Foster Wallace's "The Empty Plenum" Revisited: Exploring the Intersection of Philosophic and Literary Inquiry

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy, School of the Humanities, University of Tasmania, December 2019

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by anotherperson, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I DO NOT give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying.

The author acknowledges that copyright of published works contained within this thesis (as listed below) resides with the copyright holder of those works.

I DO NOT give permission for a digital version of my thesis.

SIGNED:  DATE: 06/12/19

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people deserve special thanks for their help with this thesis: Florence Matthews and my supervisors Graeme Miles and James Chase.

You could call this technique "Deep Nonsense," meaning I guess a linguistic flow of strings, strands, loops, that through the very manner of its formal construction flouts the ordinary cingula of "sense" and through its defiance of sense's limits manages somehow to "show" what cannot ordinarily be "expressed." (David Foster Wallace, *The Empty Plenum*)

I think I summed up my position when I said: philosophy ought really to be written only as a form of poetry. (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*)

Poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand. (Plato, *The Republic*)

But what other philosopher has found the antidote to illusion in the particular and repeated humility of tracking the uses of humble words, looking philosophically as it were beneath our feet rather than over our heads? (Stanley Cavell, *On Wittgenstein*)

Most really pretty girls have pretty ugly feet . . .

(David Foster Wallace, *Broom of the System*)

There is nobody at the window in the painting of the house, by the way. I have now concluded that what I believed to be a person is a shadow. If it is not a shadow, it is perhaps a curtain. As a matter of fact it could actually be nothing more than an attempt to imply depths, within the room. Although in a manner of speaking all that is really in the window is burnt sienna pigment. And some yellow ochre. In fact there is no window either, in that same manner of speaking, but only shape. So that any few speculations I may have made about the person at the window would therefore now appear to be rendered meaningless, obviously. Unless of course I subsequently become convinced that there is somebody at the window all over again. I have put that badly.

(David Markson, *Wittgenstein's Mistress*)

People said the poet and the philosopher were lovers, but it never looked that way. One had an apartment and ideas and money, and the other had his legend and his poetry and the fervor of the true believer, a doglike fervor, the fervor of the whipped dog that's spent the night or all its youth in the rain. (Robert Bolaño, *2666*)

For I am a Rain Dog, too.

(Tom Waits, Lyrics to "Rain Dogs")

Dedicated to the rain dogs

Table of Contents

Abstract

In a political moment characterised by post-truth ideologically generated misinformation and algorithmically propagated discourses, questions of fact, of inquiry, of perspective are paramount. This work examines what it means to write literature or to do philosophy while encountering a world of diffuse truths. It asks how can we retain clarity without erasing the fact that perspectival knowledge is always already embedded, piecemeal, contextual? To answer this question, I turn to a more foundational one, that has plagued philosophy since Plato proclaimed, "there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (*Republic*, 607b5–6). My thesis picks up on a central aspect of the quarrel, the claim that art doesn't lead to truth. I ask: what is the nature of literary inquiry and how can literature distinguish itself as an autonomous form of intellectual inquiry, if it can at all?

Beginning with David Foster Wallace's "The Empty Plenum", I argue for a novel 'perspectival' or 'mystical' interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logio-Philosophicus*. I argue, contrary to dominant literary scholarship, that it is Wittgenstein's Saying–Showing distinction that offers both a guide for conceiving the value of literary inquiry and consequently offers a robust response to Plato. The 'ancient quarrel' can be addressed resolutely: what does literature offer? Literature is free to communicate where philosophy is unable—to *show* what philosophy cannot *say*. I then turn to Davidson, Heidegger, Wallace, Wittgenstein, Borges and Lerner to flesh out the notion of showing in literature, and how it functions to induce a perspectival shift in order that the reader may see the world 'aright'. This dissertation contributes to the wider project of questioning the inherent power-dynamics and ideological bias that inform the disciplinary separation of literature and philosophy.

A Note on Translation

Evidently for a dissertation examining the manner in which language informs our modalities and morphologies of truthfulness, it must be understood that translation is inevitably an act of *creation*, rather than fidelity, or equivalence. Consequently, in engaging with specific translations over others there are a number of critical preconditions which have governed my choices, and I will discuss my reasons for privileging specific translations in what follows. The primary texts in translation that I examine are works by Plato, Wittgenstein and Heidegger. I will reference in the text where interesting alternate significations arise, or otherwise where secondary translations are consulted, they will be footnoted.

I rely for my exegesis of Plato's *Republic* on Allan Bloom's recent translation. My choice here is grounded in a recent analysis of English translations offered by Richard Polt. Bloom's translation is widely praised by scholars and critics as a faithful and intelligent rendering of the material. While alternatives offered by Grube, for instance, are arguably more readable and thus valuable for classroom use, in the trade-off between accuracy and readability Bloom's near verbatim translation has a lot to offer.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logio-Philisophicus* (hereafter abbreviated to the *Tractatus, or TLP*), while translated initially by Ogden, was later re-translated by Pears and McGuinness. Since it was offered in 1961, the Pears-McGuinness translation of the *Tractatus* (henceforth, PMT) has been near universally acclaimed as a decided improvement on Ogden's earlier translation (OT). While OT was authorised by Wittgenstein initially, commentators have focused on the improvements in terms of clarity and accuracy of PMT (see Urmson, 298–300). With very few exceptions commentaries have either directly or indirectly seconded this opinion—evident in their typical inclusion of PMT and omission of OT in abbreviations, bibliographies and acknowledgements. Consequently, while textual disagreements persist, I will rely in what follows on the PMT treatment.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations (*referenced intext as*, PI)* was published posthumously in 1953 and was edited and translated by Anscombe. A new edition was translated by Hacker and Schulte in 2009. In this dissertation the later edition is treated as authoritative. While based on Anscombe's translation—which benefits from Anscombe's personal acquaintance with Wittgenstein—the later addition includes a number of improvements: adjustments to exceedingly loose translations offered by Anscombe, and

updates to translations which, while initially valuable, have the potential to be misleading in today's context given the evolution of the English language.

The secondary literature I draw upon in justifying the translations of Heidegger upon which I rely include Macquarrie and Robinson's (1962) translation of *Being and Time*. A more recent translation of *Being and Time* exists by J. Stambaugh (1996); however, while this translation has many virtues and may be argued to be a more user-friendly guide for Heidegger novices, I follow Wheeler (2011) in conceiving of the standard Macquarrie and Robinson translation, at this time, as the first choice in Heidegger scholarship. My reasoning is that given the relative brevity of my engagement with Heidegger, and the impossibility of a deep dive at this time, I have followed convention and for the most part relied on the older tried and true translations. Furthermore, as the Macquarrie and Robinson translations of key terms are so thoroughly entrenched in English-language discussions of Heidegger, this in itself offers a compelling reason to stick with it and avoid confusion. I also draw on the useful collection of English translations of the most philosophical of Heidegger's earliest writing offered by Kisiel and Sheehan's (2007) *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings*.

My selections in reliance upon Schopenhauer translations is worth mentioning, as his primary work, explored albeit briefly here, is known under three different titles: *The World as Will and Representation*, *The World as Will and Idea* and *The World as Will and Presentation*— by Haldane and Kemp, Payne, and Aquila respectively. While all offer largely acceptable renderings of Schopenhauer's word *vorstellung*, I will refer to Aquila's translation in the section on *the sublime*, as the present-day translation, to my mind, is more accessible to the contemporary reader.

INTRODUCTION

There has never been, and perhaps never will be, an adequate resolution to the 'ancient quarrel' between the poets and the philosophers. What is clear is that in Plato's ideal society, in one of the forms in which it exists today—academia's ivory tower—the poets have been forcibly ejected. The methods of inquiry deemed admissible by the analytic hegemon are quite specific, and position literature squarely on the outside. I enter this dialogue by considering the relevance of an under-examined ficto-critical essay "The Empty Plenum: David Markson's Wittgenstein's Mistress" (hereafter abbreviated to "The Empty Plenum") by author David Foster Wallace, as a frame for exploring literature's relation to philosophy, by drawing on the distinction between *showing* and *saying* in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

This study argues that certain questions, at once possessed of a recognisable philosophical warrant, can be irreducibly posed by and through literature. My argument, in brief, is that literature can *show* some part of what philosophy cannot *say*. It is in this sense that metaphysical novels and poetry are not limited to illustrating or alluding to philosophy, and in this sense that philosophical literature can distinguish itself as an autonomous form of intellectual inquiry, rather than derivative or decocted philosophy. It is on these grounds, among others, that we should resist and respond to Plato's ejection of the poets from his ideal society.

Structure

This Introduction examines Plato's 'ancient quarrel', his ejection of the poets from his ideal society, and the modern form in which this quarrel persists in the academy. I will examine the questions: what is the nature of literary inquiry and how does it differ from philosophical inquiry? Plato's quarrel serves as a frame for understanding the importance of these questions and the dialogue that has arisen around them.

Chapter I begins by providing a brief background on Wallace's article "The Empty Plenum" and the text it analyses, Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, before evaluating both Ramal and Ryerson's interpretations of the relevance of "The Empty Plenum" to Wallace's overall conception of the relation between literature and philosophy. I then examine what I take to be the major pitfalls in both critics' arguments; that is, a failure to recognise the importance of the mysticism of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* if we are to comprehend Wallace's conception of the relation between philosophy and literature.

Chapter II considers the various interpretations of the central paradox of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: that if we adopt Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning, then the *Tractatus* itself is rendered a series of nonsensical pseudo-propositions. I argue that to correctly resolve this paradox is to conceive of the *Tractatus* as a project intended to serve as elucidatory, prompting a 'perspectival shift' in order to acquaint us with mystical experience, rather than an attempt to communicate propositional truths. I then draw on Wittgenstein's distinction between showing and saying, to argue that literature's distinctive abilities rest in its capacity to *show* what cannot be *said*. I argue the relevance of a mystical interpretation of Wittgenstein' *Tractatus* has been overlooked by theorists who have focused primarily on exegesis of his later *Philosophical Investigations*. This is a failing, I argue, as the *Tractatus* provides fruitful avenues for inquiry into the intersection between philosophy and literature.

Chapter III explores what these fruitful avenues are. I examine how this notion of showing might be best understood in literary terms; that is, how showing here has a technical sense and can be understood by examining devices and techniques such as: use, absences, emotional implications, bland fact and deep nonsense. I draw examples for each from Wallace and his reading of *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. In this way I also provide an evaluation of the success of Wallace's own philosophical narratives in the light of his own critique and identify areas for future research.

Chapter IV then examines how the perspectival shift described by Wittgenstein can be more fully understood through a process of triangulation: I turn to Heidegger's hermeneutics, notions of situatedness and phronesis, the author Ben Lerner's conception of the poem as necessarily a record of failure, Davidson's work on Metaphor and Borges' reflections on writing.

Chapter V offers a radical contextualising of the entire argument: I examine why it is important to ask these questions about the role if literary inquiry, in the current political moment characterised by post-truth or 'truthiness'. I examine the implications of 'canon' and the dangers in viewing the perspectival shift induced by literary works as intrinsically moral. In seeing the world 'aright', I argue, one is always encountering a world of diffuse truths, where perspectival knowledge is embedded, piecemeal and contextual. It is this, I argue, which points to the power embedded in the maintenance of the disciplinary 'break' between literature and philosophy.

Chapter VI examines the connection between my exegesis and creative work, *Murmurations*, both in terms of content explored in the creative work, and the endeavour to induce a perspectival shift in the reader, by Showing or gesturing towards the archetypes and universals embedded within a purported 'lover's discourse', in the form of Roland Barthes. In the Conclusion, I return to the roots and look at how this discussion relates to Plato's 'ancient quarrel'.

The Ancient Quarrel

> Poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand.
>
> Plato, *The Republic,* Book II, Section V.

Plato's 'ancient quarrel' provides the context for the questions I seek to examine; questions such as: what is the nature of literary inquiry and how does it differ from philosophical inquiry? And, considering that the 'ancient quarrel' between philosophy and literature concerns, among other things, if and how literature can distinguish itself as an autonomous form of intellectual inquiry, can literary art forms do more than allude to or illustrate philosophy?

The quarrel is epitomised in Plato's notorious claim that the poets (and perhaps rhetoricians)[1] must be banished from the 'just' city—*the philosophical republic*. Plato's fictionalised Socrates states that, should any dramatic poet happen to show up, "there is no man of your kind among us in our city, nor is it lawful for such a man to arise among us". Further, the fictionalised Socrates asserts: "Only so much of poetry as is hymns to gods or celebration of good men should be admitted into a city" (607a). It should be noted that while many argue Plato was the first to articulate the quarrel, some of Plato's philosophical predecessors, such as Xenophanes and Heraclitus, directed severe criticisms against the poets (Nightingale, 65). But whether Plato was the first philosopher to discern the presence of this deep conflict between philosophy and poetry, while an interesting question, is somewhat tangential to our purposes, as it is the enduring ramifications of his critique that concern us here.

Much of the final book of *The Republic* is an attack on poetry, indeed this quarrel between philosophy and poetry continues thematically throughout Plato's work, and is perhaps best presented in four dialogues: *The Ion*, *The Republic*, *The Gorgias*, and *The Phaedrus*. Consequently, interpretive dispute rages over what Plato meant by poetry and whether, for instance, his critique applies to sculpture, music, or the arts in general. Indeed, parallel debates are being played out between many art forms and philosophy, even though the scope is limited in this thesis to literature.[2] Plato speaks always of 'poetry' or 'the poets' rather than literature—there being no ancient Greek word for the latter. The idea that there is a sort of writing, characterised by a greater *density* of meaning, or a higher *quality* (however we would like to define quality) is a new one. In what follows I will assume, however, that Plato's injunction applies more broadly than poetry, to include literature in several forms. At this stage I will leave the definition of literature as broad: for a loose

[1] Indeed, Plato associated poetry and rhetoric very closely. In Gorgias (502), he characterises poetry as a kind of rhetoric; holding that the ontological and psychological bases of the criticism of poetry serve also as the bases of the criticism of rhetoric. Whether poetry and rhetoric should in fact be grouped together, and whether any interesting relation exists between the two, are controversial questions not to be examined in this thesis, as my interest resides in philosophy's relation to the literary arts. I will note the baring of Borges's distinction between poetry and rhetoric, where he writes: "all poetry consists in feeling things as being strange, while all rhetoric consists in thinking of them as quite common, as obvious" (18).

[2] Nonetheless, the overlap between theorists' engagement with this topic for dissimilar disciplines is telling: rhetoric, theatre and music being but three examples. Peter's *Antithetical Arts*, for instance, concerns the 'ancient quarrel' between literature and music, while Andro Linklater's *The Santorini Experiment* describes the way philosophy ended its 'ancient quarrel' with theatre. Jeff Mitscherling, in *The European Legacy*, considers the ancient and current quarrels between philosophy and rhetoric. Whether some common essence could be distilled concerning the way different art forms function as inquiry is a question worthy of further study.

definition, in the style of Roberto Bolaño, one might say literature can include prose, novel or short story; dramaturgy, poetry or essay; criticism, prose or verse.

Plato offers numerous and interrelated grounds for his theoretical expulsion of the poets from the just society, outlined within *The Republic*. While some of these justifications depend heavily on specific epistemological and metaphysical doctrines that hold little appeal for many contemporary philosophers, all can nonetheless be formulated in ways that resonate with modern philosophy's broad conception of itself.

For instance, Plato argued that poets brought no new knowledge to their audience, prioritised emotion over reason and made half-baked ideas sound attractive (*Republic*, 395). He criticised literature's capacity to engage and incite our emotions while bypassing our rational faculties and distrusted the poet's ability to construct simulacra of real persons and events. Consequently, poetry functions as a distraction from the slow and hard struggle to comprehend what lies behind reality's often-misleading presentations of itself. He opposed the poet's self-image as being subject to divine inspiration, which he felt revealed poetry to lack any secure, transmissible and impersonal body of knowledge that might ground a claim to any depth of understanding. Not only did he view the poet's imaginative capacities as non-rational, but he also perceived the poet to be essentially amoral; that is, entirely unconstrained by truthfulness, in their acts of creation. Taken together, Plato arguably viewed poetry as posing a fundamental threat of corruption to the soul of the poet and that of his readers and listeners, thereby creating further obstacles to humanity's attempts to achieve self-knowledge and live a good life through a lucid grasp of reality—the task to which he viewed philosophy to be distinctively, indeed *uniquely*, devoted.

The continual relevance of the objections to literature presented by Plato should be evident in the way analytic philosophy attempts to get its bearings, or self-situate, by adopting a set of goals, and a certain methodological toolkit that excludes the literary. Conflict persists today over what we should understand philosophy *to be* and what methodologies are considered acceptable. It may be misleading to talk about a monolithic singular philosophical project in light of the influence of movements like poststructuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, feminism and postcolonialism, which raise serious objections to such a project.

Nonetheless a dominant philosophical culture undeniably exists, in which certain methodological tools are drawn upon.[3] This methodological toolkit could be said to include, for instance, forms of logical and conceptual analysis, laboriously self-critical arguments and thought experiments, and goals of clarity and reasoned argument set against literary methods of inquiry and expression (Beaney, 1998). 'Clarity' is of course a very unclear notion, but, whatever it is,[4] it comes with a deep distrust of rhetorical embellishment and devices.[5] It should be noted, however, that despite such an apparently blunt polemic expulsion of the poets, Plato at times exalted poetry and the narrative arts. In the passage in which he ejects the poets, he also refers to the poet as "holy" (*Republic*, 534). Goldstein, among others, has argued that he intended the descriptor *holy* just as seriously as the *banishment*. Indeed, Goldstein writes: "Plato wasn't one of the many philosophers insensible to deep aesthetic stirrings" (6). Plato, himself, is often proclaimed to be one of the greatest literary artists in the Western philosophical canon. Plato seems to hope that poetry can muster up a respectable philosophical comeback, convincing him that it shouldn't be ejected, writing: "nonetheless, if poetry has any argument to bring forward that proves it ought to have a place in a well-governed city, we at least would be glad to admit it, for we are ourselves very susceptible to its charms" (395). This thesis, then, is in a sense an attempt to bring forth such an argument: to demonstrate that there exist functions that literature can serve that are not available to philosophy.[6]

A recent collection, *The Wounded Animal*, provides a parallel attempt to reopen the issue of the 'ancient quarrel' which the editor Stephen Mulhall claims to have marked, and indeed *defined*, philosophy from its inception. The authors address this debate by considering the Tanner Lectures titled "The Lives of Animals" by novelist J. M. Coetzee. Interestingly the philosopher Christine Korsgaard presented a Tanner Lecture several years later, approaching the same topic—our responsibilities towards animals (2004). Her method, however, is strictly philosophical, presenting a Kantian argument without suggestion of literary device. In contrast Coetzee's essays are peppered with meta-fictional, experimental devices. Nonetheless Coetzee's approach is arguably deeply didactic, and therefore fails to

[3] For a fuller discussion, see Chase (2010), *Analytic Philosophy and Dialogic Conservatism.*
[4] For further on the notion of clarity, see Leibniz's *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas* where clarity is examined in the context of 'clear and distinct' perception.
[5] For a thorough treatment of the nature of clarity, see Cohen's (1986) case for analytic philosophy as essentially concerned with "reasoning about reasoning" (49).
[6] That is, not available to philosophy *as* philosophy. A mode with delineated instruments of inquiry designed to exclude the literary. Much philosophical content has been examined and elucidated by methods not categorically definable as 'philosophy' according to parochial definitions, as shall be made evident in what follows.

fulfil some of the potential of literary inquiry. While beyond the scope of the present thesis, a contrast between the two works, and evaluation of how successful they are in conveying their arguments, offer insight. A further valuable point of inquiry, also beyond the scope of this thesis, concerns the fact that it has been Platonists in later antiquity who found ways to defend poetry against Plato's critiques, a case made by Miles and Baltzly (2018) in translating Proclus's commentary on Plato's *Republic*. Indeed, Neo-Platonists of late have argued for a mystical purpose for poetry, or at least for the form of poetry of which they approve—though this is couched in different terms. They also discuss the limits of language in conveying experience beyond language.[7] I will turn now to the writings of David Foster Wallace, and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Relevance of Wallace and Wittgenstein

David Foster Wallace provides footing for my entry into the 'ancient quarrel'. Wallace's interest in the intersection between philosophy and literature has often been overlooked in the emerging canon. Yet Wallace provides a penetrating analysis of this intersection in "The Empty Plenum". Consequently, I focus on this text, elucidating its major themes, and intending through this close analysis to highlight Wallace's overarching theory of successful philosophical narrative.

Other thinkers, Randy Ramal and James Ryerson, provide interpretations of this text from which I diverge. I evaluate Ryerson and Ramal's claims concerning Wallace's conception of philosophy's relation to literature, and Wallace's specific understanding of the aims of literature, as elucidated in "The Empty Plenum". Neither Ryerson nor Ramal do justice to Wallace's conception of the relationship between philosophy and literature. While each raise important issues, I argue that at the root of Wallace's discussion of the relation between philosophy and literature in "The Empty Plenum" is the saying-showing distinction made in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. By considering this distinction, overlooked by both writers, we can better understand Wallace's conception of the intersection of philosophy and literature.[8]

[7] For other recent studies of non-discursivity evidencing this kind of Platonism, see Rappe (2007).
[8] It is worth mentioning here that, while Kant draws a similar but tangential distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal world, he doesn't have the focus on conveying experience beyond language but more on the bracketing off of this unknowable noumenal world; therefore this will not be a focus in what follows (Simon, 45–51).

To make this case I explore the distinction in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, between that which can be *said* and that which can only be *shown*. I then argue for the relevance of this notion to the 'ancient quarrel'. I aim to both provide a comprehensive reading of Wallace's conception of novelistic inquiry's relation to philosophy, set out in "The Empty Plenum", and also to argue Wittgenstein's Saying–Showing distinction bears on the 'ancient quarrel' between the philosophers and the poets, demonstrating that literature acts where philosophy is unable to—it shows what philosophers cannot say.

CHAPTER I: The Empty Plenum

In this chapter I will introduce David Foster Wallace, then examine the ficto-critical essay "The Empty Plenum". I will evaluate the current interpretation of Wallace's work by Ryerson and Ramal before making my case for the relevance of the saying-showing distinction made in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* to Wallace's conception of philosophy's relation to literature.

1.1 David Foster Wallace

David Foster Wallace is often-labelled progenitor of a third wave of literary modernism christened the 'New Sincerity' or post-postmodernism.[9] He is widely considered one of the most influential and innovative writers in recent decades.[10] Laurels aside, a critical literature surrounding his work has developed only in recent years. Amidst the still inchoate field of Wallace studies there exist works exploring Wallace's innovative writing modes and voices and his thematic concerns, including: the fragmentation of thought (Stern and Mclaughlin, 2000); the relationship between happiness and boredom and tensions between the beauty and hideousness of human physicality (Feeney, 2011); solipsism (Krajeski, 2008); freedom (Wallace, 2008); mindfulness (McGurll, 2014) and moving beyond the irony and meta-fiction associated with postmodernism (Wallace, 1993). It is well established that Wallace had serious and abiding interests in academic philosophy.[11] His oeuvre is marked by philosophical concern with ethics and morality, epistemology and a distinctively Wittgensteinian interest in our everyday words and the world outside them.

[9] For a detailed examination of Wallace's formative influence on contemporary fiction, see Boswell, *Understanding David Foster Wallace*.
[10] His work having, as well as public acclaim, garnered national attention and critical praise, receiving the MacArthur Fellowship and the Aga Khan Prize for Fiction.
[11] Wallace was, for a time, a graduate student in philosophy at Harvard, beginning with an interest in mathematical logic. See also his undergraduate thesis, *Fate, Time and Language*, published posthumously by Columbia University Press in 2010.

Ryerson writes, "[Wallace's] serious early engagement with philosophy would play a lasting role in his work and thought, including his ideas about the purpose and possibilities of fiction" (2).

I should note that since completing this thesis greater attention has been paid to Wallace studies in general. Attending and presenting at the annual David Foster Wallace Conference in 2018 and 2019, I witnessed a number of scholars workshopping as yet unpublished or in-the-process-of publishing works, examining Wallace's relation to animal rights, his influence on millennial-modernism, the concept of self-transcendence, worship, devotion, religion and spirituality. Wallace's baring on political freedom, responsibility, the nature of empathy and a whole host of topics of philosophical import.[12] The trend has, however, been to attend to particular works and particular topics of moral/cultural import. But there has been scant work done on the topic of Wallace's conception of the relationship between philosophy and literature *more broadly*.

Wittgenstein claimed that "it's only by thinking even more crazily than philosophers do that you can solve their problems" (75). And, indeed, it is Wallace's views on the *purpose* and *possibilities* of fiction, in relation to philosophy, that are the focus of this thesis. In the embryonic field of Wallace studies there exists only one established collection concerning Wallace and philosophy (Cahn, 2015) yet this text explicitly concerns his exploration of Richard Taylor's '*Fatalism' and the Semantics of Physical Modality* (Wallace, 1985). A recent collection, *Gesturing toward Reality* (2015), is the first in which there is direct address of Wallace's thought to literature's relation to philosophical inquiry. The titular allusion to Wittgenstein of *gesturing* towards reality is no accident, although the term *gesture* is problematic, which I will demonstrate. It nonetheless emphasises the influence of mysticism in Wittgenstein's work, pre-empting the topic of this thesis. Despite this titular reference to Wittgenstein, the majority of the essays in *Gesturing towards Reality* remain thematically concerned.[13] The only piece in the collection to overtly take as its focus Wallace's thought concerning literary/philosophical inquiry is an article by Randy Ramal,

[12] At the Sixth Annual David Foster Wallace Conference at Illinois State University I presented an excerpt from *Murmurations*. At the fifth conference, I presented a paper on Wallace's theory of the intersection between literature and philosophy.

[13] Within this collection, some writers espouse overt spiritual or religious angles on his work; see, for instance, Bulger's essay 'A Less "Bullshitty" Way to Live: The Pragmatic Spirituality of David Foster Wallace' or the way Wallace deals with topics including loneliness, boredom and depression. See Andrew Bennet's 'Inside David Foster Wallace's Head: Attention, Loneliness, Suicide, and the Other Side of Boredom'.

responding to James Ryerson's introduction to *Fate, Time and Language*.[14] Both critics explore how this topic is elucidated in "The Empty Plenum".[15] These pieces by Ramal and Ryerson will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

While much work has been done analysing Wallace's major works, *Infinite Jest* (Burn, 2012), *Broom of the System* (Boswell, 2003) and *The Pale King* (Boswell, 2012), including the ficto-critical essay "Consider the Lobster*"* (Kaiser, 2014), little attention has been paid to Wallace's article "The Empty Plenum". It will be argued in the following section that this is a major oversight, given Wallace's "The Empty Plenum", a review of Markson's novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, is essential to understanding Wallace's conception of literature's role.

1.2 The Empty Plenum

To introduce Wallace's "The Empty Plenum", I should begin by outlining the novel it evaluates—David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress.* This work may be categorised to be a highly stylised, experimental novel in the tradition of Samuel Beckett. It is presented as a series of statements made in the first person, in which the protagonist, a woman named Kate, believes herself to be the last human on earth. *Wittgenstein's Mistress* is heavy with allusions, references, and parallels drawn between Kate and fictional and historical characters, most notably: Helen of Troy, Achilles, Vincent van Gogh, William Gaddis, Ludwig Wittgenstein, William Shakespeare and Johannes Brahms. Many of these cameos are used to orient the reader towards certain themes, particularly those of language and memory.

Wallace held this novel in high esteem given that Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress* and Wallace's own first novel *The Broom of the System* (1987) were both formally and thematically concerned with Wittgenstein's writing—yet Wallace believed Markson was better able to express the existential worry he wished to depict in *Broom.* That is, the consequences of living in the kind of world Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* described. Ryerson writes: "Wallace felt that Markson's novel had succeeded in uniting literature and philosophy in the way that he, in Broom, tried but failed to do" (27). Wallace praised Markson's novel, considering it "an imaginative portrait of what it would be like actually to live in the sort of world the

[14] *Fate, Time and Language* explores Wallace's philosophical background, examining his undergraduate honours thesis "Richard Taylor's 'Fatalism' and the Semantics of Physical Modality".
[15] As an addendum Wallace's title refers to the solipsism felt in the empty world Markson conjures in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*: "damnation to ghostliness among ghosts, curating a plenum of statues, mistaking echoes for voices" (9).

logic & metaphysics of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* posits", and that it "transforms metaphysics into angst" while revealing that "philosophy is first and last about spirit" (1990, 49). He felt Markson had succeeded in fusing philosophy and fiction by demonstrating the vital role of the novel of ideas in joining "cerebration & emotion, abstraction & lived life, transcendent truth-seeking & daily schlepping". In other words, Markson had delivered on Wallace's literary-philosophical ideal of "making heads throb heart like" (ibid).

For the above reason Wallace's analysis of *Wittgenstein's Mistress* raises concerns equally relevant to his own development as they were to his analysis of Markson's achievement, and so provides a reflection on his conception of literature more than any other ficto-critical analysis of a text provided by Wallace.[16] My analysis of Wallace's "The Empty Plenum" proves useful to understanding his own work's development. It also seems fitting that his work be assessed in the narrative vein he elected to be measured against, by the parameters he sets for others. To understand Wallace's philosophical ambitions in literature, then, it is worth looking in detail at what Wallace thought Markson had achieved and why.

1.3 The Vocational Travelogue

To understand what Wallace took Markson to have achieved, we should return to the central questions of this thesis: can metaphysical novels do more than allude to or illustrate philosophy? Put differently, how is the purpose of Markson's novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress* different from that of Wittgenstein's own philosophical text, the *Tractatus*? And can Markson's novel do more than allude to or illustrate Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*? To answer this from Wallace's perspective I think it is instructive to look at his notion of the vocational travelogue.

Wallace, in his collection *Both Flesh and Not*, utilises the idea of the 'vocational travelogue' as a shorthand reference to the way fiction has previously offered a form of imaginative tourism: a means by which readers could gain insights into places or cultures they'd otherwise never get to see. Modernity, globalisation and television have, however, rendered this function obsolete.[17] Wallace claims that in its place modern technology has created

[16] It should be noted that Wallace has given some attention to other writers including McElroy, DeLillo, Pynchon and Gaddis. None, however, have received the sustained attention given to David Markson in "The Empty Plenum".

[17] This is illustrated, for instance, in major vocational travelogue-style novels, such as Hailey's "*Airport* and *Hotel*" and Ed McBain's "police procedurals".

such extreme vocational specialisation that few people are now "in a position to know much about any professional field but their own; and thus that a certain amount of fiction's *touristic* function now consists in giving readers dramatized access to the nuts and bolts of different professional disciplines and specialties" (5). Akin to mathematical melodrama fiction,[18] Wallace asserts that many take it for given that if the novel delves into philosophical content, then it does so in this fashion—as a modern vocational travelogue of esoteric technical philosophy. His concern is that metaphysical novels, understood in such a vein, would be rendered derivative or vaguely sensationalist, and that they would function merely as an intellectual *shibboleth* in various forms, whether by riding on the coat tails of genius through allusion, dropping references 'like bricks' throughout the work, or parroting a philosopher's lines in parodic homage.[19]

Incidentally the concern Wallace raises about fiction rendered derivative has overtones of Plato's concern about mimêsis, or poetry functioning as a *copy of a copy*. One of the dangers of imitation, according to Plato in Book 10, is that Poetic mimêsis, like the kind in a painting, is the imitation of appearance alone, and its products thus rank far below truth (596–602). Through the imitation of appearance, it has been argued that artistic mimêsis intensifies a weakness present in existing objects, and consequently not only fails but fails twice, or doubly; see Murray (27–46).

This idea of the vocational travelogue raises the very question I claimed emerged from Plato's rejection of the poet from the ideal society, but set in the present context: is literature limited to being but a translation of philosophy; that is, the making of abstruse ideas accessible? In this case, is the novel of ideas rendered derivative or secondary? Or does literature go *beyond* philosophy—that is, is there something the novel alone can say? On this question of the status of literature dealing with philosophical content or theory, Wallace writes that "*Wittgenstein's Mistress*, with regards to its eponymous master, does more than just quote Wittgenstein in weird ways, or allude to his work, or attempt to be some sort of dramatization of the intellectual problems that occupied and oppressed him". He expands: "I do not mean to suggest that David Markson's achievement here consists just in making abstract philosophy 'accessible' to an extramural reader, Markson's is not a pop

[18] For instance, *Fermat's Last Theorem* or *A Beautiful Mind*.
[19] Wallace's example is *Candide*, in which Pangloss's statement "'all for the best in the best of all possible worlds' is a neon sign out front of what is, except for its end, little more than a poisonously funny parody of the metaphysics of Leibniz, and which succumbs to the hazard of most parody and gets the point of Leibniz's best-of-all-possible-worlds stuff totally wrong" (91).

book, and it is not decocted philosophy or a docudrama-of-the-week" (86). Wallace claims that though *Wittgenstein's Mistress* requires critical 'clarification' by reference to the *Tractatus*, the novel is not merely written 'in the margins of' the *Tractatus*—the way for instance Voltaire's *Candide* marginalises The Monadology or Nausea, simply by 'dramatising' it. What then does it do? What does its achievement consist of that puts it above decocted philosophy or derivative illustration, or above *vocational travelogue* status? The following sections consider what Ryerson and Ramal took this achievement to be. I will respond to their claims before turning to my own interpretation.

1.4 Ryerson and Solipsism

Ryerson, in his introduction to the posthumous publication of Wallace's undergraduate thesis in philosophy, draws attention to the role that philosophy played in Wallace's fiction and other writings (2011, 1–33). He claims that while Wallace abandoned philosophy as a formal pursuit, it was nonetheless formative for his cast of mind, and repeatedly crops up in the subject matter of his writing. Ryerson provides an exposition of where philosophical topics surface in Wallace's novels *Broom of the System*, *Infinite Jest* and *The Pale King*, among other writings,[20] and in this introduction he indicates that Wallace wanted to unite literature and philosophy in the same way David Markson did in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. Ryerson writes: "Wallace felt that Markson's novel had succeeded in uniting literature and philosophy in the way that he, in Broom, tried but failed to do" (27).

Ryerson does not, however, explore what this *same way* amounts to, nor does he expand on the views Wallace propounds in "The Empty Plenum", concerning his conception of the nature of philosophy and its relation to literature. Ryerson's focus rests mainly upon Wallace's approval of Markson's ability to imaginatively render the Tractarian solipsist's world, focusing on the way solipsism has similarly haunted Wallace's work. Ryerson writes "for Wallace, this was a harrowing equation, the dark emotional takeaway of the *Tractatus'* severe anti-metaphysics. This was also, for Wallace, what Markson had rendered imaginatively in his novel. Without ever raising these ideas explicitly, Markson had conveyed them with a special kind of clarity" (27). Ryerson then continues to loosely relate this to Wallace's insistence that the task of fiction is to *make heads throb heart like*; that is, to draw out the emotional implications of the literary work without getting lost in its abstract

[20] For instance, the morality of consuming sentient beings is considered in "Consider the Lobster", the question of beauty in athletics in "Federer as Religious Experience", illusory freedom in "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again", and the nature of language in "Authority and American Usage".

and intellectual details (14). Ryerson is undeniably correct when he points to the importance of the conjured solipsism and loneliness in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*:

> Wallace had read the *Tractatus*, of course (he wrote to Lance Olsen that he thought its first sentence was "the most beautiful opening line in western lit"). He knew that Wittgenstein's book presented a spare and unforgiving picture of the relations among logic, language, and the physical world. He knew that the puzzles solved and raised by the book were influential, debatable, and rich in their implications. But as a flesh-and-blood reader with human feelings, he also knew, though he had never articulated it out loud, that as you laboured to understand the *Tractatus*, its cold, formal, logical picture of the world could make you feel strange, lonely, awestruck, lost, frightened—a range of moods not unlike those undergone by Kate herself. The similarities were not accidental. Markson's novel, as Wallace put it, was like a 240-page answer to the question, "What if somebody really had to live in a Tractatusized world?" (27)

Indeed, Wallace wrote "Mr Markson has in this book succeeded already on all the really important levels of fictional conviction … He has fleshed the abstract sketches of Wittgensteinian doctrine into the concrete theatre of human loneliness" (24). Wallace describes *Wittgenstein's Mistress* at one point in his essay to be "an immediate study of depression & loneliness [that] is far too moving to be the object of either exercise or exorcism" (98). In fact, Markson in an interview with Joseph Tabbi asserts that the central concept of the book was the idea of aloneness.

I would, however, consider it misleading to claim, as Ryerson has, that this is what so attracted Wallace to *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. In contrast I take the major point for Wallace to be not *the particular* conjuring of solipsism, but the *having conjured* the emotional implications of the text, when Wallace writes: "I can think of no lit.-practitioner (as opposed to new- or post-structural theorist) who's captured the textual urge, the emotional urgency of text as both sign and thing, as perfectly as has Markson here" (127).

Wallace held the novel in such high regard because it was not so much an attempt to posit grounds for solipsism, but to express solipsism *as felt*. This could be called, perhaps tritely, both the *felt experience of encountering metaphysics*, and giving the reader imaginative access to this felt experience. As Wallace writes: "I guess a big part of serious fiction's purpose is to give the reader, who like all of us is sort of marooned in her own skull, to give her

imaginative access to other selves … if a piece of fiction can allow us imaginatively to identify with a character's pain, we might then also more easily conceive of others identifying with our own. This is nourishing, redemptive; we become less alone inside" (127).

I do not doubt the importance of solipsism to Wallace, it being a theme to which he regularly returns.[21] However, Ryerson seems to allude to, yet not follow through with, a major issue: much writing has concerned solipsism—the value of Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress* to Wallace lay in his "[never] raising these ideas *explicitly*", yet nonetheless "conveying them with a *special kind of clarity*" (27, emphasis added). It was this method of rendering that Wallace most admired in Markson—and this, I demonstrate in a later section, concerns a distinction between Showing and Saying developed by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus*. This same distinction, I will demonstrate, provides a novel way to address the question set out in this thesis.

1.5 Ramal on Explanation

Randy Ramal, continuing from where Ryerson left off, aims to explore Wallace's views specific to understanding the aims of literature (177–199). Beginning with a concern for Wallace's conception of the nature of philosophy, Ramal turns to the question: is philosophy such that it can be used to make the same points Wallace wanted to make in a narrative form? This is a question that Ramal, in reading Wallace, answers in the negative. In brief, Ramal demonstrates how Wallace's background in Wittgenstein's philosophy helped him develop his views on the natures of philosophy and literature. He argues that Wallace conceived of the nature of philosophy to be concerned with describing and clarifying everyday concepts without interfering with, or attempting to change, what was described. This being the case, he asserts that Wallace found "philosophy as such [to be] unsuitable for the thinker, the artist, or the creative writer who wants to not only describe and analyse concepts but also offer therapeutic alternatives to existential problems" (188). Ramal quotes Wallace saying, "I just think that fiction that isn't exploring what it means to be human today isn't art" (McCaffery, 26). Consequently, Ramal concludes that Wallace attempted to do in literature what could not be done in philosophy—that is, *express and deal with* existential matters. Ramal argues that by incorporating philosophical narratives into

[21] As Ryerson writes, Wallace's engagement with Wittgenstein's philosophy was a lasting affair, particularly as Wittgenstein addresses the doctrine of solipsism in both his earlier and later work.

his literature, Wallace found this to be a creative way of reinventing literature and using it to fight aesthetic and existential crises.[22]

Consequently, Ramal primarily reads Wallace as desiring to articulate moral perspectives on human nature beyond the confines of traditional philosophy, and thereby to be able to discuss moral and existential issues he found to be important. He claims that Wallace felt literature could escape the confines of philosophy, by avoiding theorisation and the offering of explanations, writing: "[Wallace] believed that theorizing about human nature … entails certain dangers from which the narrative philosopher ought to steer away" (190). Ramal argued Ryerson's interpretation of "The Empty Plenum" failed in that it focused on only half of Wallace's critique: "On the one hand, he saw the novel as a realistic portrait of the negative consequences of living in the kind of world that Wittgenstein depicted in the *Tractatus*", but, according to Ramal, Ryerson ignored the important anti-explanation component of Wallace's thinking, that "on the other hand, [Wallace] also found that [*Wittgenstein's Mistress*] suffers from the same fate as many narratives that promote metaphysical, or generalized, theories—namely the temptation to offer an explanation for the radically diverse and complex existence we have" (190).

Ramal argued that Wallace must have encountered the references to the danger of theorising in Wittgenstein, who held theoretical explanations to be too generalised and distorting of the phenomena they seek to explain. To understand Wittgenstein's critique requires examination of his approach to explanation outlined in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Applying this approach to psychological research reveals conceptual confusions stemming from underlying essentialism, referentialist and reductionist assumptions, leading to misconceived notions of causality, explanation and systematisation, leaving experimentation with unsound conceptual underpinnings. Here Wittgenstein is concerned with explanation, and the tendency to theorize and stipulate psychological, emotional or causal explanations as the needed factors behind a proper understanding of what is real and meaningful.[23]

[22] Ramal will go on to argue that Wallace took the state of American fiction to be in both aesthetic and moral crises, and that there was a consequent need to 'reinvent literature' by writing a new kind of fiction to tackle existential issues including: nihilism, depression, boredom, dullness, and the effects of entertainment on people's lives. See Wallace's journalistic assignment "Consider the Lobster", and the existential themes of boredom and dullness in unfinished novel *The Pale King*.

[23] For example, Wittgenstein attacks the idea that psychological theorizing necessarily explains the inner life of people by questioning whether core foundations of natural sciences—causality and systematization—are applicable to psychology. Insistence on causal explanation also suggests a systematic correspondence

Wallace seems to have been aware of this point. As his critiques of Markson's novel suggest, when it comes to existential issues relating to boredom, death, making responsible choices, etc., it is doubtful that theories could perform the job they are supposed to do, whether in philosophy or literature. Wallace's worry here, which was also Wittgenstein's concern, is that whereas theories are often promoted to be the explanation of where meaning and sense reside, the latter could easily escape the scope of theorising.

Ramal's arguments fairly capture Wallace's disapproval of Markson's use of explanation. For example, amidst his otherwise passionate advocacy and praise of *Wittgenstein's Mistress*,[24] Wallace writes: "What I'm negative on is the particular strategy Markson sometimes employs to try to explain Kate's 'female' feelings both of ultimate guilt & of ultimate loneliness" (263). Wallace's major critique of *Wittgenstein's Mistress* is that it attempts to offer psychological explanations for Kate's emotional condition. Wallace, for instance, finds the presentation by Markson of the death of Kate's son, and her separation from her husband, to be a very particular type of emotional *explanation* and objectionable reduction, asserting "the presentation of personal history as present explanation, one that threatens to make *Wittgenstein's Mistress* just another madwoman monologue in the Ophelia–Rhys tradition, is oblique & ever artful, but still prominent & insistent enough to make it hard (for me) to blink its intent" (264).

It should be noted that what Wallace finds disappointing about Markson's novel is not so much that it fails to offer an explanation but rather it fails "*because* it's an explanation" (emphasis added). This is perhaps in part because Wittgenstein felt that to solve philosophical problems we do not need better philosophical theories; we should not aim for explanation, but rather for a detailed description of the use of our words, providing a "perspicuous representation" (PI, 122) by means of which we can gain a more profound understanding of language. Wallace writes, in reference to Markson's apparent settling on a character-archetype, and narrative explanation for Kate's emotional condition, that: "it seems very interesting to me that Mr. Markson has created a Kate who dwells so convincingly in a hell of utter subjectivity, yet cannot, finally, himself help but objectify

between things, of causal connections that are universal and omnipresent. In contrast, Wittgenstein argued that we need not presume there are neural processes correlated with associating or with thinking; such that it is possible to read off thought processes from brain processes. He writes: "why should there not be a psychological regularity to which no physiological regularity corresponds? If this upsets our concepts of causality then it is high time they were upset. See for further Hacker (2013).

[24] Though it should be acknowledged that in the "The Empty Plenum" Wallace also expresses unease about what he calls "questions of voice and over-allusion" in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*.

her—i.e., by 'explaining' her metaphysical condition as emotional/psychical, reducing her bottled missive to a mad monologue … Markson is basically subsuming Kate under one of the comparatively stock rubrics via which we guys apparently must organize & process fey mystery, feminine pathos, Strengthless & Female fruit" (262).

Indeed in reference to explanation in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, Wallace expresses his affirmation of the way the novel inverts the received formulae for 'successful' fiction, in that its success is where it fails to conform; that is, "it's when Kate is least particular, least 'motivated' by some artfully presented but standardly digestible Evian/Valentinian/post-Freudian trauma, that her character & plight are most affecting. For (obvious tho this seems) to the extent that Kate is not motivationally unique, she can be all of us, and the empty diffraction of Kate's world can map or picture the desacralized & paradoxical solipsism of U.S. persons in a cattle-herd culture that worships only the Transparent I" (263).

My major objection to Ramal is, however, the centrality he assigns this opposition to explanation in Wallace's criticism of *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. Markson's offering of explanations was objectionable to Wallace foremost because Markson attempted to say what could only be shown, a Wittgensteinian distinction I shall examine in the following section. By doing so I hope to illustrate the way Ramal's anti-explanation reading of Wallace can be subsumed under this more general point.

1.6 Saying and Showing in "The Empty Plenum"

In what follows I examine what I take to be the major pitfalls in both readings: that is, their failure to recognise the importance of Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction in the *Tractatus*. This distinction I argue is pivotal. It cast's light on where literature's value resides, and what Wallace takes Markson, in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, to have succeeded in doing.

Ryerson, when providing a rough layman's guide to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, quotes Wittgenstein, stating: "anything in language that does not depict a possible state of affairs—that is, anything that does not depict possible fact—is, strictly speaking, meaningless" (27). He does not, however, follow on this discussion. But he does at one-point assert Wallace may have had a strong misreading of Wittgenstein's work, given Wallace wrote "the impoverished role granted to ethics, aesthetics, and spiritual values in

the *Tractatus* was 'a big motivation' for its disavowal by Wittgenstein" (27). This is a view Ryerson claims is misguided as the biographical literature suggests that Wittgenstein was perfectly at ease with the solipsism of the *Tractatus*, indeed even mystically consoled by its suggestion that ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual truths are unutterable. In contrast to Ryerson, I argue that Wallace was not in fact oblivious to the paradox of the *Tractatus*, but aware of it and its implications for what can be *said* and what can only be *shown*. It is rather Ryerson, who provides the strong misreading of Wallace, by believing him to be oblivious to the alternate mystical reading of the *Tractatus*, which I argue he was not only aware of, but that gave foundations to his argument in important ways.

While Ramal recognised Wallace's knowledge of this saying-showing distinction—as evidenced when he quotes Wallace writing that *Wittgenstein's Mistress* succeeds "in a deep-nonsensical way that's much more effective than argument or [allegory]" (84)—Ramal even finds that by *deep-nonsensical* ways Wallace may be referring to the ending of the *Tractatus* where Wittgenstein writes "My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless/nonsensical (*unsinnig*), when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them" (*Tractatus*, 6.54). Ramal believes that Wallace uses this to say something *obviously positive* about Markson's novel. But 'obviously positive' seems to be where Ramal's analysis stops. Indeed, Ramal dismisses further analysis, stating: "the *Tractatus* is notoriously difficult to understand, and this is not the place to analyse its complexity or to gauge Wallace's understanding of it" (74). Indeed, where Ramal delves into the *Philosophical Investigations*, and its relevance, I am of a mind with Cora Diamond, who holds that to understand Wittgenstein's work:

> One must be struck by his insistence that he is not putting forward philosophical doctrines or theses; or by his suggestion that it cannot be done, that it is only through some confusion one is in about what one is doing that one could take oneself to be putting forward philosophical doctrines or theses at all. I think that there is almost nothing in Wittgenstein which is of value, and which can be grasped if it is pulled away from that view of philosophy. But that view of philosophy is itself something that has to be seen first in the *Tractatus* if it is to be understood in its later forms, and in the *Tractatus* it is inseparable from what is central there, the distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown. (Cahill quoting Diamond, 42)

Consequently, given the distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown resides in his earlier work, my focus on the *Tractatus* is my point of departure from both readings. I have argued above that Ryerson and Ramal both provide analysis of important aspects of Wallace's "The Empty Plenum", yet both are guilty of a glaring oversight: they fail to examine the influence of the saying-showing distinction on Wallace. Wallace's discussion of philosophy's relation to literature circles around this central distinction. However, before demonstrating this I will defend the informativeness of this distinction, a defence resting on the plausibility of a mystical interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. The following Chapter II elaborates on saying-showing distinction, and then in Chapter III fleshes out its meaning in a literary context.

CHAPTER II: The Mysticism of the *Tractatus*

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them 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.)
>
> (6.54, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*).

Ryerson and Ramal misread Wallace, due to a lack of engagement with the influence of Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction. The root of Wallace's analysis can best be understood in terms of this overlooked distinction. But how should we understand this distinction—what cannot be said but only shown? And how does this relate to literature?

In order to understand this distinction, we must understand Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, a text infamous for its ambiguity and for the contention over its meaning. Unsurprisingly there exist a variety of interpretations of what Wittgenstein was up to. In what follows I will evaluate these various interpretations. I conclude that proper understanding of the *Tractatus* requires conceiving it to be an *elucidatory* project intended to acquaint us with mystical experience, rather than an attempt to communicate truths. I hold that the point of the *Tractatus* is not that its readers should come to apprehend some set of truths, but that they should come "to see the world aright". Of course, a great deal more light needs to be shed on what this notion of 'rightness' or indeed 'seeing' signifies, in Wittgenstein's phrase. This will be discussed below in the section on seeing the world aright. But first we must better understand the saying-showing distinction and see how it plays a central role in the *Tractatus*.

2.1 Senseless or Nonsense?

The *Tractatus* aims to chart the limits of thought by revealing the relationship between language and the world. To do so Wittgenstein proposed a *picture theory* of meaning, according to which the conditions for a proposition's having sense rest on the possibility of its representing or picturing a state of affairs. Consequently when a *true* proposition is thought or expressed, each constituent part *corresponds* to some aspect of the world—though importantly the picture theory allows for false pictures; for instance, "It is raining" when it is not raining—and this means that what can be said are only propositions of

natural science, rendering senseless (*sinloss*) a daunting number of statements which are used in language. It is important, however, to distinguish the senseless (*sinnlos*) from another group of statements which cannot carry sense, the nonsensical (*unsinnig*), as nonsense became the hinge of Wittgensteinian interpretive discussion during the last decade of the 20th century. Nonsensical propositions, like senseless propositions, are more radically devoid of meaning than senseless propositions; in that they transcend the bounds of sense.

Since only what is "in" the world can be described, anything that is "higher" is excluded. Nonsensical propositions include propositions of traditional metaphysics and the propositions of ethics and aesthetics—given these attempt to capture the world as a whole, they are also excluded. Similarly, the notion of solipsism—the very notion of a subject, for it is also not "in" the world but at its limit. While some nonsensical propositions are blatantly so ("Toby is identical" rather than "Toby is identical to himself"), others seem to be meaningful ("8 is a number" and "there are objects" for instance), and only analysis carried out in accordance with the picture theory can expose their nonsensicality. Wittgenstein does not, however, relegate all that is outside the bounds of sense to oblivion: he makes a saying-showing distinction that does additional crucial work, which shall be seen.

2.2 The Saying-Showing Distinction

What can be shown cannot be said, that is, what cannot be formulated in sayable (sensical) propositions can only be shown. The distinction between Saying and Showing first seriously emerges in Part 4 of the *Tractatus* in connection with the idea that a proposition shows, but does not say, what its sense is (4.022ff.). What can be shown, we are told, cannot be said (4.1212). By the end of the work the catalogue of what can be shown has expanded to include: the logical form of reality (4.121); the logical relations between propositions (4.1211, 6.1201 and 6.1221); the limit of empirical reality (5.5561); the truth in solipsism (5.62); and the mystical (6.522). Many philosophers have been ill-at-ease with this distinction. Russell, for one, claimed it left him "with a certain sense of intellectual discomfort" (TLP, xxi). But the apparent connection between the notion of showing and mystical things that 'make themselves manifest' made others hesitant to accept the distinction (6.522).

Nonetheless it can plausibly be argued that the distinction is the pivot on which Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* turns. Evidence of the centrality of the distinction comes in numerous forms. For one, in a letter to Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein complained that Russell did not understand the main message of the *Tractatus*, explaining that: "the main point is the theory of what can be expressed by propositions—i.e., by language . . . and what cannot be expressed by propositions, but only shown; which, I believe, is the cardinal problem of philosophy" (Stern, 69–70). This division would be the means by which Wittgenstein would "set a limit . . . to the expression of thoughts" (TLP, 3).

Further evidence that this distinction served as the main message of the text emerges when Wittgenstein writes to Ludwig von Ficker about his book, which he hoped Ficker would publish. Wittgenstein writes that he had once meant to include in the preface a sentence that might provide a key to understanding the work for him: "my work consists of two parts, the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important point … I've managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it … For now, I would recommend you read the preface and the conclusion, because they contain the most direct expression of the point" (*ProtoTractatus*, 16). The saying-showing distinction can then be seen to be central to understanding Wittgenstein's Tractarian project. He uses the distinction to carry out what he perceives to be philosophy's mission: to clarify our thoughts, sharpen the boundaries of what can and cannot be said, and circumscribe the limits of the natural sciences and philosophy (4.1–4.115). In order to properly understand the saying-showing distinction, we must firstly consider Wittgenstein's Tractarian project and the paradox of the *Tractatus*.

2.3 The Paradox of the Tractatus

The *Tractatus* aims to chart the limits of thought by revealing the relationship between language and the world. Outlined above, Wittgenstein proposes a picture theory, according to which, when a true proposition is thought or expressed, each constituent part *corresponds* to some aspect of the world. This correspondence itself, however, he claimed we could not *say* anything about; rather, this correspondence could only be *shown*. Given this picture theory of meaning, Wittgenstein claims the only meaningful propositions are those that picture contingent states of affairs, falsely or truly. It follows that only states of affairs that can be pictured can be represented by meaningful propositions. This means that what can be said are only propositions of natural science, rendering nonsensical a wide number of

propositions, including, firstly, the propositions of logic (as these propositions do not represent states of affairs, and the logical constants do not stand for objects). all propositions of ethics, aesthetics, the mystical, and indeed, philosophy itself.

Yet Wittgenstein also claims what I will refer to as Assumption (A), that *the purpose of the Tractatus is to communicate truths*. Wittgenstein states that one aspect of the work's value consists in the fact that "thoughts are expressed" in it (29), and that "the truth of the thoughts communicated . . . here seems to me unassailable and definitive" (29). Infamously, however, were (A) correct, then this generates a serious paradox rendering the *Tractatus* incoherent. By laying out his theory of meaning in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein draws a limit to the expression of thoughts entailing the meaninglessness of any attempt to elaborate this very theory of meaning. Consequently the *Tractatus'* picture theory of meaning renders the propositions of the *Tractatus* nonsensical, because, if we take the picture theory to be true, then to try to say how the world, and language, must be for meaning to be possible is to try to say something about the logical form that sentences share with reality (2.16–2.18); but, according to that very theory, the attempt to do such a thing can only issue in nonsense, since logical form cannot be represented (4.12). Yet, given (A), Wittgenstein claims that the *Tractatus* communicates thoughts whose truth is *unassailable and definitive*. Here then is the paradox of the *Tractatus*: if its constituent sentences are true, then they are nonsense. How can true thoughts be communicated by nonsensical pseudo-propositions?

2.4 Interpretations of the Saying-Showing Distinction

Given this ambiguity, understanding the *Tractatus* has been an ongoing topic of contention and confusion since its publication. Indeed, since its publication several waves of interpretations have come to dominate. Some fundamental disagreements informing interpretation revolve around the realism of the *Tractatus*, the notion of nonsense and its role in 'reading' the *Tractatus* itself, and the reading of the *Tractatus* as an ethical tract. Of concern, for our purposes, is elucidating the various positions on what the saying-showing distinction *is doing* in the context in which Wittgenstein articulates it. In what follows I will examine how theorists have attempted to make sense of what is going on, given the *Tractatus'* apparently incoherent nature.

I will outline several interpretations of the *Tractatus* wholesale and their bearing on this question. Some interpret the *Tractatus* as espousing 'realism', positing the existence of

objects, states of affairs, facts—via a 'linguistic turn'— "The world is all that is the case" and "Objects form the substance of the world" (TLP, 2.021). If one has a straightforward reading of the 'picturing' relation espoused in the text, this makes sense. The issue, however, of the *Tractatus*' realism requires addressing the question of the limits of language, and particularly what there is 'beyond' language. Consequently, the necessary preceding interpretative question concerns the very presence of metaphysics within the book and the status of the propositions of the book themselves. Interpretive discussions of the status of 'nonsense', that which lies beyond the bounds of language, became necessary.

i. Traditional, Metaphysical Readings

The quandary arises concerning what it is that inhabits the realm of nonsense, given Wittgenstein asserts there is something to be shown rather than said, which he characterises as the 'mystical'. Traditional readings of the *Tractatus* accepted the existence of the unsayable, the nonsensical. These traditional interpretations of the *Tractatus* conceive it therefore to be a classical piece of metaphysics: attempting to determine the world's relation to language and truth. See for instance Wedberg's initial sections of his work: "*Tractatus*' teachings of the world", "of language" and "of philosophy". Soames (197–254) more recently offers a similarly 'traditional' reading, devoting an entire chapter to the metaphysics of the *Tractatus*. These traditional 'metaphysical' readings commonly ignore or fail to highlight the concept of nonsense and Wittgenstein's views on philosophy—some may, similarly to Soames, claim that Wittgenstein deliberately violated language rules to show us something about the rules of language (252–253). Or as Wedberg (1962) argued a compromise is necessary: that Wittgenstein is asserting that true philosophy is the pursuit to prove all other philosophy nonsense. Similarly, Hacker (2000, 356) treats the *Tractatus* as providing a refutation of transcendental idealisms, by regarding the incoherence of the *Tractatus* as demonstrating the falsity of its central doctrines.

ii. Resolute Nonsense Readings

More recent readings tend to take the nonsense to be merely nonsense. These readings tend to deny that the *Tractatus* points at metaphysical truths and draw upon his words in 6.54—the famous ladder metaphor—to justify throwing out the *Tractatus* itself, *including* the distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown. Such non-sympathetic readings assert that because the *Tractatus'* theory of meaning implies its own nonsensicality we should reject the *Tractatus* and leave it at that. Relatedly, modern

'resolute' readings emphasise the fact that Wittgenstein is insisting that he is not expressing any philosophical sentences in the *Tractatus*. Diamond (1988), for instance, holds the only reasonable way of reading the *Tractatus* is to consider all philosophical sentences to be nonsense. This reading takes seriously the claim that the ladder must be thrown away: to understand Wittgenstein you must realise that all philosophical propositions, like the ones in the book, are mere nonsense. Below, however, I will offer two distinct ways of interpreting the *Tractatus* which, rather than rejecting and dismissing it, attempt to make sense of the apparent paradox.

iii. Ineffable Interpretations

A special tradition that has developed in the interpretation of the nonsense concept may be called 'ineffable truth' interpretations. This *ineffable* reading takes up the traditional metaphysical view that the *Tractatus* is a work of metaphysics, which puts forward substantive claims about the nature of a language-independent reality;[25] however, these interpretations emphasise that 'nonsense' is not something that should immediately be discarded. On this view, the *Tractatus* provides a speculative account of what the relation between language and this independent reality must be in order for language to represent the world, but it is only by assuming that Wittgenstein accepts there *are* ineffable truths about reality mirrored in language that we can begin to understand the distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown, and the *Tractatus*' clear suggestion that it is intended to convey lasting insights—enabling us to "see the world aright" (TLP, 6.54) even while it requires us to throw away the very nonsensical propositions that *enabled* us to see the world aright. Thus, the metaphysical-sounding assertions with which the work opens are, by its own lights, incoherent. Yet we must use them to grasp the essential and ineffable nature of reality that is necessarily reflected in any language in which thoughts are expressed. It has been argued that the majority of the *Tractatus*' foremost interpreters subscribe to this reading.[26] See, for instance, Anscombe's (1971) case that the *Tractatus* 'nonsense' concept is illustrating a distinction between what can be said and what can only be shown. Sullivan (2003) similarly argues that this distinction needn't require 'quasi-truths' just an attempt to express something that is understood by the reader, what co-author Moore (2003) calls an 'ineffable' understanding.

[25] This mystical reading is defended by McGuinnes, Morris and Dodd (2009).
[26] McGinn (1999) points to such a case in Anscombe (1971), Black (1964), Russell (1971), Ramsey (2013) among others.

iv. Therapeutic Readings

On what we can call a *therapeutic reading*, far from being a work of metaphysics, the *Tractatus* represents the unfolding of a therapeutic strategy. This begins with the temptation to make metaphysical pronouncements from a philosophical perspective and ends with the realisation that these pronouncements are nonsensical: the so-called philosophical perspective is an illusion, consequently we are no longer tempted to ask or answer philosophical questions, but willingly confine ourselves to the realm of what can be said, the propositions of natural science.[27]

v. Problems For Each

Each school of interpretation can be considered problematic for different reasons. The *resolute readings* are unappealing in that they are uncharitable readings, and they end what is otherwise a fecund conversation. On the one hand, the *metaphysical reading* and its more nuanced *ineffable* counterpart hold that the metaphysical truths about reality that the *Tractatus* attempts to communicate are truths that cannot be said but make themselves manifest. This requires accepting that Wittgenstein's propositions are indeed nonsense, but a special, illuminating sort of nonsense. The fundamental problem with reading Wittgenstein's remarks as nonsense that conveys ineffable truths about the world is that there is an obvious tension in the idea that Wittgenstein is putting forward metaphysical doctrines while also claiming that metaphysical propositions are nonsensical. This reading must contradict or ignore the book's preface and closing assertions where the *Tractatus* claims itself to be *nonsense*, plain and simple—not special illuminating nonsense.

On the other hand, it is a paradoxical feature of the *therapeutic* reading that it regards the remarks of the *Tractatus* as communicating nothing, but nevertheless bringing about the reader's realisation that nothing is being communicated. The work is at the same time held to provide the insights necessary for its own self-destruction and to provide no genuine insight that is not ultimately obliterated in the final act of self-annihilation. As such, we are offered an unappealing alternative between considering Wittgenstein's remarks nonsense that conveys ineffable truths about the world and as nonsense that conveys nothing whatsoever.

[27] A position advocated for by Cora Diamond (2002), James Conant (2002) and Tom Ricketts (1995) among others.

vi. A Promising Alternative Reading

As neither option provides a fully satisfactory resting place, a third 'elucidatory' interpretation is available to us.[28] This approach enables us to find a way between these two alternatives: allowing the remarks to achieve something, while stopping short of holding that they convey ineffable truths about reality. Marie McGinn provides an 'elucidatory' interpretation to navigate between these two alternatives, though it diverges from my own. McGinn, in viewing nonsense to be 'elucidatory', opposes the traditional reading of the *Tractatus* as presenting a self-undermining metaphysical theory, and opposes the resolute reading—which is contradictory, in asserting that once you've climbed the ladder you are to throw it away. She rightly asks: how can we have got anywhere by climbing the ladder if the ladder is itself an illusion? McGinn's solution is to regard Wittgenstein's nonsense as elucidatory. In attempting to provide an interpretation that will resolve the paradox, McGinn states that:

> [What is needed is an interpretation] which avoids the suggestion that there are ineffable truths about reality, but which allows that there is something behind Wittgenstein's remarks; which permits these remarks to fall away completely, but which allows that the remarks accomplish something important; which avoids committing Wittgenstein to any metaphysical doctrines, but which does not fall into the paradox of self-destruction. (496–497)

I follow on this suggestion and defend an interpretation which does not assert the existence of any 'ineffable truths', yet on which a certain *attitude* towards the world is conveyed, a mystical attitude. Given this, I hold that the point of the *Tractatus* is not that its readers should apprehend some set of truths, but that they should come to *see the world rightly* (a notion which much of this dissertation shall be spent defending, problematising and nuancing. Wittgenstein's text is designed to get the reader to adopt an alternate perspective on life altogether; the perspective of mysticism. It is this mystical perspective—not some set of truths—that the *Tractatus*' incoherence points us towards, and which the text is designed to encourage us to adopt. The result, therefore, is not any sort of discovery or addition to our knowledge; it does not enable us to do anything we could not do before; it

[28] Indeed there have been a number of writers who have tried to develop a third way, incorporating what they see as insights and avoiding what they see as flaws in both the ineffabilist and therapeutic readings. The most prominent advocates of these elucidatory readings of the *Tractatus* are Dan Hutto (2017) and Marie McGinn (1999).

is, in a certain sense, completely idle. Yet this is no fault of the work; the purpose of Wittgenstein's remarks is not to alert us to facts or inform us of truths, but rather his work's significance is exhausted in the *change of perception* it brings about. To evidence the centrality of this perceptual shift, consider when Wittgenstein writes

> What I give is the morphology of the use of an expression. I show that it has kinds of uses of which you had not dreamed. In philosophy one feels forced to look at a concept in a certain way. What I do is suggest, or even invent, other ways of looking at it. I suggest possibilities of which you had not previously thought. You thought that there was one possibility, or only two at most. But I made you think of others. Furthermore, I made you see that it was absurd to expect the concept to conform to those narrow possibilities. Thus, your mental cramp is relieved, and you are free to look around the field of use of the expression and to describe the different kinds of uses of it. (Wittgenstein Lectures of 1946–1947, quoted by Malcolm, 43)

This interpretation holds that Wittgenstein's remarks can bring about a change completely distinct from the acquisition of new information. It is essential to the idea that Wittgenstein's remarks serve as elucidations that the position we have now reached does not amount to any sort of discovery or substantial claim but represents our becoming acquainted with the world in a new light, with a new clarity of vision through this perceptual shift. An interesting aside is that 'paraconsistent logics' have recently been recognised as having validity in formal logic. These are logics which challenge the standard truth–falsity binary that dominates analytic philosophy, they allow for truth-statements to be either: false, true, false and true or neither false nor true. These allow us to make sense both of the counterintuitive consequences of quantum mechanics and insights derived from Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, particularly that of the Madhyamaka Prasangika school.[29]

I argue that we should jettison (A) that *the purpose of the Tractatus is to communicate truths*, and adopt a 'no-truths-at-all' interpretation—on which Wittgenstein is self-consciously providing a theory of meaning which renders his text incoherent with the aim of doing 'something other' than communicate truths. By jettisoning assumption (1), the *Tractatus*'

[29] See, for further on this, the defence of dialetheism and paraconsistent logic made by Graeme Priest and Jay Garfield (2003, 1–21).

inability to be a source of propositional knowledge actually supports a reading of Wittgenstein's intent as being to bring us into acquaintance with the mystical. This provides a means of understanding how the incoherence of the *Tractatus* is intended to be elucidatory; in leaving us with a feeling of the world's limits that amounts to acquaintance with the boundaries of sense.

A natural query arises: how can we justify rejecting (A), given Wittgenstein himself claimed that the truths communicated in the *Tractatus* were "unassailable and definitive"? This has been a point of contestation; however, there are reasonable grounds for rejecting (A). Firstly, given Wittgenstein wrote this within a preface to the book, he could hardly declare that the whole book and the preface are nonsensical, given his intention that the reader adopt the philosophical perspective espoused in the *Tractatus*, in order to later abandon it on recognising its incoherence. Similarly, he writes in his final remarks: "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when [they] have used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after [they] has climbed up it.)" (TLP, 6.54). Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of the ladder to express the function of the *Tractatus*, demonstrating the work is to be used in order to climb above it from a position in which we can "see the world aright", but thereafter recognise the *Tractatus* as nonsense and cast it away, according with his final aphorism "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" (TLP, 7).

But how to demonstrate that a perspectival shift is distinct from the discovery of ineffable truths, rather than just a variation on the ineffable truths' reading? I argue that what the 'something other than' communicating truths amounts to is best elucidated through the saying-showing distinction. I argue this because Wittgenstein does not relegate *all* that is outside the bounds of sense to oblivion. The saying-showing distinction is made to do additional crucial work. "What can be shown cannot be said"; that is, what can be shown cannot be formulated in sayable (sensical) propositions, but this does not mean it has no value. This applies, for example, to the logical form of the world, the pictorial form, etc., which show themselves in the form of (contingent) propositions, in the symbolism, and in logical propositions. Even the unsayable (metaphysical, ethical, aesthetic) propositions of philosophy belong in this group—which Wittgenstein finally describes as "things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest, they are what is mystical" (TLP, 6.522). In referring to the *Tractatus*' propositions Wittgenstein says one must "surmount

these propositions and see the world rightly" (TLP, 6.54), indicating again that the *Tractatus* intends not to convey propositional truths but to have the reader adopt another perspective on life altogether. Wittgenstein further remarks: "my work consists of two parts; that presented here plus all I have not written. It is this second part that is important" (letter to Ludwig Ficker of circa September–October 1919, tr. McGuinness). This second part, that which is *not written*, refers to something that cannot be said but only *shown*. It is evident that the mystical attitude is what Wittgenstein takes to be that which cannot be expressed but only shown, writing "things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest, they are what is mystical" (TLP, 6.522).

Yet what does Showing amount to? Or, put differently, what is this mystical attitude that can only be shown? And can it be defined in more than a purely negative manner? That is, as more than simply that which cannot be said? For one thing, in order to understand Showing, we should see that showing seems inextricably linked with an experience, the experience of "seeing the world rightly" (TLP, 6.54). On a mystical reading this is fitting, given where analytic philosophy aims to produce propositions which can be assessed for their truth value, mysticism involves having an experience which shows how things are, that is, which acquaints us with the limits of the world (TLP, 6.45). This will be examined in a few sections where I outline the mystical 'project' of the *Tractatus*, but firstly to respond to some criticisms.

2.6 Wittgenstein's Two Philosophical Periods

Some will argue that further evidence is required to prove that Wittgenstein, in his later work, did *not* find the *Tractatus* wanting. This may be argued given the difficulty in reconciling the notion that Wittgenstein rejected his earlier *Tractatus* as inadequately attuned to his later ideas of 'use' in questions of meaning, with my assertions that Wittgenstein deployed the notion of showing in a literary way in fact *consonant* with his later ideas. Demonstrated earlier, Wittgenstein's letter to Luwig von Ficker supports a unitarian position on this matter, nonetheless I should make a case for what change I believe took place between what are commonly proclaimed to be Wittgenstein's 'two philosophical periods'.

There is a long-standing debate among Wittgenstein interpreters over the continuity between Wittgenstein's early and later thought. The standard interpretations traditionally perceived a clear break between these distinct stages; however, recent interpretations, I

believe wisely, challenge this assumption by identifying a fundamentally therapeutic motivation in the later Wittgenstein that should be attributed to the 'former'. Indeed, as argued in this thesis, the notion that philosophy should not be approached dogmatically is a crucial insight of the *Tractatus*. The difficulty is that the later Wittgenstein goes on to describe his own early work as dogmatic. This was commonly the cause for readers' perceiving a break between the earlier and later Wittgenstein. However, I think we can clearly see them engaged in the one project: that is, if there is a transition to be marked between the two Wittgenstein it is in the latter's 'total' rejection of dogmatism; that is, a 'more full' working out of the earlier claim that philosophy should be approached dogmatically in its entirety. This meant a 'doing away' with formal aspects of the earlier work and the move from viewing the realm of logic to viewing ordinary language as central to philosophical attention, a shift from systematic philosophical writing to the more aphoristic and an emphasis no longer on definition and analysis but instead on 'family resemblance' and 'language-games'.

If we look at Wittgenstein's later preoccupations we might well understand him to be deepening the very anti-dogmatic stance evident in the saying-showing distinction; that is, we see such parallels in his move from a *truth-functional* 'representational' understanding of meaning to a notion of meaning as 'use': where the sense of a word is its function in the language (PI, 43). We see parallels too in his attention to 'language-games', demonstrating the conventional nature of language and thus the impossibility of providing 'final definitions' (PI, 65). We see it too in his notion of 'family resemblances' for understanding the varied uses for the same word which demonstrate the failings of 'general' explanations or necessary/sufficient conditions (PI, 66).

In general, Wittgenstein's later writings resemble the earlier *Tractatus* in making the case that philosophers neither do nor should supply a theory or provide explanations. Yet while the *Tractatus* precludes philosophical theories the *Philosophical Investigations* points out the *therapeutic*, non-dogmatic nature of philosophy and so could be considered more of a guidebook or manual in the ways of therapy. The critical break then is that rather than offering one philosophical method, like in the *Tractatus*, *The Philosophical Investigations* demonstrates that there is not one but many methods or therapies (PI, 133). The fly may be shew'd out of the bottle of language by many means (PI, 309). Consequently, we can conclude that the saying-showing distinction brought about in the *Tractatus* is clearly

resonant with the later Wittgenstein's ideas, even if Wittgenstein later rejected aspects of the formalism of the *Tractatus* as limited and parochial.

Despite their discrepancies, the fundamental continuity between the stages resides in a shared approach to the question of the nature of philosophy: that is, in both, philosophy serves first as a critique of language, an attempt to, through analysing language's allusive power, expose the traps of meaningless philosophical formulations. The 'discovery' in the *Philosophical Investigations* is that which enables the philosopher to break off philosophising "when I want to" (PI, 133). This allusion, itself, refers back to the *Tractatus*' ladder metaphor and the injunction to silence in the face of what cannot be *said*, but only *shown*.

2.7 PS: What Even Is Mysticism?

It is important to differentiate my terms for clarity's sake. A 'mystical' perspective can here be understood to refer to not so much a *set of belief* with propositional content that can be factually assessed, but rather an experientially grounded shift in perception that has oriented the mystic to see the world in a particular light. By contrast, a 'religious' perspective generally is taken to involve the maintenance of a set of beliefs, practices, or opinions with fervour, 'faith' and conviction. While mystical encounters may radically alter an individual to the extent that they adopt a religious attitude towards life, one may be religious without ever having had mystical experiences, and one may be a mystic without ever adhering to beliefs, values or a particular metaphysics in a rigid way. Indeed, commonly those who have mystical experiences may encounter reality in a way that appears more 'direct' and have insights of an 'experiential' character, and consequently they may develop more wariness around conceptual filters altogether. This is not universally the case, and there are certainly many who have inexplicable experiences which self-identified mystics seek conceptual frameworks for, which they then adhere to dogmatically.

Nonetheless, when Wittgenstein refers to what is mystical, and its relation to showing, my focus has been on viewing the mystical as a 'perspectival shift'. This is quite a specific, even broad, interpretation of Wittgenstein's meaning, but one warranted I believe on account of the arguments presented in the previous chapter. It is unreasonable, and does little charity to Wittgenstein, to interpret his notion of the 'mystical' as reducible to a religious set of metaphysical doctrines. That would completely undermine the entire *Tractarian* project of calling into question metaphysical systems, given religion is historically

dependent on, and informed by, metaphysical doctrines: a set of truths hardened into unimpeachable, occulted, indeed dogmatic fiats. While a valid critique of the institution of religion, it is an obvious category error to apply it to Wittgenstein's notion of showing. If we consider philosophical discourses on *the sublime* and wonder the distinction between mystical perspectives versus 'propositional' perspectives becomes more evident, as shall be outlined below. But first to describe the ingredients present in a Tractarian mystical project.

2.6 Outlining Tractarian Mysticism

In order to understand the *Tractatus* as a mystical project with the character I describe, I should spell out exactly what this project amounts to. A clear way to structure this 'mystical project' is to describe how these beliefs can all emerge from a single 'mystical experiential' realm, and how these are characteristic of 'genuine mystical experiences'. Bertrand Russell's four characteristics of the mystics' beliefs in 'Mysticism and Logic' (1917) provide a good starting point, given there is considerable coincidence between Wittgenstein's Tractarian project and the characteristics of mysticism that Russell outlines in his essay. Russell describes metaphysics as an attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought: in this, metaphysics unites two tendencies in mankind's mind, the mystical and the scientific. The mystical tendency manifests itself in certain moods and feelings, in which one has a sense of certainty and revelation. This certainty does not easily lend itself to expression in words, unless it be by way of paradox; but, according to Russell, four things chiefly characterise the *beliefs*, if such they may so be called, of the mystic. First, there is typically a belief in an insight into reality, an insight which is superior to and quite different from sense and reason, an insight common to the mystic and the poet but far clearer in the former; second, the mystic believes that reality is one, containing no opposition or division; third, they hold or feel that time is unreal; and fourth, they think that evil is mere appearance, or perhaps that good and evil are both illusory (in any case, their ethic involves an acceptance of the world).[30] I will consider each in turn and how they can be seen in Wittgenstein's Tractarian project.

[30] An important ongoing debate rages between those who affirm a similar 'transpersonal' position to Wittgenstein, and those who dispute such a notion as resulting in a dis-engagement from the problems of the world, with its inequities and forms of oppression. On the surface these stances appear contradictory: one is either *of the world*, and ethically responsive to its dilemmas, striving to create a more *just* planet, or one has *transcended worldly concerns* and attends no longer to the needs of worldly-sufferers, such suffering being empty of ultimate existence, a mere illusion or superficial reality. However, it is possible that one may be

Russell claims the mystic experiences (1) *a belief in having insight into reality*, which Wittgenstein characterises as "das mystiche", an inexpressible feeling of having "solved the problems of life". This is arrived at by the second characteristic (2) a conviction in the unity and indivisibility of reality, brought out in Wittgenstein's sense of seeing the world as "a limited whole" (TLP, 6.45). Wittgenstein holds that to have experience of the world at all requires grasping the general nature of reality; which he claims requires the experience presupposed by classical logic, that something 'is' (TLP, 6.124); not knowledge of the truth of an existential proposition but an experience of an object. This logical experience is part of the mystical experience that 'there is a world'. This is as, it is only with experience that something 'is', that we acquire awareness that there are objects whose possibilities of combination require there to be a world for those possibilities to be realised in.

That 'there is a world' in turn connects with Wittgenstein's 'ethical experience', which parallels Russell's view (3) that ethics involves acceptance of the world; that is, as the mystical experience of there being a world leads to an attitude towards the world, the individual may find life becomes clearer or that they remain in doubt whether life has sense; distinguishing the happy from the unhappy person. The 'ethical reward' for the person of good conscience is in the addition of meaning to their existence, due to their acceptance of the world's existence and non-attachment to the contingency of the life of one person alone. When Wittgenstein states "I am my world" (TLP, 5.621) we can take him to be refusing to identify himself with a sole life but rather to associate with the whole of existence. This extends to the rejection of the association with the future and past of that one particular individual. This is similar to Russell's (4) feeling that time is unreal; as is evident when Wittgenstein expresses the conviction that the 'eternal life' belongs to the person who lives in the present (TLP6.45). As in the mystical experience, space and time are merely aspects of the world that are contemplated and accepted. In this way there is an experience of 'timelessness'.

The similarities between Russell's account, and views espoused in the *Tractatus* are striking. Indeed, the marks of the experience referred to by Wittgenstein are commonplace in many accounts of mystical experience. For instance, the well-respected characterisation of nature

both *of* the world and *apart* from it at once, and it would be a disservice to Wittgenstein to presume he had achieved pure dis-interest in human suffering. Tibetan Buddhism emphasises the fact that the ultimate emptiness of existence (*Shunyata*), *ultimate reality*, by no means dissolves the value of *conventional reality*. Both exist and have their place.

mysticism by the contemplative scholar Zaehner[31] comes close to the descriptions given by Russell and Wittgenstein above. This characterisation includes intense communion with nature; abdication of the ego; a sense of passing beyond morality; and emphasis on the sense of 'naked existence'.[32] We have good reason to conclude that the *Tractatus* describes a 'genuine mystical experience'—or at least is characteristic of commonly portrayed mystical experiences.

2.7 Evaluating Tractarian Mysticism

Many contend that elements of wisdom or insight are to be found in mystical experiences. However, whether we see value in this 'mystical project' will perhaps be a matter of whether we can relate to some of the experiences Wittgenstein describes, including those on timelessness, eternity, living in the present, and the nature of ethics. Even for those not experientially acquainted with the mystical—for whom 'the reality or unreality of the mystic's world' is unknown—it can be plausibly argued we should default to Russell's open-minded position, illustrated in the claim "I have no wish to claim (mysticism) reveals no genuine insight" (146). To positively assert the falsity of the mystical perspective without being at all acquainted with it seems foolhardy or presumptuous. And yet the hesitancy on the part of many analytic philosophers to engage with mysticism may in part stem from the discipline's reliance upon a very specific, and arguably confining, methodological toolkit, which is usually adopted in seeking to understand the world. This view necessarily suffers from a lack of feeling for the mystical subject matter that Wittgenstein wishes to show. It is for this very reason that Wittgenstein's Tractatus should not be misunderstood as an irrational mysticism but rather a *rationally embraced inconsistency*. The conclusion he leads us to, being, that we should be aware of the limitations of reason, and all that cannot be said but only shown. This conclusion is the consequence of rational inquiry and not of a mystical refusal to reason.

The *Tractatus* requires a mystical reading, and perhaps we are in the wrong place to fully draw out this reading; but in lieu of shamanistic rituals, deep meditative jhana states and potent hallucinogens, the best Wittgenstein can do perhaps is suggestively *show* this mystical experience and the perspectival shift he claims is attainable. Considering the

[31] For a more in-depth comparison of Wittgenstein's mysticism and recorded mystical experiences, see Mcguiness's *Mysticism and the Tractatus* (1966, 305–328).
[32] A parallel exists here between Wittgenstein and Huxley's experiences under the influence of mescalin; see Huxley's *Doors of Perception* (1954).

above, we should certainly recognise the strong grounds for a mystical reading of the *Tractatus*, which provides a response to the central paradox of the *Tractatus*.

Turning to William James provides an interesting reflection on the hesitancy among analytic philosophers to embrace the *Tractatus* in its apparent inconsistency. This is as many analytic philosophers adhere to an 'agnostic imperative'; that is, they hold it is always wrong to believe beyond the evidence: if a subject *S* believes that *p* is just as likely as not-*p* then it is impermissible for *S* to believe either *p* or not-*p*. Yet James, in his text *the Will to Believe* (1896), challenges the claim that we must withhold belief whenever the evidence is insufficient. James demonstrates that it can be perfectly reasonable to believe *beyond the evidence* as it were, in issues ranging from theistic beliefs to philosophical issues and even including matters of practical life.

One rationale he provides for this is that while the agnostic imperative holds that one should avoid error at all costs, and thereby risk the loss of certain truths, an alternate but equally valid strategy is to *seek truth by any means available*, even at the risk of error. He demonstrates how in numerous instances such an alternative strategy can yield more benefits than costs.[33] James is thus arguing we should distinguish the epistemic goals of (1) believing truths and (2) avoiding falsehoods, and that each of us will set the balance of risk between them in different places, for different projects, and yet there's no unfaultable arguments for setting it in one place rather than another *across the board*.[34] James then provides a useful intercession, in facilitating dialogue in what may otherwise seem a conflict of insuperable difference in core beliefs, by providing a case that draws on the analytic philosopher's own tools of reasoning to demonstrate why we should be tolerant of those who place the epistemic risk ratio in different locales.

2.8 Literary mysticism and temperament

Some might argue that how acceptable Tractarian mysticism will be to the reader will come down to temperament—in which case so would one's view of literary inquiry, if we accept

[33] For instance, James demonstrates that "there are cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming" (1896, 25); he does so by pointing to the example of social cooperation, that social collectives function *by virtue of* a trust by each member that the other members will behave accordingly—cooperation then arises as a consequence of the precursive faith of those involved. These could be understood as 'positive feedback loops' arising from faith.

[34] Jacques Derrida's discussion of ethics, and the impossibility of imposing valid laws that apply universally, is a (more) contemporary application of a similar idea; see Glendinning (187–203).

that both are tied up with 'showing what cannot be said'.[35] However, I will challenge this view, through consideration of the sublime. One of the most provocative issues around which different philosophical temperaments form is the attitude toward the whole experience of *being mystified*, *bamboozled, discombobulated*. Philosophical problems are of a sort to induce a sense of mystification, at least initially. To understand a philosophical problem is to be, at least initially, flummoxed. For some people, the presence of the mystifying is emotionally inviting, even thrilling; they revel in it and frame propositions about the world that only increase the mystery. For others, it is a fact of life; they put up with it and frame propositions about the world that best accommodate themselves to it; for still others, the idea of the mysterious is intolerable, and they frame propositions about the world that deny it.

These contrasts in strategies, some would argue, are natural expressions of temperamental differences. Another issue that some argue brings out 'temperamental philosophical differences' is the sense of what makes for the best kind of explanation, which is partially an aesthetic judgment, and consequently also partially an emotional one. Does a reductive explanation that leaves no wiggle-room provide you the greatest sense of satisfaction, or does it make you feel vaguely disappointed? Is a good explanation, for you, one that sets you off on curlicue ribbons of poetic association? These questions will naturally bear on whether one embraces or even comprehend the *Tractatus* as a mystical project rather than mere self-undermining nonsense. Similarly, they will bear on the value one assigns to the literary and probably all indirect forms of communication. However, in what follows I will argue that a reduction to differences in 'temperament' is immensely deflationary and relativising by considering our relation to the sublime.

2.9 On Showing and the Sublime

Through consideration of the sublime I will make the case that to reduce this category of insight to a matter of 'temperament' or taste is to do violence to the value we as humans have found to reside in extra-linguistic phenomenal experiences, since antiquity. Much philosophical rumination has been spent exploring the notion of the 'sublime' as a means of making sense of extra-linguistic phenomenal experience, from the Ancients via the Enlightenment to contemporary investigations by philosophers such as Zizek (Porter, 2016). For good reason, the sublime has consistently invited philosophical speculation as

[35] Goldstein (2011) explores further the influence of temperament in relation to mysticism and explanation.

to the *nature* of the experience of mystification and bamboozlement, described above. If we turn to the genealogy of literary-philosophical discourse around the sublime, we can see this is a substantive notion, not reducible to *temperament,* as many have argued. To claim as much is a disservice to the experience of the sublime: there is something profoundly dismissive and problematically 'relativising' in reducing this state and the insights available to a matter of temperamental differences.

As it touches on our topic, I will detour briefly through explorations of the sublime by figures including Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, in order to demonstrate the wide influence and relevant of the topic, and its irreducibility to 'temperamental' attitudes. It should be noted, however, that the majority of thinkers on this topic do demonstrate a belief that attending to 'sublimity' is often dependent on the individual's possession of certain characteristics which allow them to be open or receptive to the state of sublimity itself. So, while not a question of *temperament*, potentially a question of *capability* remains.

The sublime is a concept used to refer to something 'great' beyond measurability, be its greatness moral, intellectual, aesthetic or metaphysical. As an aesthetic category a central characteristic is that the sublime object is not reducible to the merely beautiful; sublimity entails the experience of the 'sacred' inducing awe. The classic phrase 'a profound experience of art', in today's post-modern climate, is more often found ironically than sincerely, yet the category of experience continues to beguile our aesthetic theories. Eighteenth-century British philosophers considered the sublime as an aesthetic quality in nature. Shaftesbury and Dennison, for instance, examined this distinction between the sublime and the beautiful. Dennison attended to the contrariness of the experience of the wild beauty of nature, both of delight mingled with horror and almost despair; he came to utilise this distinction in a new form of literary criticism. In contrast Shaftesbury attended to the awe of the infinity of space; rather than establishing sublimity as an aesthetic quality opposed to beauty, he described it as grander and of higher importance than beauty. It was only in Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756) that the sublime and the beautiful were considered to be 'mutually exclusive'. I should note that in Eastern philosophy the distinction between the beautiful and sublime doesn't exist; the work *On the Sublime* by Longinus, for instance, in the 1st century applied the notion of sublimity to 'great' language, attending to the fact that it inspires awe and veneration, possessing great persuasive powers.

Highly influential was Kant's later notion of the sublime. In both its mathematical and dynamic sense, it involved the superiority of our own power of reason as a super-sensible faculty over nature. Without dwelling on the particulars of his account, Kant's conception of the sublime is useful in that he claims judgements of beauty describe the exercise of a *more general* faculty of judgement. Indeed Cavell (1976) and others have consequently drawn connections between Kant's judgements of beauty and our intuitive judgements, while Fleischacker (1999) sees a connection between aesthetic judgement for Kant and moral and political judgement. If, then, following Kant, we view aesthetic judgements as a model for general judgement, then how we relate to the sublime and the beautiful has significant ramifications beyond temperament or taste.[36]

It is important, too, to consider Schopenhauer's relation to the sublime considering his influence on Wittgenstein's own work. For Schopenhauer contemplation upon phenomena which bear a 'hostile' relationship to the human will, insofar as they are so vast or powerful that they threaten to overwhelm the human individual, or reduce his existence, brings us into contact with the sublime. Schopenhauer is referring predominantly to aesthetic contemplations of natural phenomena—landscapes or the starry night sky—and how these contemplations induce sublime experiences; however, it may be applied to experiences of art as well. For Schopenhauer the higher the magnitude of the threat posed to the human will by contemplation on the 'contemplation-resistant' object, the greater the degree of sublime feeling. For Schopenhauer, as discussed in the *World as Will and Representation* (hereafter, WWR), taking aesthetic pleasure in these 'overwhelming' scenes occurs when the subject is able to first acknowledge the sheer vastness of the object, and then consciously turn away from the threat it poses: "violently wrenching himself free from his will" (WWR I, 226). If able to do this, the subject experiences a will-less state of contemplation of the 'Ideas', in his framework. This induces a *state of elevation*—this is the feeling of the sublime. Interesting work, I believe, is yet to be done on the relation between the sublime for Schopenhauer and the ecstatic-from Ek-Stasis, to stand outside oneself, as it is explored by Judith Butler and the psychoanalytic tradition. Unlike experiencing the pleasure of the merely beautiful, the sublime for Schopenhauer is mixed with pain, in that during the experience of the sublime two elements of self-consciousness are present: a consciousness of liberating oneself, and consciousness of having been liberated from the

[36] For these reasons Kant's emphasis on the sublime has received extensive discussion within literary theory; see Weiskel (1976), Hertz (1978), de Man (1990) and Lyotard (1994).

will and its cares. It is these instances of second-order consciousness that are accompanied by the feeling of "exaltation" above the will (WWR I, 233) which characterise the felt-sense of the sublime; however, they also induce pain, as the pleasure of exaltation is inextricably bound to the subject's detaching from the pressures of his individual will.[37]

2.9 The Saying-Showing distinction and Literary Theory

> A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes.[38]
>
> It is one of the chief skills of the philosopher not to occupy [them]self with questions which do not concern [them].[39]

The relevance of Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction to the value of literature is clear, as without a mystical interpretation, the referential picture of language outlined in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* would render literature to be of no cognitive value. This is because, unlike scientific texts, literary texts typically do not refer to objects or events that exist in the actual world but describe fictional scenarios. Consequently, literature does not seem to deliver veridical descriptions of the world. Yet given Wittgenstein's referential picture of language, if statements in literary texts do not deliver veridical descriptions of the world, then they do not communicate truths, or seemingly do anything. This position would marginalise the value of literature; which would be viewed as an aberrant use of language, making it mysterious why people spend their time writing or reading literary texts in the first place. Literary language, consequently, cannot be adequately accounted for on the basis of such a notion of truth and reference. By contrast, were the philosophical interest of a literary text (as in the *Tractatus*) to lie not so much in the ideas in it but in what is not in the text, that which is *shown*, then literature suddenly has its own bailiwick, a sphere which 'the explicitly philosophical' (concerned with communicating propositional truths) cannot touch.

At the least, we can say Wittgenstein's approach to aesthetics is sparse and anti-formal: he formulated no 'poetics', explicated no 'theory' of art of literature, and could be caught

[37] I have given only the bare bones, but competing accounts of Schopenhauerian sublimity exist. See, for instance, Neill (2003) and Vandenabeele (2003).
[38] As quoted in "A View from the Asylum" in *Philosophical Investigations from the Sanctity of the Press* (2004), as quoted in Dribble (2004, 87).
[39] Extract of a journal entry, 1 May 1915, of the *Notebooks 1914–1916* of Anscome (1961).

repeatedly insisting that defining the 'beautiful' was impossible, that one could never say what the 'essence' of art might be. Wittgenstein had very little to say on the 'big issues' of the aesthetic, nor the specifics of trope or genre, fictionality, prose or narrative form; consequently, it is understandable that literary theory has largely ignored Wittgenstein's existence. And yet, some have been drawn into the temptation of extracting a poetics from his work. This is the case because, although Wittgenstein said relatively little about literature directly, there is growing recognition of his work's relevance to the relation between philosophy and literature. The primary engagement with Wittgenstein's philosophy has, however, concerned his later work, particularly the *Philosophical Investigations*. Many writers, including Stanley Cavell, Marjorie Perloff, David Schalkwyk, Timothy Gould, Bernard Harrison, John Gibson, Sonia Sedivy and Martin Stone, examine the consequences for literary theory of Wittgenstein's later picture of language.[40]

Of course, many such works are highly relevant to our discussion, and bear on the broader subject of the relation between philosophy and literature. Wolfgang Huemer, for instance, writes on Wittgenstein's privileging of the diversity of linguistic phenomena in the *Philosophical Investigations*—in contrast to the philosopher's tendency to develop ideal, rigorously regulated language, a tendency he argues sacrifices the variety of language games for unattainable exactness and universality (13–26). This bears directly on the broader question of the methodology and language considered acceptable in today's academic philosophical climate, and the tacit justification given for excluding many disciplines including literature (as well as philosophical thinkers outside the analytic paradigm) from inquiry.[41]

Some theorists have drawn upon Wittgenstein's later philosophy, which approaches language as a social practice that focuses not on the relation between words and the world but moves from reference to use: emphasising how words are used in diverse contexts of human practice. Such attempts could likewise be viewed as a means of resisting the prevalent analytic referential picture of language that reduces legitimate use of language to the type of assertive statements and bearers of truth-value common to analytic philosophy. Such arguments also bear on literature's capacity for inquiry, by recognising language's varied uses in pursuit of myriad goals.

[40] For analysis of the primary literary engagement with Wittgenstein's philosophy, see Huemer (2004).
[41] For a clear case for analytic philosophy's dialogical conservatism, and the friction point between the loosely constructed 'analytic' and 'continental', see Chase (2010, 85–104).

My concern in this thesis, however, has been the bearing of Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy on the relation between philosophy and literature, a much-overlooked area of Wittgenstein's philosophical relevance to the debate. Perhaps only Cora Diamond significantly touches on the relation between literature and Wittgenstein's unsayable (1983, 155–169). Diamond challenges Martha Nussbaum's claim that to understand the relation between moral philosophy and literature we must have a rough story about what moral philosophy is. She argues that literary texts can make points that are relevant to moral philosophy *without* explicitly stating them.[42] While Diamond draws the connection between how things are shown in literature and how they are shown in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, her picture of how the saying-showing distinction relates to literature is left as only a sketch. What's more in defending a therapeutic approach, she overlooks the more substantial mystical reading of the saying-showing distinction, which I argue is more fruitful in characterising literature—as I will elucidate by drawing on Wallace's "The Empty Plenum" analysis of *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, and Wallace's own work in the following chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have defended the plausibility of a mystical interpretation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, allowing for the meaningfulness of literature, where its alternatives would render literature incapable of communicating truths, or seemingly doing anything. Drawing on Wittgenstein's Tractarian saying-showing distinction we can demonstrate that in literary texts—as in the *Tractatus* itself—much that is valuable is not explicitly stated: rather, it *shows* itself in the way the story is told, in the language used and in the interpretive openness of the text. Positioning literary inquiry's value as belonging to the unsayable provides novel and stimulating insights into pressing questions, including how literature can aid us in 'seeing the world rightly', in adopting a mystical perspective, and how it acts as a form of inquiry distinct from philosophy. In the following chapter I demonstrate this by drawing on examples from Wallace's oeuvre, and *Wittgenstein's Mistress*.

[42] For a valuable debate on literature's non-argumentative capacity, see Diamond, who argues there exists a variety of forms of critical reflection in extra-philosophical contexts, which are equally concerned to deepen our understanding and enrich our thought, but via embodying certain kinds of affective response to things (1983, 155–169).

CHAPTER III: The Meat of Literary Showing

> The heart of Plato's case against the poets is that, when it comes to a choice between truth and beauty, they are too ready to sacrifice truth. The heart of the poets' case is that beauty is its own truth. You will find some version of the beauty-is-truth plea in the practice of almost any writer. (Coetzee 2015, 8)

John Coetzee in *The Good Story* describes the quarrel in terms of the poets accepting some feature of beauty as more valuable than truth, but that beauty *constituted its own* truth. Nonetheless Coetzee doesn't take the further step of explicating on what grounds beauty comes to constitute truth. That connection will be delved into in this chapter. My aim, in this chapter, is to flesh out the meat of the Tractarian saying-showing distinction as it occurs in literature. Firstly, I need to allay the natural worry that much of what we shall want to say in this connection is precisely what, according to the doctrine being discussed, cannot be said. How do you communicate what can allegedly only be achieved through indirect communication? This is a pressing concern. Some have argued that it is not a distinction that can be communicated more clearly than by a 'gesture'. Yet while showing is sometimes explained in terms of 'gesturing' at something, a major problem with such a characterisation is that a gesture is a lazy thing, a shorthand. Gesturing does what could otherwise be done in words, but with less effort, rather than saying 'over there' I flail my arm in that general direction. I'm concerned, however, with showing as expressing something not otherwise expressible propositionally.

To do so, then, I will distinguish between the different categories of showing. This is important as, if these ideas are to be sharpened, something still needs to be said about the special way in which the word show is being used—otherwise the claim that certain things can be shown though they cannot be said will be too easily understood as a triviality which falls far short of Wittgenstein's thesis (i.e. I can *show* you a chair but I cannot *say* you a chair). McDonough similarly argues we should recognise the multiplicity of showing categories in the *Tractatus* (250–261). Many follow McDonough in supposing there are different categories of showing in the work. Indeed, for the purpose of this thesis, special treatment of the notion of literary showing is required. After all, were there only a singular form of showing, someone could well ask: what is the difference between Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*? Are they both just attempts to show this mystical project? And if so, do they show different aspects of it? And which aspects? In

what follows I will explore the category of showing that I think best characterises the literary, doing so first by drawing on examples from the *Tractatus*, then by providing illustrations with samples from *Wittgenstein's Mistress.* Consequently, this chapter explores how this notion of showing might be best understood in terms of techniques, devices and themes drawn on by Foster-Wallace and highlighted in his reading of *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. Firstly, however, I will respond to some potential criticisms in order to make the broader project of understanding showing in literary terms.

3.1 Showing's Technical Sense

In identifying literature with showing over saying, there exist two critiques of my position which are worth responding to, as doing so further elucidates the sense in which showing is being used here, and its relation to literature.

Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2010) repudiates the 'show, don't tell' rule, arguing that novelists and short story writers repeatedly violate this rule, commonly telling us how a dramatic situation or character should be interpreted, if only to help the reader avoid wasting long lengths of time trying to infer such details. Booth's critique of the often unexamined 'show, don't tell' prescription is useful in untangling presuppositions underlying the axiom and tracing the dogma to early 20th century literary theorists. However, as evidenced in the previous sections, Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction, of course, comes apart from the commonplace that literature is much more about showing than saying as indicated in the creative writing dictum 'show, don't tell'. If Wittgenstein's mystical treatment of the relationship between language, meaning and reality were reducible to the three-word cliché 'show, don't tell', then many thousands of pages would have been wasted by scholars the world over. Rather, as indicated, Wittgenstein's notion of showing, properly conceived, must be more broadly understood; Showing may include concealing, framing, necessary-failure, and unanswerable questions—it isn't a stretch to say showing on occasion may require 'telling'. This of course is also a valid response to Booth's critique: yes, literature may require 'telling' at times, for brevity or indeed for literary effect. Showing may be a dictum, but a talented writer knows both when to show and when to tell.

Secondly, Gerald Graff in *Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma* (1970) provides a powerful critique of the contemporary idea that poetry does not deal in 'thetic' statements, arguing in fact that poets commonly tell us 'how something is'—he argues that to assume that the

voice doing so is always involved in some variety of irony is to ignore how often and reasonably readers of many varieties do ascribe thetic intentions to poets based on what they *actually* write. While I don't disagree with Graff's analysis, the issue I identify is his critiques implicit assumption that a poet must be engaged in a single project, say the 'literary' project. Why should a writer not dip into philosophy, explication, literality, and the next moment into suggestiveness, opacity or concealment that reveals? A strong case can be made, contra Graff, that, whether or not poetry occasionally deals in thetic statements, the form of showing this thesis concerns itself with can exist independently from or alongside thetic assertions—as indeed is demonstrated in Wittgenstein's own *Tractatus*, a text that both *shows* and *says*. Now, in order to understand showing in literary terms, it is useful to consider the three following examples.

3.2 Showing Through Use

Wittgenstein 'shows' that the propositions of logic are not strictly speaking propositions at all. As tautologies they do not picture states of affairs and consequently lack a sense that could be either true or false. Consider the following proposition which seemingly concerns the outside world:

> It is raining or it is not raining outside.

This statement is an exhibition of a fact about our language and the world that in turn allows us to observe something about logic. "It is raining, or it is not raining outside" says in essence:

> "p v $\neg p$" = "p or not p"

Given this is the case, this proposition tells us nothing about the weather, but tells us something about logic; it *shows how* disjunction works. As is the case with all propositions of logic, it is a tautology, all it does is articulate or *put on show* the logical connections among the genuine propositions of our language. In fact, in understanding language we necessarily already grasp all that the propositions of logic articulate, practically not theoretically, in fact pre-theoretically: before the question of the truth or falsity of any proposition arises.

McGinn (2001, 24–36) makes a strong case that we needn't speak of 'justifying' logic in that logic is coeval with the phenomena of language itself, as Wittgenstein here illustrates;

the propositions of language demonstrate the syntactical underpinning rules of logic. This is not to provide a 'justification' but to demonstrate that we cannot conceive of the world as something to which the logic of our language might *not* apply; "logic pervades the world: the limits of the world are also its limits" (TLP, 5.61).

This example of a proposition that shows the logical bones of our language illustrates the way showing works in general, by exhibiting things through *use*. This is the *productive* aspect of having oneself changed by a literary work; it points towards the affect it works on the reader. Bouveresse (1995) takes this further, making his subject not Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, but his actual use of language, "and that of the poets who have climbed through, on and over the rungs of his ladder". As mentioned early on, Plato, while disavowing poetry, had in fact a deeply poetic style of writing, himself. This is paralleled in Wittgenstein's own work: the allusiveness, 'poeticity' and strangeness of so many of the aphorisms constituting the *Tractatus* has attracted much comment; it could readily be referred to as a 'poetry of ideas'. As a consequence, so many poets, novelists, dramatists and artists have turned out works done explicitly or otherwise in a sort of honorary hat-doffing to Wittgenstein.[43] As Eagleton remarks, "The library of artistic works on Ludwig Wittgenstein continues to accumulate. What is it about this man, whose philosophy can be taxing and technical enough, which so fascinates the artistic imagination? … Wittgenstein is the philosopher of poets and composers, playwrights and novelists, and snatches of his mighty *Tractatus* have even been set to music."[44]

Bouveresse argues that Wittgenstein's own aphoristic and gestural approach to writing philosophy—as if it were indeed a form of poetry—functions as a dramatisation of the process of working through questions, in a way that tests the limits of what can and cannot be said about, firstly, literary forms (e.g., *poetry*), concepts (e.g., *barbarism*), and facts of life (e.g., *death*). As can be seen, Wittgenstein embodies this aspect of language's 'use' working effects on readers.

3.3 Showing Through Absence

This example is inspired by the *Tractatus* (see 5.633–5.6331), where Wittgenstein writes:

> The subject does not belong to the world; rather, it is a limit of the world. Where

[43] For further on this, see Ray Monk's (2012) biography of Ludwig Wittgenstein: *The Duty of Genius*.
[44] Final scene of the film *Wittgenstein* by Derek Jarman (1993).

> *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do *not* see the eye … And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye. (TLP, 5.632–3)

Wittgenstein asks that we consider somebody's visual field, where this is to be thought of as a three-dimensional portion of public space: a more or less complete description is produced of what is in it, from the point of view of the person, though with no explicit reference made to anything outside the field. Wittgenstein demonstrates that however complete the description may be, it cannot represent the fact that everything of which it treats is seen from a particular point at the edge of the field. For this is not itself a fact exclusively about what is in the field. Yet there is a sense in which this fact will be manifest in *the form* that the description takes. (The description will use terms like 'left' and 'right'.) So, there is something which cannot be said here but which is shown by *what can be said*. The real contrast is between what we say *by means of propositions* and what shows itself, or makes itself manifest (for a further example, see TLP, 4.121 and 6.124).

Clearly, Wittgenstein wrote that one should not say anything except that which can be said, captured in the infamously catchy line "whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent" (5.131). That is, one should avoid all metaphysical statements, which, under the *Tractatus*' picture theory of meaning, would be rendered meaningless. He writes that we should respond to people who make metaphysical remarks by demonstrating to them that they have used a word without meaning. In which case, the correct method in philosophy would really be to say nothing except what can be said. Take the Tractatus section 5.631, for instance, in which Wittgenstein imagines the absence of a subject, and how this could be expressed in a book, by saying nothing except what can be said, yet through the use of illuminating 'absences':

> There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas. If I wrote a book called *The World as I Found It,* I should have to include a report on my body, and should have to say which parts were subordinate to my will, and which were not, etc., this being a method of isolating the subject, or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject; for it [the subject] alone could not be mentioned in that book.

That is, the point of 5.631 is that the reader must understand what is absent in the text and turn that absence into something that can transform one's conception of one's philosophical difficulties. On this view, a literary text (which would not classically be conceived as a philosophical text), such as *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, composed of ordinary non-philosophical propositions, may be able to communicate philosophically (the absence for instance of the subject, or a profound solipsism) through what is not in it, and not through the philosophical significance of anything that is actually *said* in it. Let's consider Wallace's comments on *Wittgenstein's Mistress*.

As noted, the final prescription in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* holds that: "anybody who understands what I'm saying eventually recognizes that it's nonsense, once he's used what I'm saying—rather like steps—to climb up past what I'm saying—he must, that is, throw away the ladder after he's used it" (TLP, 6.53). Wallace writes, in reference to what he calls this "terrible and moving" final prescription, that: "this passage, like most of [Wittgenstein], is only indirectly about what it's really about. It whispers & plays. It's really about the plenitude of emptiness, importance of silence, in terms of speech" (2012, 9). Indeed, Wallace asserts that Wittgenstein's philosophy was curiously mute in certain respects: "He [Wittgenstein] never actually wrote anything about the exquisite tensions between atomism & attendant solipsism on the one hand & distinctively human values & qualities on the other" (2012, 7). The 'muteness' of Wittgenstein, to which Wallace refers, can be understood in terms of the saying-showing distinction. This muteness relates back to the vocational travelogue: what it is that Wallace felt Markson had achieved in *Wittgenstein's Mistress* which goes over and beyond decocted philosophy, philosophical allusion and illustration; that is, where Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* was mute, Wallace felt Markson's text *Wittgenstein's Mistress* could speak. Wallace writes: "but, see, this is exactly what Mr. Markson does in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*; and in this way Markson's novel succeeds in speaking where Wittgenstein is mute, weaving Kate's obsession with responsibility (for the world's emptiness) gorgeously into the character's mandala of cerebral conundrum & spiritual poverty" (2012, 7).

3.4 Solipsism, Shown not Told

Consider the way *Wittgenstein's Mistress* renders solipsism—it concerns the reader being able to, simply through bold fact, experience the conjured world of the solipsist, something Wallace claims to be much more effective than were Markson to provide a philosophical proof for Solipsism. As Wallace writes: "as can be seen Markson's seeming use of bland fact still manages to evoke, to conjure a world and state of mind. Indeed, it seems it is in this very studied indirection, this intentional sustained error by which, as Wallace writes: 'Kate convinces us that, if she is insane, so must we be'" (220). It seems what he values highly in *Wittgenstein's Mistress* is the attempt not to 'espouse' solipsism as a metaphysical position—for instance, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* does not, as so many novels of ideas do, feature cerebral characters and lofty discussions—but rather to recreate the 'emotional implications' of the *Tractatus*.[45] As Wallace puts it: "the difference, say, between espousing solipsism as a metaphysical 'position' and waking up one fine morning after a personal loss to find your grief apocalyptic, literally millennial, to being the last and only living thing on earth, with only your head, now, for not only company but environment & world, an inclined beach sliding toward a dreadful sea" (214). In this sense, as Wittgenstein would hold, the novel *Wittgenstein's Mistress* doesn't 'teach' one philosophy, and if someone restricts themselves to looking for teachings, they will be unable to learn anything philosophical from it.

Wittgenstein makes a parallel kind of point about the ethical significance of the *Tractatus* itself. In writing to Ludwig von Ficker about his book, Wittgenstein said that the point of the work was an ethical one, writing in the preface: "my book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the only rigorous way of drawing those limits" (*ProtoTractatus*, 16). Clearly, Wittgenstein felt he needn't provide explicit ethical conclusions, asserting them dogmatically; rather, the ethical is, as Wittgenstein saw it, contained in the work, but not by being spoken in it, not by being told. The ethical character of the *Tractatus*, instead, depends on the absence in it of the *explicitly* ethical.

A caveat must be added to this picture: this is not to say that in a literary text no pronouncements can be made on ethics, aesthetics, or epistemology. Clearly great

[45] As Goldstein writes, "nothing freezes the living marrow of a novel like the brutal onslaught of pure abstract ideas, dispassionately pursued" (2011, 26).

philosophical literature does often refer to these things directly. What these writers do not do, however, is inform the reader on how to think about the novel's character; they do not dogmatically assert conclusions or provide explanations. This is the kind of demand that Wittgenstein places on readers: that they respond to what is not there by making of the work something that can be significant in the spirit in which they meet what happens, what needs to be done, and what has to be suffered. Huemer has a similar discussion, concerning the way Tolstoy expresses his ethics non-explicitly: "one cannot say simply that Tolstoy keeps his ethical views unsaid. The Tsar, in Hadji Murad, is presented with his vices etched very sharply indeed and Tolstoy has his usual comments on the fashionable exposure of breasts. What Tolstoy does not tell us is how to think about Hadji Murad himself, his life and his death, or how to make what we think of Hadji Murad alive in our own lives" (2004, 130). Thus, what is *not* stated (a form of concealment) may indeed be a means of showing or 'provoking' in literary texts, without inviting contradiction—as will be discussed in 4.1 in relation to Heidegger. To believe this implies contradiction is to fail to recognise that we are utilising here Wittgenstein's notion of showing with a non-ordinary, highly technical 'sense'.

3.5 Showing as Emotional Implications

Clearly Wallace felt the novel could be more than a travelogue. He writes of philosophy that "a theoretical work can be so intellectually taxing … that the emotional implications of the text are overlooked" (cited in Ryerson, 2011, 21–22). The novel of ideas, he thus contended, is at its most valuable not when making abstruse ideas "accessible" or easy to digest for the reader, but rather when "bringing these neglected undercurrents [the emotional implications] to the surface" (ibid). Now these emotional implications might relate to parts of language usually rendered as flat and non-emotive; that is, Wallace writes we should be able to describe "the texture of et cetera itself". This statement recalls to my mind William James, who said, "We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue*, a feeling of *cold*" (1981, 238). As Wallace asserts "the novel does artistic & emotional justice to the politico-ethical implications of Wittgenstein's abstract mathematical metaphysics, makes what is designed to be a mechanism pulse, breathe, suffer, live, etc . . . The ways in which the book is moving, and the formal ingenuity by which it transforms metaphysics into angst and so reveals philosophy as first and last about feeling" (49). That is to say that, rather than being merely illustrative or derivative, the work conjures what it would be like to live in the world

posited by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, and *enacts* his philosophy.

In the case of *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, Wallace admired how the book was neither merely an illustration of a set of Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas, nor a 'novelisation' of the philosopher's life and thought. Rather, as Wittgenstein's work takes so long on the 'literal' level, as Wallace puts it, the "migrainous mental gymnastics required of his reader all but quash the dire emotional implications of W's early metaphysics. His mistress, though, asks the question her master in print does not: What if somebody really had to live in a Tractatusized world?" Wallace claims "Markson's book renders, imaginatively & concretely, the very bleak mathematical world Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* revolutionized philosophy by summoning via abstract argument". Wallace writes: "*Wittgenstein's Mistress* … succeeds at transposing W's intellectual conundra into the piquant qualia of lived, albeit bizarrely lived, experience. The novel quickens W's early work, gives it a face, for the reader, that the philosophy does not & cannot convey." My reading of this is that by placing the protagonist Kate in a cold, lonely, self-as-world cosmos, with the intention to capture the flavour both of solipsism and of Wittgenstein, Markson is able to go beyond Wittgenstein in an important sense; that is, to 'humanise' the intellectual problem. In this way Wallace was explicitly pointing at the inability of propositional thinking to 'quicken' philosophy or give it a 'face', to transpose intellectual conundra into the "qualia of lived experience". In brief: to *show* what cannot be *said*.

Wallace consequently sees in *Wittgenstein's Mistress* a conjuring, or imaginative portrait of, what it would be like to live in the sort of universe described by the logical atomism posited in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Without having *read* Wittgenstein in any sense, Markson's protagonist Kate unwittingly enacts his philosophy through a patient and gradual discovery of complexity in the most ordinary language (the mental operations hidden in a mere "manner of speaking") and an attention to the ways that words set limits on what can be thought.

3.6 Showing Devices

Wallace writes that Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress* succeeds in doing "what few philosophers glean": he succeeds in communicating the *consequences*, for persons, of the *practice* of theory. According to Wallace, that was something only fiction, not philosophy, could do. To understand how Wallace felt Markson achieved this we must look to the

devices outlined. Wallace draws out several devices in Markson's work which manage to non-propositionally and indirectly show in the way we could imagine the early Wittgenstein getting at. Devices like "repetition, obsessive return, free-/unfree association swirl in an uneasy suspension throughout. Yet they *communicate*" (emphasis in text). Here are some concrete examples from *Wittgenstein's Mistress* of how each technique works, which, as Wallace writes, "ring as true as a song we can't quite place" (95).

3.7 Showing Through Bland Fact

Consider, for example, Markson's evocative use of bland fact. Markson provides a formally very odd monologue, consisting mostly of paragraphs expressing a series of factual statements. For instance:

> What I did was spill gasoline all over Simon's old room. Much of the morning I could still see the smoke rise and rise, in my rear-view mirror. Now I have two enormous fireplaces. Here in this house by the sea, I am talking about. And in the kitchen an antiquated potbellied stove. I have grown quite fond of the stove. Simon had been seven, by the way. A variety of berries grow nearby. And less than minutes past my stream there are various vegetables, in fields that were once cultivated but are of course now wildly overgrown. (1995, 14)

Wallace is concerned with how, through mere literal description, Markson can infuse facts with meaning in *Wittgenstein's Mistress*: "Hers is the affectless language of fact … Markson directs our misprision in order to infuse statements that all take the form of raw data-transfer with true & deep emotional import" (232). And much later Wallace refers to this as giving: "the familiar bitch & moan that Markson's novel promises & comes close to transfiguring, dramatizing, mythologizing via bland bald fact" (235). Yet as can be seen, Markson's seeming use of bland fact still manages to evoke, to conjure a world and state of mind. Indeed, it seems it is *in* this very studied indirection, this intentional sustained error that, as Wallace writes, "Kate convinces us that, if she is insane, so must we be" (ibid). In this way the sub-textual emotive agenda succeeds. It is through this freewheeling disorder of isolated paragraphs and "under the flit of thought" that Wallace writes: "under the continual struggle against the slipping sand of English & the drowning-pool of self-consciousness—a seductive order not only in but via chaos—compels complete & uneasy acquiescence, here" (ibid).

3.8 Showing and Deep Nonsense

A further example is Markson's protagonist Kate's use of deep-nonsensical facts via which she communicates isolation's meaning; for instance, as she narrates "one of those things people generally admired about Rubens, even if they were not always aware of it, was the way everybody in his paintings was always touching everybody else" (102). Descriptions such as this are far more effective at communicating her solipsistic, deeply lonely state than the rare explicit announcement: "Generally, even then, I was lonely" (ibid). Wallace writes: "you could call this technique 'Deep Nonsense', meaning I guess a linguistic flow of strings, strands, loops, and quiffs that through the very manner of its formal construction flouts the ordinary cingula of 'sense' and through its defiance of sense's limits manages somehow to show what cannot ordinarily be 'expressed'". This direct reference, as elsewhere, is a direct homage to Wittgenstein's saying-showing distinction. Wallace goes on to claim "good comedy often functions the same way. So does good advertising, today. So does a surprising amount of good philosophy. So, usually on a far less explicit level than *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, can great fiction" (270).

In distinguishing the various categories of showing in this chapter we can see that the gesture towards the shown is non-trivial, and that the distinction can be carried out in a range of ways. We have seen that the literary work, while composed in the language game of information, is not used in the language-game of *giving* information. Showing should be understood as non-truth-functional 'use' that *demonstrates* aspects of experience. It may demonstrate through absences which, when identified, become illuminating means of transforming one's conceptions of one's philosophical difficulties. This is well illustrated in the case of solipsism and emotional implications of the *Tractatus demonstrated* in Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. Devices such as repetition, obsessive-return, free-association, 'apparent' nonsense that turns out to offer a form of *deep*-nonsense: the defiance of sense's limits that indirect *shows* philosophy as felt consequence, not abstract theory. In the following chapter I will consider several theorists who speak to similar and enriching aspects of what could be understood as the showable.

CHAPTER IV: The Perspectival Shift

When I began this discussion, I did so in the context of the 'ancient quarrel'. What is the nature of literary inquiry, and how does it differ from philosophical inquiry? I have addressed this by making the case for a Tractarian mystical project of showing; that is, *producing a perspectival shift* in the reader. In the process of reassessing the significance of the notion of showing to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, and its bearing on the discussion of the relationship between literature and philosophy more generally, I have suggested in the earlier chapters that the means by which showing occurs in a literary setting is akin to 'provoking' a *perspectival* shift in the reader. The following chapter is, however, integral to further demonstrating exactly *how* a literary work's act of showing serves to induce such a perceptual shift.

In this following chapter I actively nuance this sense of showing with reference to a number of contemporary authors who I believe demonstrate affectively how literary showing isn't merely *gesticulating, or demonstrating,* but rather involves forms of: *concealment* (Heidegger), necessary *failure* (Lerner), ex-formation (Wallace), framing-effects (Davidson), and non-ontic questioning (Perloff & Heidegger). Heidegger, Gadamer and Davidson, as well as the novelists Lerner and Borges, enrich our understanding of arts capacity to produce such perspectival shifts in the reader. The re-making/nuancing of the concept of showing in this chapter thus serves as an integral part of a full reading of Wallace Markson and Wittgenstein.

4.1 Hermeneutics, Situatedness and Phronesis

I will explore briefly the concepts of hermeneutics, phronesis and the truth of art, as they emerge for Heidegger and Gadamer. Both offer what I consider overlapping elaborations of the same basic conception of understanding: one taking our 'situatedness', 'prior involvement', and 'partiality' not as barriers to understanding, but as its enabling condition.[46] This notion of understanding, as shall be seen, fleshes out the full depth of the saying-showing distinction drawn on by Wallace, to see how we shall consider their approach to Hermeneutics.

[46] To see the working out of this conception in detail, read *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 2014).

Hermeneutics has its origins in problems of biblical exegesis and the development of theoretical frameworks used to direct exegetical practice. In the 19th century, it expanded into a more encompassing theory of textual interpretation in general. It involved the seeking of a set of rules to provide a basis for good interpretive practice. Many conceived of the basic problem of hermeneutics as methodological: how to found the science of interpretation in a way that makes it properly *scientific?* It was in the 1920s that Heidegger put hermeneutics to a different purpose. Instead of presenting hermeneutics as a 'theory' of textual interpretation, or a 'method' of scientific understanding, he presented hermeneutics as *that which* allows the self-disclosure of the structure of understanding.[47] In essence, Heidegger redeploys hermeneutics to express the way in which all understanding is 'always already' given over to that which is to be understood (to 'the things themselves'—*die sachen selbst*). To ground this notion, consider the example of a particular artwork. To understand a particular artwork, we need some prior understanding, even as rudimentary as knowledge of a set of paint marks on canvas—otherwise it cannot even be seen as something to be understood. More generally, if we are to understand anything at all, we must already find ourselves 'in' the world 'along with' that which is to be understood. All understanding is thus based on our prior hermeneutical *situatedness*: hermeneutics is in this vein an attempt to 'make explicit' the structure of such situatedness.

Gadamer takes up and elaborates on this hermeneutical project in Heidegger's phenomenological sense, and together they radically rework the idea of hermeneutics, providing an account of the proper ground for understanding, while rejecting the attempt to found understanding on any method or set of rules. Crucially this does not reject the importance of methodological concerns, but rather insists on the *limited role* of method and the *priority* of understanding as a dialogic, practical and situated activity. Holding that in mind, let's turn to phronesis.

For Heidegger the concept of phronesis—often translated as 'practical wisdom'[48]—gives emphasis to our practical 'being-in-the world' over and against theoretical apprehension, but additionally phronesis constitutes a mode of insight into both our practical situation, and more fundamentally our existential situation, hence phronesis constitutes a mode of

[47] For further, see the series of lectures 'The Hermeneutics of Facticity', in Heidegger (2008).
[48] The notion first appears in Book VI of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics as recorded in Jackson (1879).

self-knowledge. Gadamer took up this central element in Heidegger's thinking. The way in which Gadamer conceives of understanding, and interpretation, is as just such a *practically oriented* mode of insight, a mode of insight that has its own rationality irreducible to any simple set of rules, that cannot be directly taught, and that is always oriented to the particular case at hand.

Now to apply phronesis and situated hermeneutics to Gadamer and Heidegger's conception of art and truth, we should begin with the three lectures on 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. In these lectures Heidegger elucidates the way art relates to truth not via its 'representational' character—that is, the truth value of the work doesn't consist in correspondence between the work and the world—but lies in the artwork's capacity to 'disclose' a world. Here Heidegger rejects the totalising 'coherence' conception of truth as 'correctness', where truth is a matter of the consistency of a statement with a larger body of statements. He refers instead to an underlying, more basic sense of truth as 'un-concealment' in which truth is not a property of statements, but an event or process through which the things of the world come to be revealed. Importantly, unconcealment is not simply a matter of bringing about 'complete' transparency—because, in the revealing of things, other things are necessarily concealed.[49]

Gadamer's hermeneutics elaborates on Heidegger's idea of truth, in tandem with the poetic language deployed in Heidegger's exposition (Gadamer 1997b, 47). Gadamer felt aesthetic theory had become alienated from the actual experience of art, art criticism had become aestheticised and abstracted, while aesthetic judgment was reduced to subjectivism—taste. There are two crucial elements to Gadamer's appropriation of Heidegger: firstly, *the connection of art with truth*, and secondly, the focus on *truth itself as the event of prior and partial disclosure*. In turning back to the direct experience of art, and to the concept of truth as prior and partial disclosure, Gadamer develops an alternative to subjectivism that relates to the *hermeneutical situatedness* of early Heidegger, and the phronesis taken from Plato and Aristotle. The experience of art reveals not in spite of, but precisely because of the way it also conceals, therefore understanding is possible, not in spite of, but precisely because of its prior involvement.

[49] An obvious connection here exists with Wittgenstein's rabbit/duck; in that seeing something in one way depends on not being able to see it in another—a distinction between seeing 'that' versus seeing 'as' (Egan, 55–76).

This, some might take to mean, implies that Showing is really, at least in part, not-showing. This is a misunderstanding however: this only indicates that the work of showing takes place in some instances through acts of *concealment*, as concealment may *provoke,* and *provoking* is the work of showing. The reader who makes this mistake has misunderstood Wittgenstein's showing notion by binding it too tightly to the ordinary language meaning of 'to show'. The notion of show, drawn upon here, can occur *too* through concealment.

This connects to a famous problem for Heidegger interpretation: how to make Heidegger intelligible while retaining the excitement of his poetic experimental prose? This problem reflects the broader common dilemma around which this paper circumambulates: the way philosophers have had trouble pulling things out of literature. This will be discussed in what follows.

4.2 On Heidegger's Intelligibility

Heidegger's style has left commentators to wonder what to do with many of his formulations that sound poetic yet seem to promise a conceptual yield.[50] For instance, his assertion that "language speaks" (1962, 120) or "language is the house of being" (1762, 313).[51] The central issue, that has puzzled many, concerns interpretation: while Heidegger's challenging, but original and fascinating, style of philosophy has motivated innumerable efforts by interpreters to 'situate' Heidegger's thought, his use of language has been a cause for concern. Many philosophers and linguists, while attempting to excavate the content 'expressed' by Heidegger's formulations, have lost patience with and dismissed his conceptual-poetic language. The challenge for Heidegger scholars then is balancing the apparently conflicting desires to (a) make his formulations conceptually intelligible so that his views have currency in contemporary philosophical discussions, but at the same time (b) do so in a way that doesn't ignore the very formulations Heidegger uses. Davidson expresses well this difficulty: "The trouble is, as so often in philosophy, it is hard to improve intelligibility while retaining the excitement" (183).

[50] Regarding the aspect of Heidegger's writing which is poetic and holds a conceptual promise, Benjamin demonstrates the poetic aspect is not accidental or secondary to the conceptual aspect but gives traction to thought and is supposed to accompany us and even lead us to see what Heidegger's words point to (2005).
[51] Vandervelde illustrates how Heidegger's formulation combines the performance of thinking with the description of such a performance: "When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the word 'well,' through the word 'woods,' even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language" (1971, 132).

This reflects this larger dilemma facing the reader who attempts to make philosophical use of literature, that intelligibility strictly can kill the power or excitement in the literature. If you try to make something relevant by making use of it, by applying it, that can be deeply unsatisfying, reducing it to a stylistic mode. So, there is an idea that application is another type of mistake.

i. Frege's Choice

The first temptation for interpreters can be called 'Frege's choice'. Either we are interested in truth and turn to scientific propositions or we are interested in artistic consideration, at which point we abandon truth. As Frege writes: "in listening to an epic, for example, we are fascinated by the euphony of the language and also by the sense of the sentences and by the images and emotions evoked. In turning to the question of truth we disregard the artistic appreciation and pursue scientific considerations" (221). For instance, if we translate Heidegger's language into a propositional form, this may bring about some intelligibility, but may reduce or kill the excitement, as "surely as turning a poem into a set of propositions" as Vandervelde puts it.

This point is illustrated in David Foster Wallace's take on anti-explanation, in regard to jokes. He gives the example of reading Kafka with college students, and the impossible task of getting the students to *see* that Kafka is funny. Wallace points out that great stories and great jokes share in common a dependence on what communication theorists call 'ex-formation'; that is, a certain quantity of vital information being removed from the work in such a way as to cause "a kind of explosion of associative connections within the recipient". As Wallace writes: "The psychology of jokes helps account for part of the problem in teaching Kafka. We all know that there is no quicker way to empty a joke of its peculiar magic than to try to explain it" (61). This notion of ex-formation, crucial to many literary texts, evidently describes a facet of showing and does so through acts of concealment, via the removal of information. This is a further indication that literary showing should be understood as closer 'provoking', rather than the ordinary-language sense of showing given it may occur through removal and concealment.

Wallace speaks of a strange antipathy that *providing* such explanations arouses in readers, a feeling of offence, as if the joke has been blasphemed by its explanation. This resembles the irony in running something like a story by Kafka through the gears of a literary critical analysis—a breakdown of plot, symbols to decode, themes to remove—this provides, as

Wallace writes, "the literary equivalent of tearing the petals off and grinding them up and running the goo through a spectrometer to explain why a rose smells so pretty" (74). On the other hand, if we preserve the poetic aspect of Heidegger's language without exegesis, this results in abandoning any concern for truth. Since, in the case of Heidegger, the poetic manner of saying is part of the flesh of the concept, its substance, Frege's choice would force us to choose between two equally unpalatable options.

ii. The Sirens' Temptation

A second interpreter's temptation is to focus not so much on the scientific stature of Heidegger's propositions, but their *applicability to 'real issues'* topics of a metaphysical, ethical, pragmatic and environmental ilk. While having the virtue of making Heidegger relevant to contemporary philosophical discussion through application, this approach arguably loses the capacity Heidegger has given us to question the privileged frame of reference chosen, to call into question the assumptions that accompany our contemporary approach to what metaphysics is supposed to be about.

Indeed, philosophy in such an applied mode would involve the mining of Heidegger's work for ideas or insights that are reframed in an intelligible conceptual form, serving a social or political agenda—be it feminist, gender analysis, race theory or other. Heidegger's formulations are then "[spat out] as indigestible adornment or metaphorical fiber" (Vandervelde 1988, 64). The perils of, or a hyperbolic illustration of, such an approach is provided in Italo Calvino's *If On a Winters Night a Traveller* where he demonstrates how in pre-packaging and forcing a text into a camp among anonymously pre-established positions, the subversive capacity of the literary work is removed and the challenge it provides is consequently blunted.[52] It is, as Vandervelde writes, in the 'poietics' of thought, in the production of new ways to look at issues that the text has power.

[52] Calvino's character Lotaria doesn't read to enjoy, but dissects and weaponises works of literature for the politics they embody. She analyses the books for general theme-based content; the book is rendered instrumental to determining the author's positions with regards to 'trends of contemporary thought' and 'Problems that Demand a Solution'. Indeed she feeds books through a machine that analyses them for adherence to the codes imposed by the dominant sex, class or culture. This hyperbolic approach appears to be an attempt by Calvino to describe his concern with an academic tendency to approach literature with preconceived notions as to where the value in a text should reside, the using of books to confirm already held beliefs and positions

iii. A Possible Solution

How do we face these two temptations—Frege's choice and the Sirens' temptation—without succumbing to them? And how do we render Heidegger intelligible without flattening out what he says? Paul Vandervelde, in examining the way that the content of Heidegger's 'philosophy' cannot be separated from the performance involved in formulating it, argues compellingly that if we want to keep the excitement of Heidegger's fascinating formulations while bringing intelligibility, we must reject Davidson's assumption that both excitement and intelligibility come exclusively from the text, and embrace the view that "Poetry makes beings more being [seiender]" (1988, 64) precisely *because* poetry breaks away from the language as commonly used. By breaking away from common language, poetry allows the *seined*-moment to become perceivable or hearable again.

It is in 'failing', then, that the word unveils being, by taking away the obviousness of what we take for granted, allowing new configurations to arise. A work of art can thereby make us 'see' something as if for the first time. This is how "the word gives being" (Heidegger 1959, 193). The failing of words shows the happening precisely because "it is only in the beginning that beings 'become' [*je nur im Anfang das Seiende 'wird'*]" (2005, 122). It is *this* that we can understand as the perspectival shift effected through poetry and literature, by Heidegger and Gadamer's lights. This provides a rich alternate route to understanding the capacity of art and metaphor to produce perspectival shifts in the reader.

Commented [JTW1]:

4.3 Lerner: The Poem as Always a Record of Failure

It isn't a system
It is a gesture whose power derives from its
Failure, a child attempting to gather
Us into her glitter-flecked arms

(Ben Lerner, *Mean free path)*

I will provide a brief detour via Ben Lerner's (2016) "The Hatred of Poetry" an essay in which Lerner too describes the manner in which a discourse of failure is *constitutive* of the art of poetry, and not a reason to turn away from it. As Lerner writes, "poetry and the hatred of poetry are for me … inextricable". Curiously enough, Lerner, in the essay, begins

his examination also with Plato's famous claim that an ideal city is no place for poets and would only corrupt and mislead the young. He then draws on the common felt 'hatred' of poetry as the starting point for a defence of the art. Plato's Socrates fears and resents the corrupting power of poetic performance, and defends language as the medium of philosophy from the unreason of poets, who just make stuff up, rather than discover genuine truths. His guiding accusations is: what do you know, poet? What do you really contribute? Such questions, Lerner points out, remain on the tongues of our everyday non-poetry reader today, and on many poets' tongues too. Referencing Allan Grossman and the story of Caedmon, the first English poet, Lerner makes the case that poetry arises from a desire to *get beyond* the finite and historical to the transcendent and divine. Yet in the move from the impulse to the actual poem, the song of the infinite is compromised by the finitude of its terms. Thus, the poet is viewable as a tragic figure, and the *poem always a record of failure* (2016).

In viewing the poem as 'always a record of failure' Lerner helps us elucidate our notion of showing. Literary showing clearly cannot function by 'succeeding' in recording correctly the transcendent or divine; rather, it *provokes* in the reader an *impulse*—that is, the desire to get beyond the finite and historical to the transcendent and divine. Lerner indicates that the failure to 'experience' transcendence is no argument against showing; rather, it merely demonstrates that the urgency and possibilities of poetry must exist alongside a sense of its impossibility. *Impossibility* here means that the poem is definitionally incapable of realising the impulse out of which it arises, "As if there were a principle of failure built into the practice" (16). Why can poetry not realise the impulse out of which it arises? To answer this question Lerner refers to Grossman's case for the existence of an undecidable conflict between the poet's desire to sing an alternative world and the "resistance to alternative making inherent in the materials of which any world must be composed" (18). The difference he draws is between *virtual* poems and *actual* poems: "I live in the space between what I am moved to do and what I can do" (ibid), limitations that exist both for the individual, and by virtue of the structure of the art form. As Lerner puts it in relation to John Ashberry, in his novel *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011) through the mouth of his protagonist Adam Gordon, who is disappointed in artworks that are merely real, finished, final:

> It is as though the actual Asberry poem were concealed from you, written on the other side of a mirrored surface, and you saw only the reflection of your reading.

> But by reflecting your reading, Asberry's poems allow you to attend to your attention, to experience your experience, thereby enabling a strange kind of presence. But it is a presence that keeps the virtual possibilities of poetry intact because the true poem remains beyond you, inscribed on the far side of the mirror: "You have it, but you don't have it. / You miss it, it misses you. / You miss each other" (222).

This necessary limitation and this principle of failure are pointed at by the fact that the poet's apology for the unworthiness of his art, for the insufficiency of his song, is traditional and generic. Indeed there is no shortage of poets asserting poetry must be abolished—that the border between art and life must be done away with—or indeed that the only possible remaining poetic gesture is to do away with poetry altogether (this has long been the rallying cry of the avant-garde). The poet's claim to renounce poetry, we should note, resembles nothing more than the philosopher's claim to do away with metaphysics. What struck me while reading Lerner's *Lichtenberg Figures* is the seemingly glib but telling line, which itself evokes Wittgenstein deeply, that: "Nothing is as metaphysical as the claim to break from metaphysics" (36).

4.4 Borges: On Stars And Arguments

Borges (2002) comments disdainfully on the definition of poetry commonly held as "the expression of the beautiful through the medium of words artfully woven together" (30) claiming that while perhaps good enough for a textbook, the definition is fairly feeble. Surely, he asks, there must be something more important, which drives us not only to try our hand at poetry, but to feel that we know all about it. Fittingly, to our theme, as shall emerge, he writes: "we make a very common mistake when we think that we are ignorant of something because we are unable to define it. If we are in a Chestertonian mood we might say that we can define something only when we know nothing about it" (31). I appreciate Borges' view of poetry as akin to a scented breeze, or the colour blue, or a strong emotion: experiences so deeply felt in us that their particularity cannot be captured by other words. Borges adds valuably to our conception of literary showing, in which literature provides intimations that can best be shown not through 'naming' explicitly, but through the *spaces* that evoke—through forms of *suggestion* or intuition in place of argument.

Interestingly Borges claimed his own philosophy was derived from poetry, perhaps because his philosophical ideas arrived via suggestion or intuition to the tune of poetry's

music, rather than through thought's argument. Walt Whitman (1983) expresses a similar idea: he found "the night air, the large few stars, far more convincing than mere arguments". You can imagine rationality's rebuttal. Reason might ask, "But to what questions do the stars and sky respond?" That is, not the *ontic* questions that Heidegger argues terminate in a simple answer, nor questions of a determinate physics, but rather questions that do not bottom out in facts—ceaselessly fecund questions. So perhaps it is better to conceive literature's take on these questions as a comment, rather than a response; an addendum or better yet a flourish.

Akin to Heidegger, Perloff demonstrates how the questions Wittgenstein poses on language's relation to thought are often questions which lack any single correct 'answer' but serve instead to open us onto new spaces, spaces "in which to take a deep breath", spaces as "poetic" as they are "philosophical" (23). This Heideggerian approach to Wittgenstein's questioning in language emerges from reflection on Wittgenstein's mode of investigation: its contradictoriness yes, its aphoristic formulations also, but most essentially his claim that "Language is not contiguous to anything else" (112).

Given the distinction Heidegger draws between ontic and ontological questions, we could draw a parallel Heideggerian approach to questions that are not stated so much with the ambition to find answers, but in order to prompt states of amazement or awe in the questioner. As argued, this 'prompting' or provoking of different perspectival states is very much what Wittgenstein is describing with his notion of *Showing*. As Coleridge put it, "in Wonder all Philosophy began".[53] That is, at times we become aware of the miraculousness that is existence, questions that arise are akin to the form 'Why is there something, rather than nothing?' Such questions approximate a realisation arising through the unfamiliar. 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' is not actually a question that is asking for an answer, but rather an expression of sheer astonishment and wonder over the fact of existence. In contrast Heidegger identified the ontic question he has in mind; questions such as 'How far is the earth from the moon'?; a type of question that terminates in an answer and that in settling for an answer renders itself inert, trivial.

For Heidegger a question that is allowing of an answer is exhaustible. To answer it is to render it inert, as having a terminal destination. How could you love these questions, and what good is your love if it makes its object redundant? In contrast, what is unanswerable

[53] Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection* (1873), Aphorism 107.

is therefore inexhaustible. Here we come to what is *shown*, beyond answerable; a type of silence, but productive; and when we talk about productive silence, are we really meaning boundless questions, questioning that doesn't bottom out in a fact? Borges wrote that everything he had written had been a mere metaphor, or variation on the central theme of being puzzled by things, puzzled by the fact of existing, of existing in a human body, of looking through eyes, hearing through ears, etc. In which case he was of the opinion that no essential difference existed between poetry and philosophy. Both stood for, and answered in relation to, the same kind of puzzlement. Except that in the case of philosophy the answer is given in a logical way, and in the case of poetry you use metaphor. I don't think Borges is wrong, but I believe we can nuance his answer.

4.5 Davidson: What Metaphors Mean

A similar means of explicating this perceptual shift is expressed in Donald Davidson's 'Brute Force' elucidation of 'what metaphors mean'. Davidson claims that a metaphoric utterance, which would otherwise be idle or pointless, produces a "framing effect" rather than communicating any particular propositional content. For Davidson the framing effect is a cognitive affair, it consists in having one's attention drawn to real or putative likenesses: the hearer of a metaphor is induced to view, consider or experience the primary subject in a fresh and special light, a light afforded by juxtaposing the first subject with the secondary subject. In this way the metaphor enables us to view the whole situation in a new light; this reflects my account of the perspectival shift induced by showing via literature.[54] For illustration, Ben Lerner in the novel *10:04* writes:

> Part of what I loved about poetry was how the distinction between fiction and nonfiction didn't obtain, how the correspondence between text and world was less important than the intensities of the poem itself, what possibilities of feeling were opened up in the present tense of reading.

The *possibilities of feeling* Lerner refers to, opened onto like vistas of scale, describes the perspectival possibilities that metaphoric likening and language can effect. As Davidson puts it: when we try to say what a metaphor *means*, we soon realise there is no end to what we want to mention: "how many facts are conveyed by a photograph? None, an infinity, or one great unstateable fact? Bad question. A picture is not worth a thousand words, or

[54] For detailed critical commentary on Davidson, see Reimer (1996, 2001, 2004).

any other number. Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture" (Davidson, 46–7). A metaphor's meaning on this account is subject to interpretation, in the way dreams are. While we may interpret a dream, that interpretation depends on the nature of the interpreter and their concerns regarding the nature of the dream and its origins. As Donaldson writes, "Metaphor is the dreamwork of language, and, like all dreamwork, its interpretation reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator" (31). This will recur later in section VI—where I examine the connection between exegesis and creative artefact—as a number of techniques I draw upon in my creative work arise from a desire to produce in the reader an awareness of their role in the meaning construction that occurs in literary works.[55] On this 'brute force' account, the metaphor works as a causal device, not through any representational transaction, but by effecting this 'framing' shift. But how? To think of literary works leading to perspectival shifts in the audience, without explanation, is to assimilate metaphors to 'pills' or black boxes leading to change in belief, a parallel to blows on the head leading to insight à la koans. No account is given of how the insight is induced. Its being a Brute Force Account is thus a question begging, which is why we require the elucidation I have provided in the preceding section.

In conclusion, as should now be evident, Heidegger and Gadamer's hermeneutical situatedness, and phronesis, provide valuable models for examining how self-knowledge, insight and perspectival shifts can be wrought via art, without dependence on a 'representational' truth function, but through an 'unconcealing' or by intentionally 'failing' in language, thus defamiliarising the world, and thereby allowing new configurations to be seen. Davidson's notion of 'framing conditions' speaks to the similar perspectival possibilities that metaphoric likening and language can effect. As to the writers: Borges points to the fact that definition is often mistaken for mastery, yet this mastery is actually a form of ignorance—those things we know most deeply we can never fully put words to, consequently literary insight is uniquely responsive to this puzzlement. Lerner, too, provides an exploration of how the discourse of failure is *constitutive of* the art of poetry, in its unrealisable desire to *get beyond* the finite and historical to achieve the transcendent. The poet desires to sing an alternative world, yet meets insurmountable resistance to alternative world making, inherent both in the materials of the language and the structure of the art form. Poetry, for Lerner, sings up against the inexpressible, which Wittgenstein gestures

[55] See section VI, where I examine the connection between my exegesis and creative artefact.

towards, a necessary limitation. In the following chapter, I will outline how these have materialised in my own writing.

CHAPTER V: Radical Contextualising

In engaging with the authors in Chapter IV, the reasonable critique can be made that the thought of these authors is engaged with outside of their cultural contexts and in an ahistorical manner. It is reasonable to wonder whether these authors in fact fail to offer 'alternate' pathways to the insights gleaned by Wittgenstein, as argued, but rather that the 'insights' gleaned arrive at the same destination only due to the social location of the authors: as middle-class, middle-aged, and heterosexual males. More broadly it can be argued that our encounter with 'truth' or insight is predetermined, always already a *matter of canon* and the constitutionalising forces which privilege some thinkers over others. This is an important concern to speak to, as it amounts to the possibility that the status of 'truth' is relative not only to *genre* (i.e. philosophy versus literature) but is subject also to canonical parochialism.

Undeniably the canon is anything but a natural, or inevitable, assemblage of preordained thinkers, whose words have been righteously weighted with posterity. The canon is rather a *massed nexus* of unannounced ideological forces, which selectively work towards empowering *some* performances of truth while disempowering others. This chapter will examine the influence of canon, and canonical parochialism, on our conception of truth; it will explore the implications of this thesis for the current 'post-truth' political moment, and examine the importance of viewing the insights gleaned, when applying Wittgenstein's conception of 'seeing the world aright', as culturally and historically embedded and contingent. This chapter will therefore contextualise the quarrel and consider its relevance today; it will do so by questioning the frame in which we make sense of the quarrel as posing questions worthy of address.

5.1 Influence of Canon on concepts of Truth and Showing

Some of the most poignant critiques of the philosophical canon are the synoptic interpretations raised by feminist philosophers, so I will start there. Feminist synoptic interpretations have urged that the canon's central philosophical norms and values, i.e. *reason* and *objectivity*, are notions that are deeply gendered male. Accordingly, defenders of this approach view the Western philosophical traditions, and the central concepts we have

inherited, as requiring critical scrutiny. Philosophy's self-image as posing universal and objective truths, rather than biased and particular interpretations, is called into question. As such, it is evident that this general critique bears on the topic of 'seeing the world aright', and *how* 'aright-seeing' has been identified as the purpose or core of literary inquiry by the male, middle-class, literary figures examined above.

Genevieve Lloyd in her text *Man of Reason* makes the case that our understanding of objectivity and reason across historical periods has varied, yet the concepts themselves have remained consistently associated with maleness, in which case the notion of reason we have inherited, whether as empiricists or existentialists, requires critical scrutiny. In contrast some, such as Bordo in *The Flight to Objectivity*, map this gendering of reason to the modern period of philosophy in which the adoption of specific ideals of reason has been generated by modern scientific values which are antagonistic to women (28–32). In either instance these thinkers identify the manner in which canonical thought, bound to cultural context and social location, informs the methodological toolkit, epistemic beliefs and metaphysical conclusions that shape disciplinary knowledge.

Lloyd's case is clearly elucidating I have no doubt that the male thinkers identified in the preceding section are informed in their values by patriarchal and traditional conceptions of the role of the philosopher and the method of intellectual inquiry. I believe, however that a strong case can be made that the literary, and the category of showing or 'gestural' knowledge more broadly, actually particularly describe forms of implicit, intuitional, metaphorical truth-seeking. These forms are feminised and consequently dismissed by the philosophical canon as lacking in rigour, as being too suggestive or insufficiently clear. If we consider, like Lloyd, the maleness of reason to be at root symbolic and metaphorical (85), then we can see too how femininity has been defined in *opposition* as metaphorically the 'irrational' or 'supra-rational'. Furthermore, as is evident from the forgoing discussion, it is notions of *rationality* and *objectivity* that have held sway canonically, and, as is evident in the forgoing chapters, it was particularly in the endeavour to transgress the limits of this toolkit that the 'mystical', what cannot be said but only shown, was born.

The synoptic critique of the philosophical canon is relevant to discerning Wittgenstein's meaning in asserting that showing consists in 'seeing the world aright'. It bares too on how 'aright-seeing' has been identified by these male, middle-class, literary figures as the purpose or core of literary inquiry. It should be evident (and will be discussed in what

follows) that if taken too narrowly, 'aright' thinking, via literary *showing*, is subject to the very criticism levelled at philosophy. In which case, as feminist theorist Irigaray argues, if these theorists are seeking to establish universal truths through 'aright-seeing' this is likely occurring through the repression of sexual difference—alongside the repression of myriad other forms of difference (94).

Indeed, feminist epistemic-standpoint theorists, and intersectional theorists, have long argued for a recognition of the situatedness of knowledge relative to social location and positionality (144-185). And yet a strong case can be made that literary showing itself offers a powerful instrument in defending an epistemic-standpoint account and identifying knowledge as relative to social location. While at its inception 'the novel' was very much bound to a specific class echelon, art has since been utilised as an implement for sharing experience and for deepening empathetic capabilities. Bird, for instance, examines the relation between gender, knowledge and art in exploring how the documentation, representation and dissemination of women's experiences of domestic violence becomes most effective when utilising an arts-based methodology (95). Art offers us the capacity to acquire and share expressions of lived experience, providing others access to our multi-sensory and embodied knowledge, which may otherwise be impossible to articulate. The possibilities of using art to generate various kinds of knowledge align closely with what MacDougall refers to as the "stereoscopic imagination" (65–82). Imagination thus has a central place in these accounts of inquiry.

Making this case, however, is not to deny that the preceding section is lacking diversity in terms of theorists' social location. More on the perspectives of people of colour, diverse class backgrounds, female and queer theorists would be crucial to a thorough examination of this topic. The previous section offers only a sampling of a range of thinkers, who converge on this conception of the literary. I am cognisant that there is a much greater need for us, as scholars, to make conscious efforts to examine our unconscious bias. If I were to write this dissertation again, the sources drawn upon would reflect a more conscious engagement with a diversity of perspective and experience. This dissertation has been informed in large part by epistolary auto-theorists, poets and novelists: Maggie Nelson, Claudia Rankin, Anne Carson, Chris Kraus, Fred Moten, Brian Blanchfield and Eileen Myles. These thinkers represent a myriad of distinct social locations, and their work is to my mind crucial to inducing a perspectival shift that unseats the privilege of the white male gaze. While I do not have space to enter their work more fully here (though such

exploration takes place in my novel *Murmurations*) what is evident to me is that—whether in Moten's *Under Commons* critique of neoliberalism in the modern university, or Kraus's problematisation of the patriarchal form of the lover's discourse in *I Love Dick*, or Myles's queering of the modes of the poet novel in *Inferno*, or Nelson's meandering interrogation of the bounds of theory and biography in *Argonauts*—each of these authors demonstrate a porousness to our perceptual bounds. For instance, when Maggie Nelson, a major influence on my creative work, approaches Wittgenstein in *The Argonauts*, she writes:

> Before we met, I had spent a lifetime devoted to Wittgenstein's idea that the inexpressible is contained—inexpressibly! —in the expressed. This idea gets less airtime than his more reverential Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent, but it is, I think, the deeper idea. Its paradox is, quite literally, why I write, or how I feel able to keep writing. (1)

> For it doesn't feed or exalt any angst one may feel about the incapacity to express, in words, that which eludes them. It doesn't punish what can be said for what, by definition, it cannot be. Nor does it ham it up by miming a constricted throat: Lo, what I would say, were words good enough. Words are good enough. It is idle to fault a net for having holes, my encyclopedia notes. (1–2)

This is only one instantiation of a range of theorists who further nuance Wittgenstein's notion of 'seeing the world aright' by pointing to the value of acquainting us with perspectival insight, in a piecemeal fashion. In different ways these thinkers demonstrate the value in conceiving truth as relative to context and embedded in social location. So, as suggested, the notion of 'seeing the world 'aright' need not result in gaining insight into timeless, *universal* truth but may refer to rather a piecemeal process of experiencing insights or truth(s), fundamentally wedded to historical-cultural contexts. It is important to note, further, that these 'truths' need not also be morally positive and may indeed be deeply morally misleading, as evident in the following example.

5.2 Merits of the Ideas of a Philosopher-fascist-sympathiser?

As examined in the preceding chapter, Heidegger's aesthetics and notion of 'concealment' offers an appealing parallel for enriching our conception of what showing may mean. Nonetheless, as Peter Trawny examines in *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy* (2015), Heidegger himself in the pursuit of truth arrived at dogmatic, indeed fascistic,

conclusions. It is of note that the work cited above, Heidegger's *Poetry, Language, Thought* (1971), was written while Heidegger was exiled in Todtnauberg, after the philosopher was ousted from Freiburg University for supporting the NSDAP (Nazi Party). It is important to note, therefore, that the pursuit of truth, and the experience of 'seeing the world aright'—as history demonstrates—may culminate in dogmatic, indeed fascistic, conclusions.

It may be asked why Heidegger has been examined at all in this thesis: given his political orientations, should we be amplifying his voice? After all, there are clearly ethical issues in privileging the ideas of a fascist regime-supporting philosopher freed from their duties at the university, writing on the joys and truths within poetry during their term of exile. But including these ideas and contextualising them, I believe, provides the clearer moral lesson, that is: Heidegger's insights into poetry's relation to language and thought remain poignant. His aesthetic-reflections have radically impacted 20th century philosophy, and his sentiments are echoed by scholars across the political spectrum, from a range of social positionalities.[56] Indeed as a philosopher his influence in the 20th century may be only behind that of Wittgenstein (Mulhall, 2013). This is not an argument for continuing to attend to a philosopher whose personal politics were ignored by a philosophical tradition that historically, and concerningly, treats ideas in isolation from the context in which they were sown.[57] Rather Heidegger's ideas are included here *because* of this dissonance: Heidegger's reflections are useful and demonstrative of the way the form of literary-practice offers a capaciousness for instilling insights across the political spectrum. Literature will produce and inflame its social justice warriors, just as it will feed the fervour of fascist-philosophers. The experience of art after all—as Heidegger himself might put it—reveals, not in-spite-of, but precisely *because of* the way it also conceals.

It is probable that art played its part in providing the 'illumination' that blinded this philosopher to the truth. I would not go to Heidegger for a final description of reality—as I don't fancy myself wearing a black armband with emblazed swastika—nonetheless he and I find agreement on this important facet of art: that what is *shown* sometimes is brought about *through* what is concealed. One could try and deny this claim on account of its source;

[56] See Holland and Huntington's feminist interpretations of Heidegger (2010) for instance.
[57] Many have indeed chosen to disavow Heidegger's 'truths' upon the recent discovery of his so-called *Black Notebooks*. I am sympathetic to such a disavowal, given an important facet of truth-seeking involves determining whose ideas we advance and whose we are compelled to abandon, to whom we listen and afford the right to speak and to be heard. I have more to say on the politicised nature of truth in Chapter III: Radical Contextualising.

however, firstly, the claim crops up elsewhere as discussed in the preceding chapter, and secondly, a redefining of 'art' such that only works which produce insights that are morally *absolute* rather than merely *persuasive* is an even more dangerous idea. Such an attitude would likely foster the zealotry which itself characterised the Nazi regime. However, a poignant preceding question, as yet unaddressed, shall be raised in the following section. That is, in this thesis I have argued that literature is able to *show* some part of what philosophy cannot *say*. Yet this immediately begs the question: for what reasons is literature supposed *not* to be philosophy in the first place?

5.3 The Origins of the Literary and Philosophical Division

A strong case could be made that it is only by nefarious means that we have culturally differentiated the materiality of literature as a language game (to borrow Wittgenstein's notion) as somehow predetermined to be *not*-philosophy. After all, both 'disciplines' draw upon the same medium—language—and surely the onus should reside with philosophy to differentiate its toolkit, if it is to prove itself distinct from literary methods? As examined in the introduction section to this dissertation, analytic philosophy today continues the endeavour to gain its bearings and self-situate via adopting methodological tools that exclude the literary. It is, however, deeply misleading to talk about a monolithic singular 'philosophical project' given the variety of transgressive movements that endeavour to problematise the narrow scope of contemporary Anglophonic philosophy. The enterprise of analytic philosophy has consequently faced charges of alleged epistemic as well as political and institutional conservatism. There are, for instance, significant critiques of analytic philosophy on the grounds of its failure to criticise modernity, problems of recurrent sexism, and an inertial resistance to new ideas, whilst simultaneously genuflecting unduly to the sciences. [58]

While we can clearly point to various works of philosophy whose methods of inquiry perform in a 'generic' fashion,[59] there are also those works which are *dis*-obedient and perform rather in a *transgressive* fashion. We may consider, for instance, Plato's own allegorical figurations in his *cave of the real*; in this instance, the philosopher takes the form as *prose poet*. Or we could turn to Wittgenstein's delightfully epigrammatic *Tractatus*, a title that turns on his conception of the philosopher as a *transcendental aphorist*. There are

[58] For a full discussion of these criticisms, see Chase (2010) *Analytic Philosophy and Dialogic Conservatism.*
[59] See the analytic philosophical toolkit outlined in the Introduction (Beaney, 1998).

numerous instances of the philosopher violating today's narrowly delineated role, and constraining toolkit. Historically these breaches of convention have been lauded; indeed, in order to make its case philosophical writing commonly mobilise devices generically deployed in literary texts—consider, for instance, the metaphysical novels by Sartre or Beauvoir. In this case the current disciplinary attitude may be more reflective of the ills of professionalism, over-specialisation, and technocracy. As such, it would be highly reductive to claim that philosophy only ever utilises 'philosophical' tools based in 'exposition' rather than literary tools: engaging in *saying*, rather than *showing*.

I agree strongly with the above critique, in fact this whole dissertation is geared towards justifying this claim. I wish to contribute to fostering a cultural recognition within the academy that the literary toolkit—that which shows in a whole range of ways—constitutes a valid form of intellectual inquiry. In doing so the use in academic philosophy of an *expanded* range of instruments may take place. I look forward to the day when a short story or experimental poem may constitute a valid response to an essay question on Personal Identity, or Free Will and Incompatibilism. This ambition is founded in a deep-seated belief that discovering truths is commonly a matter of *transgressing* genre-boundaries, in order to arrive at syncretic, hybridised and consequently novel modes of saying and showing. I am certain that an exploration of the history of science would demonstrate the ways inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary engagement has led to proliferation, growth and insight.[60] It is unfortunate that, in order to guard themselves, many in philosophy departments entrench a methodological myopia that stymies such growth. This thesis is an attempt to coax the philosophers from their tent, as it must give way to the field eventually.

5.4 On Seeing The World 'Aright'

This dissertation has defended the claim that the point of the *Tractatus* is not that its readers should come to apprehend some set of truths, but rather that they should, in Wittgenstein's words, come to *see the world aright*. Taken at face value I may be appearing to champion a prescribed or narrowly mono-perceptual mode of seeing. What does it mean to *see the world aright*? And what *is seen* when the world is viewed either rightly or wrongly? In pursuing these questions, I continue the case made in 5.2. At present this thesis has engaged in much

Commented [jm2]: You'll need to check all cross-refs, as you'll need to be inserting numbers where they're missing from headings, so they may change

[60] Members of the self-proclaimed Stanford Disunity Mafia—Nancy Cartwright, John Dupré, Peter Galison for instance—examine the ontological plurality and thus importance of methodological plurality in different scientific fields (see Scerri, 2000). Their work points towards the dangers of assuming a unity of science, or a rigidity of toolkit.

abstract exploration of universals; for instance, my consideration of the relationship between language, truth and the world has occurred in a very dis-embodied, armchair mode. As discussed in 5.2, I am consequently susceptible to charges of a very specific type of myopia. What does seeing the world aright imply for a world of contested power relations, contested truth-concept, a world of privilege, marginality and structural violence?

There is a danger that even utilising the term 'aright' seeing implies a specific unyielding truth to which the 'authentic seer' has access, unavailable to the common masses, who remain ensnared in delusion. Were that the sense in which seeing the world aright was intended, then I, and Wittgenstein, would be unwittingly investing in a particularly mono-valent notion of *purity*, accessible solely through transcendence; a terminus which, as one commentator has described to me aptly, may cause poets to be removed from an ideal city-state and sent into exile, but which may *also* cause us to arrive at holocausts. These are very valid reservations. Caution is due whenever affirmations of 'correct' seeing are made. For these reasons I will outline in the following section the scope of 'aright seeing' that Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and its saying-showing distinction make possible.

What is seen aright? The 'rightness' to which Wittgenstein refers is many and varied. Some of the means by which literary showing occurs have been outlined in much greater detail in Chapter IV and Chapter V, where I draw on specific authors to examine how their ideas on the perspectival shifts, that literature may induce, enrich our understanding. Just what 'rightness' means must, nonetheless, be made clear, as it is a notion that has proven devastatingly problematic in the past. Believed 'rightness' in a 'transcendent truth' has justified war and genocide, it has been the basis for colonial dispossessions of land, for the radical Othering of different groups. This occurs in the persistent naturalising of unjust class-relations, policies of racial warfare that persist today in attempts, for instance, to entrench racial and class stratifications via supposed ethnic-biological differences.

The unfortunate thing is that this thesis cannot disallow the possibility that some of the 'seeing the world aright' that literature brings about will involve 'revelations' that disempower, oppress, entrench difference and motivate violence. In fact, there is a longstanding history of literature doing precisely that. Literature is not a morally *neutral* or indeed morally *pure* activity: it is an instrument very much in the hands of its users. As experienced in my own writing, certain narrative practices which entrench privilege are likely to be perpetuated unless you are sufficiently reflexive so as to catch yourself

embodying oppressive norms. Indeed, if we look to the propaganda of Goebbels, we see a literary flare: a capacity to show an audience a means of seeing the world anew. The new world Goebbels saw was one with a clearly delineated enemy—the Jew, the homosexual, the gypsy—these groups were radically othered; they were reduced from human status and turned into objects of collective hysteria and hatred. Through scapegoating, the German people received a foundation of solidarity, of purpose and of power. As will be discussed, a case can be made that the contemporary post-structuralist tide threatens similar tribal othering, polarisation and cultural warfare. Literature or propaganda's capacity to show is largely responsible for this occurrence. Showing has a lot of explaining to do.

It may be responded that, should this be the case, then literature is indeed merely a form of *rhetoric*, a means of *distorting* perceptions (O'Neill, 205–225), it turns minds and deceives the populace, it is an instrument of evil—consequently it should be rightly rejected from the 'just city'. I would retort that all this demonstrates is that literary showing may be as oppressive and convincing as philosophical 'saying' or logical reasoning, in the right (or wrong) hands. That is, it is one of the conceits of analytic philosophy that 'reason is impartial'. I will not waste text here dissolving this notion, that is a case for another thesis, but the lack of sound epistemic foundations for abstract reason, deductive or inductive, has been proven time and again (Price, 157–76). Truth is not objective, it is relative to discourse, it pulls itself up by its own epistemic bootstraps, it is thoroughly, *inescapably*, adherent to a Coherentist epistemic foundation (Quine, 185–196). Therefore, we can conclude that truth is contextual, informed by power relations, reliant on unquestionable hinge-propositions and foundational axioms. Reason consequently exists in relation to, and constrained by, a prevailing paradigm of cultural values and disciplinary suppositions.

My conclusion is that both implements, saying and showing, have blood-soaked hands. The important thing is recognising that 'seeing the world aright' is always a contextually defined, relative notion, as the truth, as we understand it, remains forever *truth-relative-to-context*.[61] Being both culturally embedded and historically informed, we might as well call it (in a Heideggerian vein) *truth until* we can see the world anew. Tractarian showing and seeing the world 'aright' resembles the hypotheses one 'says'—that is, they exist dialogically, in a cycling dialectic of thesis, anti-thesis, and emergent synthesis (Fox, 186).

[61] Derrida's work here is relevant, in particular his critique of our tacit belief in knowledge as such, truth as such, on account of the pre-existence of language, and its binding to signature, event and context (1977, 172–197).

Experienced rightness is consequently a contingent phenomenological experience: one that appears contradictory in that it is felt as a moment of insight, an intuition of truth, and yet also is recognised to be a historically constituted force. We can see how, for instance, the sense of rightness may be thoroughly de-naturalised by applying a post-structuralist or gender-based lens, which supports us in identifying how 'truth' is responsive to contingent internalised norms (Butler, 85–130). Alternately, if applying a contemporary evolutionary lens applied, for instance, to the workings of the human mind, we may view our intuitive capacities as mere adaptations—evolved to ensure survival or reproduction—rather than inimical guides to truth (Cosmides, 94–103). Furthermore, if we recognise that the interoceptively felt 'truth-moment' is one that, like all phenomena, arrives via apprioception—i.e. we are always necessarily making sense of new information via our pre-existing stock of information—this reveals the metaphoric nature of the experience of truth (Garfield, 15–30). Consequently, to view 'rightness' as something objectively 'in-the-world' is to risk not only reduction but *totalisation*: in which case fascism is *but one* of the consequent dangers. There exists, too, the danger of a generalised myopia, a non-responsiveness to new information, and a gaze clouded by too rigid a theoretical lens. I will particularise this discussion in the next section by considering what the question of seeing the world 'aright' may mean in the current political moment.

5.5 Application To The Current Political Moment

While my thesis has attempted to tackle some unresolved questions, covering some rather well-trodden scholarly ground, a question close to my heart is the relation of literature to the political. Some have argued that literature *reflects* politics more so than it *shapes* it. This is an important distinction; however, this is too often utilised as an excuse to avoid tackling or engaging a more *transformative*, *tendentious* project. Post-structuralists and post-modernists critique the power embedded in the presiding meta-narratives, examining how these narratives operate to maintain unbalanced social relations by privileging those in specific social locations. While well motivated, these post-structuralist incredulities towards meta-narratives are failing today to offer the transformative critique they offered in the latter half of the 20th century. Today, incredulity towards meta-narratives seems to have been subsumed into an atomising free-for-all, arguably a consequence of the neoliberal paradigm's commodification of social identity. This could be understood as an aspect of Dabord's *Society of the Spectacle*, arguably leading not only to a more inauthentic reification of specific social locations, but the emergence of an identity-based tribalism. It relates too,

as discussed above, to the decentring and repurposing of 'truth' as a commodity, as a mode of info*tainment*. We may thus, see part of the new wave of 'sincerity', such as that ventured by David Foster Wallace, as an attempt by creative producers to shift back to originary sites of the discourse of 'truth' with attention paid to how, in today's fracturing context, we might show or describe this reality. Consequently, while I have, in this dissertation, endeavoured to ground and solidify the foundations of literary inquiry, the question remains: how to situate new, emerging modes of creative production as legitimately questing towards self-making This question arises because there is no *single mechanism* of truth *showing*. I will describe bellow one such Marxist vein of approach, recognising that there are many attempts presently to innovate, and examine the ramifications of this very question.

This dissertation has explored themes of genre, materiality and the narrowly prescribed modes by which thinkers—including philosophers of certain stripes—are culturally trained to chase ideas into generically-predefined discourses of truthfulness. Plato's famed *agon* towards creative producers has been my starting point in asking: what is the nature of literary inquiry and how does it differ from philosophical inquiry? However, it is important, too, to ask: how do these questions, and the argument made to resolve them, bear on the contemporary political moment?

We are living in an era of fake news, perception management, and what has been called post-truth politics or 'truthiness'. In the contemporary political culture, debate is framed primarily by appeal to emotions, it occurs in disconnect from policy details and achieves its end through the repeated assertion of talking points and by strategically ignoring factual rebuttals. We might wish for the days where facts were traditionally contested or challenged, rather than merely viewed as irrelevant and secondary to the emotional appeal of ideas, but those days seem to be behind us. The driver of this new era, the ascendance of post-truth, seems to be related to the advent of the internet: algorithms that play a powerful role in circulating news and misinformation, in constructing virtual 'gated-communities' sealing us hermetically off from alternative perspectives by constructing a 'filter bubble'. A decentralised social media has taken root which—alongside the 24-hour news cycle, the false balancing of news reports and ubiquitous fake-news websites—provides the perfect conditions for the propagation of misinformation.

The nature of inquiry, the power of modes of expression, rhetoric, the limits of reason: these are timely topics to be exploring. This dissertation is a timely one. However, so far I have addressed my questioning predominantly towards providing a critical focus on the extra-linguistic and the sublime. It is important, however, in reading this dissertation not to falter at the phrase 'mystical' and view 'seeing the world aright' as reducible to 'transcending worldly concerns'. This thesis bears too on politics. It addresses itself equally to politicised language, the power of discourse, and the possibilities for poetry and literature to impact the political moment.

As in the discussion earlier concerning the philosopher Heidegger and his Nazi sympathies, literature is not always morally positive or even morally neutral. As also relates to the question of whether or not to give Heidegger airtime, in this current political moment, it is crucial to remember that *truth* is also a matter of choosing to whom we listen and determining whose ideas we advance and whose we abandon. *Truth* has arguably never been so politicised as at this juncture, and while the political implications of either *saying* or *showing* truths are not explicitly a dimension of this dissertation, it is useful to explore in what ways, and for what reasons, we might undertake a *tendentious* literature amounting to a 'politicisation of art'. Thus, to diverge briefly into this territory I will begin by considering the influence of Walter Benjamin.

Benjamin's efforts to develop a politically-oriented, materialist-aesthetic theory have significantly influenced the Frankfurt school of critical theory and have been informative for the likes of Derrida, Agamben and, Habermas among others. Benjamin explored the *aestheticization* of politics and how this aestheticization became a central tool of fascist regimes, by offering a spectacle in which the proletarian masses were able to express themselves without seeing their rights recognised. The logical result of fascism, for Benjamin, was the introduction of aesthetics into political life. By contrast communism, he held, would respond by *politicising* art, as examined in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Of course, the *politicisation* of art, in association with the Soviet Union, has had an equally dark undercurrent. Art subordinate to political life, incorporated for political use, is closely connected to the fascists aestheticization of politics. Benjamin's formulation of the politicisation of aesthetics, however, was intended to be associated with a revolutionary praxis, something redeeming, and a means to cope or resist for those living under a restrictive, censorship-enforcing society.

To examine how these ideas have been taken up we can consider Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. In this influential work Debord examines the development of a modern society in which authentic social life has been replaced with *its representation*. Debord argues that the history of social life can in fact be understood as "the decline of being into having and having into merely appearing" (95). How may literature challenge this process; that is, avoid participating in naturalising our current condition—an historical moment in which, as Debord argues, the commodity "completes its colonization of social life?" (84).

As argued in this dissertation, texts which endeavour to show or gesture at subtle inversions that have taken place may be seen to enact truths Debord points to—after all, what is a more powerful way of demonstrating that relations between commodities have come to supplant relations between people than to enact and mirror this occurrence in a literary text? The arts, as have been argued, are often better able to *Show* what can sometimes be so hard to see or say. This includes the way that social relations among, and between, people have become mediated by images; or the way we passively identify with the 'spectacle' of living; and how this 'appearing' supplants genuine living. Clearly this theory describes an, at large, *felt* phenomenological shift in how we relate to the world and conceive ourselves. In the *spectacular* society impoverishment takes the form of a lack of authenticity, and the consequent distorting of human perceptions.

So how can literature help people 'see the world aright', in Wittgenstein's phrase, in the context we find ourselves in? The answer may be that, if we adopt Debord's assertion, then the spectacle *itself* prevents individuals from recognising that the society of the spectacle is only a moment in history that may be overturned through revolution. Literature, then, may be arguably critical to *recognising* the society of the spectacle; as it is through *Showing* that literature possesses the capacity of 'righting' our distorted perceptions. Given it is the distortion of perceptions that results in the consequent degradation of knowledge, in turn hindering critical thought, literature can be crucial to revolutionary awareness and consciousness-raising, be it through class-consciousness concerning the economic mode we inhabit, or addressing itself, intersectionally, to the multitude of oppressive structures and power relations.

As will be discussed, however, it would be naively optimistic to assume this to be literature's usual mode of analysis, or indeed primary function. Reification, commodification, and depoliticised aestheticisation ensure that the majority of literature

bows to convention, perpetuating discourse and thus propagating the hegemonic ideology of the ruling class (to utilise Gramsci's notion of coerced consent (34–56). Often, where a work is truly critical, it remains in the margins or preaches to the converted from within its echo-chamber. There is also a tendency, of which I have been guilty, of writing in a 'decadently' *avant-garde* mode, that is consequently inaccessibly to the majority. Nonetheless, this is not to claim literature is completely powerless. It is worth considering John Berger, critic and novelist, who provides one such avenue for literature proving *tendentious* and challenging the establishment.

In contrast to a *depoliticised aestheticism*, art for Berger is a crucial instrument to be used in advocating for one's political and cultural convictions; literature offers us a means of resistance in the culture wars. This is evident, for instance, in his text *Ways of Seeing*, in which he attends to the politics of images, endeavouring to demystify the embedded conservatism in art. Berger demonstrates how art commonly functions as "a social practice to maintain illusions"; he does so by drawing attention to, for instance, the compulsive sexualising of the female body in sculpture, or the association between landscape painting and property ownership, and how these unsavoury traditions continued in modern advertising (Sterling, 2018).

As the literary theorist Lukács demonstrates, any sort of depoliticised aestheticism is prone to participate in forms of 'reification'. Lukács conceived works of art as a 'closed totality' that, while structured by the laws of its medium, served to objectively reflect the development of humanity, in the mode of 'mimetic evocation' or suggesting by *imitation* or *mirroring*. Lukács' class-cognisant analysis of literature offers a useful example of how literature may be put to a 'purpose' and in so doing serve as a measure of works, be they 'decadently' *avant-garde*, or purely conventional and culturally dogmatic tracts. In so doing Lukács tacitly suggests there is no neutral ground: either you participate in literature in a self-conscious attempt at the counter-cultural transformation of society, or you participate in reification and implicitly foster the existing status quo.

A work of art may contribute to the human capacity to become self-conscious of our universal character by reflecting the existing social totality in the artwork. In *performing* the social forms constituting modern society it may allow us to see ourselves. This was an endeavour I strived to enact in my epistolary novel *Murmurations*. It is important to note that there are challenges and working in this mode is an ongoing project, my work would

have been difficult to reach for most readers, for some it would have remained surface-level, excessive intellectualisation may have reduced its accessibility. However, as the self-soothing saying goes, 'writing is a process' and I hope in later works to address the issues of my first novel—nonetheless it was an experimental work towards a goal that I am glad to have participated in.

In conclusion, I have here attempted to contextualise the 'ancient quarrel' and examine its relevance today. As evidenced, the literary and philosophical 'canon' is anything but natural or inevitable. We live informed and influenced by ideological forces, propagated by systems and power-relations that undermine some while empowering others. This chapter has been offered in an attempt to recognise the real-world applications of Wittgenstein's philosophy, to demonstrate the potential capacity it has to make sense of the current 'post-truth' political moment. Only in recognising and owning the canonical parochialism we are all subject to, can the contingency embedded in our philosophical conclusions be identified. If we are to understand Wittgenstein's conception of 'seeing the world *aright*' through Showing, it is necessary that we attend to the piecemeal, contextual and situated aspect of inducing perspectival shifts in offering, through literature, *truth*.

CHAPTER VI: Connecting Exegesis and Creative Artefact

The 'ancient quarrel' and the ejection of the poets from Plato's ideal society may appear a quixotic problem: who cares if novels or poetry can or cannot be philosophically justified? Creative writers aren't petitioning any philosopher for permission to exist. But this question of the standing of literature, and more importantly how to do it properly, has bothered me ever since I first found myself, to the detriment of a nascent career in philosophy, toiling away on a novel.

My particular interest in David Foster Wallace arose from an appreciation of his work and his particular way of rendering philosophy in narrative. I have received from Wallace what could be called 'stylistic influences', however it is more apt to say these arise from a shard conception of literary inquiry. For instance, the sense of 'roughness' in my novel, the lack of neat resolutions, the fragmented vignettes and experimental methods, all arise from a desire to explore new ways to express and inquire. My novel is composed of a series of vignettes, loosely connected in terms of character and storyline. It is, however, connected by an overarching desire to serve as philosophically illuminating, to explore matters and get to the depths of them. Yet not merely by allusion to, or illustration of, existing philosophical work. I seek to avoid doing, in Wallace's terms, 'decocted' philosophy—but rather to show what philosophy cannot say.

Wittgenstein has been a philosophical inspiration for a long time, and his saying-showing distinction, and broader mystical project, has long fascinated me as it is a distinction situated at the contours of analytic philosophy and alternate methodologies for inquiry.

I began initially to work in straight-up fiction. And in this writing the inquiry into the age-old quarrel between the poet and philosopher has supplemented my thinking about how the novel can function in this way, non-derivatively of philosophy. This is largely as my novel originated from a desire to explore a sort of counterpoint—ways to blend philosophy with narrative into a unified work. I began from the vague intuition that in exploring these topics through a novel I wasn't merely doing some transposition of philosophy into fiction, but that, in itself, the exploration of these topics through this literary medium would inform my findings. In writing this exegesis I wanted to flesh out this intuition. A year in I shifted to poetry writing. The reason for my shift from novel to poetry, and the relationship between the novel I have offered and the poems that preceded it, is captured well once more by Nelson:

> And now, after living beside you all these years, and watching your wheel of a mind bring forth an art of pure wildness—as I labour grimly on these sentences, wondering all the while if prose is but the gravestone marking the forsaking of wildness (fidelity to sense-making, to argument, however loose)—I'm no longer sure which of us is more at home in the world, which of us more free. (65)

Maggie Nelson echoes my reasons for a shift from prose to poetry. Another way to put it is that I was drawn by the fact of poetry's capacity to draw out some of the less expected,

or continually unanticipated connections that do exist between things but go unnoticed. As John Mure puts it, "when we try to pick anything out we find it hitched to everything else in the universe" (Limbaugh, 1984). This notion resembles the Tibetan Madhyamaka notion of the interdependence of all phenomena: this was part of what poetry could show for me. Interestingly, this poetic shift then fed into the creation of an epistolary novel that wedded together letter, essay, narrative, poem and prose, and this became my final creative artefact product, titled *Murmurations*.

6.1 On Murmurations

> Straddling a threshold, I've learnt, is not the same thing as embodying a contradiction.
>
> What we want? To broadcast the circles, we find inside ourselves.
>
> Why now? Because the solstice enables the narrative poem
>
> it seems we wake to. (Murmurations, 147).

My epistolary novel *Murmurations* weds essay and poem to fiction and dream sequence. You, as reader, follow the correspondence between Juniper and Electra—as they weave strands of Ludwig Wittgenstein to Judith Butler, of Joseph Campbell to Roland Barthes. Written in a vein continuous with an emerging auto-theoretic tradition of poets Brian Blanchfield, Maggie Nelson, Chris Kraus and Eileen Myles, this queer love story provides an instantiation, and problematisation, of the lover's discourse. *Murmurations* draws on Continental philosophers and German mystics, on Buddhist psychoanalysis and gender theorists. This novel is highly self-reflexive, as if the characters were aware of, and trying to wake up from, the discourses in which they were enmeshed. Indeed, much of the book concerns how to be in relation to the life-story we cannot own. It asks:

> When I tell others of my life, should I make of it a well-formed artefact?
>
> What good is your love if it makes its object redundant?
>
> How can we encounter the world not as a collection of objects, but as a communion of subjects?
>
> Is misrecognition, then, the enabling condition for desire?

These murmurations, like starlings, cross Australia's landscape, from admiring cheap-cut glad-wrapped meat in an RSL in rural Tasmania, to riding the lentil belt of Canberra's Inner

North. They travel to Tibetan monasteries in the foothills of the Himalayas, to the glacial lakes of British Columbia. A modern love story, a litany of questions and a manifesto of the inexpressible. As Juniper writes:

> Caught in the impossibility of accounting; I give you instead a questioning of what it is to narrate and its impossibility. Self-reflexivity traps me in the structure of 'story breaking down'—an old formalism. (*Murmurations*, 147)

6.2 How Did the Exegesis Relate to the Creative Product?

In general, I wanted to find the point at which philosophy and fiction met, the fault line where these colliding masses produced what begins as friction, is felt as tremble, then experienced as shattering, destabilising. Something I imagined you could only properly know while it is happening, when you are in the midst of it, and only besides your trembling teacups, in the after-quake, measure the magnitude of. What I discovered in my reading in its stead? No fault line, but a seam, a particular lineage or vein in the face of the rock. The shape of which I could trace with a finger along the hardback spines, author to author: Calvino, Kundera, Coetzee, Foster-Wallace, Bolano, Simic, Carver, Dellilo, Lerner, Nelson, Ashberry, to name a few sedimentary layers.

Meanwhile I set out to produce an exegesis that could function as an assembly manual, with each part of the machine labelled. Suffice to say I never found in the exegesis the ghost, who I'm convinced remained enmeshed in the cogs and pistons, the wheels and gears, a viscous invisible fluid, the ghoulish spirit that makes the whole come alive and trundle. Perhaps in writing and dredging fiction I began to have non-describable intimations of what could only be shown, but never in the exegetical work. It was a different, though complementary, study. Below I will examine how the content of my creative artefact, and the devices drawn upon, relate to my exegetical inquiry.

6.3 Literary Techniques in Murmurations

As described in 'The Meat of Literary Showing' section, there exist a range of devices drawn on to show what cannot be said, techniques of which my own work demonstrates a range. My poetry and novel have also been influenced by a number of poets, and poetic postmodern techniques. Though I would like to wear that influence the way Lerner wears

it in *Lichtenberg Figures*: "I don't deny the influence, but it's less / A relation of father to son than a relation of / Moon to tide".

> The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (Wittgenstein, TLP, 5.6)

If the limits of my language mean the limits of my world, what techniques are available to push and pull the elastic language available to me, in ways that stretch and expand my world? I explore different ways to construct poems, from loose sonnet sequences that employ line breaks, to aphoristic, sometimes surreal paragraph poems. But the book is fundamentally an attempt to explore communication, its limits, and different ways of stretching language and ideas.

While this novel is quite difficult formally, and reasonably experimental, it is largely in prose. Consequently, it could be conceived of as an unfolding in prose of preoccupations in my poetry, or the novel as a genre which absorbs other genres, able to contain my poetry. Or the novel as once preoccupied with the surface effects of language, a novel that doesn't elaborate a program preceding the act of composition but rather unfolded outside my conscious control. This all arises in an attempt to suggest obliquely, to write experimentally and indirectly, yet to find and strike that balance where both the disruptions to, and the continuity of, language serve as communicative. To discover means of distressing the form in ways that challenge belief in the 'seamless lyrical utterance'. To unpick the imagined seams, as it were.

In producing sequences of poems/letters/essays in *Murmurations* that ruminate on and play with language, sense and the world, I draw upon and try to develop my own forms of Oulipian-style constraints. These include experimenting with juxtaposition of imagery, conjoining failures of speech with repetition and recombination of sense, playing with malformed syntax or syntactical ambiguity, destabilising pronouns and deictics. I employ irony formally in my work. Yet I hope that irony in the work strikes the reader as far from the vernacular sense of 'ironic' as insincere. I seek to avoid the easy, self-congratulatory mode of detached cultural diagnosis that's so common in purportedly innovative poetry. That said, I have concerns that at time my poetry can be either too dense or too cryptic, that it doesn't repay careful attention but is rather a silly scamper across ideas and language. As Lerner writes, and as I read ironically, in San Francisco "We had thought that by

arranging words at random we could avoid ideology. We were right. Then we were terribly wrong. Such is the nature of California."

To the detail: I explore collage, producing lines that collide and in collision produce new (sometimes interesting) monster hybrids, creating a sense of the poem as continuously discontinuous, like a series of thoughts interrupted. The work of bricolage is left to the reader who must choose their own adventure, in a collage that never fully assembles. I construct found poems with borrowed language; that is, buzzwords, common inquiries and phrases, using quotations or citing theories, each of which is recycled and revised throughout individual poems and the novel at large. I also create mosaics collaging shards of broken images together in order to produce a linguistically oneiric dreamlike effect with the language, whether absurd or comical or sentimental. Related to this oneiric feeling, I want, in certain poems, to create the narrative sense of time passing, of things happening, of what could be described as a *plot*, though it remains difficult to say precisely what is going on.

In my poetry I attempt to create affecting contrasts and types of cognitive dissonance by drawing upon juxtapositions. For instance, I juxtapose classical lyric images against language written at a certain distance; technical, 'objectivist' language, or rhetoric from various realms—whether political, administrative, academic or commercial. Using this juxtaposition, I set stark declarations and proclamations against failed or tentative speech. Some poems also oscillate violently between lyrical prose and trite, colloquialistic or idiomatic expressions, contrasting academic grandiloquence with blunt purely pragmatic language. I also draw upon cliché, jargon and platitudes; which I then attempt to subvert or contort, into strange contexts, so they take on new meaning, and so a type of critical pressure on the words is maintained.

These techniques are used to undermine easy decipherability, allowing for delayed meaning and inexactness in meaning so that the work's sense remains subject to continual revision. By seeking to produce misprision in the reader, or what could be characterised as 'productive frustration', the work introduces an 'instability' that elucidates the participatory nature of meaning construction between reader and author. In this way I emphasise process over product, or composing over end composition, to undermine or at least worry at the tendency in reading to seek decipherability as a critical aim; means, as Lerner puts it, of defeating or deferring actuality and thereby refusing closure.

6.4 The Content And The Journey

The content I have attempted to explore in *Murmurations* is varied. It explores place: the monastic environment, British Columbia, New York, Tasmania. I would begin writing poems as a way to amuse myself by trying to make something new, or surprise myself with unexpected conjunctions, but then this idle pursuit took on surprising weight, seriousness. To think of the porousness of certain borders, was the way I wrote poetry and letters pouring over into the way I lived? And the way I lived seeping into my poems? And then the difficulty of determining how it was I wanted to live, trying to discern how in fact I did live (a difficult task), what was reality, what was fantasy, what was a heroic subversion, what was a childish tantrum; the internal and external conflicts that perhaps mark youth in transition to adulthood.

What did it mean to abandon place in the traditional structure of class? Was this a permissible wandering for someone in his 20s, the equivalent of an extended 'gap-year' from which they would return ready to assume their place in that structure? And what about leaving the cultural centre for the periphery, both geographically and intellectually? Living amongst provincial farmers in Larina Valley, among idlers in collapsing share houses, in the mountains in northern India among Tibetan monks, in anti-nuclear communes in Hamburg, or anarchist squats in Vienna? Was it a choice to live as a perpetual vagrant, a wanderer and outsider—living out of a suitcase in subletted rooms, vans, tents? And if so, did this arise from a desire to choose the open to the known, a pilgrimage over stagnancy? Or was it the result of a trauma—the loss of my lover whom I'd projected a stable life with children, a home, hearth, and garden. All auto-theorising aside, perhaps this was just an iteration of Basho's model for poetry, as "the artless expression of a child at play".

6.5 Buddhist Emptiness, Wittgenstein And Poetry

In examining content, I should outline the relationship between Wittgenstein and Buddhist philosophy, and how my novel *Murmurations*' examination of lived Buddhist philosophy relates to my exegetical work. My research led me from Wallace and Wittgenstein to Tibetan Buddhism, in particular as relating to metaphysical paradox. As Lerner wrote in the *Lichtenberg Figures*, "There is nothing more metaphysical than the claim to break with metaphysics" (36). This plays out in Buddhist philosophy as it does Wittgenstein. The Buddhist conception of emptiness I found echoed Wittgenstein's Tractarian project, in

that Chandrakirti develops a metaphysical theory, that, in virtue of rejecting the idea of a fundamental nature of reality, is deeply paradoxical—seeming on the one hand to provide an account of the fundamental nature of reality while rejecting the coherence of any such account. Yet as I have argued in the preceding, this need not render a theory incoherent, if the Buddhist tradition, like Wittgenstein, takes seriously the possibility that metaphysics is directed "not at a deeper analysis of reality, but at extirpating the need for such a deeper analysis" (Garfield, 68). According to the Madhyamaka, to exist is to be empty, and emptiness—the lack of any intrinsic nature—is the intrinsic nature of all things. Put differently: to attack the enterprise of fundamental ontology where that is taken to be the project of finding the ultimate nature of reality is still to do fundamental ontology, as indeed Wittgenstein notes in his famous ladder analogy (TLP, 6.54).

Eerily akin to Wittgenstein, Nagarjuna states that even the statement that phenomena are empty of intrinsic nature is itself merely a conventional truth, which, by virtue of the necessary involvement of language with conceptualisation, cannot capture the non-conceptualisable nature of reality. Nonetheless language (designation) is indispensable for expressing that inexpressible truth. As Garfield puts it, "this is not an irrational mysticism, but rather a rational, analytically grounded embrace of inconsistency" (2014, 68). On the Madhyamaka account then, the drive for consistency which in philosophy is often taken as mandatory is simply one further aspect of ignorance involving the superposition of a property onto reality that reality in fact lacks.

This connection between poetry and the Buddhist notion of emptiness informs to a large degree my creative explorations. This arose because I was curious about the possibilities for creating poetic content not absorbed by a sense of self as 'interiority' but engaged with either non-self or a more expansive notion of self. This occurred in tandem with my more in-depth exploration of various mindfulness practices and introspective meditative states, and the sense of 'selflessness' described in Mahayana Buddhism. This is a familiar 'no self' that seeks to un-weave the 'exaggerated-self' whose spell we commonly operate under, and which dictates the course of so much written poetry. My objections to this self-driven work began after reflecting on the degree of absorption in childish delusion obvious from my first three collections of poetry. Since breaking, to some extent, away from this model, I believe my poetry has become more expansive, less repetitive and certainly less morose.

I studied the Prasangika Tennet system within Buddhist philosophy, a system that ascribes to the 'selflessness' of all phenomena, referred to as *Shunyata* or 'emptiness'. To give a very limited explanation: all phenomena we know and interact with lack inherent existence, in the sense that they are not the independent, unitary, self-sufficient objects we imagine them to be, but rather are dependently arisen, interdependently existent, impermanent objects that exist by means of conceptual-*imputation*. Aspects of this philosophy have been pointed towards by a number of Western philosophers, among them Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kant, Hegel and Hume.

Importantly, a conceptual understanding of this emptiness as spelt out by philosophers is only the first step according to Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. The ultimate goal is 'direct realisation' of emptiness, and this is achieved via numerous means, including ethical action, the cultivation of altruistic compassion, study and meditation. The contention, explored in my creative work, is that poetry, in a manner distinct from philosophy, provides a further method, given poetry involves exercising creative critical faculties that allow us to think beyond governing concepts. In my poetic exploration a central governing concept I have approached has been the self. In my writing I was inspired by Basho's use of and approach to haiku. Haiku can be understood as pointing both towards the world and towards the self. Read in this way, haiku serves as a reminder that the reader should not become too fixed in a singular sense of what the self consists in and of, where it resides, and how it can be set against, and considered distinct from, the world. This has been referred to as the haiku "bow[ing] to what lies on both sides of the skin's millimeter-thick boundary". This is another way of expressing this sense of unshackling the mind from any singular and absolute story, any un-nuanced and reductive dividing of world into subject and object, self and other, illness and blossom, freedom and capture. We could conceive, then, of a core goal of this form of poetry as the recognition of the necessary permeability of these categories, the suggestion that these divisions are at core artificial.

I have not been writing a lot of Haiku, but my project runs on similar lines; that is, involving the attempted dissolution of categories, and the recognition of an expansive sense of self, that we indeed feel within ourselves the lives of others: people, creatures, plants. An interesting parallel here exists with Wittgenstein's case against private meaning: that words have their meaning because we share a common language and common forms of life—we speak as we do because of what we do, and this is all a properly *public* affair. This connects with the ideas I hoped to explore in poetry: that we could move away from

the image of the poet or philosopher as a lonely self, brooding over private sensations, and move towards a focus on our culture, our shared practical life together, a characterisation of common experience.

CONCLUSION

> You know how a state of affairs that would contravene the laws of physics can be represented by us spatially, one that would contravene the laws of geometry cannot? (Wittgenstein, 3.0321)

Commented [jm3]: As I mentioned before, fix all incomplete, unclear in-text refs

The above quote is a further way of talking about the way literature may be able to do what philosophy cannot, because philosophy, narrowly construed, can't get outside its own methods. To relate all this back to the framing question, then: how does this exploration bears on the 'ancient quarrel' between the poets and philosophers? Through my close reading of Wallace and "The Empty Plenum", my case for Tractarian mysticism, and the value and relevance of the saying-showing distinction to literary inquiry, I hope to have shed some new light on the 'ancient quarrel', and importantly some light on where the worth in literature resides.

Plato often refers to poets as divinely drunk, stirring us to the depths with their irresponsible profundity, unable to give us an account of how they arrived at these profundities or what they might even mean by them. How can such no-accounts be trusted? I have argued that by looking to the Saying–Showing distinction we can better see grounds for appreciating and perhaps trusting such non-accounts.

This thesis has a number of tentacular limbs. These dexterous appendages creep in many directions. They toy with and test Plato's city gates—perhaps forcibly separating a quarrelling philosopher and poetaster or two. They fumble about over Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, their pad-like, hydrostatic suckers getting tangled with a few aphorisms (particularly propositions 1, 7 and the preface). They feel their way about inside Wallace's plenum, curious to see if it is indeed empty. Then they gather what they've found and paint a picture, something like one of those great sea octopus self-portraits on the ocean floor.

Commented [JTW4]: Fix up

In approaching Wittgenstein's mystical project, I have shown that such a reading of the *Tractatus* provides a coherent response to the central paradox of the *Tractatus*. Further I have argued that the *Tractatus*' notions on ethics, logic and metaphysics are characteristic of 'genuine mystical experiences' that support a mystical reading of the *Tractatus*. I have then connected this notion of Saying–Showing to the question of how literature can show. While the argument I put forward requires further development in order to further elucidate (full elucidation may be something definitionally impossible) the notion of

showing in literature, what I have endeavoured to accomplish in this thesis is a demonstration of the relevance of the distinction. This distinction should lay the groundwork for, and open up further avenues of, research concerning how this theory is to be understood in terms of literary practice—the different devices used, attitudes conveyed, the relation to different literary trends and what that these trends says about this distinction. As Plato writes:

> There is not, and there may never be, any treatise by me on these things, for the subject is not communicable in words, as other sciences are. Rather is it that, after long association in the business itself and a shared life, a light is lit in the soul, kindled, as it were, by a leaping flame, and thenceforward feeds itself.[62]

[62] Plato as cited in Moore (1987, 480).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anscombe, Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret. *An introduction to Wittgenstein's* Tractatus. Cambridge University Press, 1961.

Baltzly, D., Finamore, J., and Miles, G. *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's* Republic. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Beaney, Michael. *What is analytic philosophy? Recent work on the history of analytic philosophy*. British Journal for the History of Philosophy 6(3), 1998: 463–472.

Berger, John. *Ways of seeing*. Penguin UK, 2008.

Bird, J. *Gender, knowledge and art: Feminist standpoint theory synthesised with arts-based research in the study of domestic violence*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Black, Max. *A companion to Wittgenstein's* Tractatus. CUP Archive, 1964.

Booth, Wayne C. *The rhetoric of fiction*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Bordo, Susan., *The flight to objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and culture*. State University of New York Press, 1987.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *This craft of verse*. Harvard University Press, 2002.

Boswell, Marshall. *Understanding David Foster Wallace*. University of South Carolina Press, 2003.

——, ed., *Trickle-down citizenship: Taxes and civic responsibility in David Foster Wallace's* The Pale King. University of South Carolina Press, 2012: 464–479.

Burn, Stephen J. *David Foster Wallace's* Infinite Jest*: A reader's guide*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.

Cahill, Kevin M. *The fate of wonder: Wittgenstein's critique of metaphysics and modernity*. Columbia University Press, 2011.

Cahn, Steven M., and Ecker, M. *Freedom and the self: Essays on the philosophy of David Foster Wallace*. Columbia University Press, 2015.

Chase, James. *Analytic philosophy and dialogic conservatism*. Reynolds et al, 2010: 85–104.

Clare, Ralph. *The politics of boredom and the boredom of politics in David Foster Wallace's* The Pale King. In Studies in the Novel, 2012: 428–446.

Coetzee, John. *The lives of animals*. Princeton University Press, 2016.

Coetzee, John, and Kurtz, Arabella. *The good story: Exchanges on truth, fiction and psychotherapy*. Random House, 2015.

Cohen, L. Jonathan. *The dialogue of reason: An analysis of analytical philosophy*. Clarendon Press, 1986.

Conant, James. *Elucidation and nonsense in Frege and early Wittgenstein*. Routledge, 2002: 184–227.

Cosmides, L. *The Logic of social exchange: Has natural selection shaped how humans reason?* Cognition, 31, 1989: 187–276.

Davidson, Donald. *What metaphors mean*. In: Sheldon Sacks (ed.). On Metaphor, 1978: 29–45.

De Man, P. *Phenomenality and materiality in Kant*. The Textual Sublime: *Deconstruction and its differences*. State University of New York Press, 1990.

Den Dulk, A., and Boswell, M. *Boredom, irony, and anxiety: Wallace and the Kierkegaardian view of the self*. Bloomsbury, 2014: 43–61.

Diamond, C. *Throwing away the ladder*. Philosophy, 63(243), 1988: 5-27.

——, ed. *Having a rough story about what moral philosophy is*. New Literary History, 1983: 155–169.

Egan, David. *Pictures in Wittgenstein's later philosophy,* Philosophical Investigations. 34(1), 2011: 55–76.

Feeney, Matt. *Infinite attention: David Foster Wallace and being bored out of your mind*. Slate, 2011.

Commented [jm5]: ?

Commented [jm6]: Give publisher details of all such books in list, in correct style

Gadamer, HG., Weinsheimer, J., and Marshall, D. *Truth and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004.

Graff, Gerald. *Poetic statement and critical dogma*. Northwestern University Press, 1970.

Garfield, Jay L., and Priest, Graham. *Nagarjuna and the limits of thought*. Philosophy East and West, 2003: 1–21.

Garfield, Jay L. *Engaging Buddhism: Why it matters to philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

——, ed. *Ask not what Buddhism can do for cognitive science: Ask what cognitive science can do for Buddhism*. Bulletin of Tibetology 47.1, 2011: 15–30.

Glendinning, Simon. *Derrida and the philosophy of law and justice*. Law and Critique, 27(2), 2016: 187–203.

Goldstein, Rebecca. *The 'ancient quarrel': Philosophy and literature*, *Part II. Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Whitney Humanities Center, New Haven, 2011.

Hacker, Peter. *Was he trying to whistle it*? Routledge, 2000: 353–88.

——, ed. Prologue: *Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology as a critical instrument for the psychological sciences*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013: 10–27.

Heidegger, Martin. *Ontology--the hermeneutics of facticity*. Indiana University Press, 2008.

——, ed. *Poetry, language, thought*. Translated by A. Hofstadter. Harper and Row, 1971.

——, ed. *Becoming Heidegger: On the trail of his early occasional writings, 1910–1927*. Translated by Kisiel and Sheehan. Northwestern University Press, 2007.

——, ed. *Being and time*. Translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. *Blackwell*, 1962.

Helman, Glen. *The dialogue of reason: An analysis of analytic philosophy*. Indiana University Press, 1989: 78–81.

Hertz, N. *The notion of blockage in the literature of the sublime,* in psychoanalysis and the question of the Text. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Holland, Nancy., and Huntington, Patricia. *Feminist Interpretations of Martin Heidegger*. Penn State Press, 2010.

Huemer, Wolfgang. *Introduction*: *Wittgenstein, language and philosophy of literature*. Routledge, 2004: 13–26.

Hutto, Daniel D. *Misreading's, clarifications and reminders: A reply to Hutchinson and Read*. International Journal of Philosophical Studies, 2006: 561–567.

Huxley, Aldous. *The doors of perception*. Harper & Row, 1990 (original work published 1954).

Irigaray, Luce, and Gill, Gillian. *An ethics of sexual difference*. Cornell University Press, 1993.

Jackson, Henry. *The fifth book of the Nichomachean ethics of Aristotle*. University Press, 1879.

Kaiser, Wilson. *David Foster Wallace and the ethical challenge of posthumanism*. Mosaic: a journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature, 2014: 53–69.

Korsgaard, Christine. *Fellow creatures: Kantian ethics and our duties to animals*. *The Tanner Lectures on human values*. University of Michigan, 2004.

Krajeski, Jenna. *This is water*. The New Yorker, 2008.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Meditations on knowledge, truth, and ideas*. Springer, Dordrecht, 1989: 291–295.

Lerner, Ben. *Leaving the Atocha station*. Coffee House Press, 2011.

——, ed. *The Lichtenberg figures*. Copper Canyon Press, 2013.

——, ed. *The Hatred of poetry*. FSG Originals, 2016.

Lloyd, Genevieve. *Maleness, metaphor, and the 'crisis' of reason*, Antony and Witt, 1993, 69–84.

——, ed. *The man of reason: "Male" and "female" in western philosophy*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993b.

——, ed. *Feminism and history of philosophy in Oxford Readings in Feminism*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Commented [jm7]: What uni?

Commented [jm8]: Use initial capitals for all journal titles

Commented [jm9]: Month missing

Lyotard. *Lessons on the analytic of the sublime*. Translated by E. Rottenberg. Stanford University Press, 1994.

Mahon, Áine. *Gesturing Towards Reality: David Foster Wallace and philosophy*. Coffee House Press, 2015: 610–612.

McCaffery, Larry. *An interview with David Foster Wallace*. Review of Contemporary Fiction, 1993: 127.

McDonough, Richard. *Wittgenstein and Whitehead revisited*. Process Studies, 2016: 250–261.

McGinn, Marie. *Between metaphysics and nonsense: Elucidation in Wittgenstein's* Tractatus. The Philosophical Quarterly, 1999: 491–513.

——, ed. *Saying and showing and the continuity of Wittgenstein's thought*. The Harvard Review of Philosophy, 2001: 24–36.

McGuinness, Brian. *The mysticism of the* Tractatus. The Philosophical Review, 75.3, 1966: 305–328.

McGurl, Mark. *The institution of nothing: David Foster Wallace in the program*. Boundary, *2* 41.3, 2014: 27–54.

Moore, Adrian W. *On saying and showing*. Philosophy, 62.242, 1987: 473–497.

Monk, Ray. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: the duty of genius*. Random House, 2012.

Moore, Adrianne, and Sullivan, Peter. *Ineffability and nonsense*. Aristotelian Society Supplementary, 77, 2003: 169–223.

Morris, Michael, and Dodd, Julian. *Mysticism and nonsense in the* Tractatus. European Journal of Philosophy, 17.2, 2009: 247.

Mulhall, Stephen. *The Routledge guidebook to Heidegger's being and time*. Routledge, 2013.

——, ed. *The Wounded Animal: JM Coetzee and the difficulty of reality in literature and philosophy*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Murray, Penelope. *Inspiration and mimēsis in Plato*. Apeiron, 25.4, 1992: 27–46.

Commented [jm10]: First name?

Commented [jm11]: Vol/month?

Commented [jm12]: See above

Commented [jm13]: See above

Commented [jm14]: Month/vol?

Commented [jm15]: ?

Commented [jm16]: Are these OK? Look odd. Check others too

Commented [jm17]: Check title

Nelson, Maggie. *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press, 2015.

Nicolson, Marjorie Hope. *Sublime in external nature*, in Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Scribner, 1973: 336–337.

Nightingale, Andrea Wilson. *Genres in dialogue: Plato and the construct of philosophy*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

O'Neill, John. *Rhetoric, science, and philosophy*. Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 28.2, 1998: 205–225.

Perloff, Marjorie. *Wittgenstein's ladder: Poetic language and the strangeness of the ordinary*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Piekarski, Krzysztof. *Buddhist philosophy in the work of David Foster Wallace*. University of Texas Press, 2013.

Polt, Richard. *Recent translations of the*. Hachette UK, 30.4, 2007: 453–470.

Price, Anthony. *Against requirements of rationality. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Quine, W. and Ullian, J. *The web of belief*. Random House, 1970.

Ramal, Randy. *Beyond philosophy: David Foster Wallace on literature, Wittgenstein, and the dangers of theorizing*. Bolger and Korb, 2014: 177–98.

Ramsey, Frank Plumpton. *Foundations of mathematics and other logical essays*. Routledge, 2013: 270–86.

Rappe, Sara. *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-discursive thinking in the texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Ricketts, Thomas. *Frege, the Tractatus, and the logocentric predicament*. Nous, 1985: 3–15.

Ryerson, James. *Introduction: A head that throbbed heartlike: The philosophical mind of David Foster Wallace* in Fate, time, and language: An essay on free will. Columbia University Press, 2010: 1–34.

Russell, Bertrand. '*Mysticism and logic' and other essays*. Routledge, 1917.

Commented [jm18]: Check title

Commented [jm19]: ?

Commented [jm20]: ?

——, ed. *Preface to Wittgenstein's* Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Routledge, 1971: x–xxii.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The world as will and idea*. 3 vols. Translated by. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1883–1886.

——, ed. *The world as will and representation*. Translated by E.F.J. Payne. Indian Hills, 1958.

——, ed. *The world as will and presentation*. Translation by Richard E. Aquila in collaboration with David Carus. Longman, 2008.

Simon, Josef. *Phenomena and noumena: On the use and meaning of the categories*. Springer, Dordrecht, 1974: 45–51.

Soames, Scott. *Philosophical analysis in the twentieth century, volume 1: The dawn of analysis*. University Press, 2003: 253.

Sperling, Joshua. *A writer of our time: The life and work of John Berger*. Verso Books, 2018.

Stern, David G. *Wittgenstein on mind and language*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 1996.

Trawny, Peter. *Heidegger and the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy*. University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Wallace, David Foster. *E Unibus Pluram: Television and US fiction*. The Review of Contemporary Fiction, 13.2, 1993: 151.

——, ed. *The Empty Plenum: David Markson's Wittgenstein's Mistress*. Review of Contemporary Fiction, 10.2, 1990: 217.

——, ed. *Both flesh and not: Essays*. Hachette, 2012.

——, ed. *Consider the Lobster: Essays and arguments*. Hachette, 2012.

Wedberg, Anders. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Stockholm press, 1962.

Weiskel, Thomas. *The romantic sublime: Studies in the structure and psychology of transcendence*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Commented [JTW21]:

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of grass*. Bantam Classics, 1983.

Malcolm, N., and Wright, GH. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A memoir*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by Pears and McGuinness. Routledge, 4, 1961.

——, ed. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* translated by Ogden. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

——, ed. *Philosophical investigations*. Translated by P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

——, ed. *Philosophical investigations*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Blackwell, 1953.