities. This means that 'contingency and objectivity are not adversaries but bed-fellows, in the sense that it is in historically contingent practices that objective facts, norms, and values become available and compelling' (Sedivy 'Art from a Wittgensteinian Perspective' 73). In other words, change is part of our inheritance. McDowell could endorse something like this view, since he conceives his project as showing how human practices bring our criteria of correctness 'into view', though not 'into being' ('Reply to Gibson, Byrne, and Brandom' 285), which is in line with a theoretically modest Wittgensteinian approach, such as Alice Ambrose and Morris Lazerowitz propose in 'Commanding a Clear View of Philosophy': propositions in philosophy are not 'empirical'; we will not discover anything (64), though we might uncover something. However, the examples used in *Mind and World* largely concern general or long-term cases, such as the formulation of ethical rules (*MW* 79). By contrast, the change that Stevens channels and challenges illustrates a kind of realism in action; worlds embedded in our words and vice versa. Stevens momentarily plays with the idea of the supreme poem being one 'that never reaches words' – sacrificed to meaning – but swiftly sees the nonsense of this – senseless and gibberish (*CP* 396). Similarly, Wittgenstein noted in *Culture and Value*: 'Kleist wrote somewhere that what the poet would most of all like to be able to do, would be to convey thoughts in themselves without words. (What a strange avowal.)' (23e). To the extent that 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (*PI* §43), a poem with no words would have no meaning, no more than a story never told. And to tell is to change; words, individuals and the world are interconnected in action and practice.

This interconnection leads to the second notion of change; like Harrison's concept of 'dangerous knowledge', a Supreme Fiction must change *us*, too (*Inconvenient Fictions* 3). The reader is encouraged neither to accept the proof of an argument, nor to accept something unquestioningly, but to 'prove something, test something, *against himself*' (My emphasis. Cavell *Must We Mean What We Say?* 95). As mentioned above,

Matthew Muter sees Stevens as having a decidedly Wittgensteinian project to rescue us from 'the hold that certain questions have on our imaginations' ('Wallace Stevens, Analogy, and Tautology' 742), specifically those driven by increasingly untenable religious images and traditions. In order to change our view of the world, we need to change our language as well as the ideas we express in it; the two affect each other. Muter, commenting on Stevens' 'Lions in Sweden' shows how words like 'soul' cannot be simply discarded 'without discarding the whole economy of which the soul was a part' (745). We hanker after such 'sovereign images' (*CP* 125). Just so, Wittgenstein challenged Frazer's accounts of supposedly primitive and superstitious beliefs in other countries, by pointing out that Frazer was perfectly capable of understanding how these people thought, using language such as 'ghosts'; how did he learn such a concept if it is so alien, so beyond his own belief (*RFBG* 131)? We need to change not only our explicit thinking about what we believe but also the traces of previous ways of thinking, previous pictures of the world (*CV* 27e), and the poet's new paths toward reality enable us to think, free us from the 'palpable tyranny' of entrenched expressions and thoughts (*CV* 37e). What seems mere fantasy now may once have been, or may become, our reality – and the reverse is also true.

It Must Give Pleasure

Although fiction, as fantasy, might ordinarily be connected with the imaginer's pleasure, it is worth remembering that a fantasy is not a single picture, but 'a complex formation out of heterogeneous components' (*Z* §652). Stevens' account is accordingly extended and elusive. It contains celebrations (*CP* 398) and the simplest, stillest moments: 'It was enough // for her that she remembered: the argentines / Of spring come to their places in the grape leaves' (399), children at play scattering flowers (400) and ecstatic visions (402-3). At times this section reeks of sensual impressions and excess:

> The vines around the throat, the shapeless lips,
> The frown like serpents basking on the brow.
> [...]
> We drank Meursault, ate lobster Bombay with mango
> Chutney. (*CP* 400-401)

And yet, Stevens' insistence on pleasure and lyrical fireworks is not a disconnect from the more 'logical' language of the earlier sections of the poem but a performance of an

equally and precisely necessary element. As I hope to show, pleasure plays a far more important role than mere wish-fulfilment, in ways that enrich McDowell's re-enchantment picture, and make it easier to accept the adjustment to our currently dominant naturalist view he seeks to instigate, providing a balance between nature and second nature, individual response and the demands of culture.

This section of 'Notes' opens with what promises to be a celebration of hedonistic revelry, 'speak of joy […] sing of it, borne on / The shoulders of joyous men' (398) but this is soon undercut – 'This is a facile exercise' (398) – and followed by a switch to the reflective tone of earlier segments: 'These are not things transformed. / Yet we are shaken by them as if they were. / We reason about them with a later reason' (399). Pleasure is to be taken in a measured fashion not with wild abandon, and much of the rest of the poem details smaller, almost courtly activities – details of a memorable meal, restrained 'humming [of] an outline of a fugue' (402), the imposition of order and regularity on the world.

In an early review (1943) Harvey Breit noted the coherence of the writing in 'Notes' as a whole, even if there was 'a minimum of "paraphraseable" content':

> The *Notes* is still Stevens' syntax and phrasing, Stevens' signature and sensibility, but it all has gotten united, single-celled, consanguineous. The words are in continuous interaction, concentrating the poem down.' ('Sanity that is Magic' 48)

So, pleasure for Stevens can incorporate rigour and consistency, both in style and content – a variation on, but not in opposition to the usual Romantic conception of pleasure as ecstatic (as stepping out of oneself). Certainly this fits with the image of Stevens as a man of habit, 'happier [to be] doing exactly the same thing day after day' (a 1944 message from Stevens, qtd. in Phillips 71). There must be change, but it ought to have its own weather, its roots in variation rather than revolution. Even the coda to 'Notes' addressing the Soldier is couched in terms of traditions and repetitions. 'And war for war, each has its gallant kind' (*CP* 407), where this could equally refer to the different wars of the poet and the solider, or to humanity's cycle of wars (and poets). Poetry, though clearly a very different pursuit from war, still has some parallels with it, some interdependence. Part of the coda seems like a justification of cosseted poetry in the face of the enormous, brutal fact of war (the poem was first published in 1942, so written during the Second World War); it could also be read, as Brown suggests, as

insisting on the gift that the poet gives the soldier – relief from illusion and despair, by both affirming the 'illusoriness of the soldier's fictions and the value of his fictive efforts' (*The Poem as Act* 116). This reading is, though, quite 'limited' (116), particularly if taken as a summary of the poem as a whole. Stevens wants a poetry that *adheres* to reality, that is responsive to and responsible for its expression: 'It is not only that the imagination adheres to reality but, also, that reality adheres to the imagination and that the interdependence is essential' (*The Noble Rider* 43). Poetry must therefore acknowledge, differ from, battle with other human activities on all scales – from warfare to the blue woman looking out of her window (*CP* 399) – and tell the different stories that each requires. Poetry is not useless to the warrior, providing him with 'proper words' (*CP* 408) for even the final moments of a life. These proper words are not definitive or monumental, but for each reader to modulate 'in the blood' (*CP* 407); reading and writing do not end because they are activities not outcomes.

One crucial aspect of pleasure-giving, which this individuation touches on, is the inclusion of the individual and her responses as part of the ongoing fiction. Pleasure, except in the abstract, must belong to an individual and cannot be the outcome of a calculus or general rule. In binding the individual into the possibility of this fiction, not least through his very particular examples of pleasure, Stevens' precludes the rush back to the 'celestial ennui of apartments / That sends us back to the first idea' (381). No more big ideas, but shared and unexpected pleasures, like watching 'the way a leaf / Above the table spins its constant spin / So that we look at it with pleasure' (406). Ultimately, it must be an individual 'experiencing this' (404) and not some idealised or generalised subject. This insistence could be read in agreement with Brazeal's conception of the Supreme Fiction as one which each individual holds in potential but must live out and actualise for themselves ('The Supreme Fiction: Fiction or Fact?' 98). However, given the irreducibly shared nature of the language in which these fictions are told, too great an emphasis on individualism would also be a mistake. At most, each individual must experience and (partially) reinterpret the fiction as she lives it. Instead, keeping in mind Wittgenstein's remarks in §§241-315 of *Philosophical Investigations*, it is instructive to think of the insistence on pleasure as a questioning of the supposed gap between the inner and outer of the Cartesian self. If something as "internal" as pleasure or belief is shown to be equally generative of, and generated by, our fictions – fictions that we share in our language and our behaviour – we may be less tempted by the endogenous Given, and also less tempted to think of language or rationality or a

causal model of the world as singular, universal and self-evident. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the ways in which we think of poetry are closely connected with how we think about ourselves as subjects – whether, for example, language is a personal expression in public form, or a personal form generated from public expression. What is the meaning of Wittgenstein's remark that a 'poet's words can pierce us' (*Z* §155)?

Coda

This metaphor is considered in various ways in the next chapter, through the poetry of Jorie Graham. If words and world constrain us, to what extent do we express them, or they us? Graham's own poetic techniques of revision, omission and interruption are themselves partly an inheritance from Wallace Stevens' interrogation of English syntax and signification. This inheritance is explored in detail in several contribution to *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poems* (ed. Thomas Gardner) and, indeed, essays abound charting the several threads connection the two poets, such as Willard Spiegelman's 'Jorie Graham's "New Way of Looking', Mark Jarman's 'The Grammar of Glamour: The Poetry of Jorie Graham' or Forest Gander's *Listening for a Divine Word*. This chapter has attempted to show the potential and value of reading Stevens' poetry as an encounter with similar themes and progenitors that McDowell addresses in *Mind and World*, not only extending the philosophy in ways pertinent to its stated Wittgensteinian heritage but also as opening up further readings of the poetry. The next presents a reading of Jorie Graham's disturbances of ordinary language, and how these reflect the various limits of expression that run through this thesis, this time focusing on the notion of the self and its relationship with language. Where this chapter has sought to bring out a richer conception of the reality/imagination relation in support of an already Wittgensteinian philosophy, the next takes two strands: analysing a postmodern reading of an example of contemporary poetic practice to show points of agreement and difference from an Wittgensteinian approach, and to use this poetic practice to highlight aspects of Wittgenstein's literary technique.

Chapter Four: Jorie Graham and the Expressing Self

Introduction

In 'Wittgenstein and the Inexpressible' Juliet Floyd gives the following description of Wittgenstein's method and character, several details of which would map seamlessly on to a description of the poet discussed in this chapter, Jorie Graham:

> Wittgenstein is a thinker who explores and fashions new analogies and models of his own: he rips phrases and ideas out of one context (sometimes from his own earlier writings, sometimes from writings of others) and throws them into another, often shifting metaphors over time into a number of different directions. This densely rich allusiveness, this transformation and self-transformation of language, this ramification and retransformation of words, formulations, problems, metaphors, and questions is an important feature of his writing throughout his life, constituting a kind of unity of approach that is not merely literary, but part and parcel of his ambition to transpose, revitalize, and recast our relation to philosophical questions. (186)

By altering our language, Wittgenstein changes not only how some recurring questions may be answered, but what questions there are that may be asked, or make sense to ask. Sometimes this alteration of our position deflates an apparently urgent problem, at other times it stirs up what we had thought were settled questions. Jorie Graham has a similar relationship to poetry, as discussed below, disrupting many mainstream conventions yet remaining outside the orbit of explicitly experimental poetry, with its accompanying worry of maintaining its own relevance or freshness (Andy Brown *Binary Myths* 9). She makes several references to Wittgenstein in her poetry, explicit or otherwise, alongside many other intellectual and artistic authorities or interlocutors (a habit she also shares with John Burnside).[30] Connections between her work and Wittgenstein, both her own

---

[30] For Graham's quotation and incorporation of these sources see 'Postlyrically Yours' by Calvin Bedient, 'Countering Culture' by Elisabeth Frost. Her quotations tend to be from philosophers, critics and

and more thematic ones, have been fruitfully drawn by Ben Luebner, using the image of erosion common to *On Certainty* (§99) and several of Graham's poems, such as 'Philosopher's Stone' or 'Prayer', to situate her writing as a performance of the futility of philosophical theses that Wittgenstein attempted to show ('Bedrock, Erosion, and Form'). In *Leading a Human Life* Richard Eldridge describes Wittgenstein as showing 'what it is like to live with an unappeasable wish to have an account of the nature of conceptual consciousness' (3), and it is the unappeasableness that strikes a chord with Jorie Graham's writing, in forms that also echo the demands of mystic flight in Chapter 2 and the 'war that never ends' of Stevens' poetic task (*CP* 408).

This chapter situates itself partly in response to Alex Blazer's study of late-twentieth-century poetry, its relation to contemporary critical thought, and in particular the confrontation between the writing subject and death. His book traces a transformation of death's conception as the absolute limit, the defining boundary – the engagement with which constitutes the Romantic subject – into death being used as a principle *within* language, and language becoming constitutive of the postmodern subject's self. Graham is depicted as confronting death – or what amounts to the same thing, language – in the manner of a Romantic, but then hollowing out what looks like the metaphysical reward of staring death in the eye, to reveal the unspeakable void (and its annihilation) at the core of speaking. She is, like Stevens and Burnside, an inheritor of both the Romantic and High Modernist traditions (Thomas Gardner 'Jorie Graham's *End of Beauty* and Modernist Process'). This analysis clearly has several connections with the themes of this thesis, and provides a number of useful points of access to Graham's poetry. However, the contrasts between Blazer's approach and the practice-orientated Wittgensteinian view I have been outlining are also productive. I will emphasise a more 'domesticated' idea of the self's emergence in language and a reading of Graham that is the expression of a particular practice, unsettled and unsettling. Blazer's self is wounded, hollowed out by language, and only reconstituted in its recognition of itself as an 'other' through the view or language of an other. As quoted in the previous chapter, the power of words to pierce us is not to be underestimated, as Wittgenstein's remarks on poetry (particularly *Z* §155) illustrate. However, this chapter argues for a view of this piercing as less a tearing apart and reconstitution than a puncturing of our imagined boundaries or our analogies clothed as necessary forms.

---

scientists, reflecting, especially in *Materialism*, the collapse of traditional dualism. John Burnside's sources tend to be artists and writers, particularly of the renaissance. See 'Kenneth White and John Burnside' Marco Fazzini.

By thus retaining the Cavellian notion of *responsibility* as both the risk and the condition of participating in a form of life, Graham's straining of syntactical and lyric conventions can be understood as an expression of personhood – anxious, urgent, precise and incomplete – entangled in, and empowered by, language.

One of the ways of considering poetry at the level of practice in a way that connects it with the different facet of the inexpressible is through the idea of ritual. Drawing on Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough,* in particular, prompts a more careful understanding of poetry as a process, a convention, its effects, reception and tools. In this chapter the poetry of Jorie Graham is studied in terms of how she places and erases her own voice and self in her writing, and how her challenges to linguistic meaning, syntax and convention illustrate some of the Wittgensteinian themes of previous chapters.

There are some remarks in Wittgenstein that attribute ritual and ceremonial behaviour to a metaphysical confusion of language – such as when an abstract concept is treated like an object, for an occasion of purging or invocation. For example, the figure of Death is slain or driven out in effigy, usually in a guise that recalls death's literal meaning (e.g.: a skeleton), as though the closest approximation possible to 'pure' death, that elsewhere is found only its diluted instances (*RFGB* 135). The effigy takes the essence of the term on to itself, becoming vulnerable to punishment or entreaty, as if the performers of the ritual took 'Death' to be the name of a person. Such cases might be treated like philosophical confusions, in which the Wittgensteinian reminds the celebrants that their meaning of 'Death' has taken something of a holiday from its normal use (*PI* §38). (Wittgenstein makes an explicit reference at the same point in *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* to his own treatment of terms like 'object' and 'complex' in a metaphysical sense in the *Tractatus*, showing the distance he put between his thinking then and at the time of writing [1931].) The mysterious has then emerged "through" language as one of its many bewitching by-products; the same kinds of sentences and ideas that deal with ordinary objects are applied beyond their normal use, leading us into strange waters.

However, unlike the author of the *Tractatus*, the Wittgenstein stops short of seeing many of the rituals connected with such idealisation of words as simply inadmissible or in error. Ritual actions have roots and contents, through both their own history and through their connection with the primitive and fundamental elements of life. The

183

people who practice a ritual that we do not understand are yet comprehendible, insofar as they will tend to be responding to some basic human need or desire – for rain, for crops, or in response to death or nature. They also display certain common (but not defining) forms, such as elements of treating a particular place or object with reverence or fear, symbolic destruction or construction, status assertion, chanting, seasonal timings etc. Through their connection with such near-universal factors, their value is not merely intellectual but an expression of a form of life. Although we may not see the world from the same perspective, the unfamiliarity will not be total. Simply through being human, the rites and mysteries of another culture will "not differ fundamentally from ours. Only their magic is different" (*RFGB* 141). This is to say, a mystery belongs to its form of life, and is mysterious within it; from outside it would be simply odd or lacking explanation. There are, however, diverse ways in which human forms of life are similar, and at these points we grasp the power of the mystery, even if (to whatever degree) we cannot experience it or explain it ourselves. Further, since these similarities may be physical and part of our natural history, the mysterious is not fully accounted for in term of language. To communicate earnestly with those of another belief requires more than understanding their words.

Alongside or instead of dialogue of the traditional sort – such as the realist treatment of religious claims laid out by Paul J. Griffiths in *An Apology for Apologetics* – a Wittgensteinian approach would attempt to treat the experience of mystery as it is revealed in another's behaviour; we may not truly understand what a word or an image means to someone unless we pay attention to "the consequences he does or does not draw" (*LC* 72). In quoting this remark, W. Donald Hudson adds "Consequences here evidently means conclusions" (*Wittgenstein and Religious Belief* 165) but this need not be so. The consequences of the consideration of something sacred or terrible will show in my behaviour as well as my explanations, and may be so deeply ingrained that no conscious conclusion is drawn; sometimes one responds as one responds. And this is not captured by a single word or idea but by the whole network within which our practices occur.

Wittgenstein's examination of ritual is used in two ways here. Firstly, as a further reminder of the great variety of language-games, their origins, objectives and performances, using poetry as a particularly useful counter-example of the bewitchment by language that can preoccupy philosophers. Secondly, it is a way of exploring the relation between the self and the language or society of its expression – here considered

through Jorie Graham's writing in terms of the risk and responsibility of self-expression and the inexpressibility that may be the haunting or enabling centre of such rituals.

The Writing Subject

The usually assumed dichotomy in contemporary American poetry between mainstream (often confessional) and "experimental" poetry is complicated in Jorie Graham's writing. She inhabits a space created by what Marjorie Perloff calls mainstream poetry's being 'trapped in an oppressive cycle of self-presence, the "cry of the heart" designed to convey some sort of unique personal experience', which has begun to give way to a less reverential or sacred language, a 'poetics that does accommodate the "extraliterary social dialects"' (*Wittgenstein's Ladder* 183). Though Graham's poetry can certainly retain the tone of, or concern with, the sacred and profane – intimations of *ekstasis* – at the same time because she interrogates, undermines, hides and dismembers the self whose existence is the putative source of sincerity (especially in confessional poetry) or insight. Yet she also refuses to do away with traditional indicators of authorial presence or control. Undeniably her poems centre on a "voice", distancing it from the more object-like poetry of the 'Language' school (Oren Izenberg 'Language Poetry and Collective Life' 133) but the voice is fractured, self-questioning and, as I will argue below, as much a coalescing point for the poem as a revelation about the poet.

The self presented is often unstable or under question, oscillating between two ideas of the self: an untenably hermetic (Cartesian) subjectivity and the constructed, objectified self. Fear and desire on both sides interplay – the nullification of completion and the powerlessness of being subsumed into indifferent, infinite play. Kirstin Zona, in 'Jorie Graham and American Poetry' sees Graham as 'charting the dance between autonomy and contingency' (669) as a search for ethical accountability. Indeed, as Lyn Heinian argues, '[t]his sense of contingency is ultimately intrinsic to my experience of the self, as a relationship rather than an existence' ('The Person and Description' 735). Though Graham is not unique in this dance, she is perhaps its most thorough and visible performer, making her 'indispensable to discussions of American verse' and explorations of 'the play between [...] presence and absence, desire and dislocation [...] from which the 'I' emerges' (Zona 'Jorie Graham and American Poetry' 670). This unsettled self whose subjectivity phases in and out seems at times certain only of its own uncertainty, becoming a question for and of itself. Like Stanley Cavell, and with parallels to Wallace Stevens' preoccupations, Graham can be conceived of as 'outlining

the necessity, and the lack of necessity, in the sense of the human as inherently strange, say unstable, its quotidian as forever fantastic' (Cavell *In Quest of the Ordinary* 154).

So, we may begin by asking: What kind of 'self' is at work at, in and through the poetry of Jorie Graham, one of the pre-eminently "difficult" poets of her generation (Andrew Langworthy Osborn 'Admit Impediment: The Use of Difficulty in Twentieth-Century American Poetry') whose writing grapples so resolutely with the fleeting paradoxes of subjectivity? As Ben Leubner suggests, like Wittgenstein's use of interlocutors in *Philosophical Investigations* – which is a form of talking to oneself – Graham's lyric-I is both an interiorisation and an exteriorisation, as the examination of the inner is made public, or made of the public, a notion returned to later in this chapter ('"The Limits of my language": Wittgenstein and Contemporary American Poetry' 26).

In 'Opulence' (*The Dream of the Unified Field* 192-3) she writes of the 'tyranny of utter self-reflexiveness—/its nearness to the invisible' in a poem ostensibly about the growth of an amaryllis, but which closely recalls the processes of bursting forth, of hollowing out that Blazer has elsewhere identified as key to Graham's treatment of the self and language (e.g. in the poem 'Chaos(Eve)' analysed in *I Am Otherwise* 135). The sections below provide a reading of a selection of Graham's poems as self-reflexive – not only as poems about writing poetry, which many assuredly are, but as excavating an idea of the self that is paradoxical, productive and problematic.

Key anxieties in Graham's writing are the self's responsibility to itself and its world, and how the self can be regarded as constructed, expressed and destroyed by immersion in language. Nerys Williams describes Graham as having a particular attraction to self-portraiture in poetry, with the simultaneous forces of representation, distance, distortion, confession and control that this medium implies (*Contemporary Poetry*). A self-portrait is, after all, something quite different from a 'confession' of the type more normal in contemporary poetry. For a self thus created in language, what are the regions and consequences of that language breaking down? The inexpressible may become the unliveable. By illustrating these issues I hope to show additional nuances in reading Graham's poetry, while simultaneously creating a space in which to discuss the implications of, and potential alternatives to, such an account of the self.

'OPULENCE': NARRATORS AS GHOSTS AND WORDS AS OBJECTS

'Opulence' follows very closely the life-cycle of an amaryllis:[31] the surging stem ('— a settling-ever-upward'), the 'sound-free-though-tongued' bud at its tip reaching upwards, the emergence of the flowers ('stepping out of the casing outstretched'), the opening and spacing out of the four blooms ('the fourness of it now maneuvering, vitalized, / like antennae rearranging constantly,'), the plant's following the light 'according to the time / of day' and the dying away of the 'wrinkled skirts of the casing'.

As with much of Graham's poetry, there is an intense closeness of observation and a pulsing sense of rhythm that – despite repetitions and digressions – means the poem itself feels like a continuously evolving process rather than a set of distinct images or phases. In fact, the whole poem of 51 lines is effectively one short statement (line one) followed by a long, fragmented and uncompleted sentence (it ends on an m-dash, not a full stop). There are no stanza breaks, the flow being broken up and controlled by dashes, varying line lengths and indentations. This has the effect of demanding the reader's attention, holding up specific details to view, without settling on a single image or idea, even after the poem has ended. This form allows a variety of readings. It echoes the perpetual unfolding of life, but simultaneously brings into view the disjunct between the static written form of a poem and the movement through time it describes. There are, in addition, two particular features of this poem I would like to highlight: the position of the observer/poet and the multiple ways in which the narrative given is accented as a *linguistic* event, as opposed to or in addition to a physical one.

The poem's first line, 'The self-brewing of the amaryllis rising before me' is an oddly truncated opening, like a note to explain the theme of the poem, rather than part of it. It is a minimal explanation in the manner of a painting's title. From this one sketched observation the rest of the poem flows, putting a grammatical divide between what is being described and the 'me' doing the describing. The only other intrusion of the narrator is in line 37, with the marker 'when I look again'. Here again, the narrator is marginal, a sub-clause in the undeflected sentence, which merely weaves around the 'I', suggesting that the poem's action has been going on, and continues, whether the poet is paying attention to it or not. The 'again' implies the poet already looked away at some point, but this is not related in the poem, and so is not positioned as being of any

---

[31] See for example *Amaryllis Growing, Flowering and Decaying, Time-Lapse* by webiocosm: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUOzVynk4Ao (accessed 1st Dec. 2013). Hila Ratzabi, in her an interview with Graham *Nothing Mystical About It* (2006) discusses the poet's beginnings as a film student and continuing interest in notions such as 'real time' in film. This awareness of the techniques and possibilities of film, as opposed to narrative, I argue, influence the rhythm and grammar of the poem.

importance to the amaryllis' progress. The grammatical ambiguity of the first line might therefore not be picking out only a positional relation ('before' as 'in front') but also a hierarchical one – an act of prioritisation. Equally, the 'before' could indicate a temporal relation in the context of the gap between observation and writing, or self and language.

The effect of this present but insubstantial narrator has been noted elsewhere – by Charles Molesworth in 'Jorie Graham: Living in the World' (1998), for example, or in Zona's 'Jorie Graham and American Poetry' (2005). Jennifer Ashton, while providing a coherent overview of Graham's position between mainstream and experimental poetry, partly as a result of discussions of the idea of agency within lyric poetry, emphasises Graham's diminishment of the subject, claiming that she 'portrays the self as something that is at once an *effect* of nonintentional material causes and indistinguishable from them' ('From Modernism to Postmodernism' 161-2). However, she resists falling foul of the disenchanted worldview described in the previous chapter, by seeing Graham's poetry as itself generative of the writing subject; her poems show 'lyric subjectivity [...] coming into being' (167).

In 'Opulence' the effect of this is to foreground the autonomy of the plant being described, more so than if the narrator were not present at all, since it calls attention to the fact that this is a poem, an act of description or recreation, not the plant itself, which is thereby set at a slight distance. The final two lines of 'Opulence' underscore this independence, whether one reads them as acknowledging the ultimately unreachable place of the amaryllis, or as a comment on the ghostliness of the authorial presence: 'and no footprints to or from the place— / no footprints to or from—' (ll. 50-51).

What, then, is the role of the narrator here? If such observations as Graham thrives on are to be made about 'The Visible World' (the title of the next poem in the anthologised collection *The Dream of the Unified Field*) and involve digging one's 'hands into the absolute' (194), what does this mean? Firstly, and most clearly, that there is an agent doing the digging, that the speaking, experiencing subject has not disappeared, and has not entirely given up control of the poem. This may constitute an insistence that just as there is 'no self undefiled by experience, no self unmediated in the epistemological situation but a person instead' (Heinian 'The Person and Description' 735), there is no poem, no experience, untouched by a subject, to some degree authorial.

Blazer reads this vacillation as Graham's urgent desire for 'cutting herself out of her poems' (*IAO* 125), to achieve a poetry that escapes traditional notions of subjectivity, but Molesworth notes that Graham's poetry, 'stamped with authorial will' ('Living in the World'), is thereby separated from the work of the Language poets, despite her sometimes radical formal choices. Clearly one of Graham's recurring struggles is with the status and meaning of writing poetry (as poet), but Blazer overstates the case. If an escape from the subjectivity of creative control were her main goal, randomised assemblages, systems of unconscious production or digital (re)productions through reader interface would be available to her. Things do not just happen in her poems, but are experienced, are made to happen, are directed. Like the complex status of ritual that Wittgenstein describes in *Remark on Frazer's Golden Bough*, poetry and language exist neither as fully controlled nor as fully submissive acts; ritual may be conceived of as the giving of the self into a social act (Veena Gass 'Anthropology, Wittgenstein and Frazer's Golden Bough'). Further, the notion of an 'absolute' into which one can dig – in fact have a good root around in, as 'The Visible World' goes on to describe – is interestingly difficult.

Are we to conceive of the absolute as something radically independent, a Kantian noumenal realm, or as the real thing really grasped, or as the underlying coherence of disparate experiences, like Douglas Adams' 'fundamental interconnectedness of all things' (*Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* 119)? It perhaps makes most sense to read this as some kind of untouched reality into which the human hand – the human organ of 'work and exploration' (Žižek *The Seven Veils of Fantasy* 16) – inserts an idea of order and pleasure in the creation of it. This order is, however, neither arbitrarily conjured by the poet's imagination nor obedience to some pre-existing Platonic schema but a construction of their interaction; distinctions arise insofar as the hand's exploration sets things apart. (Graham refers to 'hands making and unmaking promises. / Diggers, forgetters' in 'The Visible World'.) Žižek's differentiation between physical intersection and *directed* or 'Edenic' (16) interaction is useful here, as a way of retaining the kind of agency Graham clearly displays in her poems, without retreating into the Cartesian notion of a pre-existing self. Language is made almost physical in places, both conceptually and in the way Graham layers her writing. It is something to be manipulated rather than solely a medium for communicating meaning. This effect is achieved partly through its placement on the page, partly through the treatment of words as objects. This linguistic materiality is a key consideration for many text-artists, whose

creations dwell as much on and in the form and setting of the words chosen as their meanings. The minimalist site-specific works of Alec Finlay or the manipulated print-texts of Johanna Drucker are examples of this, briefly discussed in Chapter 6. Although Graham stops short of such object-oriented work in her poems, her formal decisions, such as her long lines, do have something painterly about them, structuring the page in terms of space and time as well as meaning. She also deploys typographical effects and disruptions of anticipated meaning in a way that lends a more solid, object-like sheen to particular words than a less crafted presentation might achieve. This is particularly evident in what one might call the "second wave" of 'Opulence', denoted by the short, stopping line eight 'now,' and running to about line 18. (The poem is not segmented by stanza breaks, but the indented lines and rhythmic stutters do to a large extent match up to thematic shifts.) Here, in lines 11 and 12, Graham includes a number of words that appear to be claimed as 'lexical objects' (Molesworth 'Living in the World') rather than deployed on the basis of their referential sense:

> bits of *clench, jolt, fray* and *assuage* —
> bits of *gnaw* and *pulse* and, even, *ruse*

All of which serves to remind us of the complex relation between the things presented in the poem, the act of writing and the poem's reception by the reader. Graham is at pains to keep the linguistic (poetic) nature of the poem in view – its symbolic, revisable and transferrable qualities. Indeed, 'Opulence' like many other poems is as much about its language of expression as it is the object of description. The lexical objects, however, seem to be an attempt at something closer to ostensive definition than description – the 'thatness' of the words substituting for the desired 'thatness' of the thing described, as if we could get direct access through the acquaintance that language blocks to (at least) the language itself. But in becoming objects the words return from signifiers into sensual or material effects, like Wallace Stevens' nonsense words; we are drawn into the effort and feeling of the expression as well as or instead of experiencing the words' meaning. By bringing into view the materiality of language thus conceived, Graham calls on what Michael Luntley describes as our 'abilities other than and weaker than conceptual abilities, the abilities manifest in the regularities of word use' (*Opening Investigations* 99). Luntley's attempt here is to move beyond the rule-following, normative conception of grammar discussed in Chapter 1, in order to allow for ways of explaining the world that are not 'meaningful' in the conceptual sense.

This materiality is worth devoting some attention, not least because it has been an accusation against Wittgenstein (and Cavell and McDowell) that they are too interested in, or too bound up, in words rather than worlds – that Wittgenstein's problems and dissolutions are linguistic ones, and that outside of language nothing exists, or at least nothing of philosophical interest. For example, Charles Bernstein's concern that Cavell's textualisation of experience goes too far in 'Reading Cavell Reading Wittgenstein', J. M. Bernstein's 'Re-enchanting Nature' on McDowell's supposed failure to engage beyond the linguistic or conceptual in *Mind and World*, or Morton A. Kaplan's 'Human Reason and a Common World: Why Wittgenstein and Rawls Are Both Wrong', and the limits of some expressivist readings of Wittgenstein explored in Gorazd Andrejč's *Wittgenstein and Interreligious Disagreement: A Philosophical and Theological Perspective*). This thesis as a whole has attempted to show the poverty of overly-language-centric readings of Wittgenstein in particular, both as interpretations of his work and as positions for further intellectual endeavour. Jorie Graham's materialising of words, as a parallel to Stevens' sensuousness of language, can dissolve the supposed gap between words and other experiences. As also suggested in Chapter 3, something of this sort is accomplished simply by reminding ourselves of the naturalness and liveliness of our meaning-making, or, within the practice poetry, testing the operations of grammar and meaning in deliberate ways. Gestures, pointing, animal sounds liberate words from their surface meanings, such that boundaries between sense and nonsense, speech and reference are blurred. The effects of this blurring can be refreshing, as in Stevens' exhilarating 'Notes', humanising, as in Miller's domestication of religious striving, or unnerving in the way that Burnside's animal guides are uncertain companions.

Graham's minimal insertion of the narrative voice in 'Opulence' is also a blurring – a small shift or shrug in the poem's flow, enough to remind us in passing of the poem's poemness. While it may strive to replicate the growth of the plant and/or the experience thereof, it always remains at a slight remove. This is re-enforced by the scattering of words in the poem that pick out boundaries, breaks or constrictions: *fissure, frontier(s), fray, impregnable, imprisoned, knots, envelope, skin, monologue, formulaic* etc.

These considerations of difference between perception, meaning and expression offer a further possibility of response to the 'lexical objects' quoted above. It ought to be possible to uncover a coherent use of the terms as part of a literal description of the amaryllis, even where this is at first sight difficult. However, this would leave open the

questions of why these terms are italicised, and no others – 'in an apparently random way where no such emphasis is required', as Roger Caldwell has complained about other Graham poems ('At a Suitable Distance' 2003). Rather, if we make the slightly counter-intuitive move of reading the words not for their sense, but as items in themselves, as sonic units that echo and reconfigure each other, we can perhaps get a different sense of the pressing, tense, full feeling of a driving plant that Graham attempts to share. The words are being made to do something alternative that requires a shift in aspect perception. We may come to question whether we read a word as a meaning-unit, as symbol, as sound, as visual marker of shape and rhythm – or as disruption of any one of these readings. Graham's non-intuitive choices of presentation send us, like Caldwell, in search of reasons, which may bring other readings into view.

By reading this in light of Wittgenstein's account of aspect perception in *Philosophical Investigations*, we can impose a somewhat more nuanced idea than merely noting the variety of possible senses, associations or tonal qualities of a given word or phrase. It is worth thinking of the element of force experienced by a competent language user in coming to see different aspects, which may be decided by the context, performance or accumulation of linguistic acts, without anything that might be construed as a change within the object (word) itself, or anything that could be identified as a causal link between the object and how it is seen (*PI* §§140, 178, 304; pp179, 205). Graham's lexical objects can impose a different kind of seeing-as on a reader through the many formal and typographical tools at her disposal, made plainer by her willingness to put these tools on display – to keep drawing attention to the fact that what is being read is a poem. This level of *imposition*, which is somewhat different from a matter of interpretation, can also be linked with Wittgenstein's suggestion that for many examples it is possible to see any one of the available aspects, but not simultaneously; and different aspects may 'dawn' on us at different times (*PI* pp194-7). Think, for example of concave models of faces that seem to either recede or protrude, it being possible only to see the face one way or the other, never both. Though one can of course be aware of the possibility of different aspects, which is at the heart of acts of interpretation, it is not in some cases possible to see something *as* several of it multiple possibilities at once. In the case of 'Opulence', the way that '*clench, jolt, fray* and *assuage*' are deployed makes it difficult to incorporate them primarily as words used for their sense, but makes the words extremely effective for capturing the strange combination of tension and fluidity experienced in watching a flower bloom. Rhythmically, for example, the words carry in

them a sequentially reducing level of tension, as the vowels elongate and the sounds loosen.

By deliberately calling attention to this aspect shift (as opposed to more understatedly allowing the sounds of the words to add resonance to the surface meaning) and by doing so at just this part of the poem, as the focus shifts from the initial 'me' and the abstracted 'tyranny of utter self-reflexiveness' towards the more direct depiction of the flower, Graham manages the transition between the narrative voice's direct expressionand the verbal image of the amaryllis, which halos its directed object at a certain remove. The words become more object-like as the poet recedes. Paradoxically, as the mediating activity of words is accented, the poem is repositioned as a linguistic construct as we rebound into thinking about words rather than the things they pick out.

This in turn gives impetus to some of the imagery and terminology Graham chooses, which draw on the physical acts and materials of writing: 'so as to loosen the tight dictation' … 'and the envelope rips'. Then, in the poem's closing stages (after the flower has bloomed) the allusions are to speech and consciousness:

> the monologue reduced – or is it expanded – to
> this chatter seeking all the bits of light (ll. 42-3)

and

> the light wide-awake around it – or is it the eye –
> yes yes yes yes says the mechanism (ll. 48-9)

With the tightening parallel this draws between the writing of the poem and the writing (creation, emergence) of the self through the activity, the amaryllis becomes a metaphor for the poem/poet within which it features.

Blazer argues that Graham's self is conceived as something that bursts out through itself, using the image of Eve erupting from Adam's rib 'like a judgement' (*IAO* 133). Thus, being a linguistic being simultaneously creates the possibility of individual consciousness and *annihilates* it in the shared reality of language. This becomes the act of a Flagellant – 'She flails herself with her own language to open herself to another possibility of being' (IAO 125). The thrusting, self-exceeding plant of 'Opulence' mirrors this self-bursting push, with the smooth, tight, green skin of the stem becoming an 'exclamation' of flowers that, once released, expand, settle, take on colour, but

importantly have not reached a conclusion, only a particular stage – the 'mechanism of the underneath' (l. 49) is still ticking; the process never completed.

However, a persistently violent presentation of Graham's writing is not fully justified by her body of work, since it is difficult to detect anything so brutal in, for example 'Prayer' (*Never* 3), which is nonetheless about the attractions of losing oneself into language: 'The longing / is to be pure. What you get is to be changed.' (ll. 14-5). Thus, while I suggest that Blazer's depiction has a number of short-comings, as discussed at various points below, the almost metaphysical strain against the limits of language he detects in Graham's writing (*IAO* 125) and the notion of the self being both hollowed out by, and (re)constituted by, the exposure to language are useful for understanding the way Graham turns language against itself, into (specifically) 'broken literary speech' (Reddy *Changing Subjects* 19). Initially, it will be useful to look more closely at the continual play of uncertainty that characterises Graham's language, but in terms of redacted or questioned contents, and the breakdown of linguistic structures. Like the *puy* that appeared in Chapter 3 – the extinct volcano as image for the unproductive poet – Graham seems to fear completion or comprehension, as killers of the poem and the poet.

'DUSK SHORE PRAYER': THE EVER-FLOWING SELF AND THE UNFINISHED POEM

This notion of unbearable completion is a recurring feature of Graham's poetry, touching form, content, and publication habits. In a 2003 *Paris Review* interview, she describes the aftermath of writing 'The Taken Down God', which appears in the collection *Never*:

<div style="text-align:center">INTERVIEWER</div>

Did you know immediately you had this amazing poem?

<div style="text-align:center">GRAHAM</div>

No. In fact, I had to fly back to the U.S. unexpectedly a short while later, and found myself alone in Cambridge in the middle of the summer. I thought *Never* was finished—in fact it was already delivered to the publisher. But I called Frank Bidart, and (he's a guide on the path if there ever was one) he's the one who said, when I told him about the event, You have to write that, you just have to write that. So I took the time of that solitude—which was

great, and full of fear—my daughter was very ill—to work the notes

up into the final poem. Peter, still in Italy, spent the time walking

from Todi to Assisi and back—which took him many days. So I felt

that pilgrimage-walk of his somehow behind the poem—that spine

of days. It was a very silent time.

INTERVIEWER

So the book originally ended with the prior section?

GRAHAM

Yes, the version going to press ended on "By the Way."

INTERVIEWER

How about the other long poem in that final section, "High Tide,"

about your encounter with the homeless woman?

GRAHAM

After "The Taken-Down God" presented itself, I knew the book

was open again. As when painters say, Then the canvas had to be

wet all-over again, once they touch it anywhere . . . I went back to

my notebook and found the notes on that encounter with the

homeless woman. I had to return to Italy then, so I ended up writing

"High Tide" there—holding the book up. But my publisher is used

to that. (Gardner 'The Art of Poetry No. 85')

This resistance that Graham's poetry shows to a final form is particularly deeply

engrained. Many poems feature internal revisions of the text as they go along,

correcting an expression or changing viewpoint, keeping the poem lively by denying it a

concrete final form. This is both an internal and external feature, since Graham

frequently revises poems between publications, and explains her writing technique as a

continual process of rearrangement: 'I'd say I spend ninety percent of my time in

revision. It's a craziness. There are sometimes maybe thirty variants of the lineation of a

stanza' ('The Art of Poetry No. 85').

This attachment to revision and struggle with form and arrangement is strongly reminiscent of Wittgenstein's notebooks and manuscripts, in which ideas are re-phrased and re-contextualised multiple times, and the idea of a definitive book seemed always unsatisfactory and impossible (*PI* Preface). Eldridge goes so far as to claim that *Philosophical Investigations*, even in its published form, displays Wittgenstein's own methodological refusal to issue theses or doctrine, but only up to about §308, after which it becomes less rigorous, and sometimes didactic (*Leading a Human Life* 11), suggesting that the manuscript was never fully finished and polished. For Wittgenstein the matter was one of continual tinkering to find the 'redeeming word' (Daniele Moyal-Sharrock 'Wittgenstein on Forms of Life, Patterns of Life, and Ways of Living' 22), a 'reproductive' kind of thinking rather than simple creation (*CV* 16e), seeking 'the counter-irritant to our irritated and restless fixations' (Gould 'Restlessness and the Achievement of Peace' 89), releasing 'mental cramp' by inventing other ways to look at the use of an expression (Norman Malcolm *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir* 50). For Graham, the restless fixation is generative, as well as something to be stilled, since the poem in some sense performs (and re-performs) the act of this search, each time deviating incrementally from the normal patterns of thought and expression (*Z* §349).

In this section I will show some of the internal features of this approach, as seen in 'Dusk Shore Prayer' (*Never* 31-2). It features retractions and constant interruptions of the lyric flow, owing perhaps more to painting than poetic form for its visual aspect, which is clearly one of Graham's key concerns (Bonnie Costello 'Jorie Graham: Art and Erosion' 373). In Caldwell's review of *Never* he bemoans '[a]n esoteric punctuation involving a bizarre system of round and square brackets [that] confounds the reader and gives the impression of unfinished work' ('At a Suitable Distance'). Though this is, in truth, a not unreasonable description of Graham's difficult and typographically baroque collection, I would argue it is also an unfortunately reductive reading of what is happening in the poems, or what the impression of 'unfinished work' – or better, a work resisting completion – can be made to do. To give a flavour of the collection's hesitancy at its height, here is the 'third wave' of 'Dusk Shore Prayer'. As in 'Opulence' the poem is not broken up by full stanza breaks, but the spaces created by indents and curtailed lines do give some rhythmic and thematic demarcation:

> (which feels tugged) (the rows of scripting
>   [even though it's a trick] adamant with
>   self-unfolding) (wanting the eye to catch and take

dominant final-hold, feel the thickest rope of

waterlipped

scripting

to be a producing of a thing that speaks [to whom

one does not know, but a true speech]) – to believe this truly,

not in metaphor— (ll. 10-18)

Jorie Graham's work here *is* unfinished, insofar as its intent seems to be to re-live and sustain a moment of conscious experience *as* an experience and not the memory or distilled lesson of one. Reading the poem is a re-enactment of the asides, self-edits and anxieties that constitute mental activity. As Helen Vendler puts it: 'How to follow the flickers of consciousness without reducing it to 'pure mentality' (that Platonic fiction) is one aim of the poetry of Jorie Graham' ('Indigo, Cyanine, Beryl'). The extent to which this tactic of linguistic fracturing is effective does vary by poem and reader's taste; when the bracketing-off of text becomes, if not systematic, then perhaps symptomatic (the great majority of poems in *Never* exhibit some of this punctuation) further questions are raised. Has the following of consciousness fallen into a trap of its own displacement strategy and become a code in itself? Is there some definite meaning to the brackets (and the choice of round or square); are there distinct meanings in each use, or do they eventually become mere stylistic tics? The brackets could be the whispering worry about overly smooth thinking or language, reducing it to the presentable and fully-formed mode of public discourse. Alternatively, they might undermine the very idea of smooth thinking, in which there is always an act of revision, hesitation or interpretation, pulling one away from the idea of the thing in itself. In the latter case, the *effort* required to achieve moments of recognition is highlighted.

One's attitude to the bracketing off and circling phrasing will to a degree be influenced by how the styling and its intent are interpreted. They could be seen, for example, as testing the limits of sense, depicting (either successfully or unsuccessfully) the breakdown of language, a perfectly conscious but deliberately anti-lyrical or anti-Cartesian form of writing, or a refusal to commit to a single view or narrative – whether for reasons of ethics, anxiety or provocation. The habit of bracketing could be merely an unorthodox means of controlling the pace of the reader's eye across the text – speeding over apparent asides, braking for unexpected turns and cul-de-sacs. Given the setting of 'Dusk Shore Prayer' – the liminal beach-scene – it is perhaps easiest to read Graham's stutterings as replications of the temporary nature of the shoreline. The poet or poem is

shifted in and out by the sea, leaving trails of words whose meanings may be lost or reconfigured by the tide. The sea is taken in the collection *Never* as a metaphor for the real, or its dissolution, in several senses, recalling Stevens' brute reality engaged by song, W.S.Graham's crossing of 'the white threshold' as an escape from words and conventions (Edwin Morgan 'The Sea, the Desert, the City: Environment and Language in W. S. Graham, Hamish Henderson, and Tom Leonard'), or Burnside's littoral space of quiet retreat (Julika Griem 'John Burnside's Seascapes'). The sea in 'Dusk Shore Prayer' moves and retreats, like a voice. There is 'meaningless on (not *in*) the moving of the / waters' (ll. 8-9). It is restless – it feels tugged (l. 10), adamant (l. 11) and pregnant with an urge to resolve into a single image.

Given this setting, one can understand the hesitations, segmentation and narrative lacunae in terms of the strange and sudden violence at the centre of the poem:

> And never to be
> emptied by the wound of meaning.
> The gash of likeness. The stump interpretation. (ll. 22-24)

There is little in the preceding poem to anticipate this bodily and bloody imagery. Similarly to 'Opulence' but more overtly, the poem opens with a clipped introduction of its primary theme, 'The creeping revelation of shoreline', followed by concentrated descriptions of a scene that allude to writing, such as 'golden sentences writ on clearest moving waters' ... 'the rows of scripting' (ll. 7, 9). But unlike 'Opulence', which insists on minimising the lyric-I in favour of the observed object, here the focus attempts to simultaneously encompass the linguistic and the 'inner' experience. Spelling out positionally the self/other distinction as two distinct blanks to be filled, Graham slides into a drive-by Nietzschean call for *becoming* over *being* (an unfulfilled longing) before the jolting bodily turn quoted above. But how to read this image of a wound, and in what sense is it *desired*? Is the wish '[n]ever to be emptied' a desire to avoid being wounded, or is the inevitability, necessity or even pleasure of the wound being invoked, with the hope that one will never cease emptying into/though the wound, or with the hope that one may incur the wound, but not be destroyed thereby?

Much as Nietzsche's ascetic model acknowledged, even savoured, suffering for its resulting spiritual growth (Tyler T. Roberts '"This Art of Transfiguration is Philosophy": Nietzsche's Asceticism' 407-8), the injuries risked in making meaning can be key to the establishing of the self. The image of meaning-as-wound may be

talismanic of Graham's poetry, conjuring an oppositional but mutually generating self/Other relation, through the objectifying work of language.

Since language not only reveals our inner world but structures it, to speak is to open oneself up to the gaze of the Other. According to Blazer this implies a loss of the idea of an irreducible or unique inner subject (since everything, being in language, is sited on the same plane). One thus becomes, for oneself, 'Other', too; the self is 'emptied out' by being described in language: '[W]ords skin reality and expose a transcendent nothingness' (*IAO* 130). There is "nothing beyond the text" in the sense that what was supposedly inner and subjective can only be actualised in the realm of public and shared language. However, Blazer differentiates between what he sees as an acknowledgement of the text as the final, labyrinthine boundary in Jon Ashbery's poems (125) and Graham's metaphysical gesture towards a 'nothing' that is beyond the text. She 'transcends language only to realize holes in the firmaments of being' (125). The subjective self, or at least the kind of self we had imagined ourselves to have, is destroyed by the induction into language, and this is the self-confrontation that Blazer sees in Graham's interpenetrating streams of language. One can, however, rebuild oneself, thanks to the same gaze of the Other, which has objectified one (given one existence) through language. The subjection of the subject to the laws of language structures it in such a way that the gaze of the other permits the seeing of the self *as* other, and therefore as a self: 'the subject becomes an infinite vacillation between otherwordly obliteration and self-formation' (133).

Blazer quotes from Graham's 'The Dream of the Unified Field': 'I watch the head explode then recollect, explode, recollect' (*The Dream of the Unified Field* 177). The self can stitch back together the shredded skin around the 'hole' in Being left by the discovery of the other. Blazer's account is of a continual process inherent in language, though it is not clear whether only specific language acts, especially poetry, have this effect, nor whether this act of turning oneself inside out could rather be achieved as a developmental stage, an initiation into language use and full subjectivity (Is the significance of the wound of meaning the initial cut or the flow of blood that follows?) There are some echoes in this self-transcendence of the Pseudo-Dionysian *epectasis* of Chapter 2, seeking the loss of the self in pursuit of a Truth both more real and more personal, since the sought communion with God is the ultimate loss of the content of the self, but not utterly the self as self; the alignment of the self with perfect divinity obliterating the division between objective and subjective. The difference here is that on

Blazer's model there is no original self to be transcended except *as that act* of transcendence into the gaze of the other. Subjectivity is created by its own recognition of its constraint by social and physical reality.

The invocation of metaphor in 'Dusk Shore Prayer' quoted above (ll. 16-17) provides a way of both understanding Blazer's thinking and of pointing out some of its excesses. A central part of the prayer of the poem seems to be for an escape from the continual deferral of meaning or failure of language to pick out things in the world. In common with the hesitations and revisions of the bracketed-off sections, the plea 'to believe this truly,/ not in metaphor' suggests that what can be represented in the poem (or conceived in language) falls short of the facts, that language at some level always operates as a clothing of reality (*TLP* 4.002) covering the thing in a way that protects it from our apperception.

This observation is a generative factor in Blazer's account, since the inescapable and irresolvable nature of language means that becoming objectified therein is precisely to give up on the idea that there might be a unique, contentful subject; the self becomes a metaphor, itself generated by a metaphor – the idea of a coherent subject. The poet battles with Manichean urges to both speak and remain silent:

> Silence rips the self asunder to a state of utter absence and intolerable negation; speech loses the self in the swirling storm of the symbolic order. Both end in failure – silence because it submits itself to an inadequacy of being in the face of the real other that the subject in the end can neither admit nor permit, and speech because it cannot adequately put forth one's consciousness outside in order to simply engage, let alone surmount, the real of the other. Consequently, the perpetual vacillation between silence and speech constitutes human reality. (*IAO* 140)

This account is variously productive and problematic, exhibiting a confusion between infinitely possible interpretation and a perpetual *requirement* to interpret, driven by an assumption that if language cannot represent the word it must be merely metaphorical. Though it is true that the signs we use in language are generated by us and our language, not the object under scrutiny itself, this does not mean that the relation has no existence at all (a notion that, as Bernard Harrison has argued, is a hangover from the idea that language must be either representational or arbitrary, ignoring our 'structural fore-understandings' (*Inconvenient Fictions* 251) in interpretations and the importance

of the practices that frame our forms of literature); rather, our practices – out of which language emerges, is controlled and evolves – allow us to establish generally acceptable and unacceptable uses of language, and practices are founded in our embodied and instinctual experience. Language is no more merely metaphorical than it is merely noise, or merely temporal; these are aspects of what we do. As Charles Altieri has argued, overlooking this fact lies behind much literary theory, in which the world has been 'lost' in language's detachment from direct representation ('Wittgenstein on Consciousness and Language'). In fact, this simply perpetuates the idea of a necessity for such representation, when our language is – as Wittgenstein shows – significantly more versatile and available.

Much of the earlier part of *Philosophical Investigations* is devoted to showing how even small patterns of language are tied in with surrounding conventions, definitions, expectations, and so on. Ultimately, to imagine a language is to understand a form of life (§19); although always malleable in some directions, language is resistant in others (*Z* §§351, 374, 379). The adoption of words and gestures is not truly *arbitrary*, only contingent; 'where are the bounds of the incidental?' (*PI* §79). The view of language as infinitely interpretable therefore treats it like a layer of fog between us and the world, upon which meaning is imposed by the operations of the system. But this would make meaning a separate quality or process, an addendum – rather than seeing that *within certain contexts* meaning can be treated this way (as infinitely interpretable), but only because the majority of our language games do not require us to think in this way. Consider the following set of Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations*:

> The primitive reaction may have been a glance or a gesture, but it may also have been a word.

> Meaning is not a process which accompanies a word. For no *process* could have the consequences of meaning.

> How do I find the 'right' word? How do I choose among words? ... I do not always have to make judgements, give explanation... *Sometimes* I can say why. (emphases in original) (p 218)

This provides a reminder that language, though certainly a system that precedes and exceeds the individual, is not something detached from human or worldly existence; the difference between a mere 'animal' response and the sophistication of language is a

matter of training and socialisation – *Bildung* – not an encoding that separates us off from the world. Our 'standing obligation to engage in self-reflection' (*MW* 126) that comes from socialisation also means that 'to speak is to settle to be heard under some designation' (Denise Riley 'Lyric Selves' 212). In the case of the poet, this includes accepting (as much as insisting) that one is heard as 'a literary subject', entering into a pre-existing conversation (212-3).

Perhaps a helpful way of emphasising this acceptance of a role, which both enables and commits us to communicate, is the notion of voice. In *The Claim of Reason* Stanley Cavell repeatedly makes use of the idea of 'finding one's voice' (e.g.:27-8, 110, 141, 334, 447). Sometimes this relates to his analysis of Wittgenstein's voice(s) in *Philosophical Investigations*, at others to the sense of responsibility and risk that comes from being a speaker, the processor of a voice – or the fear of losing one's voice. The importance of maintaining disparate, even conflicting voices within Wittgenstein's writing as part of his irreducible *style*, his yet unmistakeable voice is also discussed in 'The *Investigation's* Everyday Aesthetics of Itself'.

To have a voice is to have a (human) body. Other ideas of what it means to have a voice are largely parasitic on this idea, since electronically generated voices mimic or replace the lost human voice, animals only have voices insofar as we have given them a shading of anthropomorphism. (An animal can roar, bark, squeak or buzz, but to have a voice means attributing to it an intent, which may well be entirely true to that animal, but understood in terms of our own human wants or needs.) Further, a voice is something that we develop over time, both physically and in our relationships, politics, writing etc. (cf *CR* 27). It may be the best illustration of what undergoing the process of *Bildung* entails: responsibility, responsiveness, capacity.

A writer develops such a voice, though there is nothing essential or prescriptive about this; writers reveal themselves differently, just as different readers can be more attuned to hearing a voice, or changes in it. Poetry can, as Elizabeth Austen puts it, be 'a bridge between solitudes. At its best it transports us – through the nonlinear and irresistible persuasion of music and metaphor – into a state of receptive empathy' ('How Poetry Can Help Us Say the Unsayable'). But to understand the kind of work that Graham attempts to do on her inhabiting of subjectivity – the (re)porting of experience, the interrogation of responsibility – requires both the recognition of a voice and the ability to note its non-essential quality. Indeed, 'voice' seems to be a key factor in making

sense of the poetry. Despite changes in formal style during her career (compare the 'skinny' poems of *Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts* to the long lines adopted in *Overlord,* or the semi-rigid pattern of indented lines of *Place*) there is a recognisable quality to her harnessing of close observation and abstraction, the inter-penetration of inner and outer concerns and, often, a strange sense of distracted urgency, heightened and scattered by the re-doubling of thoughts or the use of brackets and blanks. Two concepts within Graham's writing may illustrate this feeling of both 'voice' and 'objectivity' of her lyric-I: the 'glance' and the intertwined notions of responsibility and incompleteness of meaning.

In Isabel Galleymore's essay 'The Many Promises of Vision', 'the glance' is introduced as a preoccupation of Graham's that emerges in the 1997 collection, *The Errancy*. 'The glance' may be taken here as a set of challenges that Graham identifies in the writing of poetry (and life more generally): that 'seeing' the world is always preconditioned by one's position, attitude, memory etc., so that neutral experience (or subsequent description) remains beyond our grasp. We are surrounded by the 'structural fore-understandings' which condition our interpretation of texts and experience (*Inconvenient Fictions* 251). Seeing the world is therefore inherently *temporal*, because there is no moment of pure apperception, but a series of movements, couplings and combinations of the practices that facilitate our lives – from ideologies to religious beliefs, genres, games and social settings. Consequently, no matter how immediately a poem, or any other experience, seeks to record an event, even the act of looking down at the page to write involves a break between the object and the description; that the materials of poems are thus at a remove from their purported objects. The glance connects and separates. Graham's writing often reflects back on its own attempts to present an experience (such as the encounter with the homeless woman that sparked 'High Tide' discussed in the interview quoted above.)

Note here the distinction between 'glance' and 'gaze'. Where the first implies a fleeting contact – perhaps a flirtation – that captures but remains at the end external to the thing perceived, the second is steady, penetrating, challenging. Blazer's 'gaze' is a function of sustained attention and determination, whereas a 'glance' is an acknowledgement. The glance provides a certain space within which what is perceived can retain (or exceed) its status as object, rather than being claimed by the owner of the gaze.

The *lateness* of vision thus implied recurs in many guises in Graham's later collections, for instance 'I went out afterwards to see.' in 'Recovered from the Storm' (l. 1), in which the poem is something gained in the aftermath, rather than the storm something survived. (*The Errancy* 107); 'If you look hard / it is a process of falling/ and squinting - & you are in-/terrupted again and again by change' (ll. 1-4, 'Nearing Dawn' *Sea Change*) or 'I can still/ feel it in my gaze, tonight, long after it is gone' ('No Long Way Round' *Sea Change* 54). We are constantly reminded – as with the hesitations of 'Dusk Shore Prayer' – that the poem, even the experience of writing the poem, comes after, creates a break with, the experience it describes.

Writing about an event is always necessarily subsequent to, and increasingly distant from, its putative subject. For this reason, Graham prefers to treat poems as a performance of (re)discovery rather than an attempted re-telling, generating moments of consciousness lived activity. Even as she writes, Graham appears to have one eye on the process of writing, commenting on the limitations and difficulties of finding the fine distinctions of meaning, 'constantly turn[ing] her appalled eye on her own activity as she writes' (Gardner *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry* 6). The world is in that sense both ineffable and hyper-effable – there is no privileged access but our own fallible work; 'Making sense of the world in language is inherently risky and an infinite task' (Robert E. Innis. 'Language and Thresholds of Sense' 114).

Our very seeing of the world is somewhat late, pre-filtered as it is by our perceptual capacities, interests and cultivated blind-spots. Though Graham does insist on the effort of re-creating immediacy – 'porting' not *re*porting events, by writing many poems *in situ* (Galleymore 'The Many Promises of Vision') – the reader is made constantly aware of this effort and its various codes, devices and failures. Put in Cavellian terms, in the 'violence of thinking' ('The Wittgensteinian Event' 18) the World's 'presentness recedes with our attempts to make it present again' (R. M. Berry, 'Stanley Cavell's Modernism' 49). In Graham's writing this manifests itself chiefly in questions of temporality, including the aforementioned hesitations and repetitions, as well as the difficulty of the notion of *now* – see for example 'Other' (*The Taken-Down God*) (which may also be an echo of the insistence on change in Wallace Stevens' 'Notes'): 'For a long time I used to love the word *now*. I murmured its / tiniest of songs to myself as a child when alone. *Now now now/ now* I sang' (ll. 1-3)... '*It could not be / absent*' (ll. 45-6).

Part of this is to acknowledge that what is "going on" is poetry, not reportage and, as has been noted, she does this by disclosing the formal and linguistic elements of the poem; Gardner comments on the 'increasingly foregrounded stylistic means by which Graham replicates moments of consciousness' (*Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry* 4). In fact, 'some reviewers [have complained] that her linguistic records aren't exactly poetry anymore' (3), that they have become a meta-poetry that forgoes its supposed purpose in favour of a highly academic commentary on the notion of writing itself. This, however, is to ignore the many other issues Graham addresses in her work – especially ecology and the family – and the sonic and conceptual richness her verse produces, even while announcing itself as poetry. Leonard M. Scigaj argues that her distrust of closure and completeness, manifest in her linguistic and formalist delays and gaps, is a resistance to imperialist utilitarianism, making her writing political (even if, Scigaj claims, anthropocentric) ('The World Was the beginning of the World' 248).

Alongside the complexities of observation noted in the 'glance', the incompleteness of meaning adds to the temporal depth and uncertainty of Graham's writing. If the poem is a process of (re)creation, not only the writing but each reading must be felt as a productive event. Graham lets this idea of change play out in her published work, in poems that undermine their own completeness, refusing to look set or resolved. In 'Dusk Shore Prayer' the stuttering bracket section at first appears to lead into a more definitely-voiced conclusion to the poem, with short direct sentences:

> As the sun goes down. Until it glimmers in
>
> the tiny darkness and the human will comes to the end.
>
> Having it go before one's looking goes. The summer
>
> at one's back. The path back barely findable. (ll. 26-9)

However, the sentences remain grammatically incomplete, so the effect is a slowing of the tempo, without actual resolution. The last line echoes formally, and ironises, the opening line of the poem ('The creeping revelation of shoreline'), almost asking the question *How did I get from there to here?* The effect is to refer the reader cyclically back to the poem's beginning, while withholding some core insight or moral that would render the piece completed. As Sean O'Brien put it in his review of 'Place', 'This is writing not only about time but against time'.

The operative image in the poem's opening is the washing, tugging relation between the sea and the beach, suggesting an allusion to Wallace Stevens' 'The Idea of Order at Key

West', but with the sharp relation of sea and singer replaced by intertwined movements of the shoreline. The difference between the poems being perhaps that Stevens eventually 'turned / Toward the town... the glassy lights', while Graham remains on the beach until the fading light renders distinctions invisible. We know, perhaps, less with certainty by the end than we knew at the beginning.

Physicality and Absence of expression

The ways in which such uncertainty and failure to mean are denoted in Graham's writing can take many forms. As discussed above, the use of brackets, incomplete sentences and layered images batter against our normal codes of expression, stretching the language to breaking point. This section will take a brief look at the use of these interruptions of language as, in some ways, providing a genuine response to Wittgenstein's question 'For what does it mean "to discover that a sentence does not make sense"? (*Z* §274). What does it take for (suddenly or consistently) meaning to fail?

Having discussed in Chapter 2 the philosophical import of nonsense, Graham's demonstrative fracturing of propositional sense brings in a new level of disruption. Her sentences not only fail to mean in a propositional sense, they also fail to fail to mean, since her operation within the practice of poetry encourages the reader to respond in a specific, provisional way. Thus her repeated concerns with both the responsibility and risk of speaking: who is speaking and what is their relation to the sense of their own words, in a public, penetrating language?

In posing this question of the limitations and responsibilities of conveying sense in a language that constantly defers and makes ambiguous meaning, it is important to keep in mind that there is a difference between ambiguity of meaning and meaning in general. This confusion can, for example, be found in Benjamin Ogden's otherwise illuminating 'What Philosophy Can't Say about Literature: Stanley Cavell and Endgame'. By over-stating Cavell's notions of meaning and the ordinary (as permitting loss-less paraphrase in the former case and as primary or ruling rather than underlying use in the latter) (135), Cavell's insistence that our failure to grasp certain meanings is the result of our own aspect-blindness is made to look strange, if not imperialistic; that what something means can *in specific cases* be determined, even in cases of fractured language or partial information. But this is not Cavell's position. Ordinary language does underlie but not determine our meanings, and if we speak beyond sense, as we

might in very many different ways, we contradict it. But still, as speakers with voices, we continue to make sense, or to allow senses to be imposed upon us, since our meaning or potential meanings show in our life and culture as a whole. This does not mean quite that it can be known what we mean, but it does mean that we expose ourselves to being understood, to being responsible for what we say. Odgen's criticisms do not gain traction against this position, such that when he says '[In Endgame it] is Becket's ability to retain a space of irresolvable ambiguity […] that invites continued investigation by the reader […] Without such a contested and unclaimable space, Beckett's work would collapse' (131-2), this is perfectly correct – provided that 'irresolvable ambiguity' is not taken to mean a general or absolute failure to mean. Clearly Beckett performs the ways in which language is a flawed construct, but does so in a way that still rewards the attentive audience or reader. Cavell's point is rather that this attentiveness is partial and structured by the practices we assent to or enter into, such that we have the tools to understand or be blind to subjects that are, often, too difficult to face directly. The example of non-human suffering, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is a fertile area for such thinking. We have the language and the conceptual tools to discuss animal rights, notions of suffering and sentience, yet the very existence of such forms of discussion – debates of law or ethical principles, can be what prevents us from having to see – bear witness to – the individual and actual suffering of animals reared and killed for our own convenience and pleasure. We deflect the truly troubling reality of recognisable suffering into standardised forms of words and concepts. It is a distinct and torturous lack of 'deflection' (Cavell *The Claim of Reason*) or of coping skills, that drives Elizabeth Costello to become 'exposed' (The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy 72) and subsequently 'unhinged'.

Similarly, Graham's work seems often anchored by an unrevealed core and carefully cultured ambiguity. Not only the unsayable or the unsaid but the deflected or denied can be conjured by the sort of linguistic breakdown Graham depicts – the bracketed text can be read *against* rather than as part of or addenda to the putative core text. For example, in 'Underneath (Sibylline)' (*Swarm* 23-25) the bracketed lines often take up the role of interlocutor, questioning or changing the preceding lines: '(Shouldn't the red light blink?)' or '(*I can smell it, can't you?*)'. This internal mechanism of doubt and asides accents the play of consciousness it seeks to replicate. This is part of the attempt to 'port' experiences into a poem, but is also a feature of the anxiety and difficulty of making meaning. It is a digression that Srikanth Reddy identified as singularly

characteristic of modern American poetry and its excavation of the self. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 3, digression can be elusive, circular and invitingly open; it invites change through reading, not only of 'the subject of one's discourse, but also [of] the speaking subject' (*Changing Subjects* 20).

This split in attention or direction of thought is much like Wittgenstein's use of interlocutor voices in *Philosophical Investigations*, without always making this explicit through font or punctuation. Indeed, it is often possible to read certain lines in multiple voices as things are proposed, then undermined or withdrawn. Graham's interlocutors likewise seem charged with working out – like an equation, but also like a splinter – what wants to be said.

Her asides hint at being 'tempted to use such expressions [as go beyond the sayable]' (*LE* 7) that one either falls short of, or immediately seeks to erase. This idea of the present-absence, the void in sense, can be found throughout Graham's poetry, particularly starkly in the underscored blanks that begin to appear in *The End of Beauty* (1987), which Thomas J Otten has discussed in 'Jorie Graham's _____s'. In 'To The Reader', for example, Graham has the line 'Mud, ash, _____, _____ .' Though there is insufficient space here to begin a detailed discussion of these blanks, it is worth noting that there are significant connections between the effect of the circumscribed (w)holes of the _____s and the fragmented/bracket text I have been discussing, not least the 'wavering materiality' ('Jorie Graham's _____s' 240) of the ambiguous spaces created. Not only do these _____s literally evoke Kierkegaard's revoked texts, discussed in Chapter 2, but thereby call into question the act of revocation, which must, after all, have a context. In Graham's poetry, the blanks can be guessed at, or can be treated as silences or regrets, telling us something about the poem's speaker. The unexpressed, or repressed-expressed retains sufficient situatedness to communicate, at least, to the reader a puzzle or a feeling, or an incompleteness that itself lends importance to the text, as Wittgenstein suggests, contemplating Kierkegaard, might be the case with the incompleteness and contradictions of the Gospel stories (*CV* 36e). Like Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*, Graham may also be conceived of as questioning the forms of writing that have been regarded as necessary for the treatment of certain questions – or self-conceptions – through fragmentation, formalisation, confession and retraction (Hent de Vries 'From "ghost in the machine" to "Spiritual automaton"' 78). Why does this or that constitute a poem or a sentence? What is revealed or taken back by these self-indicating gaps?

This association between bracketing and blanks reaches an interesting pitch in the graphic design featured on the landing page of Graham's homepage: www.joriegraham.com:
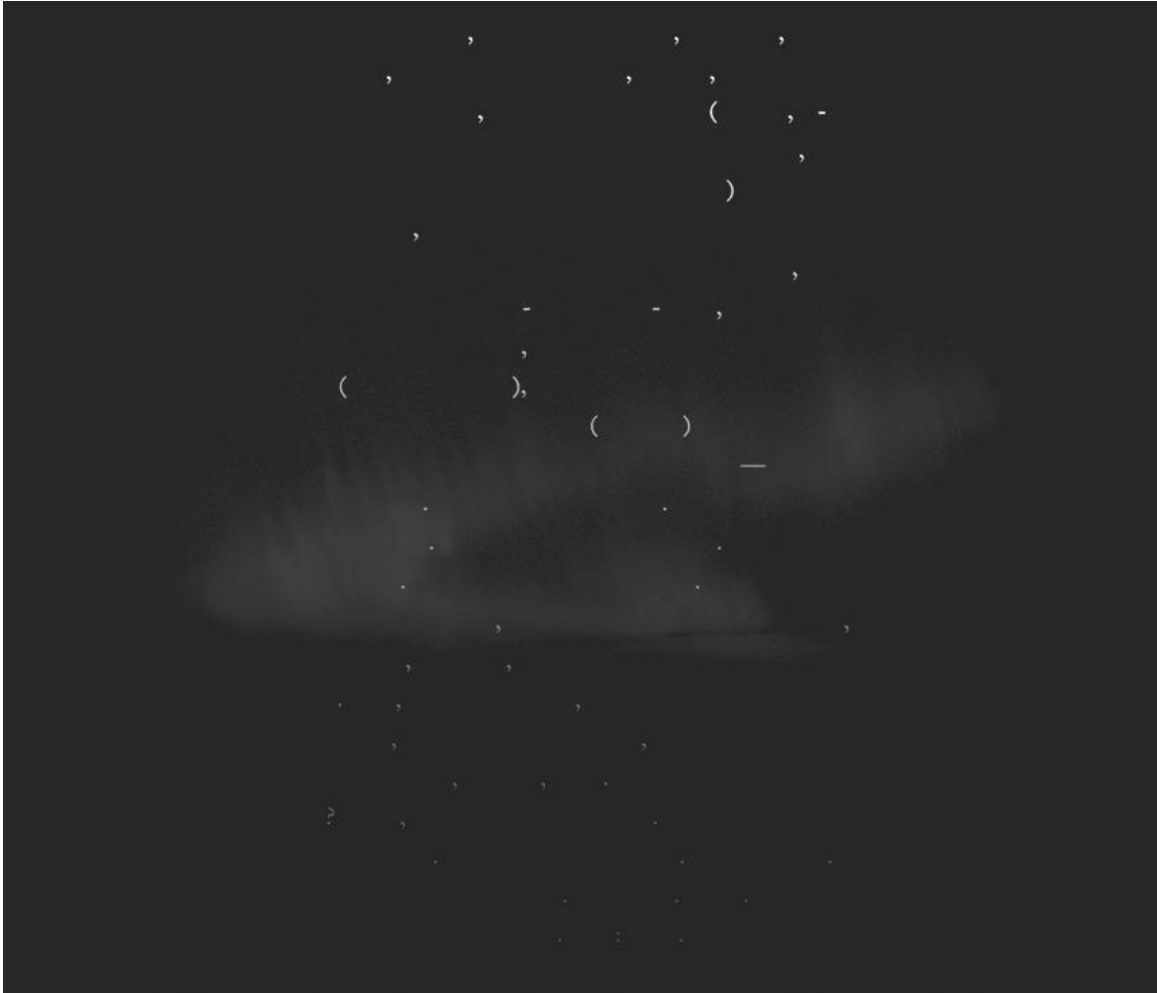
Figure 1 Prayer03 Gregory Whitmore 2008

Here, designer Gregory Whitmore has deleted all the text from one of Graham's poems, leaving only the star-like punctuation, spaced as though still demarking the flow and pacing of the text. After some searching, it was possible to pinpoint the image as being of 'Prayer', which opens Graham's collection *Never*.

In this extreme form of a pseudo-utterance, an entire poem has been redacted yet preserved. It is not a random collection of dots. It refers. Does this constitute a denial of the original text or an enactment of its original attempt at meaning? Perhaps the text-art could be seen as more akin to a *gesture* than a proposition, performing similar destabilising work in our thinking about meaning as Piero Sraffa's 'Neapolitan gesture' is supposed to have done for Wittgenstein's thinking about logical form:

> It [the anecdote] concerns a conversation in which Wittgenstein insisted that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same 'logical form' (or 'grammar' depending on the version of the story). To this idea Sraffa made a Neopolitan gesture of brushing his chin with his fingertips, asking 'What is the logical form of *that*?' This, according to the story, broke the hold on Wittgenstein of the Tractarian idea that a proposition must be 'picture' of the reality it describes. (Monk *The Duty of Genius* 260-1)

In 'What is the Logic of the That? Wittgenstein, Gesture, and the Arts' Aaron Vinegar discussed Wittgenstein's move after this encounter from the rigid propositional approach of the *Tractatus* towards what he calls a 'language of gesture' in the *Philosophical Investigations*: 'Unlike a proposition or a logical form, there is no getting behind or above the gestural event, which embodies and unfolds its meaning in its very performance' (1). I would suggest that Whitmore's skeletal version of Graham's poem is a gesture in this sense; its meaning is only available within the play between understanding or reconstructing it, and its resistance to giving up the poem and its meaning. This fleeting nature of gesture is also hinted at by the design, which fades out towards the bottom of the picture, like a voice slipping out of hearing. It clearly communicates yet withholds itself from definition separate from its context of encounter.

The poem redacted by Whitmore ends with the lines 'I cannot of course come back. Not to this. Never./ It is a ghost posed on my lips. Here: never.' (*Never* 3). The partial deletion seems entirely apposite to Graham's efforts to re-discover (not re-describe) moments of observation, consciousness and meaning in her poems, echoing the loss of the individuated moment, leaving only the markers of structure and time, the punctuation, behind. The flow into meaning that is the gesture of the poem both realises and obliterates itself, saving being caught up by an understanding reader. The necessary assistance of the reader, as witness to what is supposed to be happening, not merely being retold, is sometimes a conscious part of her process ('Interview with Thomas Gardner' *The Paris Review* No. 165, Spring 2003).

Similarly, a prayer, dedicated by the speaker, must be given up, submitted, to fulfil its nature. What then would be the effect of re-uttering it, retaining it as a static text? Perhaps the gesture would be empty; perhaps the attempt would be impossible.

'TO THE READER': THE POEM AS GROUND, THE POEM AS ABYSS

This unsettling poem begins in an assertion of certainty and truth, and ends in startling images of the impossibility of such surety in language and experience. 'To the Reader', first published in *The End of Beauty* but also anthologised in *The Dream of the Unified Field*, begins 'I swear to you', immediately demanding a relationship of trust with the reader. It continues, 'she wanted back into the shut, the slow,// a ground onto which to say This is my actual life, Good Morning'. What follows appears to be a story of Graham's childhood, the beginnings of her poetry – historical grounding for the truthfulness of what follows. If we can take at face value that 'That girl on her knees [...] is me', Graham parallels her engagement with the solidity of the earth and nature with her writing; like an archaeological dig, it is a matter of 'digging that square yard of land up / to catalogue and press onto the page *all that she could find in it*'. The world appears as comprised of knowable, useable things to be *discovered*, rather than created. Like the Augustinian picture of language given in the opening quote of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, exploring the world is a matter of learning how to name and order what is already there rather than a generative act as such (§1). This grounding of what one finds has obvious attractions – that one's discoveries have their own truth, duration and identity; the solidity of earth is a source of authority.

The archaeological metaphor continues in 'To The Reader', as the girl finds herself increasingly able to order and arrange her world (not merely to catalogue it, but to change, judge and destroy its elements):

> She took the spade and drew the lines. Right through
> the weedbeds, lichen, moss, keeping the halves of things that landed *in*
> by chance, new leaves, riff-raff the wind blew in—   (ll.25-7)

and

> She will take the ruler and push it down till it's all the way in.
> She will slide its razor-edge along through colonies, tunnels,
> through powdered rock and powdered leaf,
>
> and everything on its way to the one right direction (ll.31-34)

The image of the hand as the organ of work noted in 'Opulence' is clearly present again here, as the girl finds new and powerful ways to relate to the world. Moreover, as a history of beginning to write poetry, the text shows the awareness of being able to do things with words beyond recognising and repeating their established meanings; the

power to manipulate our inherited speech towards things previously unexpressed – by oneself or even anyone.

However, Graham is unable to leave things there. Her restless exploration of her images leads into questions of whether this picture of a self managing her language is sustainable; whether it is incomplete or, indeed, too complete:

> Say we
>
> leave her there, where else is there to go? A word,
> a mouth over water? Is there somewhere
> neither there nor here? (ll.47-50)

This questioning allows multiple layers of meaning to come into operation. Initially it brings back into focus the story-ness of the girl in her 'square yard of land' (l.4), creating both temporal and narrative distance from the reader, like a camera zooming out on a scene we had previously seen in close-up; we are once again reminded of the formal structures at play in Graham's creating of a poem. Then, Graham alludes to her positioning of the poem specifically against a *poetic* background, with her nod to Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 in line 47: '(shall I compare thee)'. The hole in which the girl digs becomes the practice within which we find and manipulate meaning – it becomes a whole language 'we must plough through', including its different practices and rituals, its heterogeneous elements, words and pictures (*RFGB* 131).

Blazer takes a further step in interpreting this poem, positioning the void which is the 'neither there nor here' as the poem – the act of writing – itself, working to open up the 'wound of meaning'. Certainly, the unforgettably strange image at the end of the poem seems to serve this reading:

> and to some it is the hole on the back of the man running
> through which what's coming towards him is coming into him, growing
>   larger,
> a hole in his chest through which the trees in the distance are seen
> growing larger shoving out sky shoving out storyline
> until it's close it's all you can see this moment this hole in his back
> in which now a girl with a weed and a notebook appears. (ll. 64-70)

212

Vendler reads the gap, the hole in the man's chest, as Graham's realisation that all search for conclusions or antitheses in language is futile; 'the desire for interpretation is simply a yawning vacancy, lethal to all hope of integrated summary in language' ('Jorie Graham: The Nameless and the Material'); understanding can never be closed. Blazer instead sees the hole in the man as expressive of the 'overunning' of writing (especially poetry) which will always exceed the possible questions set by or asked of the writer; the writer is therefore placed at the heart of the gap in subjectivity, generating or sustaining the hole through which the poet (the 'girl with a weed and a notebook') is seen, through the competing demands of self-expression in the writer and explanation in the reader. As noted above, in thinking about the distinction between the 'wound' itself and the flow *through* the wound of meaning, the generating/sustaining distinction remains ambiguous here; Blazer states that poetry 'becomes the abyss' (*IAO* 136) through which the writer is seen, but this seems at odds with Graham's poem (and other ideas about language discussed here) wherein the void appears as a *consequence* or a *condition* of the poem.

In fact, Blazer uses the final image of the poem without also noting that it is merely one of a string of images that touch on the voids inhabiting language; though the final image may refer to the poet in particular, others refer to religious or materialist responses to the incompleteness of the self (ll.57-62). There is no suggestion in the poem that the images are sequential or mutually exclusive. Blazer's more restricted reading reflects, one suspects, the more abstracted vision of poetry and language that his approach entails. It is perhaps illuminating that the man is mistakenly described as having a whole in his head, rather than his chest (*IAO* 136) – an unconscious prioritising of the mental and symbolic over activity and embodiment. Graham's list of many varied 'holes', by contrast, may be making a much simpler (but not simplistic) point about how the diverse ways in which the nature of language opens up gaps and undecidables is reflected in our practices, one of which is the attempt to see the poet in the poem. However, though this simpler reading may assist in escaping the more vertiginous trails of trying to capture the idea of the self, or the nature of the writer, this is not the offer of a solution or conclusion. If the call to attentiveness about our everyday practices that marks Graham's poetry generally – seen in the child's play in digging a hole, a walk on the beach, studying flowers in bloom – can allow us, for a time, to put aside the temptations of speculative philosophy, this is in exchange for giving up on certain ideas of certainty and permanence. We must let go of the idea that the self *can* be

exhaustively described as we imagine it might be – or better, we must sometimes come to see that, like Stevens' Blackbird, we are not really imagining what we think we are able to imagine. The 'wound of meaning' is thus closer to the continuous flow *through* the wound than the rent itself, as we constantly allow ourselves to be immersed in (and be given shape by) the world – social and physical – around us.

This chapter has endeavoured to show how the ineffable endogenous to language is interrogated through Jorie Graham's poetic practice, as inheritor and refresher of the Romantic and Modernist streams of Wallace Stevens' work. The self immersed in and generated by language is revealed as much in the stutterings and digressions of language as in its smooth flow and in the responsibilities assumed in making meaning. This illustrates some of the methodological and stylistic elements of Wittgenstein's later work, also, while a Wittgensteinian reminder of the embodiment of language in our practices (and vice versa) serves to domesticate some more speculative accounts of the self. In part this relies on pointing out where analogies have come loose of their roots and no longer appear as analogies (*BT* §87).

The next chapter returns to a consideration of Wittgenstein's own text of *Philosophical Investigations*, paired with Kei Miller's collection *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*. Considering Wittgenstein's systematic use of metaphor in this work and others, and the implications of his geographical images, is shown to be important for understanding his philosophical ambitions and frustrations. Our modes of discourse in part determine what can be expressed and how, and just so poetry can play a role in freshening our awareness of our long established grooves of thought (*Z* §359).

Chapter Five: Cartographic metaphor in *Philosophical Investigations* and the poetry of Kei Miller.

Introduction

The later Wittgenstein's use of recurring metaphors and analogies as a central part of his philosophical method has been well documented. Discussions about his choice of style and manner of argument are plentiful, including accounts that seek to discover the proper philosophical arguments behind the phrasing and those that hold it to be more productive to treat the writing as a work of literature, inseparable from its style. *Philosophical Investigations* in particular has attracted rival approaches to reading. Among the accounts I have in mind particularly, amongst others cited in this thesis, are Stanley Cavell's 'The *Investigations'* Everyday Aesthetics of Itself', Marjorie Perloff's *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, 'Wittgenstein and Literary Language' (Jon Cook and Rupert Read), Mark W. Rowe's 'Success Through Failure: Wittgenstein and the Romantic Preface', Richard Eldridge's *Leading a Human Life*, and Béla Szabados' *Wittgenstein as Philosophical Tone-Poet*. Some further examples of treatments of *Philosophical Investigations* as poetry or inspiration for it are given in the next chapter.

This chapter, while avoiding conflating the activities of philosophy and literature, attempts to take seriously a number of the key analogies used in *Philosophical Investigations*, to show how by interrogating them we can better understand both Wittgenstein's reason for using them and the implications for his ideas. The focus will be on one particular system of analogies within the work – of landscapes, maps, roads and journeys – and their effects on our capacity to think about the operations of language and philosophy. In a domestication of the inexpressible of the type explored in previous chapters, this chapter provides a case study of the possibilities and restrictions of a particular mode of thinking; what it is permitted, conceivable or purposeful to say (*CV* 32e) – what Juliet Floyd in her resolute reading of the *Tractatus* calls the *Fragestellung* within which philosophical enquiry might proceed ('Wittgenstein and the Inexpressible' 188). Throughout this thesis, it has been argued that Wittgenstein draws attention to how what we see and say in the world, particularly philosophical

puzzlement, is partly dependent on the words and logical frameworks we use in our language and our practices. This chapter explores the linguistic and methodological framework that Wittgenstein developed in his later thinking, and what this framework does for his philosophy and this text in particular.

The effort is in many ways literary, and will make some of its arguments on the basis of literary examples, chiefly from Kei Miller's collection *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*. This collection places notions of mapping, landscape and language at the centre of its concerns, using them to write about identity, expression and oppression, as well as studying the histories and rhythms of cartographical language itself. The poems therefore provide a deeper and alternative exploration of the metaphors under scrutiny, while also opening up a channel for discussing the ethical concerns implicit in, and underpinning Wittgenstein's imagery. Simultaneously, by considering the ramifications of the language Wittgenstein used, an opportunity for further engagement with Miller's poetry is created, in a consciously interdisciplinary way. As many scholars have argued, for example Andrea Selleri in 'Literary Examples in Analytic Aesthetics: The Claim of the Empirical' and Stein Haugom Olsen in 'The Discipline of Literary Studies' a historical and permeable perspective on literature as a discipline (both subject matter and technique) can be materially productive and help us to avoid taking for granted the staging devices of our investigations. A further point, though I am only able to touch on it briefly in this chapter, is how both Miller and Wittgenstein make use of complexly related (not to say disciplining) interlocutors in their writing. As discussed in Chapter 1, the interlocutory voices have a number of roles in *Philosophical Investigations*, as warnings, temptations, gut-reactions, straw men and tools of persuasion. Likewise, Miller's Cartographer and Rastaman interact not as good guy/ bad guy, nor as a blunt dichotomy. They function as a way of bringing into focus the dissolution of apparent opposites or equivalencies; this reflects how dialogue and characterisation can bring us to see things not captured by conceptual analysis alone. Stanley Cavell's remarks on metaphor cast a helpful light on how this chapter's attention to Wittgenstein's and Miller's language choices bear fruit: 'metaphor transcends criteria not as if to repudiate our mutual attunement but as if to pressure this attunement (under which pressure certain of our attunements with others will fail; but with certain others the attunement will be intensified and refined)' (*In Quest of the Ordinary* 147-8). Both poet and philosopher engage in testing our language(s), in ways that break its spells over us, or strengthen our bonds with other speakers, intuiting new moments of expression.

Maps, Journeys and Landscapes

In part, this chapter stems from an ongoing aim to categorise Wittgenstein's network of analogies, and thereby provide another way of thinking about his choices of presentation. Aspects such as the complex relations between sight and thought, the concentration on physical activity, and the interplay of everyday scenes with strange fantasy societies, might all be brought into a new light by charting their varied use and connections. The analysis is based on the English text of G.E.M. Anscombe's translation of *Philosophical Investigations* (1986 edition); a bi-lingual analysis might have generated more results, though likely not significantly; likewise other editions. I mined the text using common terms and phrases associated with journeys, landscapes and mapping. Some phrases are well known, such as the remark in the Preface: '[t]he philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of *landscapes* which were made in the course of these long and involved *journeyings'* (my emphases) (vii) for which key terms I sought out additional instances. Other terms were part of the usual network of expressions connected with these practices. A full account of all the instances in which relevant phrases or images occur would be, in its current form, unwieldy, so in this chapter I will only reference (as footnotes) key phrases as they are deployed as part of the ongoing argument. Footnotes beginning 'cf *PI*' indicate where the marked term or phrase occurs in *Philosophical Investigations*.

One interesting feature of Wittgenstein's writing is his attention to specific expressions and analogies, involving continual revision of his manuscripts. I argue that there are distinct phases of metaphor in his writings, including spatial or geometric metaphors in the *Tractatus*, particularly the ladder metaphor and the idea of meaning as a function of suitably arranged or connected elements (e.g.: *TLP* 3.121, 3.4, 4.463, 6.54) The following sources provide a deeper treatment of 'logical space': Jerry H. Gill 'Wittgenstein and Metaphor' 272-274, Andrew Peach's 'Possibility in the Tractatus' and.Hacker's *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies* 23). In *On Certainty* there is a shift towards geological images, of things layered, shifting through natural processes, or interdependent parts, such as the bedrocks of streams (§99), systems of ideas (§126), grounds and foundations (§204) or hinges on which other beliefs rely and pivot (§§341, 343, 655). Briefly, I would suggest that the notions of depth indicate an emphasis on the 'natural history' of humans, and the accompanying awareness of how our behaviours are temporally and biologically rooted (to continue a similar metaphor). Wittgenstein's

later interest in anthropology and ritual, especially in *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, discussed elsewhere in this thesis, reflects this outlook.

In *Philosophical Investigations* geographical or movement metaphors dominate, perhaps best summed up by §457, 'meaning something is like going up to someone'. Though the focus of this chapter are the geographical and cartographical images, there are clear parallels between the activity implied in these metaphors of movement and examples of activities (language games etc.) and Wittgenstein's move towards descriptions of diverse human life. The actual word 'map' only occurs in one section of *PI*, §653, and it is not used as a direct metaphor for language, but as an example of the confusions that can arise in looking for an explicit definition of reading, or understanding. In this section, Wittgenstein asks the following: at what point can one be said to be 'following' a map, if unable to provide any of the normal structures of explanation that constitute being able to read it? Ultimately, someone's behaviour must relate to the language game of following a map – the determination of which is a matter of agreement or consequences, rather than set criteria (§§654-5). However, Wittgenstein's treatment of our encounters with language – and especially the activity of philosophy – is certainly associated with related activities, notably, taking pictures or sketches[32] of landscapes,[33] of finding one's way about,[34] routes and paths,[35] and walking.[36] These are all very grounded and active images in the text, and comprise a striking contrast to the idea of lofty contemplation usually associated with philosophising. Cavell, whose insistence on embodiment, action, voicing and personal involvement emerges from his reading of Wittgenstein as a literary stylist and intellectual irritant, likewise rejects the idea of a general philosophical solution. Any satisfactory account or telling example such as Wittgenstein seeks, lays open a path that others can follow but only *for themselves* through their engagement, not because a universal truth has been revealed: 'the authority of exemplarity in the articulation of response instead of the authority of abstraction' (Eldridge 'Criticism and the Risk of the

---

[32] cf *PI vii*.

[33] cf *PI vii*, §398, §509, p197, p200, p205.

[34] cf *PI* §123, §203, §664, p202.

[35] cf *PI* §85, §139, §203, §525, §534, p213, §653.

[36] cf *PI* §25, §38, §107, §139, §172, §183, §398, §444, §615, §653, p215, p216.

Self' 94). The question is whether these kinds of activities can provide us with what we long for – a way of understanding the world, or orienting ourselves within it – or whether they lack the distance needed to obtain a clear view of that world. [37]

The idea(l) of a clear view

A central idea in Wittgenstein's understanding of language and our language games is the desire we have for obtaining a 'perspicuous representation' (*PI* §122) of our practices, as has also been mentioned in previous chapters. Translations of the original German '*übersichtlichen Darstellung'* are varied, with different emphases. It is given as 'surveyable representation' by Hacker (*Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*), which immediately connects with ideas of map-making, as does 'birds-eye view' (*Philosophical Remarks*), and to a lesser extent Nicholas Gier's 'synoptic representation' (*Wittgenstein and Phenomenology* 12). Wittgenstein is thought of in Hacker's account as producing a map or table of our philosophical puzzlements caused by grammar and our immersion in it, or of aspiring to an unencumbered view of the playing fields of our puzzlement. However, despite this apparently helpful link between mapping and Wittgenstein's geographical metaphors, I agree with Beth Savickey's defence of Anscombe's translation, 'perspicuous representation' ('Wittgenstein and Hacker: Übersichtliche Darstellung'). As well as retaining Wittgenstein's interest in clarity, rather than completeness or comprehensiveness, this translation better fits the overall composition of Wittgenstein's metaphor-set, in which he is less a cartographer than a traveller, or a guide. He deals in local phenomena rather than standardising maps. As I will argue in what follows, we may have the ambition of the cartographer, or aerial photographer, but this does not mean that this ambition is either realisable or unproblematic.[38]

Since we are always immersed in our language games as they unfold and can only truly understand them from within, we lack the clear overview that we would sometimes like to attain in being able to explain them from the outside. And this limitation is a frustration. Within particular language games, the lack of an overview is partly to do with the difference between 'knowing' and 'inhabiting' a practice (like the difference between knowing the words of a language and being a native speaker of it) and partly to

---

[37] cf *PI* §5, §24, §89, §92, §122, §125, §126, §132, §435, p198, p213, p224.

[38] For further discussion of the distinction between *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung*, and the exteriorisation that a translation of *Darstellung* needs to include, for which 'representation' is adequate, but perhaps not ideal, see Eldridge *Leading a Human Life* 176-7.

do with the different demands that are made of the concepts we want to explain when they are 'in use' or 'on display'; sometimes a sharp-edged definition is wanted, sometimes a blurred edge, or a series of examples (*PI* §77). There is also the feeling (which may be thought of as characteristic of the philosophical mind-set) that only an *absolutely* outside perspective will do if we are to really explain things, including language itself. If we could escape from the particularities of application we would better understand the functions and rules of particular words or games. We would, as it were, be able to speak about language from outside, if only we could strip away all of the ambiguities and qualifications of actual use. Although certainly distinct from the ladder metaphor at the end of the *Tractatus* (6.54), the ascent metaphor implicit in attaining this perspicuous representation draws on similar feelings of escape, stillness and clarity that would be achieved by getting above the ambiguities and contingencies of our existence.

There are different ways in which Wittgenstein's use of perspicuous representation can be taken, especially given the variably interpretable phrasing of §122: 'The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things.' I will briefly describe two divergent applications of this remark to illustrate these possibilities: David Schalkwyk's analysis of earthbound and airborne metaphors of philosophy in 'Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Garden"' and John Gibson's discussion of literature and standards in 'Reading for Life'.[39] In each case it is instructive to consider the limitations of the idea of a perspicuous representation, and to what extent these limitations are themselves part of Wittgenstein's approach.

A lot hinges on how we understand the words 'concept' and 'we' to operate in §122. Schalkwyk takes the 'we' to refer to 'the philosopher who wishes to get above the

---

[39] Other applications of the concept of perspicuous representation are of course possible, such as a clear understanding of our grammar, on the normative account of rules discussed in Chapter 1 and below, as an attempt at a value-neutral overview of diverse cultural phenomena (D. Z. Phillips *Faith After Foundationalism*)or as Wittgenstein's proffered alternative to historical or scientific explanations of human activities, as Brian Clack gives in *Wittgenstein, Frazer, and Religion* (53-4)*,* noting the resemblance between *PI* §122-3 and *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*, particularly 'This perspicuous representation is of fundamental importance for us. It denotes the form of our representation, the way we see things [...] we "see the connections" (*RFGB* 133). Clack's application is certainly productive, and has some echoes with Wittgenstein's seeing himself as representing a 'spirit' at odds with the culture of his age (see also below), but does oscillate between treating the concept as a methodology and a metaphor for language or philosophy; there is a tension between the idea of an overview and the assemblage of examples and reminders discussed in Chapter 3, which is in part the reason for adopting the view of the concept described in this chapter.

hurly-burly of ordinary language-games in order to see and make the necessary therapeutic connections that will free us from the bewitchments induced by our usual inextricable situatedness in linguistic practice' ('Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Garden"' 60). In other words, he equates the desired ascent with the Wittgensteinian project of explaining philosophical confusions by obtaining a clearer perspective on what puzzles and distracts us. If we do not (currently) command a clear view, it is because we need to remove the debris of everyday use or intellectual habits, in order to avoid philosophical cul-de-sacs and questions that remain unanswerable.

Looked at this way Wittgenstein's philosophical technique can be seen as guiding us in this direction, pointing out obstacles, like someone familiar with the territory assisting a visitor. Schalkwyk notes the elevated position of the perspicuous representation, and contrasts it instructively with the more earthbound activities of criss-crossing landscapes mentioned above. How can we both continue our necessarily involved language games (at ground level) while also looking for the 'clear representation from above' (61)? He reads this tension between the metaphors as an unresolved desire for the clarity of philosophical abstraction (or the escape of the Tractarian ladder), and one which eventually proves a frustration for Wittgenstein. The overview is linked with the search for a 'redeeming word' (55), the '*erlösende Wort*' that features repeatedly in Wittgenstein's *Notebooks* (e.g.: January 20, 1915, June 03, 1915). Wittgenstein frames the solution to his work and puzzlement as constituted by the presentation of the single word or expression that brings into clarity what is otherwise said only in half-sense or muddle. To find it will 'put an end to intellectual restlessness' ('Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Garden"' 55) according to Schalkwyk, but the search proves unending, and brands the philosopher as a perpetual itinerant, never able to settle in or summarise the surrounding landscape (62). This is in many ways a more nuanced and productive reading than the view that finding the right way of speaking (or not speaking) entirely stills the urge to speak the inexpressible, or to resist philosophising, though this may be a matter of temperament (James C Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile* 129).

The trouble with this reading of §122, attentive though it is, is that the frustration described is attributed to the Wittgensteinian method in a way that suggests the difficulty was not foreseen, or that the eggshells of an earlier philosophy (*CV* 51e) are still found to be clinging to the new approach, and not rejected but treasured. But this seems to miss the central difference of Wittgenstein's method: that the frustration is not a surprise, or something eventually to be overcome, but something that has to be faced

up to, and worked with, despite the acknowledgement that philosophy will never permanently come to an end – the redeeming word is a *moment* of peace or rest, not an epiphany. We not only 'inhabit' our language but must 'sustain and amend [it] in our ongoing activities of judgement' (Luntley *Wittgenstein, Meaning and Judgement* vii). I argue that if we take the words 'concept' and 'we' in §122 differently, we can attribute the 'we' not to the small band of Wittgensteinian philosophers, but to 'us' more generally – the range of humanity that may include philosophers in general in their attempts to analyse and understand language, politicians looking for the best means of persuasion, Christmas party attendees working out social niceties, and so forth. We have a sense that to command our language game is to get a clear view of it, to be able to partially stand above it in ways that other players cannot. This might be illustrated by the common footballing expressions, that a clever pass shows 'great vision' or that reliable defending involves being able to expertly 'read the game'. Within such particular language games, an overview is sometimes, and to varying degrees, achievable, and we therefore have the *concept* of a perspicuous representation. However, when it comes to the kind of absolutely general overview that philosophers tend to seek, we have the concept but no way of making it real, since we have as yet provided no context for it, and cannot; our perfectly understandable desire for it is doomed to failure. This is, I propose to argue, a key Wittgensteinian insight – not that the clear view is needed but difficult (and the objective of much philosophical activity) nor that the very idea of a clear view is nonsense. Rather, the desire for such an understanding is simultaneously present and understandable, yet unfulfillable. That is why the philosopher remains earthbound and restless. This is not a flaw in Wittgenstein's method, but a key part of it; without that realisation, the continuation would be not work but torture. The difficulty of this kind of philosophy comes from having to accept an element of perpetual frustration, release from which can only be momentary.

The momentariness of release again finds a parallel in Cora Diamond's 'The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy', in which empathy with another, born of imagination and recognition of a kind of personhood, permits the leap between minds, even very different ones (72). We can, partially and briefly, know what it is to be that other, see the world in a new way, without any requirement to be able to put this knowing into rational or propositional terms. Indeed, any attempt to put this into language, at least in terms of statements of facts, might only yield nonsense, since these

are not the kinds of sentences required. Many of Wittgenstein's analogies for coming to understand a meaning similarly capture a sudden or startling feeling – (*PI* §§6, 506, p196, p210) – continuous with the mood of activity and movement displayed by the whole text of *Philosophical Investigations*, which can itself be treated as a performance or a game (Richard Eldridge *Leading a Human Life*; G.L. Hagberg *Meaning and Interpretation: Wittgenstein, Henry James, and Literary Knowledge* 14). '[*T*]*his language-game is played*' (Emphasis in original. *PI* §654). Here, rather than understanding another, however, it is more a case of coming to understand ourselves (singular and plural) by bringing into view how our practices shape our expressions, and how these can themselves be changed (can change us) in various ways.

John Gibson has a similarly grounded idea of what a perspicuous representation could be, in 'Reading for Life'. The challenge of our failure to understand is not met by a flight away from our language practices, but by the accumulation of helpful examples, so that where we are puzzled we are shown how to carry on, but in such a way that *nothing* seems strange, nothing appears to stand in need of explanation. A perspicuous representation does not *explain* anything. It rather demystifies what we once found "queer" (118). This does not mean that for each case there is a perfect example, or a standpoint from which we can see everything – there simply is no 'God's-eye view' (119) that could be attained. Instead, with patience and attention to how we use our language, we can provide a series of intermediate cases that serve particular purposes. Gibson's retention of the provisional and ordinary nature of our relief is effective; there is no transformative information, only a new view on things and a series of fixes. It is important to remember, though, that this sage advice will only satisfy the philosophical urge temporarily. We have always to guard against our desire to make our world fully comprehensible. How do we continue to resist the temptation of generalisation, without giving up the work of philosophy altogether?

Both Gibson and Schalkwyk go on to describe how literary examples can be made to do the kind of therapeutic work that their conception of philosophical restlessness requires, which I will briefly say more about later. Meanwhile, I will return to the metaphors of maps and landscapes, to show how Wittgenstein's repeated uses can create the series of reminders that are needed to keep us grounded and engaged. We can attempt to be continually prepared for the compromises and limitations of our situated worldview, and this is part of the effectiveness of Wittgenstein's choice of imagery: the map, symbol of order and overview, can be revealed as a vehicle of compromise.

Remarkable Maps

In 'Glimpses of Unsurveyable Maps' David Wagner has given a many-faceted account of Wittgenstein's use of the map metaphor, alongside examples of imagined or impossible maps in literature. It provides a reminder of the specific kind of compromise that a map is, without which the notion becomes absurd. A map cannot replicate the world it represents in such detail that it becomes a suffocating replica, as happens in Jorge Luis Borges' 'On Scientific Rigor' ('Glimpses of Unsurveyable Maps' 366). Neither, though, can a 'perfect' map be one that is impossible to misread because it shows nothing at all, as The Bellman's chart in Lewis Carroll's 'Hunting of the Snark' demonstrates. Nor can a map go "all the way down", like Josiah Royce's idea of a map that is so perfectly, self-reflexively accurate that it contains a scale version of itself, which contains a scale version of itself and so on *ad infinitum*. ('Glimpses of Unsurveyable Maps' 369). However, despite this necessary distance and difference from what it represents, a map must contain some connection with its own context in order to be useful, which may be considered a form of self-reflexiveness. This notion is pursued by Ben Smith in 'Beating the Bounds', in which the physical, experiential form of mapping created by the British tradition of beating the bounds affects both the landscape and those initiated into it through the ritual, connecting this linkage between map and its readers with the poetry of 'dwelling space' and its borders in the poetry of John Burnside. Movement through the unfamiliared-familiar marks much of Burnside's poetry, as discussed in Chapter 2. A map need not of course be a thing of paper and ink, as Smith's example illustrates. It must, however, be sufficiently like a map to be recognised as one, even if it turns out to be a very bad or misleading one: 'Maps will only get us lost if we know how to read them' (Eric Bulson *Novels, Maps, Modernity* 131).

Wagner claims that 'in a contextual sense every useful map is a map-within-a-map. For what use would a map of Oxfordshire be to someone lost in Lower Austria?' ('Glimpses of Unsurveyable Maps' 371). But this ignores the fact that a map could be used for navigation outside of its own field of depiction, such as when planning a trip, or using its scaling to mark off how far one has travelled, or learning how to read another, more useful, map by studying the keys and signs of cartographical orthodoxy, and so on. However, the more general point still applies: a map must contain enough that is comprehensible to the reader and the context if it is to do more than play to our hunches (cf *OC* §201).

The point of the map metaphor is that it combines the method by which Wittgenstein sought to progress, while also showing that this method itself only makes sense relative to a context. A map is useful *because* it is limited, and has certain omissions and assumptions. When the importance of each map's particularity of design and application are forgotten the map becomes counter-productive or ridiculous. In this sense the 'useless maps' Wagner describes become useful, '[i]f only as inspirational material for philosophers' ('Glimpses of Unsurveyable Maps' 372-3). More pertinently, perhaps, they can act as reminders of the dangers of philosophical ambition, and the over-application of our productive pictures and metaphors.

These considerations of mapping, however, tend to come at the image from only one side, as it were. We draw or use a map to find our way about in a landscape, one that seems to predate and dwarf us as we traverse it. Rowe is right to note that the journey[40] through the Wittgensteinian landscape is usually rural or mountainous[41] – through something discovered and to all intents and purposes permanent – rather than the built and designed world of a city ('Success Through Failure: Wittgenstein and the Romantic Preface' 87). Where the city metaphor does come into play in *Philosophical Investigations*, it is usually still an under-populated 'ancient city' (§18) and tends to be a restrictive or disorientating place, rather than something that can be criss-crossed and explored[42]; here we follow paths but do not create them.[43] Most often, the map metaphor suggests a landscape; the journeys are on foot and through countryside. One is hard-pressed not to associate the image with Wittgenstein striding across the dramatic countryside of Norway or Austria, or taking a riverside walk with a friend, deep in conversation, so often recalled in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*. (This biographical note may be irrelevant to how we understand and apply the metaphor itself – that is, its signification – though it perhaps explains some of its continuing appeal, both for Wittgenstein and for us.) The map is the means by which we navigate the landscape, or

---

[40] cf *PI* vii.

[41] cf *PI* p200.

[42] cg *PI* §89, §206, §243, §308, p185.

[43] Wittgenstein's association between cities and rules, and the estrangement work that philosophy may be tasked with is also illustrated in O. K. Bouwsma's *Wittgenstein Conversations 1949-1951* (35) 'When you leave the city, there are still roads, but no traffic lights. And when you get far off there are no roads, no lights, no rules, nothing to guide you. It's all woods. And when you return to the city you may feel that the rules are wrong, that there should be no rules, etc.'

explain it to others; it is a means of following the 'rules' laid down by the space we want to understand.

Exactly how rules are 'laid down' – and the implications for what it means to then follow a rule – remain a point of contention. Most Wittgensteinian accounts posit a normative power to the rules of language, so that the 'roads' they make offer us the only routes of travel; any attempt not to follow an existing road leads into the wilderness of nonsense. There is certainly a sense of being thus guided and directed in how we follow rules. But it is not clear that this is an essential or operative aspect of the rules *themselves*. Wittgenstein in *The Big Typescript* also uses the metaphor of a path around a garden: 'A rule compared to a *path*. Does a path say that one is to walk on *it* (and not on the grass)? Does it state that people usually go that way?' (*BT* §240). In *Wittgenstein: Opening Investigations* Luntley responds: 'Clearly, both questions are to be answered in the negative. So, what is a path? It is a regularity, a way we regularly go up the garden' (97). If so, no force makes the path the way it is; it emerges as a factor of the regularity of our use – a description, rather than a prescription. Luntley uses this more modest notion of rule to question conservative, normative accounts of Wittgenstein's conception of grammar (92). For our purposes here, the diversity of ways in which language can direct us – from necessity to instruction, to simple regularity – is worth noting, both in connection with the impossibility of a *conclusive* release from philosophy via a clear overview, as in Schalkwyk's account, and with the idea of our view of the world having a *living* history, as the following discussion will make clear.

One further way of reading the difference between a path partly created by our actions and a road laid out ahead of us is that the former can help us to extend Wittgenstein's metaphor into thinking about the implications of mapping *for the landscape mapped*, as well as for the map-holder.

Cartography is not a neutral science, though it tends to aspire to be so. As J. B. Harley warns in *The New Nature of Maps*, 'design is fraught with potential ethical consequences' (201). And yet, Harley complains, the discipline itself rarely engages in the consequences of the choices made of what to map, what to obscure, the distortions of projections, the implications of keys and symbols. Without underestimating the achievements of increasingly powerful mapping technologies and the benefits of standardised design, if becomes accepted 'that certain conventions are "natural" or

226

"normal", the danger is that they acquire a coercive and manipulative authority' (202). "Truth" in mapping cannot only be a question of graphical accuracy and respect for copyright; the ways in which cartographical consensus can shut down those voices that do not follow its keys may hide the choices of omission or accent in design, and these require our attention, too. Since Harley's 'Deconstructing the Map' first appeared in 1989 (followed by many other articles questioning cartography's capacity for and assumption of objectivity) there have been a number of responses that have deepened and refined critical thinking about mapping. Harley's (largely Foucauldian) identification of the ideologies and power structures that come between a map and the world it claims to represent has been extended to a more Derridean question of the very possibility of talking about a mapped world separate from its 'creation' in the map. Not only does the ideology of the map-maker disguise the truth of the world, but there is no truth of the world accessible to us by deconstructing the ideologies we can discern in the maps. Cartography's 'foundational ontology [...] that the world can be objectively known and faithfully mapped using scientific techniques that capture and display spatial information'(Kitchin, Gleeson and Dodge 'Unfolding Mapping Practices' 480) has increasingly been eroded by questions of dominant discourses, the mapped subject, and connections between history, technology and purpose in mapping. Many post-modern critiques of cartography are naturally concerned with the development of power structures, especially in a (post)colonial discourse, including how maps can 'inculcate us into seeing and representing the world in highly selective (and, for the powerful, felicitous) ways' (Clayton 'Snapshots of a Moving Target' 19). A map does not only record, but fixes, simplifies and instructs.

Kei Miller is an eloquent contributor to these debates, particularly on matters of literature and Jamaican civil rights, including his essays in *Writing Down the Vision*. His facility with key theoretical texts can also been seen in the employment of postcolonial critic Sylvia Wynter's essay in "xiv" of CWZ: "On How / We Mistook the Map for the Territory" (Ll. 9-10).

It is also worth bearing in mind that the ability or habit to think 'in maps' is a relatively new one. As has been explored by D. K. Smith in *The Cartographical Imagination in Early Modern England*, the availability of maps and mapping technology that flourished in early modern English not only provided tools for commerce and travel, but actually reformed how people saw their own world and their place in it, moving from localised reference points to universal, quantifiable places and movement. This was reflected

simultaneously in the literature of the time, such as in the rise of the travelogue as a literary genre (Andrew Hadfield *Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance* 1). Just as the scientific world view makes grasping value in the world difficult, as seen in Chapter 3, it can be difficult to conceive of our world, now, other than in mappable, comparative terms. In a similar vein, to turn to a literary example can provide a set of reminders that alert us to how our worldview frames our thinking, and how paying close attention to our language and nonsense can pay dividends. In the next section a literary example provides a way of speaking about issues while resisting being subsumed into the standardising discourse of cartography, operating not as a set of examples or morals, but as a reading performance and experience. It simultaneously provides an exploration of the map metaphor that has implications for thinking about language: the yearning for a clear view, and what it means to orient ourselves in this way.

The Cartographer's Ideal

Kei Miller's *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*, has received wide-spread praise for its humour, musicality and political alertness, winning the Forward Prize, amongst others. Much of Miller's writing – prose, poetry and comment – charts issues of globalisation, race, blending cultures, and the powers of literature to reveal and preserve specific lived experiences.

At the heart of the collection is the insistence that the ways in which we talk create and constrain how we see the world, what seems possible within it. The words we have access to and the status we afford them impact on not only what we see, but how and where we look. This may no longer be a startling idea. By its own terms, however, it is one that perpetually needs to be fleshed out again through original examples and forms. It is one thing to *say* that language is itself active and world-building, another to keep this in mind through renewal and demonstration. As our language-world evolves, so does our appreciation of this change. What Miller has achieved is to interlink clashes of culture, discourse and outlook in a manner that is involving yet individual, and that remains irreducibly poetic.

The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion is largely composed of a dialogue of poems between the titular Cartographer, who has been charged with mapping the Island of Jamaica, and the Rastaman, who is keen to challenge the assumptions and systems behind this apparently neutral task. Through the moments that pass between the

interlocutors, we are presented with the benefits of mapping – its precision and capacity for ordering – but also its contrast to the bright variety of local colour, the dark rumblings of history, and the unmappability of people. The turning point of their encounter comes in the Cartographer's sudden resolution to map a way to Zion, about which the question that defines his discipline – Where is it? – makes little sense. At best, one might ask the related question – How do I get there?

Initially, the confrontation seems to be one of cultural asymmetry, as the Cartographer represents the scientistic, abstract, Western, quantitative discipline of cartography, whose objectivity belies a rapacious urge to count and classify; against him is set the firmly local, historical, provocative Rastaman. The latter is loquacious, hospitable and distrusting, a determinedly human figure, wholly involved in, and protective of, the life the Cartographer would like to classify – neutrally and rationally, as if from above.

In particular one can find the attractions and dangers of a systemising worldview. The illusion of neutrality in such an endeavour is a common target in the poems, for instance the pair of short poems numbered iii and iv:[44]

iii.

The cartographer says
    no –
What I do is science. I show
the earth as it is, without bias.
I never fall in love. I never get involved
with the muddy affairs of land.
Too much passion unsteadies the hand.
I aim to show the full of a place in just a glance.

iv.

The rastaman thinks, draw me a map of what you see

---

[44] Several of the poems in the dialogue are untitled except for the Roman numerals; references are given to these numerals.

> then I will draw a map of what you never see
>
> and guess me whose map will be bigger than whose?
>
> Guess me whose map will tell the larger truth?

The ambition to 'draw a map of what you never see' – but what is nonetheless there, available, might well be a motto for Wittgenstein's approach in *Philosophical Investigations*, with the important proviso that, like the Rastaman, there is no claim that this depends on special knowledge or perspective, nor that it is a job to ever be concluded. Far from avoiding the 'muddy affairs of land' we return to the rough ground (*PI* §107).

But the difference between these two methods does not result in a stand-off. The characters continue to argue, travel together, pick up each other's traits, and reveal their similarities. The Rastaman plays the host – 'Come share with I an unsalted stew / an exalted stew of gungo peas and callaloo / and let I tell you bout the nearby towns' (v), while the Cartographer, despite his early claims that he would 'never get involved' (iii) finds himself not recording neutrally the landscape, but learning of the island's sometimes dark history, and wishing he could make some recompense, 'if on his map he made our roads a little / smoother, a little straighter, as if in drawing / he might erase a small bit of history's disgrace' (xi).

In each encounter, the consequences of mapping are drawn out – from the large scale imposition of borders (ii) to the precise vagueness of navigating according to the advice of locals (x); the possibility of seeing the world geometrically or mythically (xii), or of the relation between representation and history (xi, xiii). Two recurring themes in the collection also complement the dialogue poems: place names and roads. I have discussed these images in more detail elsewhere,[45] so for the moment I want to take one image that emerges from the poems and is particularly relevant for the Wittgensteinian map metaphor. Miller is at pains to stress the history – and the continued living of it – that has shaped the island geographically, culturally and linguistically. In 'Roads', 'xxi', 'v' and other poems, the different purposes and characters of roads are charted; a route on which we travel may also be a scar of slavery, a reminder of pilgrimage, crime or

---

[45] See 'Cartographic thinking and the poetry of Kei Miller: Of Metaphors and Maps.'.

struggle, an opening up of new land, an escape or a conquest. In short, roads[46] wear their histories into their landscape.

Far from being neutral connectors between places, differentiated on the map only by their colour coding, the routes we chose for crossing a landscape have many purposes and effects. Just as lines drawn on a map are not merely neutral or representative, but in their "unfolding effects and affects [...] are performative" (Gerlach 'Lines, contours and legends' 26), roads are more than markers of travel; they have history, agency, and a shaping phenomenology. Miller speaks about the character of movement around the Island, including how one might pass along:

> secret roads and slaving roads,
>
> the dirging roads, marooning roads
>
> [...]
>
> cow roads and cobbled roads
> the estate roads and backbush roads
>
> [...]
>
> causeway roads and Chinese roads
>
> [...]
>
> press-along, soon-be-done,
> the not-an-easy, the mighty-long. ('Roads' Ll. 1,2,6,7,12, 16,17)

Beyond the type and task of a road, the route may reflect something very other. Poem 'xi', relates how a road was built curved, to please the ego of a plantation owner's wife,

> so that Miss Musgrave
> on her carriage ride home
> would not have to see
> a nayga man's property
> so much bigger than her husband's. (Ll.11-15)

The race-divide that structured the island's history is not a surface-level phenomenon; it is pressed deep into the infrastructure, becoming harder to change with every iteration

---

[46] cf *PI* §29, §85, §426, §491, §596.

of its processes. 'Some kinds of ghostly line . . . can have very real consequences for peoples' movements' (Irwin et al. 'The City of Richgate' p 62, cited in Gerlach 26). The 'serpentine' flow of Lady Musgrove's Road now causes pandemonium on the modern city's commuter route, as its needless turns restrict and complicate traffic (L.10). This unexpected addendum to the colonial past (interestingly at odds with the Haussmann-ish rationalisation of the landscape one might sooner anticipate) acts as a reminder of the entrenchment that decisions undergo, and institutions facilitate. The Cartographer notes reluctantly the 'thoughtless' (L. 26) lay out of the street, wishing he could put right the injustices of history with his mapping; straightening and smoothing roads "as if in drawing / he might erase a small bit of history's disgrace" (L. 35-36). But for whom, and to whom, would he speak and draw? The map, however superior to reality, cannot improve the traffic, or undo its knotty history. The character of the landscape is as much a factor of its past as its present topography and culture. Miller depicts Jamaica as a place where 'every road might buck yu toe', a statement of roughness that is as proud as it is imperfect ('v' L. 5). The Island carries its past in its roads and people and language.

The Wittgensteinian figure criss-crossing the landscape of a language (a landscape distinctly Northern European in its imagining, one might say, with an apparent preference for 'the woods' over the 'city' (Clack *Wittgenstein, Frazer, and Religion* 176) is not, on such a view, a neutral presence; it imposes while it explores by opening up one route, closing down another, recording and moving according to a particular purpose. [47] Perspicuous representation is not created by absenting oneself from the landscape, but neither can it be achieved by an exhaustive familiarity with the terrain. We make choices based on our priorities and limitations. In this structure of selection and incompletion, mapping is an ethically charged choice, much like the responsibility of meaning-making in Jorie Graham's poetry, and likewise the map metaphor must consider its ethical implications. Wittgenstein's choice of metaphor, thus seen, reflects his own stance regarding the proper way of approaching the ethical, including the means by which one might write on ethics.

Ethics and Practice

---

[47] Wittgenstein regular asks about the 'way to go' or knowing 'the way about': cf *PI* §222, §230, §309, §339; §123, §203, §664, p202.

It is difficult in any discussion of Wittgenstein's work that touches on the poetic to exclude from the same debate the notion of the ethical. As discussed in Chapter 1, the linking of the two in Wittgenstein's notes, even while his publishing on either subject was near non-existent, marks something important both about how the later Wittgenstein conceived of language and judgement functioning, and the centrality of ethics to Wittgenstein's conception of a human life, including the usages of language.

The oft-quoted remark that Wittgenstein considered talking about ethics and aesthetics to be merely *Geschwätz* (Letter to Paul Englemann 16th January 1918. *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* 12e) might be taken to indicate a dismissal of the topic as nonsense or, at best, an essentially human but ultimately hopeless activity, as a positivist reading would take the *Lecture on Ethics* to be presenting. In the later writings, ethics fall almost completely out of the picture, with only one brief aside occurring in the *Philosophical Investigations* (§77). One might then ask whether Wittgenstein had simply lost interest in the topic, or felt that his earlier critique had answered all the questions, or whether he now thought that philosophy – either his own or the model of philosophising he was often attacking – was not the vehicle for such a discussion. However, an equally viable and more productive reading of the omission is that he did not hold ethics to be unimportant, but perhaps *too* important – that anything that could be said in ethics would always fall short of its target and be a travesty of what it hoped to capture. Leaving aside the fact that everything we know about Wittgenstein's personal life insists that he was far from indifferent to the ethical or the aesthetic, there is little to suggest in the later writing that the ethical has become irrelevant; this is never stated, and its omission may in itself be a comment on the subject – even a key to making sense of the project, as Benjamin Tilghman has argued in *Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics*. The moral and aesthetic dimensions of *Philosophical Investigations* 'remain to be made manifest' through its techniques, rather than its utterances (ix).

No matter how we choose to view the transition from his earlier to his later thinking, Wittgenstein's movement beyond the work of 'the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*' (*PI* §23) seems in this area to be connected to a dissatisfaction with the tools used or how the problem was conceived rather than a rejection of the subject of the end of the *Tractatus* – the ethical and how it might or must not be spoken about. The formulation *Geschwätz* is thus as a complaint against the usual ways in which philosophy approaches ethics (Yaniv Ickovitz *Wittgenstein's Ethical Thought*). In this case, the problem Wittgenstein sees is not with the attention to ethics itself, but with the

emptiness of *assuming* that there is something identifiable as 'the good' – a special category of thing – and then trying to fit more tangible concepts into this space. Our attachment to the shapes in which we think, like our attachments to particular words and expressions, are under question here, which can carry a far deeper psychological or social or habitual connection than the mere surface meaning (Cavell 'The Wittgensteinian Event' 12).

In line with the method of the *Philosophical Investigations*, we ought rather to find multiple examples (both in everyday life and in imagined circumstances) and see what each of these tell us about the various ways in which the idea of the 'good' is used – how these uses connect and differ. Literature seems like a suitable candidate for this sort of work, since it provides examples in a way that is bounded and memorable. Both Gibson and Schalkwyk, in different ways, want to use the literary example as a reiterable moment of life, like an animated gif that we can recall and rerun alongside our everyday experience. This will provide a model for judgement or a clear(er) view of our practices, respectively. But in either case, what the example is supposed to achieve relies on extracting it from the practices in which it is embedded (reading, performing, watching) in order to facilitate analysis.

Gibson proposes (drawing on Wittgenstein's remarks on measurement and the Standard Metre in Paris in *Philosophical Investigations* §50) that we consider literature to be playing a different role in our language games than the representational aspects of non-fiction, having in a sense been 'removed' from the demands and applications of this practice. Through certain textual or extra-textual markers that identify it as fiction, the text is granted a certain license to be treated as a genuine speech-act, but with the consequences of such an act held back. Altieri, following J.L.Austin, describes this as 'an illocutionary act without illocutionary consequences' ('The Poem as Act' 105). Instead of the contents of the literary text requiring the same kind of immediate response as an order or a request, we allow a certain amount of free-play to enter into our reception, storing up potential reactions for later consideration or application. We 'hold' literature in place through the surrounding traditions of reading and writing; the practice of "being literary" (Lamarque. 'Wittgenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice' 387).

This notion of a tradition, both of the practice of reading and of particular canonical texts, is important for Gibson's efforts to explain this educational but not

representational aspect of fiction ('Reading for Life' 119). By writing and repeating stories, he suggests we are building up an 'archive' of complex human behaviour. Rather than thinking of these stories as being representational of some particular thing in the world (since they are not), it would be more productive to think of them as 'standards' against we can measure, or through which we can form possible ways of seeing the world. Through their 'fixed' form as known texts (Gibson seems primarily to have canonical or long-standing literature in mind for his model) these standards operate not 'in' our language games, but stand alongside them; they have a role, but it is not the same role as a factual text demanding our assent or response to its content. However, Gould's model of (canonical) literature as standards against which we measure ourselves, while remaining distinct from mere 'examples', as if literature had a duty to be mimetic, still stands at a remove from actual language and, I suggest, inserts a distinction between literary and practical language that is an impoverishment to both, as Bernard Harrison argues in *Inconvenient Fictions* 19-70). Simply put, 'there is in fact *no* material difference, [...only] the *use* to which we put language varies so much that words and sentences become, as it were, unfamiliar when they reappear in a new context' (Perloff *Wittgenstein's Ladder* 19-20). Any attempt to draw a line between strictly literary and strictly practical language is doomed to failure, given that real language itself is not a series of propositions, but always implanted with jokes, clichés, gestures, circumlocutions, flourishes and repetitions, even if these are not "on display" as they may be in a poem. The point and richness of poetry is best not found in some set purpose or quality, but in an activity as a whole – an expression or multitude of expressions of our exhilaration, discontent, confusion, loneliness, wit and desperation – which we can no more take out of the context of "being poetry" than we can (Wittgenstein suggests) perform useful philosophical analysis on a piece of language ripped from its repeated applications.

This is perhaps the best way of taking Wittgenstein's notoriously difficult-to-translate remark '*philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur* dichten'(*CV* 28e). 'Really one should write philosophy only as one *does poetry*' is one slightly clumsy translation, though '*dichten*' as the activity of poetizing has no real equivalent in English. Various translations have offered '...as a *form of poetic composition*' (trans. Anscombe cited in Perloff *Wittgenstein's Ladder*., preface) or '...as one *writes a poem*' (trans. Peter Winch, *Culture and Value* 28, 2006) or 'as a *form of poetry*' (*Wittgenstein's Ladder* n243). Each of these has complications. One wants to avoid too formal a connection, as

though philosophy should be bent into certain pre-existing forms, as a poem might be, or equate Wittgenstein's writing with an attempt at verse, erasing the distinction between the two kinds of activity (though it is certainly possible to find in Wittgenstein's writing the poetic, as Perloff does, and many artists have ('Writing Philosophy as Poetry: Literary Form in Wittgenstein'). I am sympathetic to Schalkwyk's interest in preserving the activity at the heart of *dichten*, though even the suggestion that philosophy should be 'poetised' ('Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Gardens"' 56) feels retroactive. My suggestion is rather that a certain *spirit* is being called upon, drawing on Wittgenstein's remarks in *Culture and Value* (5-11e, particular the early draft of the printed foreword to *Philosophical Remarks*, 8-9e). This avoids these difficulties, but admittedly goes beyond either a direct translation or a definitive explanation. The appeal to spirit is also made by James C. Edwards in *Ethics without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life*, urging the need to adopt a certain spirit if seeking to continue Wittgenstein's philosophical project, but his conception is essentially Christian-religious, whereas the reading I have put forward throughout treats Wittgenstein as being not a orthodox religious believer but forcefully attracted to that worldview (Drury 'Conversations with Wittgenstein' 79). The spirit is one of fighting against the mechanisation and systemisation of life that Wittgenstein saw as the legacy of the twentieth century, in favour of directly encounters, provisionality and 'work on oneself' (*CV* 24e). Poetic creativity, reading and writing, provides for Wittgenstein a model of this perpetual alertness to exact expression, the complexity of clarity, and the attempt to show more than is said. The spirit is digressive in the same way that Wallace Stevens' 'Notes' digresses in interwoven stories and modes, each adding to the understanding of the others, but shying away from proclamations or finality; the illusion of an answer is part of the performance that the poem demands of the reader. As Harold Bloom says of the opening lines of 'Notes', 'The peace he celebrates here, though momentary, is very much of this life [...] a peace that comes from reading and writing poems.' (*The Poems of Our Climate* 167-8). In like fashion, Kei Miller deviates from simple binaries in favour of the evolving characters of the Cartographer and the Rastaman, creating rest, or the promise of it, through deeper involvement in everyday life – food, music and dance; Wittgenstein uses and evades the traditions of analytic philosophy discourse, creating a conversation of many voices, finding small moments of pause rather than definite solutions. As Srikanth Reddy writes of such digressive techniques, 'Their authors assiduously map out unruly detours and deviations from

imperatives of readerly expectation that have historically governed the decorum of poetic discourse' (*Changing Subjects* 20).

Accordingly, I use 'showing' above advisedly, and not as a stand-in for what is absolutely beyond expression, but as something that makes active demands on the reader, in a way beyond the transfer of information; to say "Here, come and see what I see" can sometimes be the best and only description on offer (cf. *PI* §§66, 217, 335, p183). And this is essentially the technique of both Kei Miller's poems and the character of the Rastaman within them; there is very little direct argument in the collection, though the Rastaman, who holds a PhD '(from Glasgow / no less)' (xiv) would be perfectly capable of arguing within the Academy, if this is what would be effective. Instead, we are given meaningful details and their connections that might otherwise be lost: 'plenty things that poor people cyaa do without – like board / houses, and the corner shop from which Miss Katie sell / her famous peanut porridge' (ii). The Cartographer cannot just be told about them, either, he has to eat the food, dance to the music of the place, the 'DUP-DUP-dudududu-DUP-DUP' of a nyabinghi beat; this 'is no riddim the mapmaker's heart is / familiar with. No. Ain't nutt'n iambic bout dis' (xvii). And in the same way the reader is not just told, but brought into the imaginative space of another voice, through Miller's use of patois, powerful rhythms, and the demonstration that things can be seen differently – a kind of persuasion, an invitation to compromise. Miller's sketches of a landscape, his itinerant Cartographer, may never reach Zion, (just as Miller's Church Women find spiritual ascent comforting, demanding and elusive) though it is the search, not a discovery that will get him there. Likewise, the Wittgensteinian figure in the landscape must continue to travel, seeking out new viewpoints, drawing new sketches. [48]

In the following chapter, I discuss how my research and poetic practice, and those of other writers, have taken up aspects of this Wittgensteinian challenge – to re-write or un-write the familiar, and let the activity of language have its full play. This partly underwrites the repeated emphasis on practice (as a whole as well as on a conceptual level) in this thesis but also agrees with one of Stanley Cavell's complaints about the conventional reception of Wittgenstein as 'concentrating more on our capacity to construct language games than on our desire to break free from our disappointment with our constructions' ('The Wittgensteinian Event' 22). The interrogation of the

---

[48] cf *PI* vii, §232, §673.

inexpressible in its very many forms takes the shape of acknowledging these frustrations, not as short-comings but as part of our natural condition – our continual and always partial efforts to lose and find ourselves in our words.

Chapter Six: Poetry Practice

Introduction

In its various attempts to bring the inexpressible back into the circulation of ordinary use, back from its holiday (*PI* §38), this thesis has pitched the understanding of Wittgenstein's method at the level of practice. In this way, it avoids the illusions and deflections of replacing theory with further theory but also provides an alternative to the potentially problematic notions of therapy, or the chimera of being able to give up philosophy for good.

As the chapters have progressed, different faces of the inexpressible have each in turn been shown to exist in, or as, practices, with their own histories and points of deflection from expression. I have attempted to structure the chapters so that a number of lines of thought conjoin, moving from the early Wittgenstein to the later, from more philosophical to more literary discussion, and from the contours of logic to specific choices of words and modes of discourse.

In this final chapter, I briefly discuss the poetry-projects that I undertook alongside the critical research presented here, providing a further step away from theory towards practice. Although not all of these link directly into the content of the thesis – certainly not as further arguments – many were inspired by the materials studied and illustrate similar kinds of intellectual and artistic engagement. In keeping with the emphasis on wider practices, many of these projects were collaborative, inter-disciplinary or refashioned for specific purposes. To close this study I have included as appendices poems from two of the collections produced, *The Wittgenstein Vector* and *Still Life with Promises*.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Wittgenstein has proven a rich inspiration for artists and poets. Marjorie Perloff has discussed the formal attractions of the *Tractatus* and the interrogative mode of *Philosophical Investigations* as marking contemporary American poetry ('Towards a Wittgensteinian Poetics' and the final chapter of *Wittgenstein's Ladder*). There is considerably more work to be done, both in identifying Wittgenstein's direct influence on poets and artists such as Jan Zwicky, Johanna Drucker, David Clark, John Hall, Robert Creeley, Tony Lopez, David Markson, Garret Caples, David Connearn, Emmanuel Hocquard, Alan Halsey, and John Cage, as well as

using Wittgenstein's understanding of language and form in assessing artworks generally. This is a project I would hope to take up in future, particularly since the questions that Wittgenstein raises about the in completeness of language and the attitude of aesthetic appreciation apply so readily to the burgeoning possibilities of digital literature as a performative genre.

Here I want to give two brief examples of existing work. Jan Zwicky's collection 'Wittgenstein Elegies' includes poems written from the philosopher's perspective, and incorporates numerous quotations and allusions to his work. Zwicky also incorporates a number of Wittgenstein's stylistic markers, such as the use of multiple voices (Wittgenstein's public personae, the poet Trakl (whose career Wittgenstein supported with a donation when he gave away his inheritance) Wittgenstein's inner monologue, and a narrator's voice) indicated with a mixture of speech marks, italics and indentations. Broken and unfinished lines, though considerably less baroque than Jorie Graham's typography, mimic both Wittgenstein's constant need for revision, and the skittish activity of thought, as distinct from the supposed clarity of philosophy. Sometimes the stark declarations prohibit a narrative reading of the poems, making them more like the proposition-objects of the *Tractatus*. Zwicky's collection creates a frustrated Wittgenstein character, closed in by his inability to express what seems to need expressing, both by the logical form of language and by his inability to write poetry. Despite his remark discussed previously about doing philosophy in the manner of writing a poem (*CV* 28e), Wittgenstein was convinced of his own lack of ability as a poet: 'Just as I cannot write verse, so too I can write prose only up to a certain point, & no further. There is a quite definite limit to my prose, & I can no more overstep it, than I would be able to write a poem' (*CV* 67e). The poem included as an appendix in the 1998 edition of *Culture and Value* (100) shows that he maintained an interest in poetry, both as art and as practice, though he always felt that his writing was limited to expressions of good taste, or *'good manners'* (Emphasis in original. *CV* 29e). In ways similar to the frustrations explored in Chapter 5, Zwicky presents Wittgenstein as returning again and again to questions or problems that are to be dissolved rather than solved, and temptations to be resisted. Ultimately, it is a recognition that the *Fragestellung* must be shifted away from the empty concepts of philosophy towards ordinary speaking and living:

> The idea
>
> Now absorbs us that the ideal

is concrete. One vast analysis, a single form/

At each expression's root.

[...]

We think already that we see it there.

A thing that we had always known

But never spoken.

This was our mistake. (47)

Zwicky, also a philosopher by profession, uses both Wittgenstein and Heraclitus throughout her oeuvre, such as in the shifting music and lost landscapes of *Forge*, asking 'Who can name the absence / music is, who draw that space, / the cold breath, sudden and empty / that will own you the rest of your life?' ('Music and Silence: Seven Variations' ll. 1-4).

The second example I want to use to prime my discussion of Wittgensteinian reading and ways of writing is the much less direct case of Jo Shapcott's *Of Mutability*, which I read as a text bearing a number of Wittgensteinian markers. Though the collection as a whole is an exploration of cancer (co-incidentally also the cause of Wittgenstein's death) the poem 'Hairless', for example, not only foregrounds the bodiliness of communication – our appearances and expressions shaped by our faces, illnesses, movements – but contains a number of phrases that could have been taken directly from *Philosophical Investigations* (§250, 261, 614-6; p229), *The Blue and Brown Books* (7), *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology II* (40) and elsewhere.

Can the bald lie? The nature of skin says not:

it's newborn-pale, erection-tender stuff,

every thought visible – pure knowledge

mind in action – shining through the skull.

I saw a woman, hairless absolute, cleaning.

[...]

It was clear just from the texture of her head,

she was about to raise her arms to the sky;

I covered my ears as she prepared to sing, to roar.

Shapcott dramatises the loss not only of hair but of a hinge of life; cancer has robbed the woman of her expressions, her place in the form of life; something so simple and apparently innocuous can weird our language games. Like Kei Miller's Church Woman in 'Off-Key 1', the note of wordless song, the roar, may be the most articulate expression.

The Wittgenstein Vector

In the projects connected with this thesis, the poetic motivation is often a similar pressing on the hinges of propositions: metaphors disguised as literal statements, displaced contexts, and moments when our usual expressions fail. As Avram Stroll notes, with a Wittgensteinian eye on language we may think about the different ways in which language games lean on the foundations of our practices, and how poetry can play with them, through ambiguity, shifts of tone or meaning, formal innovations, and the building or disappointing of expectations ('Wittgenstein's Foundational Metaphors' 15-16; *PI* §§574-7). In *The Wittgenstein Vector*, a collaborative project with SMSteele and Jaime Robles, the contexts of sense and production of the *Tractatus* were pressurised to produce an art installation, which subsequently spawned a short film and a conference presentation, and has been re-exhibited in San Francisco for 'Sisters of Invention'. Publication of the collection as a book is currently being considered, which carries its own ironies, since the project was conceived as an explosion of Wittgenstein's original text and the logical dependence of the numbered propositions.

As I have discussed in more detail in 'The Wittgenstein Vector: essay and poems', in later life Wittgenstein observed that the austere chain of propositions that made up the *Tractatus* might actually function as something more like chapter headings for a full work of philosophy. *The Wittgenstein Vector* fills in these imagined spaces, but with poetry rather than philosophy. The installation was constructed on a Victorian brick wall on the University of Exeter Streatham campus. Iron eyes are embedded in the wall, where fruit trees were once espaliered. The laminated poem-cards, with the *Tractatus* proposition on one side and the text on the other, stood at right-angles to the wall, interspersed with art pieces by Jaime Robles, based on Wittgensteinian images and themes. The reader followed the poems using a map provided – according to the numbering system, the poems' themes, individual poets – or at random. The cards bent to the touch and rattled in the wind, adding tactile and auditory elements to the exploration.

Figure 2 *The Wittgenstein Vector*, 2012. Portrait of Wittgenstein. Photo Credit Jaime Robles.

Figure 3 *The Wittgenstein Vector*, 2012. Proposition 7. Photo Credit Jaime Robles

By dismantling Wittgenstein's book, and allowing new texts and applications to emerge through these fractures, we in part enacted the philosopher's own later philosophy, with its insistence on the importance of context and use to meaning-making. We also address his discomfort with the idea of publishing a book of philosophy – he worried that an authoritative text might become stale and stop readers from having to do too much thinking for themselves – by questioning the finality of any such text.

Our explicitly *poetic* engagement with the *Tractatus* has drawn out connections between different elements of Wittgenstein's thought, and also the human and literary contexts of its production. Crucial to all this is the range of possible responses to Proposition 7, the famous closing remark of the book, which this thesis has argued was, in its various forms and methods, a continual prompt to Wittgenstein's philosophy: 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'. In our re-reading and re-writing of his words, we have interrogated this call – for restraint? for despair? – through unexpected modes of speaking and creating.

Three writers' voices pull a putatively linear text in many directions. Some of the poems play out the philosophical thought, or use the constraints of Wittgenstein's system as a springboard; others probe the terse expressions and logical rigour for a more human moment – possible openings on to comfort, confusion, love or sorrow. Many threads hold its pieces together, but none is the single connecting line (*PI* §67). My contributions enjoy the interplay of the philosophical and the personal, attempting to tie together the human and the philosopher – the passion and ridiculousness of both. The silences between propositions came to stand for Wittgenstein's deeply felt incapacity to do justice to the ethical and the sacred in a fractured world, one shadowed by isolation and conflict. How can words do justice to our situation; how can we do justice to our words?

A selection of my contributions to the collection are reprinted in Appendix A. '1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by these being *all* the facts', for example, imagines Wittgenstein's desire to be 'absolutely safe' in the *Lecture on Ethics* (8). Wittgenstein's examples of ethical statements in the lecture are striking in their adherence to everyday language and desires, even while they are placed as exceeding

meaningful speech. In the collection as a whole, the poem sits between texts by Jaime Robles that play with the intricate numbering and ontological underpinnings that open the *Tractatus*, and is designed to offer a momentary return to the familiar, while remaining equally unobtainable. A similar playing with the propositional numbering system can be seen in '2.0211 If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true', in which further propositions are imagined inserted between 2.0211 and 2.0212, much as Wittgenstein's later writing style seems to invite continual digression or deferment through the insertion of examples or interlocutors. Other poems play with our habits of reading: '6.1265 Logic can always be conceived to be such that every proposition is its own proof' and '6.22 The logic of the world which the propositions of logic show in tautologies, mathematics shows in equations', for example, disrupt the usual flow of understanding with breaks, gaps, formulae and blanks. The former puts into view an example of language operating not as information-giving but as ritual (*Z* §160; *RFGB* 133). The latter, mimicking Jorie Graham's _____s described in Chapter 4, uses omission and repetition to emulate the kind of deflection that Cora Diamond discusses in 'The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy': what information do we hide from ourselves in our relations with, and systematic consumption of, animals bred for meat?

One question we faced was how to respond to the final proposition of the *Tractatus*, '7 Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent'. In the original installation, we left the card obverse of the proposition blank, and in performances have also ended on a sustained silence, allowing Wittgenstein's drawing of the limit the final, withdrawing word. However, for the published collection, and partly in view of the process of this thesis, I replaced the blank page with a series of unpunctuated questions, pressing the reader with a mixture of abstract, personal or rhetorical enquiries, to which the poem admits no response. The varieties of the inexpressible intermingle, as the reader's lack of response may be practical or logical, and may be felt as a discomfort, a taboo or a frustration.

The installation was reconfigured as a hanging mobile for indoor installation, allowing readers to spin the cards and create new patterns along which to read the poems. This formed part of the *Wor(l)ds in Collision* exhibition (Exeter 2015), which I curated with Jaime Robles, showcasing how a number of text and visual artists had responded to Wittgenstein's work, in particular the notion of games and play.

Wor(l)ds in Collision

Opened to coincide with the annual conference of the British Wittgenstein Society, this semi-permanent exhibition featured works by Johanna Drucker, Tony Lopez, David Connearn, Alan Halsey, Dan Wood, Richard Carter, Sas Colby, John Hall and the *Exegesis* collective. Each piece placed under playful inquisition our received ideas of language and representation. Johanna Drucker's *Wittgenstein's Gallery* and *Stochastic Poetry*, for example, use visual representation – of objects as well as hand-set type – to ask questions about how our grammar works; verbs treated as nouns, nouns as verbs; pictures with different iterations raise questions about identity and 'meaning the same'; overlaid type in chaotic but nearly comprehensible patterns represent natural conversation at the expense of our conventions of type. David Connearn's pieces, by contrast, meditate on Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Colour* and the ideas of fine shades of difference or blurred concepts in *Philosophical Investigations* (§50, 71; p200-4), in which incredibly fine variations of colour are placed side by side, and hand-drawn lines, each with its own tiny variations are placed together, creating the suggestion of patterns or signatures, raising questions about how we use our words to describe, and how we might hunt for the specific conditions of an experience. Alan Halsey's *In White Writing* again commented on our methods of production and interpretation, with prints created by collages of scrap paper and discarded drafts, photocopied and annotated to create intricate and inviting doodles that promised and withheld decipherment – a promise that was later fulfilled, or confounded, by Alan reading the pages in performance, complete with stutters and omissions, lists of phone numbers, and animal howls. As Alan Munton described it, in his Shearsman review of the exhibition, '[t]here is structured mental activity that breaks out disrespectfully into the world; the language-relation between the given and the imagined; and the creative subject surrounded by inanimate but provocative objects: this exhibition embodies such relationships.'

Still Life with Promises

The second collection relating to this chapter takes similar inspiration from Wittgenstein's remarks, using several as titles or epigraphs. The poems are included as Appendix B. Some respond directly to the concerns in Wittgenstein's philosophy, or his interest in conceptions of madness and therapy, the functions of names, or the grip a particular image has on us, our bewitchment by language. Others are a continuation of Wittgenstein's interlocutors in *Philosophical Investigations*, following supposed

answers into cul-de-sacs or literalising metaphors. Relating situations where words seem inadequate, we find ourselves retelling stories, wondering when we might discover the 'redeeming word', or the movements to bridge divides between us. I find, in retrospect, that the poems are heavily populated with birds, cats and other animals, mostly domestic; although this was not a theme I set out to develop, I connect their presences with my own fascination with the temptations of anthropomorphism – the simultaneous blankness and recognition of an animal gaze; the way our lives are filled with animal voices not ours to understand; the awareness of one's own human outlook and the difficulty (or seductive ease) of empathising with an other. The animal – sometimes specific animals – represent the slippages between intelligibility and unintelligibility that parts of this thesis have addressed; how do we speak to, or for, an other form of life? When Wittgenstein says 'If a lion could speak, we could not understand him' (*PI* p223) this is not just a remark about the difficulty of speaking across language-games or forms of life; it is not as simple as not sharing a language or simply putting animals outside what we include in our human world (Cary Wolfe and W.J.T Mitchell 'Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and

Posthumanist Theory'). It points towards the framework that lies behind such ideas as speaking, understanding, co-habiting, and what it means to individuate. There are fine gradations of understanding, that at times will be relevant, at others not. There is no one line, crossing which grants access into a human community, but many and overlapping practices, in which speaking and behaving is granted meaning. A re-enchantment *of* the world is also an enchantment *by* it – its pleasures, tempi and contradictions – and the extent to which we control this enchantment, or can determine its inclusiveness, is a matter of experimentation, context and agreement. In poetry those lines can be redrawn as pictures, challenges and fables, encouraging us to reassess the grooves of thought we run in.

Several of the poems in this collection have been works of collaboration, which I find another tool for refreshing my language, putting poems into new light through comparisons; much like the perspicuous representation of *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough* (133) and *Philosophical Investigations* §122; we 'sharpen our eye' by placing telling examples together, or in constellation. 'Bangor, Maine from 30,000ft' was commissioned for *Exewhirr*, a public engagement event exploring technology and embodiment. With poets Wei Hsien Wan and Isabel Galleymore I produced a pamphlet called *Paraphernalium* that pondered issues of climate change, digital romance, and our

society's inscriptions of itself. 'Memory Box' was part of a collection called *Drawing Over is Drawing Under* in which the same three poets wrote poems after paintings by Michael Broughton. Recalling Wittgenstein's 'beetle in a box' (*PI* §293), how is a memory something we 'have', how is it 'owned'? The way our language treats our "inner life" of thoughts and feelings as objects has lead to some of our most enduring philosophical confusions, and some of my favourite over-readings of metaphor for poetic effect.

Translations and Technologies

Finally, I have become increasingly interested in process of translation and technologies for writing or publishing. As well as a recent collection of translations of Golden Age Dutch poetry with early modernist Esther van Raamsdonk, I have collaborated with poet David Sergeant to produce utopian and dystopian 'translations' of an imagined source text. By running Nigel Farage's infamous victory speech on the morning after the UK's referendum vote to leave the EU ('without a shot fired') through Google-translate for each EU national language, we produced texts full of suggested meanings that also made plain Farage's rhetorical strategies. The overall effect or our translation was darkly humorous, pastiche-ing over-worn phrases and euphemistic language, with, we hoped, an echo of Karl Kraus' truthful satire. In these times of rising nationalism and the threat to the European project, Wittgenstein's experiencing of the world as exile from a disappearing world, and his feting in a culture and language not his own, as Perloff elucidates in *Wittgenstein's Ladder*, is increasingly powerful. His life in combination with his philosophy can keep us alert to easy and divisive myths, their forms and apparent natural reality.

In 2014, I organised an interdisciplinary seminar that encouraged collaborations between philosophers, scientists, artists and digital humanists, under the title 'Wiring Wittgenstein'. The meeting showcased digital literature research and projects, including my digital humanities 'twitterture' project, in which a modern-English version of the *Roman de la Rose* is transmitted in daily tweets, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Digital Manuscript Library, under the hashtag #roserom. The poem-snippets were coupled with images from the database, essays about the project, and a commentary by Professor Steven Nichols. In making the translation I considered how the Twitter medium transmitted ideas of the tweeting self – both diced up into pre-sized snippets of speech (140 characters), and retained indefinitely in the account's history of

activity. By using the poems to begin conversations with other impersonations of historical or literary figures, such as Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lydgate and King Cnut, we raised more serious questions about translation as creation, responsibilities to source texts, and the democratisation of information through digital storage and dissemination.

Envoy

As this thesis has attempted to bring into view the many different ways that we seem to meet the limits of expression, and show that these are rooted in particular practices, none of which can coherently lay claim to either define or dismiss what we find inexpressible, it ought to be shy of offering firm conclusions. 'Beware', as David Sergeant says in 'The Cornish Cough', 'the one / who'd take a definition like a pill // or nail the breeding wind against your tongue' (ll. 56-58). The operation of finding how our practices shape us and vice versa is in a sense a philosophy of 'what attacks false necessities' (Cavell *In Quest of the Ordinary* 184). These necessities include the postures our pictures seem to force us into adopting, without pretending that we can simply ignore them or treat them as arbitrary. This philosophical activity, as Cavell insists, cannot if it is true to itself, stand separate from the rest of life (Berry 'Stanley Cavell's Modernism' 54).

Using Cavell's writing as an instructive comparison, and pulling together several of the strands followed in this thesis, I argue that Wittgenstein's engagement with philosophy, framed as questions of it from within, similarly seeks to understand what might still the urge to philosophise. However, Cavell's insistence on finding a space for voice – his own – and ways in which he is able to take responsibility for the language and culture he is part of, is a speaking against the worry of finding himself blank. Philosophy is regarded as a violence done to ordinary language, attempting to stem the flow of interruptions of the self that constitute language use (Eldridge 'Criticism and the risk of the self' 96). Wittgenstein seems by contrast already to inhabit, even be weighed down by, his own voice. It threatens to reveal too much about himself, as much of the correspondence in Monk's *Duty of Genius* shows. Often Wittgenstein is trying to understand and resist the urge to escape himself into philosophy and the respite (absolution or rest) this offers, which must paradoxically be both justifiable to himself and beyond justification. Wittgenstein seems to feel the pull of philosophy as a spell cast by language and culture as a whole, a deeply felt urge, where Cavell's search for attunement remains more everyday (though not necessarily in conflict with

Wittgenstein's own concerns), characterised by the individual utterances, or claims on us, made by others in our language (Timothy Gold 'The Literal Truth' 163). Perhaps what marks the starkest difference between these two writers, whose parallels are often very valuable, is Wittgenstein's powerful sense of 'decency' – a recurring theme in *Culture and* Value (e.g.: 11e, 35e, 51e, 58e, 85e) and his correspondence. This is a notion was arguably more pressing for someone of Wittgenstein's cultural background, standing in contrast to concerns of authenticity that predominate Cavell's more individualistic thinking, and indeed much contemporary and confessional poetry. While there is not the space here to adequately analyse the difference between these drives, I would note that Wittgenstein's decency, while on the surface a more conservative attitude, incorporates a sense of obligation to one's society, ethics and practices (or the failing in this) that is extremely powerful. Wittgenstein's inability or refusal to escape himself, to think other than through his own person, even in philosophy (Badiou *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy* 88 – though here conceived more socially and historically than Badiou allows) provides strong parallels with the conflicted self of Jorie Graham's poetry, as well as the cultural and religious concerns of John Burnside and Kei Miller.

In my own practice I find the idioms of my ordinary expression inescapable without risk to my 'decency', which is one reason for the language used: conversational and conventional, but with moments of misformation as the pictures of everyday English become unserviceable, or a translation from another language better strikes the required note (*PI* §6). I have tried to skirt the boundaries between an imagined *ekstasis* of verbal excess and the risk of becoming leaden (though this often where poetry is most revealing – 'Laurence Goldstein 'What Does "Experiencing Meaning" Mean?' 119). The point of the poems, though frequently personal or philosophical, is also a confirmation of my own joy in finding expressions that refresh but still fit the language available to me. As John Mole admits, sometimes it is as simple as feeling at home and 'most adventurous when making patterns out of language, surprising myself with its possibilities as the writing takes shape or risking a radical change of gear if it doesn't' ('Poetry, Jazz and the Sound of Surprise' 210). This admission is a kind of decency, I think, and one that makes the writing of Wallace Stevens, in his world of orderliness and imagination, fantastical language and ordinary pleasures, so attractive, and such a useful parallel for Wittgenstein's work. Similarly, Kei Miller's use of multiple linguistic registers in not only an extension of his poetic toolkit, but the recognition of an

obligation, or the creation of hybrid literature that aspires to be both specific and accessible. Both writers create new frames of song or strange syntax, through which something else about the world is revealed. In the end, this is what prevents poetry from merely talking to itself - 'What poetry *mustn't* do' (Bernard O'Donoghue 'Poetry's Concern' 222) – but also from spoiling itself by moralising or overstating intellectual points (*CV* 62e). Instead this is poetry talking *through* itself – its heritage, practice and potential.

Through the different aspects of the inexpressible encountered in this thesis, the importance of seeing each as a practice, or providing reminders of the patterns and forms of life that scaffold our meaning or failure to mean, I have attempted to show the advantages of this reading of Wittgenstein, avoiding the extremes of both theory and therapy, and emphasising the sensuousness and flexibility of language that poetry thrives on. This has also shown how important poetry and the arts are for a truly integrated understanding of Wittgenstein, that aesthetics are 'interwoven into the fabric of his main body of philosophical work to the extent of undercutting its purported subdisciplinary demarcation' (Eran Gunter 'Critical Study: An Inadvertent Nemesis – Wittgenstein and Contemporary Aesthetics' 299). Further, Wittgenstein's thinking can open new readings of poetry of his own time and today, providing inspiration for and critiques of form, metaphor and creativity.

In pursuit of this, the thesis has paid attention to a variety of approaches and contexts, in a way that reflects Perloff's notion of a Wittgensteinian text as 'alternately anecdotal and aphoristic, repetitive and disjunctive, didactic and jokey, self-assertive and self-cancelling' (*Wittgenstein's Ladder* 66). Ultimately, the perfect expression of the inexpressible would say nothing at all about it, only reveal, to the attentive reader, the unsayable within the practice: 'if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable then *nothing* gets lost. But the unutterable will be – unutterably – *contained* in what has been uttered' (Wittgenstein, Letter to Paul Engelmann 09/04/1917).

Finally, perhaps, a practice or a poem must be left to speak for itself.

Appendix A:The Wittgenstein Vector

Preface

Imagine yourself   a landscape

clothed in soil   crossed by paths

asking to be judged   to be followed

not a word   a map

understood   like bird-flight

except heard before   or a portrait

of the unobserved   framed

what resides   in nonsense

in more glory   its jingles numbered

than saying nothing

and yet   what is unsaid

you speak   when you cease

1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by these being all the facts.

I should very much like to feel *absolutely* safe

as though the world were wrapped in a duvet

muffling the noise of traffic, impossible to disturb.

An infinity of being between fresh sheets.

I would need to be assured that no part, not even

a toe, would protrude from cover into daylight,

that bird noises exist only within

the perimeter of my perception. I could sleep

as cleanly as an algorithm, replicating days,

everything proven true. I would know

that I know the precision of breathing, this world

carved like a yawn, all of one piece.

1.11 The world is determined by the facts, and by these being all the facts.

1.2 The world divides into facts.

The conductor's nod barely disturbs

the brim of his hat – worn to a shine

by years of thumbing down,

donned only for closed rehearsals –

sends a swoop

more ready than the sea

through the coop of woodwinds,

pearling their hooms and hums

into the new-drummed wave,

until the rushed choir rises,

translated between knife lips

into a flourish of seabirds,

rising

over thundered space and salt.

2.014 Objects contain the possibility of all states of affairs.

I would pick up an orange

if it would bring you home

if it amended the world

embanked its rivers

I would dot it with cloves

pressed in with my thumb

2.0211 If the world had no substance, then whether a proposition had sense would depend on whether another proposition was true.

(2.02111   This, once known could cast

        a reassuring shadow, a sundial by which to carry out

        measurements.

2.02112   Though the truth of this

        depended on the position on of the sun

        which depends on the time of day.

2.021121   The sun moves in accordance with the mechanism

        of my wristwatch.

2.02113   The adulation of the dawn chorus remains

        independent of my waking to witness it.

2.021131   I am locked in a room with thick curtains.

        The arguments of birds do not disturb me.

2.02114   I should like to move

        out of the sun

        proposition to proposition.

2.02115   It would be possible to make sense

        in the light of my attention

        which is the sun.

2.02116   In dreams I could not picture myself

        though I am confident of my presence.)

2.0212   It would then be impossible to form a picture of the world

        (true or false).

2.1 We make to ourselves pictures of facts.

Your life opening like a court-case,

speeches and wigs, the indentation

of gavel on wood. Cars and horses move

like cardboard cut-outs over maps

under your serious hands. "This is approximate."

There will be judgement. If you call

upon a witness they will reconstruct

events, bricks in the piers of a bridge.

At the back of the room, an artist

perches, laying down your likeness

for the next case. You offer

your profile, and she does the same,

another artist taking up her pen.

3.26 The name cannot be analysed further by any definition.

It is a primitive sign.

when you speak

the rope catches

muscles of plaster

beneath the paint

3.324. Thus there easily arise the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full).

What it would be like to walk

the firmness and the roots

of a lengthening forest

between the thighs of mountains

prickling the very tendrils

of a twilight sky, each foot

pressed into the give and tension

of a red soil, one hand slipping

over the trunks of still-warm trees

the other holding up a picture

of bricked city traffic, just high

and steady enough to sheet

the view of all ahead.

4 The thought is the significant proposition.

A trough of bottles after Christmas

cackles into recycling.

This t-shirt is a harvest of cat hair.

Quietly, gambling happens among pennies

and cigar smoke, its memory,

brown and sofa-solid.

A breathe has the shape

of the tide in a harbour,

coddling a jangle of boats.

It is a study of heat.

Pull a cracker, find the joke

in the fleet scattering of soot.

A live fish boxed between disgusted palms

tells futures quick

as a flick of the tongue.

4.2 The sense of a proposition is its agreement and disagreement with the possibilities of the existence and non-existence of the atomic facts.

You have opened a book

onto an unread page, a crocodile

playing peek-a-boo with a child

There is a kind of angel, slim and webbed

      that carries you while you are driving,

      knife-hands gentle on your shoulders.

In 1918, Italy. P.O.W.

      P or –P?

Perhaps written —

                 a means of escape.

5. Propositions are truth-functions of elementary propositions.

(An elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself.)

In which truth tries on the white coat and arranges itself

(according to the atomic weights of words.)

The mind collides propositions and writes down the patterns.

(The energy of a proposition is its cultural velocity.)

The world takes the form of an answered riddle.

(I have seen the high cliffs around Thebes.)

Mr Wittgenstein writes folk-music, of cherries with no stones.

(*A lover's gift is not a matter of probability.*)

5.1361 The events of the future cannot be inferred from those of the present. Superstition is the belief in the causal nexus.

Feynman's electron, a loose zipper

in the continuum. I was.

You remember, you're there, too.

So I will be nothing else

but everything – the condition of movement:

fluid white, struck black

a fumbled hanging sky

a still exploding ocean.

I meet myself there, in passing.

Wittgenstein and Poetry: Negotiations of the Inexpressible.   M. D. Rose-Steel

265

5.254 Operations can vanish (e.g. denial in "~~p", ~~p = p).

A postcard with pictures on both sides

is shot into the pillar-box, with a slight

application of spin

from the middle and index fingers.

Alcibiades writes his mash-notes from Persia,

to long-dead Socrates: wish you

were here. A wish to eat itself.

Something

about the weather, the trousers, dust that cakes eyes, mouths,

the necks of amphora. He misremembers

the mountain snows

of Sparta and his speech

to the snub-nosed ghost, the love

half-requited, of the man on the ladder.

5.47321   Occam's razor is, of course, not an arbitrary rule nor one justified by its practical success. It simply says that unnecessary elements in a symbolism mean nothing. Signs that serve one purpose are logically equivalent, and signs that serve none are logically meaningless.

One could imagine a tribe

(let's call them 'us') whose everyday games

had no place for notions of forgiving.

How would this show

in their baking bread, rose beds,

shaking hands, and so forth?

They might instead keep

tallies of Wrongs, carved

on civic columns, or clench

their jaws for a certain length of time

appropriate to forgetting

(by some untroubled mechanism)

Or do we quietly carry

around our necks these things

accumulating

until we no longer sleep

on our stomachs, for fear

of suffocating?

5.6 The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

A favourite childhood game was always

to trek to the very edge of the universe

– a pure curve, somehow blue in all directions –

to poke an arm (the right one) out. The play

was to wiggle your fingers, coins in a purse,

feel them dissolve into protons and neutrons.

In all the times we went I never

thought to expose my head: too scared

to look into a world where distance

never started, ran forever. I wonder

now, if I had dared to lick the void,

filled my senses with its ancient trace

would the taste have burned

my tongue right out

or it would have been nothing

to write home about?

6.1265 Logic can always be conceived to be such that every

proposition is its own proof.

You say: "tell me   you love me,

say *I love you*,"   like a creed

ladled out   into the ribs

of a church so   the truth drips

in, delving   the Onduline heart

for poor flashing   darts

into crevices   and pools:

a thick red   liquid, a cartoon

of blood.   This is convincing

(someone   of something)

a little self-propelling   ceremony

the nightlight   of anthrophony.

6.22 The logic of the world which the propositions of logic show in tautologies, mathematics shows in equations.

To calculate how much meat you'll receive, use this equation:

Live weight x dressing percentage x carcass cutting yield = pounds of meat.

For example,

a 280-pound hog

butchered to bone-in chops and roasts

well trimmed, and regular ground pork or _____ will yield

$$280 \times (0.72 \times 0.74) = 280 \times 53\% = 148 \text{ pounds of meat.}$$

A _____ hog

_____ to boneless chops and roasts,

closely trimmed, and lean _____ pork or sausage will yield

$$\_\_\_\_\_ \times (0.72 \times 0.65) = _____ \times 47\% = 132 \text{ pounds of meat.}$$

A 280-pound _____

butchered to boneless _____ and _____,

closely trimmed, and lean ground pork or sausage will _____

$$280 \times (0.72 \times 0.65) = 280 \times 47\% = _____ \text{ m}\_\_\_.$$

6.36111 The Kantian problem of the right and left hand which cannot be made to cover one another already exists in the plane, and even in one-dimensional space; where the two congruent figures a and b cannot be made to cover one another without moving them out of this space.

The right and left hand are in fact completely congruent. And the fact that they cannot be made to cover one another has nothing to do with it.

----o   x--x‾‾‾‾‾‾   o--‗‗‗‗‾‾‾‾‾‾

*   a   b*
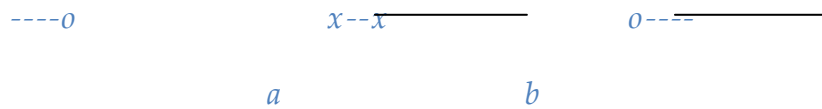
A right-hand glove could be put on a left hand if it could be turned round in four-dimensional space.

Butting on moonrock, shaping craters with the hammer-ball

  the cappuccino froth of breeze blocks

    puffs away gritting windows and glasses

      in a windless chill wet socket of daytime

        all torque and swing and outbreath hoofing

          a ringing cracking blue sure imprint into dust

            caught twice, three, four faces broken free

           leaning off meekly, slowly into crumbed turf

         soundless and helpless solid stone

          gone

the way of it, frozen at the elbow

  a pile, then, a sacked city claiming at least

    there were blisters on the left palm of it

      turned at the wrist's parabola; absent, dirty

      a slice rucked back to obsecrate disorder

        done, space lit up with itself, an unnecked bottle

and then knowing, not knowing,

when to stop.

7 Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

Where have you been	Are you	alone
	How did you	imagine it
	How did you	manage
How do you	feel now It	is me
Is it painful	still When was	the last time
Is it the	same ache Are	you an expert
Do you remember		
	Will you be	coming home
Will you hold	me tonight	Would you like to lose yourself
Does this change anything		
Are these your	hands A big	joke, huh
	Did any of	this make sense to you
Did you like	the pictures	
How do you	think I feel	Is this the first time
Do you want	to be punished	Are you a kind person
Do you like	that Where were	you last night
Do you trust	me Is it	true
Was it an	accident Why can't	you sleep
How often	Are your dreams	your own
Do you know	the situation Does	it show
	Do you object	Why you
Is it correctly	spiced Is there	enough nutmeg
Is that a	line you'd cross	Do you always react like that
Have you ever	wondered what you'd	do with all that freedom
		Is that red or blue
Was it ever	love What else	is there
	Who else is	there

Since when have   you believed any   of this nonsense

Are you happy   Why don't you   stop

Why can't you   look at me   Is it tactical

Wouldn't you like   to know

                Did you say   something

Don't you care   Have you never   worried yourself insane

Isn't it inevitable   Are you sure   it's safe

What if it's   never enough What   if it's a boy

Have you been   good Is it   the rice pudding

Are you stressed   Are you scared   Are you satisfied

                Are you happy

Are you free   What did you   decide

Is it delicious   Is it over

Are these my   hands Did you   eat the plums from the icebox

Can you hear   me

What did I   tell you

Haven't we done   this before Are   you happy

Do you miss   me Was it   cancer

Are you talking   to me Could   one compose a sentence

whose meaning was   perfectly determined   without reference to

its context Would   you like to   stay for coffee

What's the next   move Are you   happy

Do you think   I am complicated   Do you think

                Are you listening

Appendix B: Still Life with Promises

In what sense does an order anticipate its execution?

(*Philosophical Investigations* §461)

Persuasion

Is it unwillingness to move your feet

through the tall fescue that keeps you standing

a little further off, your chat a beat

behind an easy laugh, your responding

kept becalmed, your profile like a plate.

Or does something spring-like and incomplete

in my gestures – which always come too late

or too early for my words – only meet

you at a glancing angle, flick your cheek

like a bluebottle? I'd lay arguments

out beneath the trees, and let reason speak

unhampered by a heart, or just invent

jagged animal noises. But you lay

unmoved as a blue jar of mayonnaise,

beyond persuasion – or I might say

a stranger swaying in the summer haze.

> *"I know" and "You can rely on it". But one cannot always*
> *substitute the latter for the former.*
> (*On Certainty* §561)

How is it you   resist

being clutched   through your words

through your gestures   that own you

more than you   own them

Your simple movements   express

holding   something or too much

honesty and I know   all I am likely to know

everything   as if that were everything

I have the feeling you are   yet to break the rules

to speak   nonsense

The curious thing   is the blame

I can't help place on you   for my helplessness

like a bag   full of done necessities

that should spill   in the right hands

Or is it   even a question that

the fault   is not

the length   of my arms but

the brightness   of my reflection

277

The thing I would most dread… that you could take it for granted that I was deluded.

(*Conversations with Wittgenstein*, Drury. p 166)

It is as formal as showing

a snow-goose around the house:

 up and down encumbering stairs

 hissy of cat-plucked splinters in the spindles

 fluffing up against the bathroom-cold.

Afterwards, I sit.

A medieval devil's head

 carved in wood

tilts between my hands.

I cover his eyes to keep him calm,

his stumpy tongue pressing against my palm.

You are upstairs

still in dressing-gown and bed-socks

beneath the quilt beneath the quilt,

steaming exhaustion into baggy sheets.

 I hammer tea into bone-china cups

 and touch the damp feathers on the carpet,

spooked by the tightness of the sound, the rattle of teeth.

Memory box

Your hands clamp on it tight

closed off like a tooth

        Is this what entitles you

        to call it your own

        as though the sight

        of it were theft

A code understood unseen

a deathwatch

beetle knocking

its way through the beams of a house

Memory box

Our motto might be: "Let us not be bewitched".

(*Zettel* §690)

Arion vulgaris

A slug clings

    to the kitchen floor

        tight as glaze on a pot.

The slug is not *of* the kitchen floor,

    nor part of it, nor a late sophistication

        of the kitchen floor. It has erupted into your morning.

A realisation yet to take

    its first breath pecks

        above your left eye (a precise and necessary hole).

It would be impossible to imagine

    the slug toppling onto its side.

        It resides and glistens.

Could you interrupt this strange, undulating, honest thing –

    catch it between finger and thumb

        like a mother bird tending her hatchlings?

Could you stamp it flat – feet

    barely feeling the give and the suck –

        and flick it into the mosses under the fridge?

It would be easier to imagine the end

    of capitalism, or taking tea with that god

        you saw once, hanging his umbrella on the back of your door.

My Tongue

It is raining, and I say it is raining.

I believe myself.

My descriptions are clear, my delivery perfect.

So believable am I

that the window is cut with droplets

and the grass outside lays itself flat.

If I were to go outside,

I would even get wet.

It has been written, and I have read it.

I make it believable

with my best belief.

The butterfly is pinned so precisely

to the board, that you could not be mistaken.

Its colours are dignified with names.

If I were to breathe on it

I would expect it to fly away.

There is a curtain and I have drawn it.

I have built a fence

with nothing on the other side.

Here is a hand – my own hand –

that built it. Certainly,

with this hand

I shrink the world;

I possess it, like a coin.

Suppose someone were to say: "Imagine this
butterfly exactly as it is, but ugly instead of beautiful"?!

(Zettel §199)

Is it a matter of well-buffed lenses, or tight-fitting silhouettes?

Work hard, do the work required

comb up storm-clouds and burry skies

  pin-boards for your specimen.

Focus on the wing smeared in walnut juice;

dropped crystals and stitches, the

rot-steeped edges, a browning cancer.

  The apical vantage point or perfect map

would surely show you the surface

(the slip in detail, the tightening of light).

Make this your quarter of interpretation.

  You might imagine reading circuit diagrams

from an unknown science. You might enjoy

the myth of a mental process

purring, the way cash machines rattle

  counting out money.

Need one imagine it in order to mimic it?

(*Philosophical Investigations* §450)

If one could only repeat oneself

by some sound or symbol

into believing in a pain

imagined in a curtained room;

If one could only repeat oneself

like a paper-chain of dancers, each

stepping from the outline

of a possible first page;

If one could only repeat

the bluff, crumbed sounds

of wind catching the backs

of one's ears, like *this*

could one repeat

oneself into a faith,

an authorised self-possession,

the expression of an unwavering eye?

Eulogy with omissions

Interestingly, you're alive as I write this, still _____ even

        still in *colour*, but it seems

        I need

        to write out

your ghostliness, *solidity*, pipe-smoker's tarred top pocket

        the reek of nostalgia.

        I can

        hardly be a _____

of a certain type without that hard-to-remember *figure*,

        (a radio

        rambling in the

        kitchen.)

Am I too _____?

        Are you

        not yet *set*,

        tree-glass

patient for the burr of memory? I could see you

        object,

        if I showed you

        this   now

and see the motion of it: the head a fraction back, furrows

        stacking above eyebrows,

        mouth

gently open (about half an inch), page at three-quarter arm's _____

           two fingers

           a *thumb*.

Your nails need cutting.

           You might read

           this aloud –

           a barked 'cello

before handing it back with a barely imitable widening of the eyes.

And how will he know again in the future what remembering feels like?

(*Philosophical Investigations* §231)

Something new to learn

my name grazed.

> *She gazed up into his wild eyebrows, a forest of intellect,*
>
> *wishing to burrow her way in, shelter like a hedgehog.*

My writing scattering

strung metal, a harp imploding.

> *"Joe," she whispered, "My sweet cockroach, Joe…"*

Writing: this ethics of moderation.

> *He held her close against his rock-like chest.*
>
> *"For you, I will bend time to my will, the will of the people."*

A puffball of marginalia.

> *Joe slowly turned to her, until her whole vision*
>
> *was filled by his muscular moustache.*

To say nothing

should come as easily,

shouldn't it?

> *How much she longed to serve him, like a sick dog, her Ryaboi!*

Photo album full

of playing cards. Snap.

Snap.

His hand, that state-crafting hand, rested

Locked   *on her cabbage-white shoulder. The power ran through*
                                    her, like liquid steel.

in a library

"One star-crossed love affair," he whispered with pale-blue passion, "is a tragedy. One
million, a statistic."[49]

---

[49] Text in Italics taken from "In the Heat of Proletarian Revolutionary Literature", Josef Besoshvili, M&B: 1953.

Tattoo

: a prayer for the replication of the self

bunkered a millimetre beneath original skin,

fallen out of air into fat and the roots

of tiny hairs. A perfect tattoo

might re-inscribe itself, line drawing over

line, tunnelling towards marrow, each layer

relayed in rising tinnitus of needles.

Look here, he grins, rolling up a sleeve and slapping

an bicep with two sure fingers. And I see a man

with one sleeve up, grinning, two fingers on unyielding

muscle, and by him my inked double

staring at the picture of another exposed arm.

My sketched stance dangles between

art's finitude and the blue-smoke smell

of the reservoir beneath, this craft

as personal as sweat

 writes depth into this parchment.

I feel giddy in its closeness, as if placing

my thumb over this Peeping Tom

would blur me out

of this bar, this table, these shoes,

tight, into a new, unreadable skin.

Bangor, Maine from 36,000 feet

A hare, a stag, a bat, a bear

    risen drunkenly to its hind legs –

        I invert the old game

            of spotting dragons in the clouds.

            Snow lakes in the shapes

                of deer and rushing fire

                freeze every hollow into motion.

                This landscape runs

            corrected of its permanence.

            My carrier drops

          its hurrying shadow

        over country that dreams

the return of ice.

6.54 My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used the, - as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

Überwinden

Here I am speaking

like the spring in a clock

running down.

To reach the stopping point

of movement:

to overcome

transcend, surmount,

to quell, to dominate or eliminate.

Each its own movement of the tongue

its courtroom.

Wigs and gowns.

Do I know how to go on?

Doors open

the room rises.

<u>We</u> have our conversations

between the words,

with stuttering gestures that pass

through   targets or clutch for

an arm already fallen,

it isn't the same, it's nothing like it

nothing like a mistake. or a headache

snatched into bone. c*an't you fix*

that damn light? you   pointing at

my chest, then   the steam from the kettle as

I have crossed to the fridge;
tea?

which of these words will rattle in my throat

which burn   up between us

along Cambridge streets,
Wittgenstein jumping

from one topic of logic to the next

as if his thoughts   string arrows

and coil themselves about,
suffocating

 any   resolution. *you don't see it*

at all. I couldn't say *it, nor   its denial. it's*

 not a contradiction: a syllable of nonsense,

 your co-ordinates within a gesture towards

a witless outer boundary.   the tightness of

how one might feel; a world

I express in gears and switches

which   break, not unlock, a silence

Reproduction Permissions

Jorie Graham Home page: 'Payer 03'. 2007. Permission for use of image file confirmed by Gregory Whitman (designer): email 13 Jan 2014.

Bibliography

Aaltola, Elisa. "The Anthropocentric Paradigm and the Possibility of Animal Ethics." *Ethics and the Environment* 15.1 (2010): 27-50. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 May 2012.

Altieri, Charles. "The Poem as Act: A Way to Reconcile Presentational and Mimetic Theories." *The Iowa Review* 6 (1975): 103-24. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 March 2014.

---. *Wallace Stevens and the Demands of Modernity*: *Toward a Phenomenology of Value*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 2013. Print.

---. 'Wittgenstein on Consciousness and Language: A Challenge to Derridean Literary Theory.' *MLN* 91.6, Comparative Literature (Dec., 1976).1397-1423. JSTOR. Web. 14 Feb 2016.

Ambrose, Alice and Lazerowitz, Morris 'Commanding a Clear View of Philosophy' *Essays in the Unknown Wittgenstein*. New York: Prometheus, 1984.

Adams, Douglas. *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency.* London: Pan, 1987. Print.

Andrejč, Gorazd. *Wittgenstein and Interreligious Disagreement: A Philosophical and Theological Perspective*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; 1st ed. 2016. PDF provided by author.

Anonymous. *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Trans. A.C. Spearing. London: Penguin, 2001. Print.

Anscombe. G.E.M. *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1959. Print.

Arrington, Robert L. and Addis, Mark. (eds.) *Wittgenstein and Philosophy of Religion,* London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Ashbury, John. "The Art of Poetry No.33." Interview by Peter A. Stitt. *Paris Review* 90 (1983). Web. 20 June 2014.

Ashton, Jennifer. "Authorial Inattention: Donald Davidson's Literalism, Jorie Graham's Materialism, and Cognitive Science's Embodied Minds." *From Modernism to Postmodernism: American Poetry and Theory in the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge: CUP, 2013. 146-76. *Cambridge Books Online*. Web. 26 Sept 2013.

Atkinson, James R. *The Mystical in Wittgenstein's Early Writings*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Austen, Elizabeth. 'How Poetry Can Help Us Say the Unsayable' *Seattle Times*. 9 May 2015. Web. 20 May 2015.

Badiou, Alain. *Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy*. Trans. Bruno Bosteels. New York: Verso, 2011. Print.

Baker, Gordon P. and Haker, P.M.S. *Wittgenstein : rules, grammar and necessity : essays and exegesis of 185-242*. 2nd ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Print.

Balaska. Maria. 'The notion of happiness in early Wittgenstein: towards a non-contentful account of happiness.' *South African Journal of Philosophy* 33.4 (2014). 407-415. Web. 12 Nov 2015.

Barnes, Jonathan. *Early Greek Philosophy*. London: Penguin, 1987. Print.

Bartley III, W. W. *Wittgenstein*. London: Cresset Library, 1985. Print.

Bates, Milton J. "Stevens and the Supreme Fiction." *Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*. Ed. John N. Serio. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 48-61. Print.

Benamou, Michel. 'Wallace Stevens: Some Relations between Poetry and Painting.' *Comparative Literature* 11.1 (Winter 1959) 47-60. JSTOR. 06 Jun 2016.

Benient, Calvin. 'Post-lyrically Yours' *Jorie Graham – Essays on the Poetry*. Ed. Thomas Gardner. London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005. 38-41. Print.

Bernstein, Charles. 'Reading Cavell Reading Wittgenstein.' *boundary 2 9.2 A Supplement on Contemporary Poetry* (Winter 1981) 295-306. Web. 17 Jul 2016.

Bernstein, J. M. "Re-enchanting Nature." Smith 217-245.

Bernstein, Richard. "McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism." Smith. 9-24.

Berry, R. M. 'Stanley Cavell's Modernism' *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy, Literature and Criticism*. Eds. James Loxley and Andrew Taylor. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. 40-61. Print.

Bhatt, S. 'Manunagar Days' *The New Poetry*. eds. Michael Hulse, David Kennedy, David Morley. Northumberland: Bloodaxe, 2003. 242. Print.

Blazer, A. *I am Otherwise: The Romance Between Poetry and Theory After the Death of the Subject.* Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2007. Print.

Blegvad, Peter. "Hardware." *Chicago Review* 45.3/4 (1999): 126. *JSTOR*. Web. 29 Nov. 2011.

---. *The Book of Leviathan*. London: Sort Of Books, 2000. Print.

Bloom, Harold. *The Poems of Our Climate*. Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1980. Print.

Boesel, Chris and Keller, Catherine (eds) *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality* 3rd ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. Print.

Booth, Wayne. *The Company we Keep*. London: University of California Press, 1992. Print.

Bostock, David. *Plato's Theaetetus.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. Print.

Bouwsma, O. K. *Wittgenstein: Conversations 1969-1951*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986. Print.

Boyle, Brendan. 'The Buildungsroman after McDowell: Mind, World, and Moral Education.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69.2 (Spring 2011) 173-184. JSTOR. 15 Feb 2015.

Brandom, Robert. "Non-inferential Knowledge, Perceptual Experience, and Secondary Qualities: Placing McDowell's Empiricism." Smith. 92-105.

Brazeal, Gregory. "The Supreme Fiction: Fiction or Fact?" *Journal of Modern Literature* 31.1 (2007): 80-100. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 May 2013.

Breit, Harvey. "Sanity that is Magic: Review of *Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction*." *Poetry* 62.1 (1943): 48-50. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 May 2013.

Brewster, Scott. 'John Burnside: Poetry as the Space of Withdrawal.' *Poetry & Geography Space and Place in Post-war Poetry* Ed Neal Alexander and David Cooper. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2013. ELib. October 2015.

Bristow, Tom. *The Anthropocene Lyric: An Affective Geography of Poetry, Person, Place*. Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. Print.

Bronzo, Silver. 'The Resolute Reading and Its Critics.' *Wittgenstein-Studien*. 3 (2012) 45-80. Web. 23 Jun 2016.

Brown, Andy (Ed). *Binary Myths*. Exeter: Stride, 1998. Print.

Brown, Marshall. 'Negative Poetics.' *Representations.* 86.1 (Spring 2004) 120-140. JSTOR. Web. 08 Nov 2012.

Brown, Merle. E. *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1970. Print.

Budd, Malcolm. *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2014. Print.

Bulson, Eric. *Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850-2000*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print

Bureau International des Poids et Measures. 14 Aug 214. Web.

Burley, Mikel. 'Reincarnation and the Lack of Imagination in Philosophy'. *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 4.2 (2015) 39-64. Web. 04 Aug 2016.

Burns, Gerald L. 'Poetry as Reality: The Orpheus Myth and its Modern Counterparts.' *ELH* 37.2 (1970): 263-86. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 May 2013.

Burnside, John. 'Annunciations.' *Common Knowledge.* London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1991. Print.

---. *Black Cat Bone*. London: Cape Poetry, 2011. Print.

---. 'Interview' *Dwelling Places: An Appreciation of John Burnside*. South Petherton: Agenda, 2011. 22-39. Print.

---. Interview with Angela Bennie. "Words to Touch the Invisible." *Sydney Morning Herald*. Fairfax Media, 2008. Web. 24 May 2008.

---.'Le Croisic.' *Gift Songs*. London: Cape, 2007. 67-78. Print.

---. *The Light Trap*. London: Cape Poetry, 2002. Print.

---. "Loved and Lost." *Black Cat Bone*. London: Cape Poetry, 2011. Print.

---. 'Strong Words' *Strong Words* eds W. N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis. Northumberland: Bloodaxe, 2000. 259-261. Print.

---. *Swimming in the Flood*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995. Print.

---. 'Travelling into the Quotidian: Some Notes on Allison Funk's 'Heartland' Poems.' *Poetry Review* Summer (2005): 59-70. Print.

Caldwell, Roger. 'At a Suitable Distance'. Rev. of *Never*, by Jorie Graham. *Times Literary Supplement* 27 June 2003. Web. 7 Dec 2013.

Carnap, Rudolph. 'Überwindung der metaphysik durch logische analyse der sprache.' *Erkenntnis* 2.4. Vienna: Felix Meiner, 1931. 219-241. Web. 04 Nov 2015.

Carroll, Joseph. 'Stevens and Romanticism' *Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*. Ed. John N. Serio Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007. 87-103. Print.

Carver, Newton. *This Complicated Form of Life*. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1994. Print.

Cascardi, Anthony, J. 'Cavell and Kant: The work of Criticism and the Work of Art.' *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies: Consequences of Skepticism*. Eds Richard Eldridge and Bernard Rhie. London: Bloomsbury, 2011. 47-61. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. *The Claim of Reason*: *Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999. Print.

---. *In Quest of the Ordinary*: *Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism.* Chicago: Chicago UP, 1988. Print.

---. "The *Investigations*' Everyday Aesthetics of Itself." Gibson and Huemer. 21-33.

---. *Must We Mean What We Say*? Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976. Print.

---. *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005. Print.

---. 'The Wittgensteinian Event.' *Reading Cavell*. Eds Alice Crary and Sanford Shieh. London: Routledge, 2006. 8-25. Print.

Cavell, Stanley, Cora Diamond, John McDowell, Ian Hacking and Cary Wolfe, eds. *Philosophy & Animal Life*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.

Churchill, John. 'Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy' *Metaphilosophy* 20.2. (Apr 1989) 103-113. Web. 07 Oct 2015.

Clack, Brian. *Wittgenstein, Frazer and Religion*. New York: Palgrave, 1999. Print.

Clark, David. *88 Constellations for Wittgenstein*. *n.p.* 2006. Web. 16 May 2014.

Clayton, Daniel. "'Snapshots of a Moving Target': Harley/Foucault/Colonialism." Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization, 50.1 (2015): 18-23. Muse. Web. 2 May 2015.

Coetzee, J. M. "The Lives of Animals." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Princeton, October 15-16, 1997*. Web. 12 April 2012. PDF file.

---. *The Lives of Animals*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.

Collins, Randall. *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000. Print.

Conant, James. 'Mild Mono-Wittgensteinianism'. *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Cora Diamond*. Ed. Alice Crary Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2007. 131-142. Print.

Conant, James. and Cora Diamond. "On Reading The *Tractatus* Resolutely: Reply to Meredith Williams and Peter Sullivan." *The Lasting Significance of Wittgenstein's Philosophy*. Ed. Max Kölbel and Bernhard Weiss. New York: Routledge, 2004. 42-97. Print.

Connearn, David. 'Everything is what it is and not another thing.' *tmdtctv*. tmdtctv.blogspot.co.uk. Dec 10, 2013.

Cook, Eleanor. *Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War in Wallace Stevens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. Print.

Cook, Jon and Read, Rupert. 'Wittgenstein and Literary Language.' *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*. Eds. Garry L. Hagberg and Walter Jost. Oxford: Blackwell, 2010. 467-490. Print.

Cooper, David E. "The Inaugural Address: Ineffability." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 65 (1991): 1-15. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Aug. 2009.

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy: Logical Positivism and Existentialism Vol 11*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2003. Print.

Corns, Thomas N. *Milton's Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990. Print.

Corrigan, Kevin. '"Solitary" Mysticism in Plotinus, Proclus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius' *The Journal of Religion*76.1 (Jan 1996) 28-42. JSTOR. Web. 04 Aug 2016.

Cosello, Bonnie. Jorie Graham: Art and Erosion.' *Contemporary Literature* 33.2. (Summer 1992) 373-395. Web. 06 Sep 2012.

Crary, Alice (ed). *The New Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Crawford, P., Brown, B., Baker, C., Tischler, V., Abrams, B. *Health Humanities* London*:* Palgrave MacMillan, 2015. Print.

Critchley, Simon. "The Philosophical Significance of a Poem (On Wallace Stevens)." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* New Ser. 96 (1996): 269-291. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 May 2013.

---. *Things Merely Are*: *Philosophy in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens*. London: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Cuppit, Don. *Mysticism After Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. Print.

Curry, Greg. "Psychological Realism and Literary Value" 21st Century Theories of Literature Conference. University of Warwick. 28 March 2014. Paper.

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Trans. John Cottingham. Cambridge: CUP, 1986. Print.

D'Aguiar, Fred. "Further Adventures in the Skin Trade" *Strong Words* eds W. N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis. Northumberland: Bloodaxe, 2000. 270-273. Print.

Dale, Kathleen, A. 'Extensions: Beyond Resemblance and the Pleasure Principle in Wallace Stevens' Supreme Fiction.' *boundary 2*. 4.1 (Autumn 1975) 255-273. JSTOR. 11 July 2016.

De Clercq, Rafael. 'Aesthetic Ineffability.' *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7 (2000):87-97. JSTOR. Web. 03 Oct 2015.

Derrida, Jacques. 'How to Avoid Speaking: Denials.' *Derrida and Negative Theology*. Eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989) 73-136. Web. 09 Jan 2016.

Derrida, Jacques and David Wills. "The Animal that Therefore I am (More to Follow)" *Critical Inquiry* 28.2. 2002. 369-418. JSTOR. Web. 11 Jun 2014.

Diamond, Cora. 'The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy.' *Philosophy & Animal Life*. Cavell, Diamond, McDowell, Hacking and Wolfe. 43-90.

---. 'Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's Tractatus' *The New Wittgenstein*. Eds. Alice Crary and Rupert Read. New York: Routledge, 2000. 149-173. Print.

---. *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995. Print.

---. "Throwing Away the Ladder." *Philosophy 63/243* (1988): 5-27. *JSTOR*. Web. 05 Jan. 2012

Diffey, Terry. 'Wittgenstein, Anti-essentialism and the Definition of Art.' *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics, and Philosophy*. ed Peter Lewis. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 37-51. Print.

Dillard, Annie. *Teaching a Stone to Talk*. New York: Harper&Row Publishers, 1988. Print.

Doggett, Frank A. *Stevens' Poetry of Thought*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1966. Print.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. "Taylor's (Anti-) Epistemology." *Charles Taylor*. Ed. Ruth Abbey. Cambridge: CUP, 2004. 52-83. Print.

Drucker, Johanna. *Wittgenstein's Gallery*. Los Angeles: Druckwerk, 2010. Print.

---. *Stochastic Poetics*. Los Angeles: Granary and Druckwerk, 2012. Print.

Drury 'Conversations with Wittgenstein' *Recollections of Wittgenstein*. Ed. Rush Rhees. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. 97-171. Print.

Eaglestone, Robert. 'One and the same? Ethics, Aesthetics, and Truth.' *Poetics Today* 25.4 (Winter 2004). 595-608. Web. 06 Oct 2015.

Ehrenpreis, Irvin. 'Stevens' Nonsense.' *Wallace Stevens: A Celebration*. Eds. frank Doggert and Frank Buttel. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. JSTOR. Web. 12 Aug 2016.

Eldridge, Michael. "The German *Bildung* Tradition." UNC Charlotte Philosophy Dept. *n.d.* Web. 20 May 2013.

Eldridge, Richard. 'Criticism and the risk of the self: Stanley Cavell's modernism and Elizabeth Bishop's' *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy, Literature and Criticism*. Eds. Richard Eldridge and Bernard Rhie. London: Bloomsbury, 2011. 92-105. Print.

---.*Leading a Human Life*: *Wittgenstein, Intentionality and Romanticism*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1997. Print.

---. 'Problems and Prospects of Wittgensteinian Aesthetics' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 45.3. (1987): 251-261. Web. 3 May 2015.

Eldridge Richard and Rhie, Bernard, eds. *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies*. London: Continuum International, 2011. Print.

Englemann, Paul. *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1967. Print.

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012. Print.

Fazzini, Marco. 'Kenneth White and John Burnside' *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Poetry*. eds. Matt McQuire and Colin Nicholson. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009. 111-125. Web. 20 Aug 2016.

Ferreira, M. Jamie. 'The Point Outside the World: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein on Nonsense, Paradox and Religion.' *Religious Studies* 30.1 (1994): 29-44. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Aug. 2009.

Filreis, Alan. *Wallace Stevens and the Actual World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. Print.

Finaly, A. *There were our own There were the others*. National Trust. Castle Drogo. 23 June 2014. Poetry Reading and Performance Installation.

Fisher, Michael. 'Stanley Cavell's Wittgenstein.' *Redrawing the Lines: Analytic Philosophy, Deconstruction, and Literary Theory*. Ed. Reed Way Dasenbrock. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1989. Print.

Floyd, Juliet. 'Wittgenstein and the Inexpressible.' *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Cora Diamond*. Ed. Alice Crary. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2007 177-234. Print.

Fogelin, Robert, J. *Wittgenstein: The Arguments of the Philosophers*. London: Routledge, 1987. Print.

Frankfurt, Harry G. *On Bullshit*. Princeton: PUP, 2005. Print.

Franzen, Jonathan. *The Kraus Project*. London: Fourth Estate, 2013.

Friedman, Michael. "Exorcising the Philosophical Tradition." Smith. 25-57.

Frost, Elisabeth. 'Countering Culture' *Jorie Graham – Essays on the Poetry*. Ed. Thomas Gardner. London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005. 34-37. Print.

Gakis, Dimitris. *Contextual Metaphysics: the case of Wittgenstein*. Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2012.

Galleymore, Isabel. "The Many Promises of Vision." Review of *The Taken-Down God: Selected Poems 1997-2008*, by Jorie Graham. *Stride*. June 2013. Web. 14 Jan 2013.

---. ''Trope on Trope': Rethinking Nature Writing Pedagogy through Metaphor' Dissertation. University of Exeter, 2016. PDF.

Gallie, W. B.. *Philosophy and the Historical Understanding*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1964. Print.

Gander, Forrest. "Listening for a Divine Word: Review of *The Errancy*" *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry*. Gardner. 75-81.

Gardner, Thomas. 'Jorie Graham's *End of Beauty* and Modernist Process.' *Southwest Review* 33.2-3 (2003) 335-349. Web. 07 Nov 2013.

---. (ed.) *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005. Print.

---. "The Art of Poetry no.85.*" Paris Review* 165 (2003): n. pag. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.

Gass, Veena. 'Anthropology, Wittgenstein and Frazer's Golden Bough'. Lecture JHU *Practices of the Everyday*. 15/04/15.

Geertz, Clifford. 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.' *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. New-York: Basic Books, 1973. 3-30. Web. 15 Jan 2015.

Gelpi, Albert (Ed.) *Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print.

Genova, A. C. "Review of *Reading McDowell: on Mind and World.*" *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews.* (2003) Web. 17 May 2013.

Gerlach, Joe. 'Lines, contours and legends: Coordinates for vernacular mapping.' *Progress in Human Geography* 38.1 (2014). 22–39. Muse. Web. 26 Apr 2015.

Gibson, John. "Reading for Life." *The Literary Wittgenstein*. Gibson and Huemer 109-24.

Gibson, John and Wolfgang Huemer, eds. *The Literary Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Gier, Nicholas. *Wittgenstein and Phenomenology: A Comparative Study of the Later Wittgenstein, Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981. Print.

Gill, Jerry H. 'Wittgenstein and Metaphor.' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 40.2 (Dec 1979) 272-284. Web. 02 May 2015.

Ginsberg, Allen. "America." *Poems for the Millennium*. Vol. 2. Eds Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris. London: University of California Press, 1998. 368-370. Print.

Gizzi, Peter. 'Correspondences of the Book.' *A Poetics of Criticism*, ed. Juliana Spahr, Mark Wallace, Kristin Prevallet and Pam Rehm. Buffalo: Leave Books, 1994. Reprinted in *Creative Criticism* ed. Stephen Benson and Clare Connors, Edinburgh UP, 2014. 176-185. Print.

Glannon, Walter in 'What Literary Theory Misses in Wittgenstein.' *Philosophy and Literature* 10.2 (Oct 1986) 263-272. Web. 05 Jan 2016.

Glaser, Brian. 'Ambivalent Posthumanism: A Few of Stevens' Animals.' *Wallace Stevens Journal* 34.2 (2010) 209-221. Web. 11 May 2014.

Glock, Hans-Johann. *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*. Oxford:Blackwell, 1999. Print.

Gold, Timothy. 'The Literal Truth: Cavell on Literality in Philosophy and Literature.' *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy, Literature and Criticism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011. 150-165. Print.

Goldfarb, Warren. 'Die *Überwindung*: Anti-metaphysical Readings of the *Tractatus*.' *Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgenstein Debate*. Eds Rupert Read and Matthew A. Lavery. New York: Routledge, 2011. 6-21. Print.

Goldstein, Laurence. 'What does "Experiencing Meaning" Mean?' in *The Third Wittgenstein*. ed Daniel Mayol-Sharrock. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 107-123. Print.

Goodman, Russell B. 'Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein on Ethics.' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 17.4 (October 1979) 437-44. Web. 11 Mar 2015.

Gould, Timothy. "Restlessness and the Achievement of Peace. Writing and method in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*." Gibson and Huemer 75-91.

Gowens, David J. *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker*. Cambridge: CUp. 1996 Print.

Graham, Jorie. *The Dream of the Unified Field*. Manchester: Carcanet, 1996. Print.

---. *The Errancy*. Manchester: Carcanet, 1997. Print.

---. 'The Glorious Thing: Jorie Graham and Mark Wunderlich in Conversation.' *American Poet* (Fall 1996). Web 30 Mar 2016.

---. *Materialism*. New York: Ecco, 1995. Print

---. *Never*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2002. Print.

---. Interview by Hila Ratzabi. "Nothing Mystical About It". *JorieGraham*. Lumina, 2006. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.

---. *The Swarm*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2000. Print.

---. *The Taken-down God: Selected Poems 1997-2008*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2013. Print.

Green, Gemma. 'Infinity and Beyond' *Dwelling Places: An Appreciation of John Burnside*. South Petherton: Agenda, 2011. 50-53. Print.

Green, Mitchell. 'Empathy, Expression, and what Artworks have to Teach.'*Art and Ethical Criticism.* Ed. Garry Hagberg. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. Online VLeBooks. 01 June 2015.

Griem, Julika. 'John Burnside's Seascapes.' *The Beach in -Anglophone Literatures and Cultures: Reading Littoral Space*. Eds. Ulrike Kluwick and Virginia Richter. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. 87-106. Print.

Griffiths, Paul, J. *An Apology for Apologetics*: *A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Discourse*. New York: Orbis, 1991. Print.

Hacker, P.M.S. *Insight and Illusion*: *Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.

---.'Was he Trying to Whistle it?' *The New Wittgenstein*. Eds. Alice Crary and Rupert Read. New York: Routledge, 2000. 353-388. Print.

---. 'When the Whistling had to Stop' *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2005. 141-169. Print.

---. *Wittgenstein: Connections and Controversies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001. Print.

---.'Wittgenstein and the Autonomy of Humanistic Understanding' *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts*. eds Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey. London: Routledge, 2001. 39-74. Print.

---. *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning I*. 2nd Ed. Oxford: Wiley-Routledge, 2005. Print.

Hadfield, Andrew. *Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Print.

Hagberg, G.L. *Meaning and Interpretation: Wittgenstein, Henry James, and Literary Knowledge*. Ithaca, Cornell UP: 1994. Print.

---. 'Wittgenstein's Voice: Reading, Self-Understanding, and the Genre of Philosophical Investigations.' *Poetics Today* 28.3 (2007) 499-526. Web. 03 Sept 2015.

Hallet, Garth. *A Companion to Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977. Print.

Hanfling, Oswald. 'Wittgenstein on Language, Art and Humanity.' *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts*, eds Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey. London: Routledge, 2001. 75-91. Print.

ter Hark, Michael. ''"Patterns of Life": A third Wittgenstein concept'. *The Third Wittgenstein*. *The Third Wittgenstein.* Ed. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock. Aldershot:Ashgate, 2004. 125-144. Print.

Harley, J.B. 'Deconstructing the Map.' *Cartographica* 26.2 (Spring 1989) 1-20. Web. 18 Nov 2014.

---. *The New Nature of Maps*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2001. Print.

Harrison, Bernard. *Inconvenient Fictions*. London: Yale UP, 1991. Print.

---. "Language, Practice and Human Worlds: Wittgenstein and the Uses of Literary Fiction." Draft via personal correspondence. 2011. PDF file.

Heaney, Seamus, trans. *Beowulf*. London: Harvard UP, 2002. Print.

Heaton, John M. *Wittgenstein and Psychotherapy: From Paradox to Wonder*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. 'The Origin of the Work of Art' *Off the Beaten Track*. Ed and Trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.

---. 'What is Metaphysics?' *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*. Ed and tran D. F. Krell. revised and expanded edition. London: Routledge, 1993. 93–110. Print.

Heinian, Lyn. 'The Person and Description.' *Poetics Journal*: Digital Archive. Eds. Lyn Hejinian and Barrett Watten. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014. Web. [Original article in Poetics 1991] 15 Feb 2015.

Henry, Charles. "The Storied Context of Story Telling." *CLIR*. CLIR. Web. 24 June 2014.

Herbert, W. N. and Matthew Hollis, eds. *Strong Words: Modern Poets On Modern Poetry*. Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2000. Print.

Hertzberg, Lars. 'On Aesthetic Reactions and Changing One's Mind' *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics, and Philosophy*. ed Peter Lewis. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 95-106. Print.

Hick, John. 'Ineffability' *Religious Studies*36.1 (Mar 2000) 35-46. JSTOR. Web. 10 Jul 2016.

Hintikka, Jaakko. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half-Truths*. London: Springer, 1996. Print.

---. 'What Does the Wittgnesteinian Inexpressible Express?' *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* 11.1 (2003) 9-17. Web. 04 Jun 2016.

Hogan, Patrick Colm. *Philosophical Approaches to the Study of Literature.* Gainsville: Florida UP, 2000. Print.

Holdheim, W. "The Concept of Poetic Estrangement." *Comparative Literature Studies* 11.4 (1974): 320-325. *JSTOR*. Web. 08 May 2014.

Holy Bible, RSV. New York: Thomas Nelson, 1972. Print.

Huemer, Wolfgang. "Misreadings: Steiner and Lewis on Wittgenstein and Shakespeare." *Philosophy and Literature* 36, (2012): 229-237. Academia.Edu. Web. 05 September 2014.

Hume, David. *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Oxford: OUP, 1995. Print.

Hutto, Daniel D. *Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy: Neither Theory nor Therapy*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006. Print.

---. 'Two Wittgensteins Too Many' *The Third Wittgenstein.* Ed. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock. Aldershot:Ashgate, 2004. 25-42. Print.

Hudson, Donald, W. *Wittgenstein and Religious Belief*. London: MacMillan, 1975. Print.

Hyman, John. 'The Urn and the Chamber Pot.' Wittgenstein, Theory, and the Arts. Eds. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey. London: Routledge, 2001. 137-153. Print.

Ickovitz, Yaniv. *Wittgenstein's Ethical Thought*. London: Palgrave McMillan, 2012. Print.

Imber, Jonathan B. "The Vocation of Reason: Wallace Stevens and Edmund Husserl." *Human Studies* 9.1 (1986): 3-19. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 May 2013.

Innis, Robert E. 'Language and Thresholds of Sense: Some Aspects of the Failure of Words.' *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (New Series 22.2. (2008) 106-117. Web. 17 Feb 2014.

Isava, Luis Miguel. *Wittgenstein, Kraus, and Valery*. New York: Peter Laing, 2002. Print.

Izenberg, Oren. 'Language Poetry and Collective Life.' Critical Inquiry, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Autumn 2003), pp. 132-159

James, William. *The Will to Believe: and other essays in popular philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979. Print.

Janik, Allan and Toulmin, Stephen. *Wittgenstein's Vienna*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973. Print.

Jarman, Derek, dir. *Wittgenstein*. 1993. Zeitgeist. Film.

Jarman, Mark. 'The Grammar of Glamour: The Poetry of Jorie Graham.' *New England Review* 14.4 (Fall 1992) 252-261. JSTOR. 06 Jan 2016.

Jenson, Robert. 'A Matter of Professionalism: Marketing Identity in *Fin-de-Siécle* Veinna.' *Rethinking Vienna 1900*. Ed. Steven Beller. Oxford: Bergham Books, 2001. 195-219. Print.

Jeauneau, Edouard A. "Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor in the Works of John Scottus Eriugena." *Carolingian Essays: Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in Early Christian Studies*. Ed. Uta-Renate Blumenthal. Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 1983. 137-151. Print.

Kahane, Guy, Kanterian, Ed and Kuusela, Oskari (eds.) *Wittgenstein and his Interpreters* . Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. Print.

Kansteiner, Wulf. "Hayden White's Critique of the Writing of History." *History and Theory* 32.2 (1993): 273-295. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 June 2012.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987. Print.

---. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: CUP, 1997. Print.

Kanterian, Ed. 'Philosophy as Poetry? Reflections on Wittgenstein's Style.' *Wittgenstein-Studien* 3.1 (2012). 95-132. Web. 08 May 2016.

Kaplan, Morton, A. 'Human Reason and a Common World: Why Wittgenstein and Rawls Are Both Wrong.' *The Review of Metaphysics* 60.2 (Dec 2006) 359-384. Web. 30 Oct 2014.

Kaufman, Daniel. 'Family Resemblances, Relationalism and the Meaning of Art.' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47.3. July 2007 280-297. Web. 20 MAr 2014.

Keane, Webb. 'Religious Language.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1997) 47–71. Web. 11 Mar 2016.

Kendon, Adam. *Gesture.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP,2004. Print.

Kennick, W. E. "Art and the Ineffable." *The Journal of Philosophy* 58.12 (1961): 309-20. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Aug. 2009.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *'Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments.* Vols 1&2. Ed. and Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. Print.

---.*Journals and Papers* Vol. 3. Eds. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975. Print.

Kitchin, Rob, Gleeson, Justin, and Dodge, Martin. 'Unfolding mapping practices: a new epistemology for cartography.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38. (2013) 480–496. Muse. Web. 28 April 2015.

Klagge, James C. *Wittgenstein in Exile*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011. Print.

Knepper, Timothy D. "Ineffability Investigations: What the Later Wittgenstein Has to Offer to the Study of Ineffability." *International Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 65 (2009): 65-76. *JSTOR*. 14 March 2012.

---. *Negating Negation*. OR: Cascade Books, 2014. Print.

---. "Techniques and Rules of Ineffability in the Dionysian Corpus." Draft via personal correspondence. 2012. PDF file.

Koethe, Jon. *The Continuity of Wittgenstein's Thought.* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996. Print.

Kontje, Todd. *The German Bildungsroman: History of a National Genre*. Columbia: Camden House, 1993. Print.

Kraut, Richard, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Cambridge: CUP, 1992. Print.

Kripke, Saul. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982. Print.

Kristeva, Julia. *Tales of Love*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. Print.

Kuhns, Richard. Metaphor as Plausible Inference in Poetry and Philosophy. *Philosophy and Literature* 3.2 (Fall 1979) 225-238. Web. 30 Mar 2015.

Lamarque, Peter. 'Wittgenstein, Literature, and the Idea of a Practice' *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 50.4. (Oct 2010). 375-388. Web. 13 Aug 2016.

Lamarque, Peter and Olson, Stein Haugom. *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition - An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. Print.

Langworthy Osborn, Andrew. 'Admit Impediment: The Use of Difficulty in Twentieth-Century American Poetry'. Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin (2001). Web. 14 Aug 2016.

Larmore, Charles. 'Attending to Reasons' *Reading McDowell on Mind and World*. Ed Nicholas. H. Smith. London: Routledge, 2002. 193-208. Print.

Legget. B. J. "Stevens' Late Poetry." *Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*. Ed. John N. Serio. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 62-75. Print.

Leighten, Patricia. 'The White Peril and L'Art nègre: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism' *The Art Bulletin* 72.4 (1990) 609-630. Web. 20 Jan 2016.

Leubner, Ben. 'Bedrock, Erosion, and Form: Jorie Graham and Wittgenstein.' Twentieth Century Literature 55.1 (Spring 2009) 36-57. JSTOR. 05 Mar 2012.

---. 'The limits of my language : Wittgenstein and contemporary American poetry.' Dissertation. Northeastern University. 2009. Web. 12 Nov 2013.

Llosa, Mario Vargas. 'Interview: The Art of Fiction No. 120.' *Paris Review*. (Fall 1990). Web 12 Feb 2013.

Losuth, Joseph, ed. *Wittgenstein - Biographie, Philosophie, Praxis: Eine Ausstellung der Wiener Secession 13. September - 29. Oktober 1989*. Vienna: Wiener Austellung, 1989. Print.

Loxley, James and Taylor, Andrew. 'Everyday Achievements?' *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy, Literature and Criticism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011. 1-21 Print.

Luntley, Michael. *Wittgenstein, Meaning and Judgement*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. Print.

---. *Wittgenstein: Opening Investigations*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015. Print.

MacArthur, David. 'Wittgenstein and Expressivism' *The Later Wittgenstein on Language*. ed. D.Whiting, New York: Palgrave, 2010. 81-95. Web. 16 Sep 2015.

MacKenzie, Ian. 'Wittgenstein and Aesthetic responses' *Philosophy and Literature* 11.1 (Apr 1987) 92-103. Web. 04 Mar 2014.

Malcolm, Norman. *Ludwig Wittgenstein : a memoir by Norman Malcolm ; with a biographical sketch by Georg Henrik von Wright.* London : Oxford University Press, 1966. Print.

Maran, Timo. 'Biosemiotic criticism: modelling the environment in literature.' *Green Letters* 18.3 (2014) 297-311. Web. 18 Mar 2016.

Markson, David. *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. Chicago: Dalkey Archive Press, 2002. Print.

McClendon, James Wm and Kallenberg, Brad J. 'Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Christian in Philosophy' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51.2 (May 1998). 131-161. Web. 15 Feb 2014.

McCormick, Peter. 'Real Fictions.' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (1987) 259-270. Web. 22 Jan 2015.

McDowell, John. "Comment on Stanley Cavell's 'Companionable Thinking'." Cavell, Diamond, McDowell, Hacking and Wolfe. 127-138.

---. 'Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein' *Mind, Value and Reality*. London: Harvard University Press, 1998. 297-324. Print.

---. *Mind and World*. London: Harvard UP, 1996. Print.

---. *Mind, Value and Reality*. London: Harvard UP, 1998. Print.

---. *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*. London: Harvard UP, 1998. Print.

---. 'Reply to Gibson, Byrne, and Brandom.' *Philosophical Issues* 7 (Perception) (1995) 283-300. Web. 11 Mar 2014.

---. "Responses." *Reading McDowell: On Mind   and World*. Ed Nicholas Smith. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

McFee, Graham. 'Wittgenstein, Performing Art and Action.' *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts*, eds Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey. London: Routledge, 2001. 92-116. Print.

McGinn, Marie in 'Between Elucidation and Therapy' *Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (197) (1999) 491-513. Web. 02 Jun 2016.

Medina, José. *The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 2002. Print.

---. 'Wittgenstein's Social Naturalism: The idea of *Second Nature* After the *Philosophical Investigations*' in *The Third Wittgenstein*. Ed. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 79-92. Print.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans. Alfonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1997. Print.

---. *The Prose of the World*. ed. Claude Lefort. Trans. John O'Neill. London: Heinemann, 1974. Print.

Miller, Kei. *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion.* Manchester: Carcanet, 2014. Print.

---. "Dear Uncle Brendan (and Auntie Kay), can we talk about our island, and how buggered things have become?" *UnderTheSaltireFlag*. UnderTheSlatireFlag. 23 May 2014. Web. 24 July 2014.

---. *Kingdom of Empty Bellies*. Coventry: Heaventree Press, 2005. Print.

---. *A Light Song of Light*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2010. Print.

---. *There is an Anger that Moves*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2007. Print.

---. *Writing down the Vision*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2013. Print.

Milton, John. *Areopagitica*. London: MacMillan and co, 1949. Print.

---. *Paradise Lost*. ed. Alistair Fowler. London: Longman Pearson, 2007.

Minden, Michael. *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance*. Cambridge: CUP, 1997. Print.

Mole, John. 'Poetry, Jazz and the Sound of Surprise.' *In Their Own Words: Contemporary Poets on their Poetry*. Eds Helen Ivory and George Szirtes. Cromer: Salt, 2012. Print.

Molesworth, Charles. "Jorie Graham: Living in the world." *Salmagundi* 120 (1998): 276-284. Print.

Monk, Ray. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius.* London: Vintage, 1991. Print.

Moore, G. E. *Principia Ethica.* London: Cambridge University Press, 1903. Print.

Morgan, Edwin. 'The Sea, the Desert, the City: Environment and Language in W. S. Graham, Hamish Henderson, and Tom Leonard.' *The Yearbook of English Studies*17, British Poetry since 1945 Special Number (1987) 31-45. Web. 16 Jul 2016.

Moyal-Sharrock, Daniele. '*On Certainty* and the Grammaticalization of Experience.' *The Third Wittgenstein.* Ed Daniele Moyal-Sharrock. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. Print 43-62 .

---.*The Third Wittgenstein* (Ed). Aldershot:Ashgate, 2004. Print.

---. *Understanding Wittgenstein's* On Certainty. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

---. 'Wittgenstein on Forms of Life, Patterns of Life, and Ways of Living.' *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* Special Issue *Wittgenstein and Forms of Life*. 21-42. Web. 01 Feb 2016.

Moyal-Sharrock, Daniele and Brenner William H (eds). *Readings of Wittgenstein's on Certainty*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Die Zauberflöte*. (K.62) 1791.

Murray, Michael. 'The conflict between poetry and literature' *Philosophy and Literature* 9.1 (Apr 1985) 59-79. Web. 20 Dec 2015.

Munton, Alan. 'Review of *Wor(l)ds in Collision.*' Shearsman Review Nov 2015. Web. 15 Aug 2016.

Muter, Matthew. 'Wallace Stevens, Analogy, and Tautology: The Problem of a Secular Poetics.' *ELH* 78 (2011) 741–768. Web. 09 Jun 2016.

Myers, Gerald E. 'Review: *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*.' *Modern Philology* 90.1 (Aug 1992) 136-138. Web. 04 Apr 2013.

Nedo, Michael. Wittgenstein: Ein Biographisches Album. München: C. H. Beck, 2012. Print.

Nedo, Michael, Guy Moreton, Alec Finlay. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: There Where You Are Not*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2005. Print.

New, Elisa. 'Beside ourselves: Near, Neighboring and Next to in Cavell's The Senses of Walden and William Carlos Williams' Fine Work with pitch and Copper' *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies*. London: Continuum International, 2011. 177-193. Print.

Newman, Barnett. 'Queen of the Night II' 1967. Oil on Canvas. London: Tate Modern Exhibition, 2002.

Nichols, Stephen. '22,000 lines 140 characters at a time, or The Rose Twitter Project.' CLIR. Blog. 3 Aug 2014.

Nieli, Russell. *Wittgenstein: From Mysticism to Ordinary Language*. Albany: State of New York Press, 1987. Print.

Nussbaum, Martha. 'Cultivating Humanity' *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: WW Norton, 2010. 2306-2327. Print.

O'Brien, Sean. Rev of *Place*, by Jorie Graham. *The Guardian*. 14 Sep. 2012. Web. 3 Dec. 2013.

O'Donoghue, Bernard. 'Poetry's Concern.' Strong Words: Modern Poets on Modern Poetry. eds W.N. Herbert and Matthew Hollis. Tarset:Bloodaxe, 2000. Print.

O'Driscoll, Dennis. "Greek Bearing Presence: John Burnside's 'Parousia'." *The Poetry Ireland Review* 63 (1999): 109-113. *JSTOR*. Web. 07 June 2012.

Ogden, Benjamin H. 'What Philosophy Can't Say about Literature: Stanley Cavell and Endgame.' *Philosophy and Literature* 33.1 (Apr 2009) 126-138. Web. 06 Jun 2015.

Ostwalt, Conrad. *Secular Steeples.*London: Bloomsbury, 2012. Print.

Otten, Thomas. *"Jorie Graham's* _____s.*" PML*A 118.2 (2003): 239-253. *JSTOR*. Web. 04 October 2013.

Paolozzi, Eduardo. *As Is When*. 1965. Print. Tate Britain, London.

Partee, Morris Henry. "Plato's Theory of Language." *Foundations of Language* 8.1 (1972): 113-132. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 Dec. 2011.

Pascal, Fania. 'Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir.' *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*. Ed. C. G. Luckhardt. Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press. 23-60. Print.

Paterson, Don. *Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets*. London: Faber and Faber, 2010. Print.

Paulos, John Allen. *I think therefore I laugh*. New York: Columbia UP, 2000. Print.

Peach, Andrew. 'Possibility in the Tractatus: a defence of the Old Wittgenstein' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45.4 (Oct 2007) 635-658. Web. 06 Jun 2014.

Pearce, Roy Harvey. 'Toward Decreation: Stevens and the "Theory of Poetry" to the Memory of Michel Benamou (1929-1978).' *Wallace Stevens: A Celebration.* Eds. Frank Doggett and Robert Buttel. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. 286-307. JSTOR. 12 Aug 2015.

Perloff, Marjorie. "Avant Guard in a Different Key: Karl Kraus' *The Last Days of Mankind*." *Critical Inquiry* 40.2 (2014): 311-38. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 February 2014.

---. *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

---. 'Writing Philosophy as Poetry: Literary form in Wittgenstein.' *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein.* Eds. Oskari Kuusela and Marie McGinn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Web Edition. 12 Aug 2016.

Phillips, D. Z. *Faith After Foundationalism.* Abingdon: Routledge, 1988. Print.

Phillips, J. 'Madness of the philosophers. Madness of the clinic.' *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 16.4 (2009) 313–317. Web. 27 Aug 2014.

Phillips, Siobhan. *The Poetics of the Everyday*. New York: Columbia UP, 2010. Print.

Phillips, Tom. *Wittgenstein's Dilemma*. 1999. Silkscreen on Acrylic Cube. tomphillips.co.uk.

Pierce, Robert B. 'Defining "Poetry"' *Philosophy and Literature* 27.1 (Apr 2003) 151-163. Muse. 4 June 2015.

Pitcher, George. 'Wittgenstein, Nonsense, and Lewis Carroll.' *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and his Philosophy*. Ed K. T. Fann. Sussex: Harvester, 1976. 315-335. Web. 14 Jan 2014.

Plant, Bob. "The Confessing Animal in Foucault and Wittgenstein." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 34.4 (2006): 533-559. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 Feb 2012.

---. *Wittgenstein and Levinas: Ethical and Religious Thought*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Plato. *The Republic.* London: Penguin Classics, 1974. Print.

---. *Theaetetus*. Trans. Robin Waterfield. New York: Penguin, 2004. Print.

Plumley, Yolanda. *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut*. Oxford: OUP, 2013. Print.

Posner, Richard A. 'Against Ethical Criticism'. *Philosophy and Literature* 21.1 (1997). 1-27. Web. 19 Mar 2015.

Pseudo-Dionysus. *The Complete Works*. Trans. Colm Luibheid. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1987. Print.

Quigley, Austin, E. 'Wittgenstein's Philosophizing and Literary Theorizing' *New Literary History* 19.2 (Winter, 1988) 209-237. Web. 11 Dec 2014.

Quigley, Megan. *Modernist fiction and vagueness : philosophy, form, and language*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2015. Print.

Raine, Craig. *A Martian Sends a Postcard Ho*me. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. Print.

Read, Rupert. 'A No-Theory?: Against Hutto on Wittgenstein' *Philosophical Investigations* 29 (1) (2006) 73–81. Web. 20 Jul 2015.

---.'Throwing Away the "Bedrock".' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 105 (2005). 81-98. JSTOR. Web. 01 Jan 2015.

---. 'Wittgenstein and Faulkner's Benjy' *The Literary Wittgenstein*. Eds John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer. London:Routledge, 2004. 267-288. Print.

---. 'Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations" as a War Book.' *New Literary History* 41.3 (Summer 2010) 593-612. JSTOR. 20 Apr 2016.

Read, Rupert and Cook, Laura. *Applying Wittgenstein*. London: Continuum, 2007. Print.

Read, Rupert and Lavery, Matthew A (eds.) *Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgenstein Debate*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print.

Reddy, Srikanth. *Changing Subjects: Digressions in Modern American Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Print.

Reid, Lynette. 'Wittgenstein's Ladder: The Tractatus and Nonsense.' *Philosophical Investigations* 21.2 (1998) 97-151. Web. 14 May 2016.

Retallack, Joan. *The Poethical Wager*. London: University of California Press. 2003. Print.

Richardson, Graeme. "John Burnside's Poetry: No Ideas but in Somethings." *Areté* 10 (2002/3): n. pag. Web. 17 July 2014.

Richardson, Joan. "Wallace Stevens: A Likeness." *Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*. Ed. John N. Serio. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 8-22. Print.

Riley, Denise. 'Lyric Selves' *The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony* (Standford UP, 2000) 93-112. [reprinted in *Creative Criticism*. Eds Stephen Benson and Clare Connors, Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014. 205-225. Print.]

Roberts, Tyler T. "'This Art of Transfiguration *Is* Philosophy': Nietzsche's Asceticism." *Journal of Religion* 76.3 (1996): 402-427. *JSTOR*. Web. 09 May 2013.

Robles, Jaime. "Dark Lyrics: Studying the Subterranean Impulses of Contemporary Poetry". Diss. University of Exeter, 2013. Print.

---. "Picturing language: Tracking Wittgenstein through some recent visual and poetic artworks." *Fortnightly Review* Forthcoming. Print.

Robles, Jaime, Sas Colby and Betsy Davids. "Sisters of Invention: 45 years of Book Art" Exhibition. The Center for the Book Arts, San Francisco. 2015-16.

Roman De La Rose Digital Library. JHU. Web. 19 Sept 2014.

Rose-Steel, Michael. "'…and I will draw a map of what you never see": Making Use of Cartographic Metaphor in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.' Forthcoming. Paper.

---. 'Cartographic thinking and the poetry of Kei Miller: Of Metaphors and Maps.' *Politics of Place*: *Green Connections Issue*. (Autumn 2015). Web. 01 Sept 2016.

---. 'The Wittgenstein Vector' *kadar koli* 10 (2016) 32-39. Print.

Rose-Steel, Michael, Isabel Galleymore, and Wei-Hsien Wan. *Drawing Over is Drawing Under*. Exeter: Spindlebox Press, 2014. Print.

---. *Paraphernalium*. Exeter: Spindlebox Press, 2014. Print.

Rose-Steel, Michael and Jaime Robles. *Wor(l)ds in Collision.* Exhibition, Byrne House University of Exeter. 2015.

Rose-Steel, Michael, Jaime Robles, SMSteele. *The Wittgenstein Vector*. Exeter: Exegesis Press, 2014. Print.

Rose-Steel, Tamsyn. "Church, Court, and Tavern: Games and Social Hierarchy in Some Medieval Motets." Ed. Serina Patterson. *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*. Palgrave, Forthcoming.

Rowe, Mark. W: 'Criticism without Theory' *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics, and Philosophy*. ed Peter Lewis. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 73-94. Print.

---. "Success through Failure: Wittgenstein and the Romantic Preface." *Aisthesis: Pratiche, linguaggi e saperi dell'estetico*. 6.1 (2013): 85-113. Web.

---. 'Wittgenstein's Romantic Inheritance' *Philosophy* 69.269 (Jul 1994) 327-351. Web. 11 Nov 2015.

Rudd, Anthony. *Expressing the World: Skepticism, Wittgenstein and Heidegger*. Chicago: Open Court, 2003. Print.

Ryle, Gilbert. 'Reflecting and Thinking.' *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures*1 (1968) 210-226. Web. 06 Oct 2013.

Santayana, George. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990. Print.

Savingy, Eike von. 'Diagnosis and therapy: Christening simple objects, pi 38-64' *Wittgenstein at Work: Method in the Philosophical Investigations*. Eds. Erich Ammereller & Eugen Fisher. London: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Sass, Louis A. 'Wittgenstein, and the Nature of Psychoanalytic Explanation' *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts*, eds Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey. London: Routledge, 2001. 253 – 295. Print.

Savickey, Beth. 'Wittgenstein and Hacker: Übersichtliche Darstellung.' *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 3.2 (2014) 99-123. Web. 05 Jan 2016.

Schalkwyk, David. 'Fiction as "grammatical" investigation: A Wittgensteinian Account' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53.3 (Summer, 1995) 287-298. JSTOR. Web. 03 Apr 2016.

---. 'Wittgenstein's "Imperfect Gardens": the ladders and labyrinths of philosophy as *Dichtung*. *The Literary Wittgenstein*. eds John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer. London:Routledge, 2004. Print.

Schulte, Joachim. *Experience and Expression: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.

---. 'The Builder's Language' *Wittgenstein at Work*. London: Routledge, 2004. 22-41. Print.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation,* Vol I. Ed. and trans. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman. Ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print.

Scigaj, Leonard M. 'The World Was the beginning of the World.' *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and the Environment*. Eds Michael P Branch, Rochelle Johnson, Daniel Patterson, and Scott Slovic. Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1998. Print.

Scott, Stanley, J. *Frontiers of Consciousness: Interdisciplinary Studies in American Philosophy and Poetry*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1991. Print.

Searle, John. *Speech Acts*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969. Print.

Sedivy, Sonia. 'Art from a Wittgensteinian Perspective: Constitutive Norms in Context.' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 72.1 (Winter 2014) 67-82. Web. 17 Feb 2015.

Seitz, James E. *Motive for Metaphor: Literacy, Curriculum Reform, and the Teaching of English.* Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh UP, 1999. Print.

Selbmann, Rolf. *Der Deutsche Bildungsroman*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1984. Print.

Sellars, Wilfrid. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. Print.

Selleri, Andrea and Gaydon, Philip (eds.) *Literary Studies and the Philosophy of Literature: New interdisciplinary Directions.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. (forthcoming. PDF).

Sergeant, David. 'The Cornish Cough.' Talk like Galileo. Exeter: Shearsman, 2010. Web. 14 Aug 2016.

Shanker, Stuart. 'A Picture Held Me Captive' *Wittgenstein at Work*. ed Erich Ammereller. London: Routledge, 2004. 246-256. Print.

Shapcott, Jo. *Of Mutability*. London: Faber, 2010. Print.

Shivani, Anis. "American Poetry in an Age of Constriction." *The Cambridge Quarterly* 35.3 (2006): 205-230. Muse. Web. 12 Oct 2014.

Shulte, Joachim. "The Life of the Sign." Gibson and Huemer 146-64.

Smith, Ben. 'Beating the Bounds: mapping the borders of self and landscape in the work of John Burnside and Tim Robinson' *Green Letters* 17.1 (2013) 67-76. Web. 24 Aug 2016.

Smith, D. K. *The Cartographical Imagination in Early Modern England: Re-writing the World in Marlowe, Spencer, Raleigh and Marvell*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. Print.

Smith, Nicholas, ed. *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Somavilla, Ilse. *Licht und Schatten*. Berlin: Heymon, 2004. Print.

Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.

Spiegelman, Willard. 'Jorie Graham's "New Way of Looking."' *Salmagundi* 120 (Fall 1998) 244-275. JSTOR. 27 Feb 2016.

Stang, Charles. *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Print.

Stengel, Kathrin. 'Ethics as Style: Wittgenstein's Aesthetic Ethics and Ethical Aesthetics'. Poetics Today, 25:4 (Winter 2004). 609–625. Web. 04 Feb 2014.

Stern, David. 'Texts and Style' The Blackwell Companion to Wittgenstein. Eds. Hans-Johann Glock and John Hyman. Oxford: Blackwell. (forthcoming).

Stevens, Wallace. *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. Print.

---. *The Letters of Wallace Stevens.* Ed. Holly Stevens. London: University of California Press, 1996. Print.

---. *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1951. Print.

---. 'The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words.' *Twentieth-Century American Poetics*. Eds. Dana Gioia, David Mason and Meg Schoerke. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004. 30-44. Print.

---. *Poet to Poet*. Ed. John Burnside. London: Faber&Faber, 2008. Print.

Stone, Martin. 'On the Old Saw, "Every Reading of a Text is an Interpretation"' *The Literary Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge, 2004. 186-208. Print.

Stout, Rowland. *The Inner Life of a Rational Agent*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006.

Strawson, Peter. 'Critical Notice of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.' *Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds.* Ed. Harold Morick. New York: Humanities Press, 1967. Print.

Stroll, Avrum. *Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2002. Print.

---. 'Wittgenstein's Foundational Metaphors.' *The Third Wittgenstein.* Ed. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock. Aldershot:Ashgate, 2004. 13-24. Print.

Stroud-Drinkwater, Clive. 'Stevens After Davidson on Metaphor.' *Philosophy and Literature* 26.2 (Oct 2002) 346-353. Web. 14 Feb 2014.

Sukenick, Ronald. *Musing the Obscure*. London: University of London Press, 1967. Print.

Szabados, Bela. *Wittgenstein as Philosophical Tone-Poet: Philosophy and Music in Dialogue.* New York: Rodopi, 2014. Print.

Taylor, Charles. "Foundationalism and the Inner-outer Distinction." *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*. Smith. 106-120.

Thornton, Tim. *John McDowell.* Abingdon: Routledge, 2004. Print.

---. 'The harmony of thought and reality in McDowell and Wittgenstein.' *In the Space of Reasons*. inthespaceofreasons.blogspot.com. 05 Mar 2015.

Tilghman, Ben. 'Literature, Human Understanding and Morality' *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics, and Philosophy*. ed Peter Lewis. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 201-214. Print.

---. *Wittgenstein, Ethics, and Aesthetics: The View from Eternity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. Print.

Tolkien, J. R. R. 'On Fairy-Stories.' Tree and Leaf. London: Harper Collins, 1988. 1-82. Print.

Turner, Denys. *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999. Web. 10 Oct 2015.

Turvey, Malcolm. 'Is scepticism a 'natural possibility' of language? : Reasons to be sceptical of Cavell's Wittgenstein.' *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts*, eds. Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey. London: Routledge, 2001. pp 117-136. Print.

van Raamsdonk, Esther. and Rose-Steel, Michael. "The Roads Constrict like Throats: Cartography that Creates and Controls." Green Connections Interdisciplinary Conference on Arts Practice and the Environment. University of Exeter, Devon, UK. 5 Sep. 2014.

Vendler, Helen. "Indigo, Cyanide, Beryl: Review of *Never*." Rev. of *Never* by Jorie Graham. *London Review of Books* 23 Jan 2003: 13-16. Web. 20 Sept 2014.

---. 'Jorie Graham: The Nameless and the Material.' *The Given and the Made: Strategies of Poetic Redefinition*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995. 91-130. Web. 11 Dec 2015.

---. *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969. Print.

---. 'Stevens and the Lyric Speaker.' *Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*. Ed. John N. Serio. New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. 133-148. Print.

---. "Wallace Stevens: Hypotheses and Contradictions." *Representations* 81.1 (2003): 99-117. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 May 2013.

Vinegar, Aron. "What is the Logic of the That? Wittgenstein, Gesture, and the Arts." Wiring Wittgenstein Colloquium. University of Exeter, Devon, UK. 12 June 2014.

de Vries, Hent. 'From "Ghost in the Machine" to "Spiritual Automaton": Philosophical Meditation in Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Levinas.' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 60. (2006) 77-97. Web. 15 Jan 2015.

Wagner, David. "Glimpses of Unsurveyable Maps." *Publications of the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society* 17 (2011): 365-376. Web. 24 Aug 2014.

Waismann, Friedrich. *Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle: Conversations Recorded by Friedrich Waismann*. Trans. Brian McGuinness and Joachim Schulte. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1979. Print.

Watson, Ariel. 'Cries of Fire: Psychotherapy in Contemporary British and Irish Drama' *Modern Drama* 51.2 (Summer 2008) 188-210. Web. 03 Mar 2015.

Webiocosm. "Amaryllis Growing, Flowering and Decaying, Time-Lapse." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 9 Feb. 2010. Web. 1 Dec. 2013.

Weitz, Morris. 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Sep., 1956): 27-35. *JSTOR* Web. 12 Jan 2016.

White, Nicholas P. 'Plato's Epistemological Metaphysics' *Cambridge Companion to Plato.* ed. Richard Kraut. Cambridge: CUP, 1992. 277-310. Print.

White, Roger. 'Throwing the Baby out with the Ladder.' *Beyond the Tractatus Wars: The New Wittgenstein Debate*. eds Rupert Read and Matthew A. Lavery. New York: Routledge, 2011. 22-65. Print.

Whyte, Christopher. 'Twenty-One Collections for the Twenty-first Century.' The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature. Ed Berthold Schoene. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007. Print.

Wilde, Carolyn. 'Ethics and Aesthetics are One' *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics, and Philosophy*. ed Peter Lewis. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 37-51. Print.

Williams, Michael. "Exorcism and Enchantment." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 46.182 (1996): 99-109. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 May 2013.

Williams, Anne. *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1995. Print.

Williams, Nerys. *Contemporary Poetry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011. Print.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. "A Lecture on Ethics." *The Philosophical Review* 74.1 (1965): 3-12. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Oct. 2011

---. *The Big Typescript TS. 213*. ed and trans. C. Grant Luckhardt and Maximilian Aue. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. Web. 20 Jun 2016.

---. *The Blue and Brown Books*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1958. Print.

---. *Cambridge Letters: Correspondence with Russell, Keynes, Moore, Ramsey and Sraffa*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. Print.

---. *Culture and Value*. Trans. Peter Winch. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. Print.

---. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Ed Cyril Barrett. Oxford: Blackwell, 1978. Print.

---. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology I&II.* Eds. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman. Trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue. Oxford: Blackwell, 1982. Print.

---. 'Letters to Ludwig von Ficker' *Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives*. Ed. C. G. Luckhardt. Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979. 82-98. Print.

---. *Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore*. ed. G.H. von Wright. Oxford : Blackwell, 1974. Print.

---. *Nachlass: The Bergen Electronic Edition*. Text and Facsimile Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Online. 03 Aug 2016.

---. *Notebooks 1914-1916.* Eds. G. H. von Wright and G. E. M. Anscombe. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1961. Print.

---. *On Certainty*. Trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe. USA: Harper Touchbooks, 1972. Print.

---. *Philosophical Grammar*. Ed. Rush Rhees. Trans. Anthony Kenny. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980. Print.

---. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. Print.

---. *Philosophical Occasions.* Eds. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann. Indionapolis: HAckett Publishing Company, 1993. Print.

---. *Philosophical Remarks.* Eds. R. Rhees, Trans. R. Hargreaves and R. White. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980. Print.

---. *Prototractatus: An Early Version of Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*. Ed and trans. Brian McGuinness. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

---. *Remarks on Colour.* Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe. Trans Linda L McAlister and Margarete Schättle. Oxford: Blackwell, 1977. Print.

---. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology vol I.* Oxford:Wiley-Blackwell, 1991. Print.

---. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* Trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

---. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932*. Ed. Desmond Lee. Oxford: Blackwell, 1980. Print.

---. Z*ettel*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1981. Trans G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1967. Print.

Wolfe, Cary. 'Elemental Relations at the Edge.' *Elemental Ecocriticism: Thinking with Earth, Air, Water, and Fire*. Eds. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. Print.

---. 'Exposures' Cavell, Diamond, McDowell, Hacking and Wolfe. 1-42. Print.

---. 'Flesh and Finitude: Thinking Animals in (Post) Humanist Philosophy.' *SubStance* 37.3. 2008. 8-36 JSTOR. Web. 20 March 2014.

---. 'The Idea of Observation at Key West, or, Systems Theory, Poetry, and Form beyond Formalism.' *New Literary History* 39.2 (2008) 259-276. Web. 04 Sept 2015.

Wolfe, Cary and Mitchell, W.J.T. 'In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion' *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory.* Chicago Scholarship Online Feb 2013. 3 March 2014. Web.

Wright, Crispin. "Human Nature?" Smith. 140-159.

Wynter, Sylvia. 'On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of Desêtre' *Black Studies Toward the Human Project*. Eds. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. Web. 11 Nov 2014.

Wyss, Sebastian. 'Does Wittgenstein have a Method?' *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 4.1 (2015) 167-193. Web. 01 Jun 2016.

Žižek, Slavoj. "The Seven Veils of Fantasy." *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso (2009). 1-40. Print.

Zona, Kirstin. "Jorie Graham and American Poetry." *Contemporary Literature* 46.4 (2005): 667-687. *JSTOR*. Web. 06 Aug 2013.

Zwicky, Yan. *Forge*. Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2011. Print.

---. *Wittgenstein Elegies*. Ilderton, ON: Brick Books, 1986. Print.