The Shepherd and the Familiar Stranger:
Surveying Grammar in *The Shepheardes Calender*

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We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal; but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!

  - Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

But it is to be wonne with Custome, and rough words must be subdued with Vse. For, why a Gods name may not we, as else the Greekes, haue the kingdome of our owne Language, and measure our Accentes by the sounde, reseruing the Quantitie to the Verse?

  - Edmund Spenser, *The Spenser-Harvey Correspondence*

      Placing these passages at a crossroads can mutually illuminate the work of

Spenser and Wittgenstein. But we must tread carefully, both in approaching these

extracts discretely and in tracing their networks of their intra-/intertextual resemblance.

To be sure, one can glimpse images and issues that weave through the corpora of the poet

and the philosopher alike: the forces of use and custom in linguistic practice;

topographical and urban metaphors to describe the evolving systems of language

communities; conceptions of roughness and refinement in relation to an ideal *logos* or an

authoritative *lexis*. The selections above are notable soundings, yet they are not

definitive of either author's thinking. Between and within their perspectives on language,

we stand to learn as much from the divergences as from the convergences. Suffice it to

say that there are far more formidable hazards to heed than the pitfalls of anachronism.

      In what follows, I treat these epigraphs as portals through which we may peer or

pass. Each performs particular functions. The first, from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical

Investigations* [*PI*], offers an entrée into the tenets of Wittgenstein's philosophy after he

revised the underpinnings and conclusions of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* [*T*].

My readings of his later work adhere largely, if not entirely to scholarly consensus: they

could only be distinctive in how I elect to order and condense the citations and

commentary. The goal of this arrangement is to steady my exploration with the bearings

that orient Wittgenstein's "vision of language."[1] Contextualizing and elucidating the

excerpt above furnishes a lens and a lexicon for the core venture of this study:

illuminating the conceptions and the uses of familiarity and estrangement in the formative

practices of Spenser's poetics.

　　　To this end, we must handle Spenser's portion of the dual epigraph with greater

caution. The quotation from the *Investigations* is illustrative of Wittgenstein's

convictions in a relatively forthright manner. (So one would hope for a philosophical

work.) The selection from Spenser, however, which is drawn from a published set of

"familiar letters" between his friend and mentor Gabriel Harvey, is heavily layered with

stylized and tendentious performativity.[2] Moreover, while Spenser's figural image of

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[1] I borrow the phrase "vision of language" from Stanley Cavell's "Excursus on Wittgenstein's Vision of Language" in *The Claim of Reason* [*CR*]. The uses of *vision* in this context are supple and well suited to Wittgenstein's project: scholars can therewith speak broadly about his complex views on language and meaning without referring to them as codified *theories* or *theses* (*PI* §109, §128). Although this distinction can in some ways seem hair-splitting or even counterintuitive, it strikes to the heart of Wittgenstein's perception of philosophy as an activity and discipline. In his eyes, to construct theories and doctrines is a method that typifies traditional philosophy and modern science. To avoid the dogmatism of either, philosophers must cast off this method in favor of "grammatical investigation":

> . . . [O]ur considerations must not be scientific ones . . . And we may not advance any kind of theory . . . All *explanation* must disappear, and description must take its place. And this description gets its light – that is to say, its purpose – from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems . . . [T]hey are solved through an insight into the workings of our language . . . The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. (*PI* §109)

Considering these approaches to language as those of a *vision* speaks to another aspect of Wittgenstein's method, viz., *looking*, *seeing*, and *showing* what is *evident* in linguistic practice, yet what language fails to express of itself (*PI* §66-67, §90-93, §118-133, §578-580; Cf. *T* §5.6-5.62, §6.522). For a brief summary of Wittgenstein's wariness toward "the theory-constructing impulse in philosophy," see Hans Sluga's *Wittgenstein*, pp. 13-15.

[2] The circumstances and motives behind the 1580 publication of this correspondence are various and often cryptic. The five letters issue in two stages, the first entitled *Three Proper, and wittie, familiar Letters: lately passed betwene two Vniuersitie men: touching the Earthquake in Aprill last, and our English refourmed Versifying. With the Preface of a wellwiller to them both*, the second entitled *Two Other, very commendable Letters, of the same mens writing: both touching the foresaid Artificiall Versifying, and certain other Particulars: More lately deliuered unto the Printer*. The extent to which Spenser sanctioned the dissemination of these letters remains slightly ambiguous, despite the fact that they display a marked degree of purposive ordering and revision. As in *The Shepheardes Calender*, Spenser retains anonymity, employing the pseudonym Immeritô ("the unworthy one"). However, the letters do contain some fairly stark clues to the poet's identity: for instance, in a Latin poem dedicated to Harvey, the speaker refers to himself as "Edmundus." Convincingly, I think, many Spenserians have conjectured that these letters, like

language as an indigenous and inhabitable kingdom possesses far-reaching significance

throughout the poet's art and thought, its first application appears in highly specialized

circumstances: experimental efforts to bring English verse and pronunciation into

conformity with the quantitative meters of Greek and Latin.[3] Even so, once we reckon

with these caveats, a Wittgensteinian reading of the passage can lead us to a unique

apprehension of crucial aims and methods—often overlooked by virtue of their

fundamentality—that characterize Spenser's innovative book of pastoral poetry, *The*

Shepheardes Calender.

These means and ends are difficult to encapsulate at this introductory stage. I

cannot yet articulate my argument as I wish to. Though, in truth, if this is a wish to

satisfy my own "theory-constructing impulse," my present inability to offer an exhaustive

thesis may be for the better. The ambitions of this paper are considerable indeed: I am

after nothing less than a clarification of Spenser's own vision of language—the vision of

an imaginative and eccentric reinventor of elocution who composed during one of the

most dynamic periods in the history of English.[4] Still, if a clarification is my sole pursuit,

the *Epistle* to Harvey at the start of *The Shepheardes Calender*, function as paratexts to the book's twelve eclogues. In this manner, they form part of a "hermeneutical game" or puzzle for audiences to play or solve (Zurcher 38-41; Hadfield 123). Readers can thereby discern—in a gradual, careful, and vexingly limited fashion—the discrete voices and intellectual commitments of each author. More importantly, readers can begin to see how these voices and commitments interweave with the greater purposes of Spenser's groundbreaking pastoral opus.

[3] A famous champion of these efforts, Sir Philip Sidney, was a pivotal patron and poetic predecessor of Spenser. Also, during the publication of *The Shepheardes Calender* and *The Spenser-Harvey Correspondence* (1579-1580), Spenser may have been engaged with the *Areopagus*, a transitory, but spirited literary circle that orbited Sidney and his Penshurst Estate. The nationalist principles of this group bore striking affinities to those of the *Pléiade* in France, in that each coterie espoused the enhancement and advancement of vernacular language and literature. Spenser's early poetry, for instance, displays rich encounters with the works of the *Pléiade*'s chief members, namely Joachim du Bellay and Pierre de Ronsard. Du Bellay's *La Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française* (1549) particularly influenced Spenser's endeavors to (re)claim the "Kingdom of English." For a helpful treatment of Spenser's interests in the *Areopagus* as displayed in his letters to Harvey, see Hadfield's biography, pp. 104-110.

[4] For broader treatments of linguistic development in early modern England, consult the following seminal studies: Richard Foster Jones' *The Triumph of the English Language*, Richard Waswo's *Language and*

then the extent to which I need to "advance any kind of theory" is moot. And if there are

aspects of my aspiration that remain high-flown, I can mitigate their exorbitance by

employing the humble and strenuous modes of "grammatical inquiry."[5] In fact, my basic

contention is that Spenser's poetry participates in similar modes, even vis-à-vis his most

unconventional uses of language and his loftiest attempts to enrich the English word-

stock. In *The Shepheardes Calender*, the poet explores (and rethinks) the substructural

conditions that support linguistic and literary development. Amid the epistemic and

communicative struggles of the multiple speakers, the space of the pastoral embodies a

sort of ground zero or excavation site where Spenser reaches toward the bedrock of

poetic diction.[6] Note that I do not say, "the *essence* of poetic diction." In stressing

conditions, I allude more to prior states of affairs and underlying patterns of agreement in

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Meaning in the Renaissance, and Judith Anderson's *Words That Matter: Linguistic Perception in the Renaissance*.

[5] I explicate the components of Wittgenstein's conception of "grammatical inquiry" in the next section. See *PI* §90, as well as the prior footnote on Wittgenstein's suspicion of constructing theories in philosophy (p. 2, n. 1).

[6] Many Renaissance theorists considered pastoral poetry as a point of origin in the genealogy of genre. See, e.g., Guilio Cesare Scaligero's *Poetices Libri Septem* (1581): "Of dramatic poetry there are many subdivisions . . . The earliest form is pastoral, the latest is comedy and its offspring, tragedy" (20). While George Puttenham technically disagrees with this perspective in *The Arte of English Poesy* (1589), he maintains the primacy of pastoral poetry in the evolution of human affairs. That is, Puttenham "[denies] that the eclogue should be the first and most ancient form of artificial poesy, being persuaded that the poet devised the eclogue long after the other dramatic poems" in order to "insinuate and glance at greater matters," which would result in castigation if the poet did not write "under the veil of homely persons and rude speeches" (127-128). Nevertheless, Puttenham acknowledges some primitive form of pastoral poetry to be at the basis of civilization and social interaction:

> Some be of the opinion . . . that the pastoral poesy, which we commonly call by the name of eclogue and bucolic . . . should be the first of any other, and before the satire, comedy, or tragedy, because, say they, the shepherds' and haywards' assemblies and meetings, when they kept their cattle and herds in the common fields and forests, was the first familiar conversation, and their babble and talk under bushes and shady trees, the first disputation and contentious reasoning, and their fleshly heats growing of ease, the first idle wooings, and their songs made to their mates or paramours either upon sorrow or jollity of courage, the first amorous musics. Sometime also they sang and played on their pipes for wagers, striving who should get the best game, and be counted cunningest. All this I do agree unto, for no doubt the shepherd's life was the first example of honest fellowship, their trade the first art of lawful acquisition or purchase, for at those days robbery was a manner of purchase. (127)

I will return to this passage later in the essay, when I flesh out the perceptions of familiarity and community that inform Spenser's language-use (and language-cultivation) in *The Shepheardes Calender*.

the uses of early modern language and art. Hence, I am interested in specific senses of *rules* and how these rules coordinate *games* of writing (teaching) and reading (learning) in early modern poetics and hermeneutics.[7] I see Spenser as striving for balance and traction on the locutionary *terra firma* that moored the literary practices of his historical moment. In this light, Spenser's pastoral debut works to show the *ground rules* of poetic diction, to show what makes lexical analysis possible at all, and to show what makes verbal performance graceful or labored, skillful or learned. Given the absence of any theoretical treatise on poetics or linguistics in Spenser's oeuvre, readers must infer the poet's vision of language from the practice of his art: in other words, Spenser's vision of language *shows* itself.[8] And similarly to Wittgenstein's foregrounding of grammar in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Spenser's lexical experimentation is "directed not towards *phenomena*, but rather . . . towards the '*possibilities*' of phenomena." (§90).[9] The

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[7] As Wittgenstein accentuates in *Philosophical Investigations*, "The word 'accord' and the word 'rule' are *related* to one another; they are cousins. If I teach anyone the use of the one word, he learns the use of the other with it" (§224). In the eponymous chapter of *Must We Mean What We Say?* [*MWM*], Stanley Cavell seems to have these remarks in mind when he rephrases Kant's Categorical Imperative as a "Categorical Declarative (description-rule), i.e., [as a] description of what it *is* to act morally" (25). Rules of this sort, like public criteria, do not "bind" individuals' words and actions: they determine what these words and actions (must) constitute and imply. Consequently, I resist emphases on *literary convention*. In the context of Spenser and his contemporaries, these conventions are rarely highlighted without being bent or broken. I am more interested in what cannot be broken, or what conventions (must) remain in place for diction, mode, and genre to be recognizable or to *count* as something.

[8] In *Spenser's Legal Language*, Andrew Zurcher similarly acknowledges the lack of a prose treatise in Spenser's corpus akin to Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (30). Thus, in order to historically situate the "archaism" and "neologism" of Spenser's "national linguistics" (28), Zurcher turns to the *Epistle* that initiates *The Shepheardes Calender*—a notoriously tendentious preface by the book's enigmatic glossator, "E.K." Adapting the same scholarly convention that this essay will, Zurcher treats E.K.'s *Epistle* to Harvey as "a manifesto for Spenser's approach to linguistic issues" and, ultimately, as "the closest we may come to [Spenser's] explicit views on language and interpretation" (30). Presumably, it is the sense that one cannot exercise too much vigilance in this approach that prompts Zurcher to repeatedly refer to "Spenser's general 'theory' of language" in scare quotes (32, 38). The present study will further emphasize the appropriateness of these scare quotes, probing the extent to which Spenser eschews the explicit theorizing of language and poetics. Does this eschewal resemble Wittgenstein's distrust of philosophical theorizing? If so, how? What might this teach us about Spenser's notions of poetic and philosophical composition?

[9] To refer to a component or operation of language as a *phenomenon* is a suggestive gambit. This move presupposes that words can attain a sort of "materiality" or "object-status" (Lamb, "APP" 165-166; Cf. De Grazia 143; Anderson 35-37). Moreover, it implies the Kantian notion of phenomena as being mere

illumination of these "possibilities" hinges on the notions of community and expatriation—on the processes of welcoming the foreign into the folds of the familiar, and of becoming strangers to our native languages and our senses of self.[10]

Lastly then, this study speaks to a broader, yet no less pragmatic endeavor to elucidate the connections between poetry and philosophy. What is to be gained when a philosopher operates poetically, or a poet philosophically? What interpretative concepts and practices are readers to apply in these cases? Indubitably, Spenser and Wittgenstein provoke these questions, regardless of whether audiences take the authors separately or together. In the study of Spenser, countless scholars have investigated the poet's investment in philosophical modes and ideas, particularly those stemming from Plato and

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appearances and all one can ultimately know of objects. As Kant summarizes his thesis of transcendental idealism in *Critique of Pure Reason*, "What may be the nature of objects considered as things in themselves and without reference to the receptivity of our sensibility is quite unknown to us. We know nothing more than our mode of perceiving them" (36). With linguistic phenomena, our mode of perception tends to entail the desire for essential and universal definitions, when all we can do is describe various examples of language-use. Stanley Cavell describes this "ontological condition of words" in *The Senses of Walden*: "the occurrence of a word is the occurrence of an object whose placement always has a point, and whose point always lies before and beyond it" (27). Our words and concepts are shared—ours and not ours: their meanings and their uses depend on the contexts that surround them and, indeed, on every other word in the lexis and history of a language.

[10] My sustained attention to familiarity and estrangement follows a line of inquiry exemplified by R. F. Jones in *The Triumph of the English Language*. In this landmark study, Jones traces the emergence of vernacular eloquence in early modern England beyond (and by way of) the classical languages that ruled humanist letters. Still, as Catherine Nicholson has noted, "Jones does not dwell" on "the disorienting and disruptive" eccentricities that characterize this rise of eloquence in English rhetoric and poetry (1, 7; Cf. Jones 169). Nicholson's *Uncommon Tongues: Eloquence and Eccentricity in the English Renaissance* thus offers the most current and direct examination of the paradoxical interplay of the native and the foreign that constitutes fluency and potency in one's mother tongue. Moreover, her study investigates the development of English eloquence vis-à-vis the historical and geographic conceptions of Britain as a place of exile and barbarism in Greek and Roman literature (11, 103; Cf. Keilen 15-16, 78). Consequently, Nicholson recursively considers the necessity of "self-alienation" in the poetic and pedagogical projects of Elizabethan England, i.e., how these enterprises cultivate vernacular language and literature often by importing and adapting the vocabulary and the principles of classical philosophy and oratory—a means that does not harmoniously coincide with the end of establishing a new and distinct cultural-linguistic identity (11-17). In fact, early modern authors tend to defend the use of exotic diction and dialect by appealing to it as a customary stylistic practice in ancient and medieval literature (3-5). The present study is likewise attuned to how "vernacular rhetoricians and poetic theorists could claim alienation as the signal feature of style and imagine an English language enriched and enlarged by its estrangement from both the classical past and itself" (70). However, my respective focus on the problematics of place, distance, and alterity in Renaissance poetics constitutes a narrower inquiry into Spenser's endeavor to (re)create his language community through a renovated art of lexical analysis. Consult Nicholson's introduction for a concise review of pertinent scholarship.

Aristotle.[11] Correspondingly, Wittgenstein's writing has long been noted for its literary

forms and figures.[12] In fact, Wittgenstein considered his own philosophical work to be a

product of poetic processes: "I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said:

philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition*" (*Culture and Value*

[*CV*] 24).[13] I hope to bring these disciplinary overlaps to light in due course. And in

pairing Wittgenstein with Spenser to shed this light, I likewise hope to demonstrate the

pertinence of these writers beyond poetry and beyond philosophy. I am confident that

any success in these aims will contribute to Toril Moi's ongoing project of "reading

philosophically without imposing a pre-existing philosophy on a literary text" (125). To

this end, as with Moi, I follow Cavell's indefinite, but helpful suggestion "to let the

object or the work of your interest teach you how to consider it" (*Pursuits of Happiness*

10, qtd. in Moi 131). This guideline is especially apposite to Spenser's *Shepheardes*

Calender and Wittgenstein's *Investigations*: these two works are deeply (and often

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[11] The depth of Spenser's philosophical involvements reflects the extent to which early modern conceptions of literature do not presuppose sharp distinctions between poetry and philosophy. Consider, for example, Sidney's argument in the *Defence of Poesy* [*DP*] that "the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher" (18), in that poetry can unite "precept" and "example" in an accessible "speaking picture" (13-23).

[12] While Stanley Cavell is perhaps the most influential reader of Wittgenstein who investigates the relationship(s) between literature and philosophy, it is Marjorie Perloff who has most directly studied the literary and poetic elements of Wittgenstein's writing. For a handy summary of Wittgenstein's poetical qualities, see Perloff's chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein*, "Writing Philosophy as Poetry: Literary Form in Wittgenstein." For a more extensive (and somewhat idiosyncratic) examination of Wittgenstein's poetic sensibilities, see Perloff's book, *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary*. And for additional applications of Wittgenstein to the theory and philosophy of literature, see *The Literary Wittgenstein*, an essay collection edited by John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer.

[13] As Perloff notes in "Writing Philosophy as Poetry," Wittgenstein's gnomic proposition, "Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur *dichten*," presents serious complications for an English translator "because there is no precise English equivalent of the German verb *dichten*—a verb that means to create poetry but also, in a wider sense, to produce something fictional" (716, n. 4). Perloff considers David Schalkwyk's translation from his chapter in *The Literary Wittgenstein* to be more accurate: "Philosophy should be written only as one would write poetry'" (56, qtd. in Perloff 716, n. 4). While an improved translation does little to unravel the perplexities of this statement, Perloff puts forward some elucidatory conjectures as to how Wittgenstein conceives of writing or doing "philosophy as poetry." In this regard, she especially scrutinizes Wittgenstein's analogies and figures of speech, as well as his remarks' gradual tempo and nonlinear structure.

explicitly) concerned with how they are to be read and learned. Put another way, these

works emphasize writing as teaching.[14] Their speakers become shepherds for one's

"adventure of reading" (Moi 132-137). In this manner, these writings enact an inquiry

into how poetry and philosophy constitute (or ought to constitute) a broad construal of

guidance. They strive to show how (and why) works of poetry, philosophy, and poetry-

philosophy can teach us where preexisting pedagogical institutions disappoint. And they

strive to show why (and how) our words and our lives need to be shepherded toward (and

even from) their homes.[15]

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[14] The associations here between writing/teaching and reading/learning, like those on page 4 of this essay, are influenced by Naoko Saito's readings of Cavell's readings of Emerson and Thoreau in "The Gleam of Light: Initiation, Prophesy, and Emersonian Moral Perfectionism." Saito initiates her piece with an epigraph from Cavell's *The Senses of Walden*: "The chapter [in Thoreau's *Walden*] on "Reading" identifies his readers as students—and himself, consequently, as teacher. Eventually, students will be anyone whose 'education is sadly neglected' (III, 12); and one day we might all "become essentially students" (III, 1)— that is, one day we might find out what essential studying is" (42, qtd. in Saito 170).

[15] I take the idea that our words (and thus our lives) need "shepherding" from Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* in *This New Yet Unapproachable America*:

> I continue to be caught by Wittgenstein's description of his itinerary as asking oneself: "Is the word ever actually used this way in the language game in which it is at home?" (§116). It expresses a sense that in philosophy (wherever that is) words are somehow "away," as if in exile, since Wittgenstein's word seeks its *Heimat*. The image or sense of our words as out, as absent, or truant, casts a certain light on Wittgenstein's speaking of language in philosophy as "idle" (cf. §132): it presents that condition as caused, not as it were by something in language, but, since these are our words, caused by us; or at least it is a condition for which we, each of us philosophers, is responsible, or say answerable, not perhaps as if we personally banish our words but as if it is up to us to seek their return. Wittgenstein says in the sentence following that containing *Heimat*: "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use." *Wir* führen die Wörter . . . We as opposed to "philosophers" (to that side of ourselves); and, I think, the *way* we "bring" them as opposed to the way philosophers "use" them . . . It would be a little better [to] express my sense of Wittgenstein's practice if we translate the idea of bringing words back as *leading* them back, shepherding them; which suggests not only that we have to find them, to go to where they have wandered, but that they will return only if we attract and command them, which will require listening to them. But the translation is only a little better, because the behavior of words is not something separate from our lives, those of us who are native to them, in mastery of them. The lives themselves have to return. (34-35; Cf. Scheman 165).

Situating and elaborating Cavell's "sense of Wittgenstein's practice" is a goal of the immediately following section.

The First Epigraphic Portal: Mobility and Orientation on the Ground of Language[16]

"Zurück auf den rauhen Boden!" With what tone does Wittgenstein voice the desire to walk and the need for friction? I hear a sigh of resignation before this exhortation. Even after we acknowledge this passage as a metaphor for facility and efficacy in communication, what precisely are the appeals of *rough ground*? The speaker calls; he guides. And if the audience follows, it does so in a mode of returning to a former place or practice. The need for mobility paradoxically leads one back to a point of origin—to a territory or terrain that is presumably native and in some ways inhospitable. One ceases to idle on ice, but friction bears its own costs. Wittgenstein's entreaty does not propose a return to primitive uses of language. Nor does his use of *rough* necessarily allude to vernacular, vulgar, or, let us say, uncouth forms of expression.[17] Granted, investigating rudimentary "language-games" and their "scenes of

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[16] With the supposition that I am writing for two discrete audiences who may be respectively unfamiliar with either Spenser or Wittgenstein, I annotate this section heavily (and at the expense of the flow of my prose). Scholars of Wittgenstein who determine that my readings are uncontroversial may elect to pass over these footnotes in silence. That being said, I consider these encumbrances to be ultimately valuable, in that they sufficiently slow one's reading to allow for a cohesive account of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Their density and bulk should function as a ballast.

[17] It does seem that the speaker allows for the evocation of these connotations, however misleading they can be. Still, Wittgenstein's use of *rauhen* ("rough, harsh, coarse") and *boden* ("bottom, ground, soil") are explicitly geological and tactile terms (Kluge 37, 279). We must distinguish this diction from other words that Wittgenstein's translators have rendered as forms of *rough* and *ground* (e.g., *ungefähr*, "adj., 'casual, accidental,' adv., 'about, not far from'"; *grob*, "coarse, uncouth, rude"; *grund*, "ground, basis, rudiment, reason" (Kluge 126, 257, 373). In this instance, Wittgenstein employs "rauhen Boden" as a metonym for traction and traversal in the use of language. These notions of traction and traversal are in turn part of a more elaborate figuration for the contexts and operations that "ground" or anchor discourse, thereby making it intelligible. The concomitant emphasis on *terrain* alludes to other poetic images of the philosopher, viz., the shared criteria for words and concepts as forming a sort of "bedrock" (*felsen*) or "river-bed" (*flußbett*), i.e., as constituting epistemic and hermeneutic foundations that may pragmatically "shift" in spite of their relative stability (*PI* §214; *On Certainty* [*OC*] §95-99). According to this extended metaphor (allegory?), Wittgenstein's methods of "grammatical inquiry" aim to "[shed] light" on this "rough ground," to map or to chart it, and even to refine it by "clearing misunderstandings away" (*PI* §90, §118).

instruction" is a characteristic method of his later writing.[18] Yet in this case, Wittgenstein

is more precisely urging his listeners to a resist a cluster of bewitching pictures: an ideal

language subtended by "the crystalline purity of logic" (*PI* §97-107); an "*essence*" of a

word, thought, or proposition, which we can exhume and explain through "analysis"

(§89-92); a "surveyable representation" that can provide a totalizing "*overview*" of "our

grammar" (§122-126).[19] These "*pictures*" can "[hold] us captive" (§115).[20] While we

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[18] Wittgenstein turns to this method notably in *The Blue Book* [*Bl. B.*], a text that documents a watershed in the philosopher's thought. Inter alia, these shifts display the influence of Wittgenstein's early experiences as an educator—in Austrian primary schools and in the classrooms of Cambridge. As Wittgenstein's lecture runs,

> I shall in the future again and again draw your attention to what I shall call language games. These are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language. Language games are the forms of language with which a child begins to make use of words. The study of language games is the study of primitive forms of language or primitive languages. If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption, and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought. When we look at simple forms of language the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent. On the other hand we recognize in these simple processes forms of language not separated by a break from our more complicated ones. We see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms (105).

Wittgenstein fittingly commences his *Philosophical Investigations* with a quotation of Augustine's *Confessions*, which details (rather prosaically) the Saint's recollections of how he, as "a child," began "to make use of words." In fact, Wittgenstein develops his concept of language-games in response and in contrast to the "particular picture of the essence of human language" offered in Augustine's depiction, in which "Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which it stands" (§1). Wittgenstein conjures an instructive language-game of his own, imagining a four-word command-language by which a builder communicates with his assistant (§2). He thereafter devises and contemplates increasingly complex examples, electing at root to "call the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven, a 'language-game'" (§7). More importantly, he *delimits* "the whole," acknowledging the accumulation of language-games as that of an anti-essentialist plurality. The grammatical systems that evolve from these interconnected communicative practices correspond to the diverse "needs" of countless "forms of life" (*Bl. B.* 158-159; *PI* §19, §23, §241). Thus, language-games, their processes of acculturation, and their inherent adaptability converge to demonstrate Wittgenstein's insistence that "For a *large* class of cases . . . the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (*PI* §39). (Cf. *Bl. B.* 90: "But if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its *use*.") Referring to the acquisition of a language-game as a "scene of instruction" is a coinage by Stanley Cavell. See, for example, Cavell's chapters on the processes of education and rule-following in one's initiation into language-games: "Natural and Conventional" in *The Claim of Reason* and "The Argument of the Ordinary" in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*.

[19] The fact that "our grammar lacks surveyability" (§122), according to Hans Sluga's reading of Wittgenstein, presents "the crucial difficulty of philosophy" (Sluga 98). I concur with Sluga that "in order to appreciate the nature of this difficulty," we have to clarify Wittgenstein's notion of grammar:

are in their grip—or in their frame—we strive to graph "sharp" and encompassing

"boundaries" onto names and concepts that we can neither generalize nor essentialize (*Bl.
B.* 109).[21] And in our attempts to attain the necessary vantage points for these chimerical

ends, we are recurrently tempted to "speak outside our language-games."[22] This leap

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. . . "grammar" is meant to be here not an abstract system of grammatical rules but more generally the organized pattern of our linguistic practices. It is this actual structure or order of our language game that proves unsurveyable. In fact, we should not be thinking only about language and language games. The human form of life—our society, our culture, our history—each has its grammar and of each grammar we must say that it lacks surveyability" (98).

The translators of the Revised Fourth Edition of *Philosophical Investigations* also seem to have Wittgenstein's concept of grammar in mind in electing to render Wittgenstein's uses of *übersicht* and its cognates with corresponding inflections of *surveyable* and *overview* (in contrast to these uses' prior translation as *a clear view* and *perspicuous*). With this choice, Hacker and Schulte highlight Wittgenstein's multiple references to seeing and ordering "from above," displacing Anscombe's crucial, but slightly inordinate emphasis on clarity as transparency. See the editors' endnotes on §92 and §122, pp. 250-252.

[20] Cf. *PI* §104: "The idea is like a pair of glasses on our nose through which we see whatever we look at. It never occurs to us to take them off."

[21] In *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein elaborates the "craving for generality" that inhibits the study of language-games:

If we study the grammar, say, of the words "wishing," "thinking," "understanding," "meaning," we shall not be dissatisfied when we have described various cases of wishing, thinking, etc. If someone said, "surely this is not what one calls 'wishing,'" we should answer, "certainly not, but you can build up more complicated cases if you like." And after all, there is not one definite class of features which characterize all cases of wishing (at least not as the word is commonly used). If on the other hand you wish to give a definition of wishing, i.e., to draw a sharp boundary, then you are free to draw it as you like; and this boundary will never entirely coincide with the actual usage, as this usage has no sharp boundary.

The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term. (*Bl. B.* 109; Cf. *PI* §88)

It is at a similar end in the *Philosophical Investigations* that Wittgenstein resolves, "*Essence* is expressed by grammar" (§371). In seeking out the essence of a word, name, or concept, Wittgenstein discovers instead a multiplicity of meanings that correspond to various uses, "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" (§66). He characterizes these similarities as "family resemblances" (§67). According to Wittgenstein, "we extend our [concepts] . . . as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread resides not in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres" (§65-67; Cf. *Bl. B.* 106-109).

[22] Stanley Cavell mines the phrase "outside language-games" from various moments in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (§393, §423, §554), elucidating its cruciality to Wittgenstein's convictions regarding language:

"The meaning is the use" calls attention to the fact that what an expression means is a function of what it used to mean or to say on specific occasions by human beings . . . And to trace the intellectual history of philosophy's concentration on the meaning of particular words and sentences, in isolation from a systematic attention to their concrete uses would be a worthwhile undertaking . . . A fitting title for this history would be: Philosophy and the Rejection of the Human.

Wittgenstein's motive . . . is to put the human animal back into language and therewith back into philosophy . . . He undertook . . . to trace the mechanisms of this rejection in the ways in

leads to the "confusions which occupy us when language is, as it were, idling" (*PI* §132), that is, when our utterances have lost contact and circulation with the dynamism of how words "*are actually used in our language*" (*Bl. B.* 155). Picture decontextualization as a loss of gravity. Our speech and our ideas need maneuverability to achieve intercourse. We (re)turn to rougher ground in turning away from an even less navigable medium.

And we quickly find that improved traction is merely one component of tractability. True, the call to rough ground directs our attention to ordinary language and thus to the familiar. It is related to Wittgenstein's endeavor "to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use"—to assiduously consider the uses of those words and concepts "in the language in which [they are] at home" (*PI* §116). Indeed, in Wittgenstein's eyes, this process constitutes a "therapy," not a "theory" (§109, §133). Still, it is a mode that entails great labor. Its struggles require coaching (or a shepherd of sorts). Clarifying the endlessly diverse uses of our concepts, signs, and speech-acts proves to be a tremendously arduous task, particularly in the cases of their metacognitive and metalinguistic operations. All the same, Wittgenstein insists that "ordinary language

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which, in investigating ourselves, we are led to speak "outside language-games," consider expressions apart from, and in opposition to, the natural forms of life which give those expressions the force they have . . . What is left out of an expression if it is used "outside its ordinary language game" is not necessarily what the *words* mean (they may mean what they always did, what a good dictionary says they mean), but what we mean in using them when and where we do. The point of saying them is lost.

 And how great a loss *is* that? To show how great is a dominant motive of the *Investigations*. What we lose is not the meaning of our words – hence, definitions to secure or explain their meaning will not replace our loss. What we lose is a full realization of what we are saying; we no longer know what *we* mean. Wittgenstein's "methods" in philosophy are guided by the realization that the goal of philosophy cannot be found in the classical "search for a definition." (*CR* 206-207)

Indeed, describing family resemblances in lieu of defining essences is a characteristic mode of the *Investigations*. See, for instance, §124 - §126: "Philosophy must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language, so it can in the end only describe it . . . Philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain." (Cf. *Bl. B.* 107: "I want to say here that it can never be our job to reduce anything to anything, or to explain anything. Philosophy really *is* 'purely descriptive.'")

is all right" for these undertakings—that authentic philosophy does not pursue "an ideal

language" to perform them (*Bl. B*. 119; Cf. *PI* §98). As a medium that "pervades all our

life" (*Bl. B*.158), ordinary language is at the substratum of our abilities to make sense.

Thus, ordinary language is our best case for verbal and conceptual clarity, and this is due

in part to its being subject to renovation.[23]

Even so, it is natural to often feel (or be "tempted to think") that "our ordinary

language is too coarse, that we need a more subtle one" (*Bl. B*. 141). As much as

Wittgenstein's later work defends the sufficiency of ordinary language, it continually

probes the ways in which ordinary language, by dint of "regular coincidence," is "slightly

cumbrous and sometimes misleading" (*Bl. B*. 149): Undoubtedly, much of the

Philosophical Investigations consists in demonstrating how our articulation, both in

academic and everyday contexts, is liable to lose touch with and misuse such concepts as

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[23] Once again, at issue here is the ideal of "complete exactness" in expression—the idea that "analysis is supposed to unearth" an *essence* of language, of propositions, [and] of thought . . . that lies *beneath* the surface" (*PI* §91-92). On the contrary, for Wittgenstein, the mission of the philosopher is *to survey* the grammar of our everyday language and *to (re)order* our words and concepts accordingly—however much "our grammar is deficient in surveyability" (*PI* §122), however "deeply" and "variously" our linguistic practices are "rooted" (*PI* §92, §111; *Zettel* [Z] §656). Wittgenstein elaborates a metaphor for this recursive process in *The Blue Book*:

> Imagine we had to arrange the books of a library. When we begin the books lie higgledy-piggledy on the floor. Now there would be many ways of sorting them and putting them in their places. One would be to take the books one by one and put each on the shelf in its right place. On the other hand we might take up several books from the floor and put them in a row on the shelf, merely in order to indicate that these books ought to go together in this order. In the course of arranging the library this whole row of books will have to change its place. But it would be wrong to say that therefore putting them together on a shelf was no step towards a final result. In this case, in fact, it is pretty obvious that having put together books which belong together was a definite achievement. But some of the greatest achievements in philosophy could only be compared with taking up some books which seemed to belong together, and putting them on different shelves; nothing more being final about their positions than that they no longer lie side by side. The onlooker who doesn't know the difficulty of the task might well think in such a case that nothing at all had been achieved. – The difficulty in philosophy is to say no more than we know. E.g., to see that when we have put two books together in their right order we have not thereby put them in their final places. (140)

I will revisit this metaphor's use of "archival re-collection" when I reach Spenser and *The Shepheardes Calender*.

meaning, *understanding*, *intention*, *expectation*, etc.[24] Grammatical inquiry anticipates

the challenges of loosening these "entanglements."[25] The tasks therein, while onerous,

are typically decelerated and modest—again, in manners reminiscent of a shepherd or a

cultivator. The exercise begins with a reorientation where one has come to regard as

strange what was once ordinary and habitual. Wittgenstein highlights our usual need for

mobility, yet in this case, he nuances the sense of *being adrift* that motivates our need to

move: "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (*PI* §123;

Cf. §203).[26] "Philosophical problems," according to Wittgenstein, consist in our lexical

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[24] In the collection of notes entitled *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein considers the necessity of demonstrating these disconnects in language-use. Not surprisingly, his remarks continue to build on the figural image of mobility:

> As long as there continues to be a verb "to be" that looks as if it functions in the same way as "to eat" and "to drink," as long as we still have the adjectives "identical," "true," "false," "possible," as long as we continue to talk of a river of time, of an expanse of space, etc. etc., people will keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up. (15)
> . . . .
> Language sets everyone the same traps; it is an immense network of easily accessible wrong turnings. And so we watch one man after another walking down the same paths and we know in advance where he will branch off, where walk straight on without noticing the side turning, etc., etc. What I have to do then is erect signposts at all the junctions where there are wrong turnings so as to help people past the danger points. (18)

Examples of the "puzzling difficulties" that hide in plain sight in our common and customary expression abound in Wittgenstein's writing after his return to Cambridge: e.g., the confused uses of *I* as an object and a subject (*Bl. B.* 167-177); the strain of describing the spiritual without employing the vocabulary of the material (*Z* §121-131); the opacities of the words and concepts that we use to describe our mental states and activities (*PI* passim); the overwhelmingly intricate contexts and concepts that inform our uses of *know*, *believe*, and *doubt* (*OC* passim).

[25] Wittgenstein's images of embroilment underscore the futility of abstracting ourselves from our grammar and language-games. We have to clarify the structures, modes, and uses of our language and our thinking *from within*: "Here the fundamental fact is that we lay down rules, a technique, for playing a game, and that then, when we follow the rules, things don't turn out as we had assumed. So that we are, as it were, entangled in our own rules. This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand: that is to survey" (*PI* §125). Wittgenstein nuances this figure to characterize the consequent *work* of philosophy: "Philosophy unties knots in our thinking; hence, its results must be simple, but philosophising has to be as complicated as the knots it unties" (*Z* §452).

[26] In some respects, this famous description is a reflection of Wittgenstein's prefatory image of the *Investigations* as "an album" of "sketches of landscapes," compiled by a "draughtsman" who must "travel and criss-cross in every direction over a wide field of thought" (*PI*, "Preface" 3-4). That is to say, the speaker organizes his "thoughts as remarks, short paragraphs, sometimes in longer chains about the same subject, sometimes jumping, in a sudden change, from one area to another," but nevertheless with "the same points or almost the same points . . . always being approached afresh from different directions" (3).

"entanglements," with *lex* alluding to our uses of words and the grammatical rules

("laws") that order these uses.[27] Ergo, the verbal and procedural aspects of a

philosophical problem arise when our uses of ordinary language lead us into a

"contradiction"—when we must confront "the civic status of a contradiction, or its status

in civic life" (§125). We find ourselves on a liminal or paradoxical space on the ground

of our language, wandering between familiarity and estrangement.

Yet even though it is our everyday expression that has led us astray, we remain in

error if we believe that anything but ordinary language could lead us home. This is what

Wittgenstein grasps in stating that his "aim in philosophy" is to "show the fly the way out

of the fly-bottle" (*PI* §309): the way out is the way in. But how exactly is this to be

achieved?

To gradually and pragmatically show how is the purpose of Wittgenstein's later

writing. Our language-games and grammar are precisely what the *Investigations* sets out

to investigate (and thereby to clarify). In so doing, Wittgenstein is clearing the way for

more effective uses of ordinary language. Still, to rigorously inquire into what is native

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Of course, the audience's experience of this form is one of dizziness and realization, of gradually recognizing (familiarizing itself with) an ostensibly strange topography.

[27] My attention here to multiple resonances of *lex* is partly influenced by the work of Andrew Zurcher in *Spenser's Legal Language*. Zurcher demonstrates how Spenser's poetic diction and the hermeneutic modes that it demands are both grounded in a plexiform understanding of *lex*, which accounts for Early-Modern English legal system(s), the semantic constituents of law, the compositional and interpretative practices of jurisprudence, and the disciplinary genealogies of poetry and law as they overlap the "intellectual tradition of rhetoric and argument" (9). However, my inquiries run along more rudimentary structures than Zurcher's. Zurcher particularly investigates how Spenser, by enriching the methods and applications of lexical analysis, works to critique and even shape the legal conflicts and customs of his time. I am more attuned to how Spenser intervolves his conceptions of poetic diction and lexical analysis in order to illuminate the grammatical foundations of a national language (in order to unite these "variously rooted" language communities into a "kingdome"). My approach thus entails a broader construal of *rules* as flexible structures of regulation and regularity that function within and among diverse social conventions and institutions.

to us presupposes a paradox.[28] Wittgenstein initiates a reordering of ordinary language by acknowledging its extraordinariness:

> When I talk about language (word, sentence, etc.), I must speak the language of everyday. So is this language too coarse, too material, for what we want to say? *Well then, how is another one to be constructed?* – And how extraordinary [*merkwürdig*] that we should be able to do anything at all with the one we have! (*PI* §120)[29]

So much of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* insists that we see our ordinary language anew. But our deepened appreciation of the commonplace must not be too credulous: in part, we cleanse our vision to see to the oddities and vagaries of otherwise unquestioned forms of expression.[30] So often the speaker reiterates, "Don't take it as a matter of course, but as a remarkable fact," when studying the workings of our everyday communication and interaction (*PI* §524; Cf. *PI* §260, §363; *Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment* [*PPF*] vi.42, x.93, xi.250-253).[31] However, in imploring us to "puzzle over" aspects of our ordinary language (*PI* §524), Wittgenstein is working to show how we are *already* puzzled—how our puzzlements originate in what "we do not find . . . puzzling enough"

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[28] Perloff and Cavell have respectively marked this guiding paradox as "the strangeness" and "the uncanniness" of "the ordinary." See Perloff's *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* and Cavell's "The Uncanniness of the Ordinary" in his *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*.

[29] The concurrent impressions of language's limitation and immensity appear in Wittgenstein's thinking as early as the *Tractatus*: "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (§5.6); "Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is. The contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling" (§6.44-6.45).

[30] Cf. *PI* §464: "What I want to teach is: to pass from unobvious nonsense to obvious nonsense."

[31] In the Revised Fourth Edition of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*, the editors elect to isolate the manuscript that was previously published as Part II of the *Investigations*, concluding that there is minimal evidence that Wittgenstein ever intended to incorporate the remarks of this manuscript into the body of what prior editors published as Part I. Thus, the set of remarks that has long constituted Part II of the *Investigations* has been retitled *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment*. See the editors' note on the text, pp. xxi-xxiii.

(*PPF* vi.251).[32] One moment we are roving "in the familiar surroundings of our words" (*Zettel* [*Z*] §155); with a single turn, these surroundings suddenly resemble a labyrinth.[33] That we were always in a maze somehow escaped our notice.

We, as it were, fail to see the strangeness through the familiarity. Our language evolves, and we evolve with it, within it. Thus its convolutions and occlusions do not strike us as strange. We do not perceive its vestiges as burdens. In fact, negotiating its hazards is so second nature to us that we have to focus in order to observe how we manage them. Wittgenstein accordingly depicts "our language . . . as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, of houses with extensions from various periods, and all this surrounded by a multitude of new suburbs with straight and regular streets and uniform houses" (*PI* §18; Cf. §1-3, §32). The crux of this figure is that the "ancient city" is a *native* city, *our* native city. In a sense, it is a linguistic metropolis that we have built; in another sense, it has developed organically, through custom. Indeed, it is still developing, presumably such that only portions of the original structure endure. Imagine a native of contemporary Rome navigating traffic. Imagine a visitor doing so.

As Wittgenstein expands upon the image, this city is replete with "signposts," which signify "rules" for the uses of our words and concepts. But one must remember, the signposts are erected *after* the paths are formed: our uses of language are what establish and maintain the rules that apply to them. As grammatical rules do not precede

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[32] Cf. *PI* §129: "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.)" See also Cavell's chapter on "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy": "If speaking *for* someone else seems to be a mysterious process, that may be because speaking *to* someone does not seem mysterious enough" (*MWM* 67-68).

[33] Cf. *PI* §203: "Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about."

linguistic practices, they cannot bind them—not with utter fixity, at least (*PI* §80-87; §197-199). These rules do govern to a crucial extent, namely in *governing*'s derivational sense of *steering*, but they cannot circumscribe the potentiality of new directions and adapted applications for an evolving community of use.[34]

Enter the philosopher, whose consequent task, as Wittgenstein envisions it, is "to survey" our rules and our rule-following—to track our goings by the signposts, so to speak (*PI* §125). This task may involve inspecting a rule to probe whether "the signpost [leaves] no doubt about the way [one has] to go" (§85), i.e., how a rule steers our uses of language the way that it does. In the course of these inspections, ambiguities may crop up, which can indicate whether or not a "signpost is in order," whether or not "it fulfills its purpose" (§87). In these cases, one may begin to see language as "an immense network of easily accessible wrong turnings," in which it falls to the philosopher to "erect [new] signposts" (*CV* 18). But before one can build new signs, one must discover the communicative breakdowns that necessitate different rules and uses for our expression— no easy task, as the pitfalls only disclose themselves in the course of live and direct experience. Following Wittgenstein's advice to "let the use [of a word or concept] *teach* you [its] meaning" entails a physical encounter (or at least a simulated encounter) with the perils of contradiction (*PPF* xi.250): we "follow the rules" and "things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen" (*PI* §125).[35] The philosopher-surveyor must

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[34] In this regard, Wittgenstein critically alters the rule-signpost simile, in such a way that rules come to constitute the "paths of usage" themselves—paths that are "created by being followed" and "followed by being created" (Ahmed 16). Still allowing for deviation, Wittgenstein rethinks this aspect of rules as the "rails" of regularity: "Whence the idea that he beginning of a series is a visible section of rails invisibly laid to infinity? Well, we might imagine rails instead of a rule. And infinitely long rails correspond to the unlimited application of a rule" (*PI* §218).

[35] Wittgenstein even imagines the philosopher-surveyor as being sacrificially subject to "cognitive blows" for the sake of improving a language community's understanding: "The results of philosophy are the

carefully walk and measure the ground of our language-use in order to spot "the danger

points" (*CV* 18). S/he must meticulously mark where and how these danger points

threaten aporetic "entanglements" (*PI* §125) or idealistic ice sheets (§97, §107).

Furthermore, in generating "surveyable representations" of our grammar (§122)—models

that can either lead or mislead us, depending on the limitations of their use in context—

the philosopher-surveyor employs the art of cartography. S/he maps and charts our

linguistic territories through the painstaking navigation of their terrain. Collectively,

these associations clarify Wittgenstein's intuition that "the name 'philosophy' might be

given to what is possible *before* all new discoveries and inventions" (§126). The

operations of land surveying and cartography are preliminary and preparatory: they serve

concrete needs pertaining to various works-in-progress—agriculture, architecture, transit,

and colonization, to name only a few.

I confess, I am taking some license in this reading of Hacker's and Schulte's

revised translation of *übersicht* and its cognates as multiple forms of *survey* (*PI* §92,

§122, and §125; Endnotes 250-252). With this translation, Hacker and Schulte

emphasize important and interconnected concerns of the philosopher: our desire to view

or oversee our grammar; the futility of attaining an absolute grammatical "overview"; the

partial perspectives that our "surveyable representations" can offer us; the utility of these

pictures when their arrangements are "overseeably" ordered (*übersichtlich*). But to be

clear, Wittgenstein does not explicitly associate the processes therein with those of land

surveying (*landvermessen*) or cartography (*kartographie*).[36] That he does not is really

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discovery of some piece of plain nonsense and the bumps that the understanding has got by running up
against the limits of language. They – these bumps – make us see the value of that discovery" (*PI* §119).
[36] I first encountered these images in recent criticism and theory. In "Wittgenstein and Early English
Dictionaries: 1604-1658," Julian Lamb investigates notable resemblances between early modern

quite surprising: these significations are highly apposite, albeit figuratively and implicitly, to the methods of his later philosophy. To my mind, whether Wittgenstein and his translators intended to imply these senses in their uses of *übersicht* and *survey* is less important than what these senses can show us.

A vision of grammatical cartography sheds light on the vitally *poetic* aspects of Wittgenstein's writing in *Philosophical Investigations*. Doing "philosophy as poetry" (*CV* 24), for Wittgenstein, involves a deep immersion into the rough of our language—a slow and careful trek into the "surroundings of our words" (*Z* §155).[37] Perloff's etymological note on Wittgenstein's uses of *dichtung* ("poetry") is fitting here: "the verb *dichten* comes from the adjective *dicht* (thick, dense, packed): *dichten* originally meant to make airtight, watertight; to seal the cracks (in a window, roof, etc.) . . . Poets, indeed,

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lexicography and cartography. Like Lamb, I acknowledge the influence of Naomi Scheman's essay, "Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground," in describing the linguistic enterprises of philosophers, poets, and scholars as possessing topo-/cartographic shades. It is also crucial to note that this image of grammatical surveying/cartography bears important affinities to the work of J. L. Austin and Gilbert Ryle––philosophers who, for all of the differences among their styles and goals, have been collocated with Wittgenstein under the heading of Ordinary Language Philosophy. In *The Concept of Mind*, for instance, Ryle employs a metaphor of "logical geography" to describe his cartographic approach to philosophy:

> To determine the logical geography of concepts is to reveal the logic of the propositions in which they are wielded, that is to say, to show with what other propositions they are consistent and inconsistent, what propositions follow from them and from what propositions they follow. The logical type or category to which a concept belongs is the set of ways in which it is logically legitimate to operate with it. (10)

Austin, who warily refers to his rigorous examination of word-use as a sort of "linguistic phenomenology" (*Philosophical Papers* [*PP*] 182), likewise admits, given the propensity of ordinary language to mislead, that "we may wish to tidy the situation up a bit, revise the map here and there, draw the boundaries and distinctions rather differently" (*Sense and Sensibilia* [*SS*] 63). For a current and astute comparison of the goals of Ordinary Language Philosophy à la Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Austin with the goals of certain Renaissance Humanists, consult the final chapter of Lodi Nauta's *In Defense of Common Sense: Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*.

[37] The full remark on §155 of *Zettel* fleshes out this notion of "roaming" through one's linguistic surroundings: "A poet's words [*Worte eine Dichters*] can pierce us [*können durch und durch gehen*]. And that is of course causally connected with the use they have in our life. And it is also connected with the way in which, conformably to this use, we let our thoughts roam up and down the familiar surroundings of our words." The philosophical surveying of Wittgenstein's later work is concurrently a poetic enterprise. I include the German in the first sentence to illuminate the ambulatory and itinerant denotations of *durch und durch gehen*, "to go or to walk through and through"—rendered by Anscombe in this edition, for idiomatic/axiomatic purposes, as "to pierce." A poet's words can pierce because they share familiarity with the reader's communicative environment as fellow and thorough travelers.

fiction-makers of all stripes, are those that make thick or dense, that pack it in" (725). In

the Preface of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein envisions his book as "an album," densely

packed with interrelated "sketches of landscapes" (2). The arrangement of these sketches

has to be as thickly and tightly interwoven as the "criss-crossing" routes that the artist has

wended over his "wide field of thought" (2).[38] The evocations of thickness carried by

dichtung also throw light on the dense and cumbersome grammar(s) of our

communicative practices, such that "the rough ground" of our language begins to

resemble a jungle, or a dark wood. In any case, we wander in a complex cultural-

linguistic ecosystem.[39] Such challenging terrain as this must be navigated and negotiated

gradually (Perloff 726). Indeed, this precept aligns with Wittgenstein's suggestions for

how to approach his work: "Sometimes a sentence can be understood only if it is read at

the *right tempo*. My sentences are all supposed to be read *slowly*" (*CV* 57); "When you

are philosophizing you have to descend into primeval chaos and feel at home there" (*CV*

65). To carefully traverse and depict one's grammar (via *katabasis*, no less), to

decelerate one's perception in order to apprehend greater complexity, these are poetic

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[38] Cf. Perloff 726: "coherence, in this instance, is not a matter of linearity, of logical or temporal movement from a to b to c. For Wittgenstein, the *criss-crossing* of threads must be *dicht*—thick and dense—and, as in the case of lyric poetry, only *slow reading* can unpack the meaning in question." See also my consideration of how the form of the *Investigations* as book reflects the forms of the philosophical problems that it aims to untangle (pp. 14-15, n. 26).

[39] Immersive studies of our utterances' grammatical environments recur throughout Wittgenstein's later writing, as the philosopher steadily appreciates the fundamentality of *context* to the criteria and operations of verbal expression: "The sign (the sentence) gets its significance from the system of signs, from the language to which it belongs. Roughly, understanding a sentence means understanding a language" (*Bl. B.* 90). (Cf. *PI* §199: "To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to have mastered a technique"; §565: "It is natural for us to say a sentence in such-and-such a context, and unnatural to say it in isolation.") Our abilities to use and understand language, the proficiency with which we move through our grammatical structures, and our involvements in forms of life are all acquired "by imitation and habituation, by drill and practice" (Sluga 107). Having adaptively grown within a system of epistemic and communicative customs, our cognitive and linguistic practices accumulate and reticulate in such a way that "light dawns gradually over the whole" (*OC* §141). The significance of our concepts and speech is sustained through their interrelation in a language community and "world-picture" [*Weltbild*] (*OC* §93-95, §162, §167, §233, §262).

acts. And in turn, interpreting poetic artifacts requires a similarly decelerated progression in one's critical practice. Through all of these adventures, we are in need of guides.

I could step away at this point and recapitulate some useful insights, but a transition to Spenser would better consist in addressing some important questions (explicit and implicit) with which Wittgenstein leaves us—questions which my reading of Spenser purposes to address. First, consider the issue of linguistic *completion*, a problem that actually prompts Wittgenstein's "city of language" simile. With this figuration, Wittgenstein is representing how language-games evolve from the primitive forms instanced in *PI* §2 and §8: "Don't let it bother you that languages (2) and (8) consist only of orders. If you want to say that they are therefore incomplete, ask yourself whether our own language is complete . . . (And how many houses or streets does it take before a town begins to be a town?)" (§18). In other words, at what order of discourse are we able to call various forms of communication a language? At what stage of "refinement" can we deem a language to be complete? How do we determine this? (Why is linguistic consummation desirable?) Bound up with these inquiries of completion are those of *construction* and *agency*. It should be clear: I do not take Wittgenstein's question, "*Well then, how is another [everyday language] to be constructed?*" (§120), to be a rhetorical one. Granted, it seems to assume that constructing a new or alternate ordinary language is impossible. It even seems to doubt whether attempting to do so is a worthy pursuit. Nevertheless, Wittgenstein is seriously interested in how one might proceed in this undertaking and what we could learn from the attempt. To recall, the question arises with the acknowledgment that our ordinary language leads us into contradictions, that the philosopher must show how this happens,

and that all of this work serves to improve our language-use (and therein our relational

lives). Thus the question remains, when language-use evolves gradually and

cumulatively through custom and practice, what agency does any one of us have—as a

philosopher, poet, or otherwise—in reconfiguring the shared criteria and activities of our

expression?

More importantly (and more troublingly), how comfortably can we claim that our

language is *ours*? To what extent do "we" return to the same rough ground? In what do

the overlaps or convergences consist?[40] Before my reading of Spenser can initiate a

response to these queries, I will have to clarify their nature and implications. This will

require a bit more explication and an unavoidable degree of obliquity.

First, these questions of *community* cast light on Wittgenstein's concept of

"family resemblance" (*PI* §65-67).[41] Specifically, they spotlight a distinction that, while

implicit in much of Wittgenstein's thinking, is not given a localized and direct

articulation in the course of his writing. As Hans Sluga cautions, "confusion arises"

when we use the word *family* in "two different senses": "once to characterize a kinship

grouping (a causal group), and once to characterize a similarity grouping (a cluster)"

(91).[42] Wittgenstein subtly reveals a conflation of these two senses early in the

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[40] With a productive queer-theoretical slant, these inquiries guide the work of Naomi Scheman's "Forms of
Life: Mapping the Rough Ground."

[41] I touch upon "family resemblances" in the footnote that clarifies our "craving for generality" (p. 11, n.
21).

[42] Taking "our concept of language" itself as an example, Sluga elaborates how the categories of
"causal/kinship" and "cluster/similarity" become a false dichotomy when applied too rigidly:

> Something that starts as a kinship term may eventually become in our use a similarity term, and
> the same thing will hold vice versa . . . It is plausible, for instance, to think of our concept of
> language as originally a kinship notion. The ancient Greeks certainly pretended that only they and
> their kin spoke a real language and that everything else was incoherent noise. But for us today
> "language" is, undoubtedly, a similarity and cluster term. Anything that looks like, sounds like, or
> functions like language is for us language. Phenomenology, we might say, has triumphed here
> over genealogy.

Investigations with his incisive reflections on Augustine's picture of language-

acquisition:

> Someone coming into a foreign country [*fremdes Land*] will sometimes
>
> learn the language of the inhabitants from ostensive explanations that they give
>
> him; and he will often have to *guess* how to interpret these explanations; and
>
> sometimes he will guess right, sometimes wrong.
>
> And now, I think, we can say: Augustine describes the learning of human
>
> language as if the child came into a foreign country and did not understand the
>
> language of the country; that is, as if he already had a language, only not this one.
>
> Or again, as if the child could already *think*, only not yet speak. And "think"
>
> would here mean something like "talk to himself." (§32)[43]

To recall, in the passage from the *Confessions* that opens the *Investigations*, Augustine

describes how he, as a child, observed the "sounds" that "grown-ups" verbalized when

they "turned towards" and "named some object" (§1). As the depiction goes, Young

Augustine particularly heeded "the natural language of all peoples," which is to say, the

vocal "tones," the physical "gestures," and the "facial expressions" of his elders when

they pointed and responded to different objects in myriad situations. Eventually, through

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> But similarity concepts may also over time become causal concepts. When we speak
> today of a family tree of the Indo-European languages, when we postulate that these languages
> have developed out of each other, and that they refer us to a shared cultural (and perhaps even
> biological) heritage, then we do so because of the similarities that philologists have discovered
> between the various Indo-European tongues. The term "Indo-European language" has thus
> developed from being a similarity term to a causal and kinship term, and this development marks
> an advance in our understanding. Our grasp of the phenomena becomes firmer when we think not
> only in terms of similarities but also in the richer and more suggestive vocabulary of causal order.
> (92-93)

We weave and unravel these different threads of resemblance in various patterns to serve myriad
intellectual needs. In turn, the philosopher must attend to the contextual particularities of objects, concepts,
speech, etc., marking how heterogeneous conditions can shape their manifold structures of inter-
resemblance.

[43] I address Augustine's "picture theory" of language in the footnote concerning language-games (p. 10, n.
18).

this gradual process, the child "learnt to understand what things the words, which [he] heard uttered in their respective places in various sentences, signified. And once [he] got [his] tongue around these signs, [he] used them to express [his] wishes" (§1).[44] Wittgenstein begins to revise this "picture of language" by noting how its inordinate focus on "nouns like 'table,' 'chair,' 'bread,' and . . . people's names" overlooks "the remaining kinds of word," such as "the names of certain actions and properties" (§1). Wittgenstein goes on to illustrate how "the functions of words," like "tools in a toolbox," are both endlessly diverse and endlessly interrelated (§11):

> But how many kinds of sentence are there? Say, assertion, question, and command? – There are *countless* kinds; countless different kinds of use of all the things we call "signs," "words," "sentences." And this diversity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten. (§23)[45]

The key idea that circles back to §1 rests on how "the word 'language-*game*' emphasizes the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (§23). We are raised into evolving forms of life by participating in the linguistic practices that interweave with them.[46] "Here the teaching of language is not explaining, but training

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[44] These citations of *PI* §1 are a tertiary translation of Augustine: Hacker's and Schulte's English translation of Wittgenstein's German translation of Augustine's Latin in *Confessions* I.8.

[45] Wittgenstein subsequently includes lists of examples. They display the "variety of language-games" while implying several points of resemblance within that variety: e.g., "Giving orders, and acting on them . . . Reporting an event – Speculating about the event . . . Making up a story; and reading one – Acting in a play . . . Cracking a joke; telling one . . . Requesting, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying" (§23; Cf. §27).

[46] Return to *PI* §23 and note the quasi-Darwinian image of diverse language-games, in which new "types of language . . . come into existence," and old forms "become obsolete and forgotten." Subsystems of language-use mutate, proliferate, and become extinct through evolutionary processes. See also J. L. Austin on the matter of linguistic evolution: "Our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing . . . : they surely are likely to be the more numerous, more sound, since they have

[*Abrichten*]" (§5). With the use of *Abrichten*, Wittgenstein has in mind the behavioristic

conditioning that we tend to associate with the domestication of animals (Sluga 107).

Though a bit startling at first, this affinity obtains consistently through Wittgenstein's

final writings on language-acquisition in *On Certainty*:

> 475. I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one
>
> grants instinct but not ratiocination. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic
>
> good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us.
>
> Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination.
>
> 476. Children do not learn that books exist, that armchairs exist, etc. etc.,—they
>
> learn to fetch books, sit in armchairs, etc. etc. (*OC* §475-476)

We are now in a position to grasp the fundamental confusion that Wittgenstein detects in

Augustine's "picture of language" (§1, §32), i.e., the conflation of synchronic analogy

with diachronic genealogy in language-learning. The child acquiring his *native* language

already seems "to understand a language": that is, he apparently has already "mastered a

technique," viz., the ability to read and translate "the natural language of all peoples"

when they name and react to various objects in context (§1, §32, §199). Thus, this child

is displaying an uncanny understanding of the "difference between kinds of word," and

even employing a "kind of ratiocination" to determine how varieties of language-use

correspond with "certain actions and properties" in our forms of life (§1). Where is the

child and the adult, the native and the newcomer, in Augustine's depiction? The "human

animal" acquires these capacities only gradually, after being thoroughly trained in shared

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stood up to *the long test of survival of the fittest*, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably
practical matters" (*PP* 182, my emphasis).

sets of practices within shared environments.[47] "We learn language and learn the world *together*" (Cavell, *MWM* 19).

Still, do *we* always (in all ways) learn the word and the world together? Yes and no. In response to this question, Wittgenstein returns to the image of traveling into a strange land:

Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country [*unbekanntes Land*] with a language quite unknown to you [*dir gänzlich fremden Sprache*]. In what circumstances would you say that the people gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on?

Shared human behavior is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language. (*PI* §206)[48]

Akin to his revision of Augustine's picture in §32, Wittgenstein elegantly captures here that critical disparity in the forms of our linguistic resemblance: which relations emerge from shared heritage and chains of causality, and which relations comprise similarities in quality *per se*—clusters of ahistorical likeness?[49] Both Wittgenstein and Augustine, for instance, are productively attuned to "the natural language of all peoples" (§1).[50] This "shared human behaviour"—or as Augustine conceives of it, this corporeal expression

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[47] Cf. Cavell *CR* 206-207. See the extended quotation at prior footnote (pp. 11-12, n. 22).

[48] Cf. *PI* §54: "Just think of the kinds of case where we say that a game is played according to a particular rule. The rule may be an aid in teaching the game. The learner is told it and given practice in applying it . . . [and] an observer can read these rules off from the way the game is played – like a natural law governing play.—But how does the observer distinguish in this case between players' mistakes and correct play? – There are characteristic signs of it in the players' behaviour. Think of the behaviour characteristic of someone correcting a slip of the tongue. It would be possible to recognize that someone was doing so even without knowing his language."

[49] Cf. Sluga 85-93. See Sluga's elaboration of "causal/kinship" and "cluster/similarity" concepts in terms of family resemblance in prior footnote (pp. 23-24, n. 42).

[50] In Augustine, "verbis naturalibus omnium gentium"; In Wittgenstein, "der natürlichen Sprache aller Völker."

that "indicates the affections of the soul" (§1)[51]—functions as an hermeneutic and heuristic "system of reference" for one's habituation (training) in new and diverse (foreign and unpracticed) forms of speech. Thus, through expatriation, we experience language as a "cluster concept"—language as a capacity that is shared by all humans and, to some degree, certain nonhumans (Sluga 88, 92-93). Without a doubt, much of Wittgenstein's writing on language and meaning aspires to this scope of relevance. He proposes grammatical investigation as a mode that can benefit any language—and conceivably, whatever "resembles (behaves like)" a language (§281).[52] Moreover, the grammatical cartography of a philosopher-poet can chart the routes by which the *fremd* (the strange, the foreign, the other), in and through language, can be enfolded within the familiar.

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein pauses and yields to certain breaks and blockages in the family tree of our language(s). In lines of kinship and causation, not every divide is traversable. These breaches show themselves in the interactive collisions of human expression and practice:

> We also say of a person that he is transparent to us. It is, however, important as regards our considerations that one human being can be a complete enigma to another. One learns this when one comes into a strange country [*fremdes Land*] with entirely strange traditions [*gänzlich fremden Traditionen*]; and, what is more, even though one has mastered the country's language. One does not *understand* the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.)

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[51] In Augustine, "indicante affectionem animi"; In Wittgenstein, "die Empfindungen der Seele anzeigt."

[52] Wittgenstein signals a recurring theme on §281: "only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious." Cf. *PI* §283; *PPF* iv.19-26.

We can't find our feet with them. [*Wir können uns nicht in sie finden*.] (*PPF* xi.325)

This passage is rich with multivalence, such that its range of application is intentionally broad, if not intentionally obscure. Consider the final sentence. Anscombe's translation of "We cannot find our feet with them" is appealing in that it evokes themes of travel, exile, and disorientation: We wander into an alien space, or we march asynchronously with others, or we lose our footing, or our vestibular senses lapse and we literally cannot find our own feet (tell up from down). However, as Cavell has noted, a more literal translation of Wittgenstein's German would yield: "We cannot find ourselves in them."[53] This rendering strikes me as even more suggestive. For one, it further accentuates the limitations of a nonnative speaker's ability to "master" a language. It calls the grounds of this "mastery" into question, intensifying the feeling that one's failure to "*understand*" the other transcends the purely verbal. There are deeper clefts in these cases of mutual enigma. We fail to find a rhythm with an other, to "empathize with" an other, or to "inhabit [an other's] world" (Viefhues-Bailey 40). Language is implicated in this foundering, but it is not the sole cause. People of different backgrounds may speak the same language, but certain forms of expression within that language will not be as meaningful or as usable for those who have not engaged in the specific forms of life that sustain a culture's linguistic practices. And if we cannot "find ourselves" in different people(s), then in some sense, it is our *selves* that we have to adapt. We have to "find

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[53] Cavell takes this sentence to be an idiomatic expression (*MWM* 67-68). However, in *Beyond the Philosopher's Fear*, Ludger H. Viefhues-Bailey maintains that Wittgenstein's "Wir können uns nicht in sie finden" is not technically idiomatic. It means what it says. Still, it is redolent of similar expressions: "The idiom that Cavell seemed to have in mind would have been: 'Wir können uns nicht in *ihnen wieder*finden.' Another possible reading would be 'Wir können uns nicht in sie *hinein*finden,' meaning we cannot empathize with them, cannot inhabit their world" (40, n. 3).

ourselves in," or *participate in* foreign practices. And we have to imaginatively place ourselves within the semantic fields of new words and concepts. Finding our selves in these fields is akin to envisioning the potential uses of novel forms of speech in our customary forms of life—even akin to learning the pragmatic implications of new signs through immersive and interactive experience (through *abrichten*, training). Suffice it to say, the circumstances in which we manage to obtain these "findings" will be highly particular.

Remember that this collapse in intelligibility does not solely apply to the literal traveler in a strange land. Wittgenstein offers this image as merely one example of how "one human being can be a complete enigma to another." To be sure, there are countless ways in which our words may fail to reach one another—ways that further confuse the criteria of *familiarity* and *estrangement*. Even the "city of language" in Wittgenstein's metaphorical imagination contains internal sources of division and alienation. After all, who (or what group) inhabits the "old . . . houses," who the "houses with extensions from various periods," and who the "multitude of new suburbs with straight and regular streets and uniform houses" (*PI* §18)? Can we always find the language-games in which our uses of words and concepts are "at home" (§116)? What happens when people—even people who are intimately involved in each other's lives—have differing experiences of these "homes," these original contexts of language-use? More problematically, what if the very idea of a grammatical or linguistic "home" misleadingly presupposes a place of communal attunement?[54]

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[54] Cavell elaborates a conception of criterial "attunement" in pp. 28-36 of *The Claim of Reason*:

> It is altogether important that Wittgenstein says that we *agree* in (forms of life) and that there is agreement *in* (judgments): "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement [*Übereinstimmung*] not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in

These questions are guiding concerns in Naomi Scheman's "Forms of Life:

Mapping the Rough Ground." Investigating the (dis)connections among individuals'

formative experiences with such concepts as love, grief, and marriage, Scheman works

"to unsettle the sense that there *is* a 'we,' that we do share a form of life, that there is a

home to which our words can be brought" (163). Taken a step further, to unsettle these

senses is to destabilize "the idea that to be where one ought to be, to be in the place in

which one's words and one's actions are intelligible . . . is to be at home" (166). On the

contrary, a human being can occupy positions of "marginality" on the linguistic and

epistemic grounds of a community (154-156). S/he may even operate as an "outsider

within" (160). These loci will emphasize certain perspectival limitations, even as they

offer vantage points on specific topics (topoi) (154-156). A human being may also "live

diasporically" on the ground of a language community, striving "to find oneself properly"

in a "world" where s/he is "precisely not 'at home'" (166).[55] This vision of "our words as

diasporically linked to home" is especially generative, for it demands that we renovate

our conception of *home*: we must see *home* anew as a built or cultivated environment for

which we are responsible (166-169). Even when we do not share grammatical origins,

we can build grammatical residences. The vision of this commune "presents itself to us

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judgments" ([*PI*] §242); "It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use" (§241). The idea of agreement here is not that of coming to or arriving at an agreement on a given occasion, but of being in agreement throughout, being in harmony, like pitches or tones, or clocks, or weighing scales, or columns of figures. That a group of human beings *stimmen* in their language *überein* says, so to speak, that they are mutually voiced with respect to it, mutually *attuned* top to bottom" (32).
To be clear, Cavell commits to the use of this term with the proviso that it should prompt scrutiny of precisely those moments when our agreements in language and judgment "are out of tune" (32): "Appealing to critiera is not a way of explaining or proving the fact of our attunement in words (hence in forms of life). It is only another description of the same fact; or rather, it is an appeal we make when the attunement is threatened or lost" (34).

[55] One can imagine that the criteria for *finding oneself properly* would be rather ambiguous to an exile or emigrant residing within an unfamiliar language community.

as an ethical and political imperative to create forms of life that would place our words and us in right relation" (166). Putting this vision into practice is a complex and ongoing endeavor.

So, back to the rough ground! The guide says this as much to himself as to his followers. Both must rally and take heart: the acknowledgment that the concepts of *word*, *proposition*, and *language* lack "formal unity" is a sobering one (*PI* §108). To walk on shared linguistic ground requires more than contiguity and friction. *Walking* here comes to mean something closer to *inhabiting* or *cohabiting*—learning how to "find one's way about" in a "family of structures more or less akin to one another" (§108; Cf. §123, §203, and *PPF* xi.325). And finding one's way about here entails learning *precisely how* these "family of structures" are "more or less akin to one another." To acquire this communicative familiarity, one must cut a criss-crossing course through dense grammatical forests and learn to "feel at home there" (*CV* 65). Ultimately, this work serves to build new towns and pastures in language, to restore and to cultivate the old along with the new, and to prevent the waste of the fertile soil that underlies all.

Yet these final aims exceed the scope of philosophy alone. At root, grammatical inquiry "must not interfere in any way with the actual use of language . . . It leaves everything as it is" (*PI* §124). And even where one gets the sense that grammatical investigation has the power to level a city of language—"as it were, all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble"—one quickly finds that the philosopher-surveyor is only "destroying . . . houses of cards [*Luftebäude*, 'buildings of air']" (§118). The dissolution of these air-structures is still crucial: the philosopher-cartographer therein contributes to "clearing up the ground of language on which [the houses of air] stood"

(§118). Philosophy thus clarifies the communal *vision* of a language, i.e., a city's vision of its civic or national identity. A language community needs open spaces, clear pathways, and tilled furrows in order to grow—even when the only obstructions are mirages and fog. All castles in the air aside, a kingdom of language *can* find parts of itself in states of disorder or ruin.

Enter the poet, who, after engaging in his own forms of grammatical inquiry, refuses to "leave things as they are." The philosopher and the poet practice distinct, yet interrelated arts of grammatical shepherding, collectively leading our search for community through language.[56] Philosophy envisions what poetry enacts in the renewal of our words and our lives.

The Second Epigraphic Portal: (Re)Making and (Re)Taking the Kingdom of Language

It has become a sort of ritual in Spenser Studies to approach the poet's entreaty for "the kingdome of our owne Language" as if it carries an atmosphere of monumentality, even when one is ambivalent as to precisely what (and how much) one would like Spenser's plea to do. Richard Helgerson's reading of the extract at the commencement of his *Forms of Nationhood* is still the most memorable. Helgerson sees Spenser's call as the typification of a "concerted generational project" to inscribe the national identity of Elizabethan England in its literature (1):

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[56] Cf. Cavell *CR* 20: "The philosophical appeal to what we say, and the search for our criteria on the basis of which we say what we say, are claims to community. And the claim to community is always a search for the basis upon which it can or has been established. I have nothing more to go on than my conviction, my sense that I make sense. It may prove to be the case that I am wrong, that my conviction isolates me from all others, from myself. That will not be the same as discovering that I am dogmatic or egomaniacal. The wish and search for community are the wish and search for reason."

Spenser wants to "have the kingdom" of his own language. He wants to exercise

sovereignty over English, wants to make it do what he wants it to do . . . Instead

of an ideal representation, Spenser's sentence provides a dramatic expression of

ambition, cultural envy, and frustration. The Greeks had the kingdom of their own

language. Why, Spenser asks, can't we? Why must we be consigned to perpetual

subjection and inferiority? This pressure, this tension, this conflict of aspiration

and insecurity, brings us close to the crisis from which Elizabethan poetry and the

larger project of English self-representation emerged, close to the desperately

hopeful sense that, were England to rival the greatness of Greece and Rome,

something decisive needed to be done.

And what was that something? To have the kingdom of their own

language. To govern the very linguistic system, and perhaps more generally the

whole cultural system, by which their own identity and their own consciousness

were constituted. To remake it, and presumably themselves as well, according to

some ideal pattern. (3)

Since its publication in 1992, this reading of the *Spenser-Harvey Correspondence* has

remained a vitally important commentary on Spenser's literary, linguistic, and civic

convictions. Its consequence obtains in spite of, if not because of its shortcomings.

Admittedly, Helgerson performs a rather violent decontextualization of the passage, a

move which both decenters the *Letters*' concentration on the quantitative verse project

and downplays the frequently satirical and playful tones of the speakers' expression.[57]

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[57] To get a sense of how quickly and sharply Helgerson's interpretations nettled the field of early modern
studies, see Frank Kermode's "The High Cost of New History" in the June 25, 1992 issue of *The New York
Review of Books*, and see especially Helgerson's response to Kermode's unsparing review in a letter to the
NYRB editors (which includes a reply in turn from Kermode) in the September 24, 1992 issue. Kermode's

There *is* an excess in Helgerson's approach—an overeagerness to encapsulate within a single phrase the thorough "circulation" and "negotiation" of "social discourses" across such institutions as literature, law, government, empire, etc.[58] Even the primary subject of the *Letters*—the refinement of English prosody via the rules of classical meter— proves in the end to be a transient enterprise for all parties involved. Thus, the extent to which Spenser and Harvey actually concurred and participated in the efforts of the *Areopagus* remains unclear.[59] This obscurity must inform the spirit in which scholars consider Spenser's will to have the kingdom of a shared language—a will that is voiced by "Immeritô," to be more precise, the anonymous "new Poete" of the newly-published *Shepheardes Calender*.

Notwithstanding, Helgerson's conception of Spenser's linguistic kingdom makes a crucial step (if not a leap) toward illuminating the poet's vision of language. Its loftiness raises the elevation of our view, as it were, enabling readers to peer farther down the roads of research. To be sure, it does not fully show the ways to walk that ground. Yet Helgerson's inquiries into law, cartography, and monarchy have projected the paths for many (productively historicist) studies of Spenser's work within its cultural and

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review takes Helgerson's study as a platform for evaluating of the then-burgeoning modes and terminology of "New Historicism." But its basic critique is rather direct: Helgerson engages in "inflated interpretive fantasies" that ignore "larger historical context" with "his thrilling claim that Spenser in his youth planned to take over 'the whole cultural system of England.'"

[58] See Kermode's review, which initiates its critique of New Historicism's "desire to deaestheticize literature" pace Stephen Greenblatt and certain uses of a Focaultian lexicon.

[59] See prior footnote (p. 3, n. 3) on the *Areopagus*, a literary circle that supposedly convened Sir Philip Sidney, Edward Dyer, and Thomas Drant, among others, around the aim of enriching English verse through the precepts of Greek and Roman prosody. As it turns out, the Spenser-Harvey *Letters* constitute the only documental evidence that the *Areopagus* existed. Even so, Sidney's interests in establishing rules for English quantitative verse would have been known to whoever read the "Nota" on meter in "The First Eclogues" of his *Old Arcadia* [*OA*], which was circulating in manuscript during the composition and reception of *The Shepheardes Calender* and *Spenser-Harvey Correspondence* (Cf. Sidney, *OA* 70-73, 373).

colonial contexts.[60] And placing Immeritô's appeal for "the kingdome of our owne

Language" amid the broader terrain of the *Spenser-Harvey Correspondence* tends to bear

out Helgerson's intuition that this learned discussion of metrical "rule" and accentual

"custom" reflects contemporary discourses of jurisprudence and politics in Elizabethan

England.[61] In fact, in situating this deepened perspective of Spenser's figural image amid

the broader landscape of his corpus, the poet's vision of a reborn English language-

kingdom emerges on the horizon as a sort of terminus for his poetic journey—a "New

Hierusalem" of our language that one may distantly perceive from a "Mount of

Contemplation" (Spenser, *Faerie Queene* [*FQ*] I.x.46-61). Far beyond the concerns of

prosodic mobility, the voyage that the poet embarks upon in the *Letters* and the *Calender*

strives to encompass the whole of his nation's literary-linguistic history and geography—

or so it would seem.[62]

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[60] In *Uncommon Tongues*, Nicholson glosses her discussion of Helgerson's work with a rich review of relevant book-length studies by such scholars as Hadfield, Hastings, Shrank, Schwyzer, Escobedo, etc. (174-175, n. 14-18). To Nicholson's list, I would add Gordon's and Klein's *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern England*, Zurcher's *Spenser's Legal Language*, and Smith's *The Cartographic Imagination*.

[61] An investigation that especially makes good on Helgerson's intuition can be found in Stephanie Elsky's "'Wonne with Custom': Conquest and Etymology in the Spenser-Harvey *Letters* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland*." Elsky notes how these two seemingly disparate texts "negotiate the problem of implementing foreign rule, whether poetic or political," through a complicated portrayal of "the concept of custom": on one hand, the colonial imposition of custom functions "as the mechanism that makes the foreign familiar"; on another hand, custom as conceived "in the realm of common law" functions "as a form of a *resistance* to foreign imposition" (165). I will address the nuances of Elsky's argument as I make my way through the Spenser-Harvey *Letters*.

[62] I see Book II of *The Faerie Queene* as launching with a re-articulation of this aspiration. The poet begins with the surmise that readers will "iudge" his "famous antique history" to be "th'aboundance of an ydle brain . . . and painted forgery / Rather than the matter of iust memory" (II.proem.1). Still, he insists,
> But let that man with better sence aduize,
>   That of the world least part to vs is red:
>   And daily how through hardy enterprize
>   Many great Regions are discouered,
>   Which to late age were never mentioned.
> . . .
> Yet all these were when no man did them know,
>   Yet haue from wisest sages hidden beene
>   And later times thinges more vnknowne will show.

For an exploration of this kind to be sound, one must anticipate the complications

of fashioning a city of language from "an ideal pattern" (Helgerson 3). In clarifying the

"sense of national identity or . . . 'national consciousness'" that Helgerson reads in

Spenser's "kingdome" as an emphatically *emergent* sense," literary critics confront, as

Spenser does throughout his poetry, the painful ambiguities of an ideal's accessibility,

existence, or value (Elsky 188, n. 23).[63] Spenser realizes that in order to have, "as else

the Greekes," a consummated "kingdome of our owne Language," the terminus of his

poetic journey would involve a more dreaded termination: to reach completion in this

way would be to reach stasis, therein ending the life of his language.[64] Death is, after all,

the precondition for Renaissance. But how do languages, which are inevitably "apt to

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> Why then should witlesse man so much misweene
> That nothing is but that which he hath seen? (II.proem.2-3)

For Spenser, then, the interlaced romantic tales of epic legend—the blending of fiction and history—constitute nothing less than "iust memory." His narratives are designed to encompass (recall) undiscovered "Regions" of Britain's collective memory (history, territory, identity). Yet he suspends the proem with a string of subjunctives—open possibilities to be imagined or explored. The narrator can only hope that "that man with better sence" may "yield his sence to bee too blunt and bace" to "trace" the "signes" of "faery lond" without the "fine footing" of "an hound," i.e., without a sort of shepherd-poet (II.proem.4). In other words, the poet questions whether even attentive readers will allow the poem to guide them how to read it (Cf. Cavell *POH* 10, qtd. in Moi 131; discussion on p. 7). Spenser further hopes that his poem may function as a "fayre mirrhour," in which in his "Soueraine Queene" (and, to some extent, any kindred reader) "maist behold thy face / And thine owne realms in Lond of Faery, / And in this antique ymage thy great auncestry" (II.proem.4). However, the sufficiency of his poetic images, the remoteness of the regions in space and time that they depict, and the recoverability of his nation's "moniments" and "antiquitees" remain uncertain (II.ix.54-60; II.x). Lastly there is the matter of his readers' vision—whether certain "aspects" and "physiognomies" will "light up" for them in Spenser's "fayre mirrhour" (Cf. Wittgenstein *PPF* xi.118, 250-261).

[63] Cf. Schwyzer 9: "What we discern in some early modern texts is not the nation *per se* so much as the nation *in potential*."

[64] Samuel Johnson, for instance, might have yearned for the authority of such "dead languages" as Greek and Latin when expressing his resigned lexicographical wish "to embalm a living language" in his *Plan for a Dictionary of the English Language* (Lamb, *EED* 20-21): "I am not so lost in lexicography, as to forget that *words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven.* Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but signs of ideas: I wish, however, that the instrument be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote" (Johnson 7, qtd. in Lamb *EED* 20). Even in conceding the impermanence of signs, Johnson clings to an Augustinian picture of language in assuming the permanence of "the things which [words] denote." Underpinning Johnson's desires to delay semantic drift and secure the denotative fixity between word and world are the same "bewitching pictures" that Wittgenstein resists in his call to return to rough ground (Lamb, *EED* 16-22). See my discussion of this "bewitchment" on pp. 9-12, and my questions of "linguistic completion" on pp. 22-23.

decay" (Johnson 7), regenerate themselves continually? Where is poetry's place in this

renewal? To revitalize and sustain his language community, Spenser shepherds a way

through these entanglements, but there are few, if any ideals to be discovered in the mire.

Accordingly, the poet shows how these embroilments comprise the *practical* problems

and choices that we encounter in the phenomenal world (with our "ordinary" language).[65]

Even the ideals that characters approach in Spenser's "faerie lond" are rendered

apophatically and transcendentally.[66] What uses, then, do "ideal patterns" serve in

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[65] Recall my discussions of "lexical entanglements" in pp. 13-15, 18-19 by way of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*: "Here the fundamental fact is that we lay down rules, a technique, for playing a game, and that then, when we follow the rules, things don't turn out as we had assumed. So that we are, as it were, entangled in our own rules. This entanglement in our own rules is what we want to understand: that is, to survey . . . The civic status of a contradiction, or its status in civic life – that is the philosophical problem" (§125). Consider now the rustic speakers in the eclogues of Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* [*SC*]. While Immeritô's diction is decidedly archaic and arcane, i.e., "extra-ordinary" (qualities which his glossator E.K. is at pains to defend), the expression of the shepherds—even that of Colin Cloute, the melancholy, yet beloved poet-singer "under whose name the Author self is shadowed" (*SC* "Epistle" 133-134)—is regarded as being "rough, and rudely drest" (*SC* "June" 77), at least within the contexts of *this* pastoral world-picture. Moreover, these shepherds (poets, pastors), in representing what Puttenham in *The Arte of English Poesy* considers to be "the first familiar conversation . . . the first disputation and contentious reasoning" (127), recursively confront the "civic status of a contradiction, or its status in civic life" (§125; Cf. prior footnote, p. 4, n. 6.) Which is to say, the dialogues of *The Shepheardes Calender* portray the contradictions and confusions that stem from "our" everyday language: "Spenser suggests that the language that should be a common medium of exchange is not even legal tender in the *Calender's* pastoral world: like those dwelling in the suburbs of Babel, Spenser's shepherds do not use and understand language in the same way" (L. Johnson 64). The eclogues, and particularly the ones categorized by E.K. as "Moral" (*SC* "General Argument" 30-34), comprise debates in which the speakers' words and stories—and the cares and commitments that those words and stories incorporate—fail to reach "their intended audience" (Malpezzi 183-187). Thenot and Cuddie in "February" are unable to find common ground in determining the value of the past and old age to youth and the future; Piers and Palinode in "Maye" fail to see each other's respective insights regarding the proper conduct of shepherds (prophets, preachers) in relation to "iouysaunce" (25), "maintenaunce" (79), and the protection of their flocks from "fraude and guile" (127). These examples, along with others, reveal how even our most commonly-used words and concepts—love, joy, wisdom, education, etc. (to say nothing of "Chastity," "Friendship," "Iustice," "Courtesie," etc.)—need to be shepherded toward a shared grammatical home.

[66] By this, I mean that the poet depicts ideal forms as absent presences (spiritual essences) from a world beyond. Arthur, for instance, the elusive protagonist of Spenser's epic, describes his dream-vision of the "Queene of Faries" by negation: this "creature"—"so fayre" that she "yet saw neuer sunny day," so well-spoken that "Ne liuing man like words did ever heare"—departs at the moment of Arthur's awakening, leaving "nought but pressed gras where she had lyen" (*FQ* I.ix.13-15). Similarly, at the end of Book I, when Una (an allegorical figure for unified truth), casts "her mournefull stole aside" in betrothal to the Redcrosse Knight, the narrator himself is tongue-tied by "the celestial sight" of her "heauenly beautie" (I.xii.21-23):

> The blazing brightnesse of her beauties beame,
>   And glorious light of her sunshyny face

(re)making a kingdom of language here on earth? A builder of a language-kingdom can

only linger so long on a hill of contemplation, dazzled by a far-flung image. Ultimately,

s/he must descend into multilayered grammatical underworlds.

So instead of representing ideal kingdoms, Spenser ignites and sustains his poetic

career through "the *topos* of ruin"—the recursive "re-collection" of cities and edifices

(actual and allegorical) that have been despoiled, scattered, and lost in the labyrinth of

history (Helfer xii).[67] Helfer traces this pattern—which runs centrifugally from Spenser's

formative poetry in Jan van der Noot's *Theatre for Worldlings* to the *Mutabilitie Cantos*

      To tell, were as to striue against the streame.
      My ragged rimes are all too rude and bace,
      Her heauenly lineaments for to enchace. (I.xii.23; Cf. II.proem.5, III.proem.1-3)

Ideals may serve to generate wonder, to provoke thought, even to move one's choice and action in real-life contexts. But neither the pastoral spaces of Spenser's *Calender* nor his epic lond of faery are ideal environments. Rarely are they even idyllic. And the inhabitants of these places are more likely to be idols than ideals. (Just think of those all-too-human knights that represent ((and slowly reform themselves towards)) the six virtues of the epic's six books.) When Redcrosse gazes at New Hierusalem from the Mount of Contemplation in I.x, even the Kingdom of Cleopolis, the city of fame where "that fairest *Fary Queene* doth dwell"—indeed, "for earthly frame, / The fairest peece, that eie beholden can" (I.x.58-59)—dims in comparison to that city "that earthly tong / Cannot describe, nor wit of man can tell" (I.x.55). And when Redcrosse reluctantly turns "Backe to the world, whose ioyes so fruitlesse are" (I.x.63), he is disoriented by the ideal itself: ". . . dazed were his eyne, / Through passing brightnes, which did quite confound / His feeble sence, and too exceeding shyne. / So darke are earthly thinges compard to things diuine" (I.x.67).

[67] Similarly to Rebeca Helfer's *Spenser's Ruins and the Art of Recollection*, my investigation walks along routes previously mapped by Willy Maley in "Spenser's Languages: Writing the Ruins of English" and Jennifer Summit in "Monuments and Ruins: Spenser and the Problem of the English Library." Maley pithily portrays Spenser as a "poet of ruins, raking in the ashes of English in order to remember the cinders of its heritage" (169). Moreover, Spenser is "a poet of exile and empire": his uses of archaism, neologism, and etymology operate with the persuasion "that Englishness in its purest expression [is] best preserved in the colonial margins rather than the cosmopolitan centre" (169-170; Cf. McCabe, "Edmund Spenser: Poet of Exile"). Hence, "in order to pave the way for a British future . . . Spenser [makes] his home literally among the ruins of the original English colony in Ireland . . . [finding] the time and space, and most importantly, the rich reserves in language, to write in the ruins of a genre, and in the ruins of an earlier form of English" (169-170). Summit's article, which she extends in *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England*, considers the relations between Spenser's poetry and the "recuperative" efforts of Archbishop Matthew Parker's circle in the wake of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Summit takes two episodes from *The Faerie Queene*—the ancient library of Eumnestes and Anamnestes (memory as archive and memory as recollection) in the Castle of Alma (the rational soul or mind) (II.ix-x), and the demolition of the Bower of Bliss (II.xii)—to exemplify cycles of Protestant "biblioclasm," i.e., "the destruction of monastic libraries" and their calculated reconstruction (2). By "enacting" in his poetry "the material process of remembering and forgetting that begin in the library," Spenser practices what Summit calls "a poetics of wreckage, an extended meditation on the project of cultural recovery that accompanied England's long Reformation" (6). See Helfer's discussion and endnotes on these and other treatments of ruin in Spenser scholarship (9; 320, n. 11).

that suspend his *Faerie Queene*—centripetally back to the Greek myth of Simonides, a

proto-teacher of the "art of memory."[68] Cicero's *On the Ideal Orator*, in recalling this

"Tale of Simonides" through the lens of Plato's *Phaedrus*, establishes a key intertextual

riverbed for Spenser's historico-poetic meanderings (Helfer 1-14, 29-48). That is,

Spenser adapts an ongoing dialogue on memory, oratory, and writing, initiated by

Socrates and Phaedrus, and re-membered by the work of Cicero, Augustine, Petrarch,

Chaucer, Castiglione, Du Bellay, and Sidney, among others (Helfer xi-xiii, 48-71).[69]

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[68] As the story goes, the lyric poet Simonides, after performing at "the house of Scopas, a rich nobleman," leaves the festivities to meet with two youths at the threshold of Scopas' property, whereupon the dwelling implodes, burying the nobleman and his guests with such force that the bereaved are unable to distinguish the mangled bodies of the dead. Thankfully, Simonides is able to "[identify] every one of them for burial" through his "recollection of the place where each of them had been reclining at table." Reflecting on this event, Simonides realizes "that order is what most brings light to our memory." This discovery informs his devising of an "art of memory"—a.k.a., "locational memory," the mnemonic strategy of constructing and touring imagined spaces and structures, by which orators recall the "localities" or *topics* of long speeches (Cicero II.350-360; Helfer 1-14).

[69] Do not forget that this "initial" dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus is likewise "recollected" by Plato. And to be clear, Socrates and Phaedrus allude to the Tale of Simonides only implicitly. When Socrates asks Phaedrus to relate Lysias' speech on love, Phaedrus initially doubts whether his "unpracticed memory can do justice to an elaborate work, which . . . [a rhetorician] spent a long time in composing" (228a)—despite the fact that Phaedrus has been carrying around and poring over a text of the speech all morning (228b). Even so, Phaedrus proceeds to "practice" whatever skills of artificial memory he possesses, claiming that, although he "did not learn the very words," he has "a general notion of what [Lysias] said" and may provide "a summary of the points" (228d). Throughout the ensuing dialogue, Socrates generates extempore two speeches of his own on love, demonstrating—to his mind, at least—a more "elevated" art of memory. Deeply critical of writing and literacy, Socrates' art reframes rhetoric as a sort of prophetic orality (Cf. 257c-279c).

To this end, Socrates recalls the instructive "Tale of Theuth." Theuth, an "old [Egyptian] god" reminiscent of Daedalus, invents "letters" in order to "make Egyptians wiser and give them better memories" (274e). But when presenting his invention to King Thamus, the king cautions that, on the contrary, Theuth's "discovery . . . will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust the external written characters and not remember of themselves" (275a). The invention, according to Thamus, is "an aid not to memory but to reminiscence" (275a). Socrates likewise deems writing to work "unfortunately like painting; for the creations of the painter have the attitude of life, and yet if you ask them a question they preserve a solemn silence . . . And when [texts] have been once written down they are tumbled about anywhere among those who may or may not understand them . . . and, if they are maltreated and abused, they have no parent to protect them" (275d-e). For Socrates, genuine wisdom and truth develop organically by "planting the seeds of dialectic in the soul and letting them come to full fruition" (de Blas 201). The "living word of knowledge," like the cultivations of "some garden of Adonis," must be "graven in the soul of the learner" (276a-b). Physical texts, "as memorials to be treasured against the forgetfulness of old age," can, at best, merely activate this higher-order mode of recollecting what is "graven," or written (planted, rooted) in the soul (276c-d). (Plato's *Phaedrus*, a *written* dialogue, evidently constitutes the sort of "reminder" or "memorial" that Socrates has in mind.)

While the multiple texts in this dialogic lineage intricately relate and differ from one another, they all demonstrate the art of memory "as *foundational* to poetry, not *applied* to it" (Helfer xi). Beyond mnemonics, these texts practice "an ongoing art of recollection" in the "places" of ruins, creating "[stories] about history . . . [that engage] all of the faculties of human psychology—imagination, reason, remembrance—in order to create something new from something old: in metaphorical terms, in order to re-collect, re-form, and re-member the raw materials of memory and knowledge" (Helfer xi-xii, 8). The continual dynamism of this process casts new light on Edmund Spenser as England's (and Ireland's) arch-poet of mutability (Helfer 9).

But well before Socrates explicates his superior modes of philosophical rhetoric and memory in 257c-279c, he has already *shown* these methods through his second speech on love (244a-257b). In reconstructing a mythic tale of the soul's passage through the underworld (245b-250c), Socrates reworks an art of *anamnesis*: "the recollection of things past that were never experienced and yet, because of the immortality of the soul, can nevertheless be found there" (Helfer 12; Cf. 33-36). Moreover, in framing his second speech as a "palinode" or recantation in the manner of Stesichorus (242d-243d), Socrates channels and refashions his speech through a story of Troy—"the symbolic ruins that were the foundation of Greek edification" (Helfer 34). Socrates thus uses *anamnesis* "to demystify origin stories, especially allegories of the soul that sacralize tales of Troy; in these contexts, the idea of prior knowledge is less an attempt to establish absolute categories of 'true knowledge' than a way to demonstrate the complex interdependencies of history and mythic stories" (Helfer 12). Through this process, Socrates "rewrites the underworld places of epic . . . as clearly demarcated locations, filled with vivid images and personifications, which allow both characters and readers to recollect the ruins of the past" (Helfer 35-36).

In this regard, the *anamnesis* of Socrates produces "heuristic tales," enabling the intertextual genealogy that Helfer traces from Cicero onwards. *On the Ideal Orator* begins with an explicit imitation of Plato's *Phaedrus* (Cicero I.24-29; Helfer 29-30). But Cicero's dialogue between Antonius and Crassus is less a reproduction of the *Phaedrus* than an "anamnesic" adaptation. For example, at the start of Book III, Cicero heuristically (re)applies the Tale of Simonides that concluded Book II, interrupting the dialogue to recall the loss of Lucius Crassus and the fall of Republican Rome (as echoes of the Fall of Troy). Like Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Crassus in Cicero's *De Oratore* is a re-collection. But Cicero makes a crucial departure here from Socrates' view of literacy: he "performs the role of a new Simonides, recollecting the past within the mnemonic space of writing figured as a ruined edifice, and as a mingling of fact and fiction" (Helfer 46). St. Augustine similarly refigures the dynamic anamnesis of lettered edification. Writing in the palimpsestic ruins of a successively-sacked Rome, Augustine rethinks the Virgilian image of the soul's journey toward "empire without end": he depicts spiritual reformation as consisting rather in "cycles of ruin and re-edification" (Helfer 9-10, 12-13, 48-56). These intertexts form the intellectual ground on which Renaissance poets treat "ruin" (and its corollary of architectural/pedagogical "edification") as "a master metaphor . . . for the activity of disinterring the past for the present (Helfer 9). Helfer sees the figurative capacities of *ruin* as relating "to the Greek meaning of 'metaphor,' to carry across or over, and to its Latin equivalent, 'translation.' As a figure of transport, ruin relates to the transmission of culture, *translatio imperii et studii*, imagined from antiquity through early modernity as the westward translation of empire and learning. As more than just a metaphor, the ruins of writing share common ground with the ruins of history." (Helfer 9).

I admit, one could still justly ask at this point how these metaphors of ideal cities (a New Hierusalem promising unity in our distant future) and of ruined cities (a labyrinthine underworld containing the fractured remnants of our past) relate to "the kingdome of our owne Language." At an initial glance, the figures that I have marshaled seem to bear more historical, political, and theological significance than linguistic, poetic, and literary significance. My answer would be that a particular ordering of these images illuminates how Spenser's vision of language enfolds the historical, the political, and the theological *within* the linguistic, the poetic, and the literary. Through a Wittgensteinian lens, an extended metaphor of a "city of language in ruins" can clarify the ways that Spenser renovates poetic diction and lexical analysis in order to convey literary-linguistic memory. In brief, I aim to provide a new picture of Spenserian etymology.

Naturally, critical considerations of Spenser's etymology have followed conventions charted by Plato in the *Cratylus*. Is Spenser, like Hermogenes, a *conventionalist*, maintaining "that *nothing* but local or national convention determines which words are used to designate which objects" (Sedley, "Cratylus," *Stanford Encylcopedia of Philosophy* [*SEP*])—i.e., that "the relationship between words and things [is] arbitrary" (Ruthven 256)? Or is Spenser, like Cratylus, a *naturalist*, resolving that "words denote the nature of the things they refer to" (Ruthven 256)—i.e., that "names belong *naturally* to their specific objects" (Sedley *SEP*), as the original name-makers designed them to "represent the essences of objects" (Maley 170)? Despite scholars' natural/conventional bias toward Socrates, who negotiates a knotty middle ground in the dialogue between Cratylus' and Hermogenes' perspectives, readers of Spenser have a very strong tendency to examine the poet as a "naturalist etymologizer" (Ruthven 256).

Martha Craig's "The Secret Wit of Spenser's Language" lays the groundwork for

naturalist views of Spenser's diction. Craig's 1967 paper is among the first and the

clearest treatments of how the *Cratylus* informs Spenser's archaism and neologism

(451).[70] In this inquiry, a naturalist bent is, to an extent, necessary (natural): Spenser

clearly uses etymology in a purposive manner, "picking out archaic forms that are more

suggestive of philosophic meaning" (451).[71] Indeed, to engage in etymological

investigation at all requires the conviction that our uses of language have a traceable

history.[72] The deeper question is how well we can trace this history—to what effect.

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[70] Craig also addresses the *Cratylus*' influence on Spenser's headmaster at the Merchant Taylors' School, Richard Mulcaster (449). Mulcaster alludes to Plato's dialogue when introducing the "Generall Table" at the end of his *Elementarie*. According to the pedagogue, his lexicographic reference-tool will function as "an help for ignorance and an ease for knowledge" by familiarizing its users with the morphological systems of the words "which we [most] commonlie vse in our hole speche" (Mulcaster 163-164). By consulting these networks of resemblance in the lexis of "our naturall tung," one can learn to better "waie the words and the forces which theie haue" (167):

> We nede not to proue by *Platoes Cratylus*, or *Aristotles* proposition as by best autorities . . . that words be voluntarie, and appointed vpon cause, seing we haue better warrant. For euen God himself, who brought the creatures, which he had made, vnto that first man, whom he had also made, that he might name them, according to their properties, doth planelie declare by his so doing, what a cunning thing it is to giue right names, and how necessarie it is, to know their forces, which be allredie given, bycause the word being knowen, which implyeth the propertie of the thing is half known, whose propertie is emplyed. (167)

Mulcaster initially appeals to a conventionalist sensibility in stating that words are "voluntarie" and "appointed" according to our "warrant." However, the "causes" upon which names are "appointed" constitute core meanings that naturally persist in the words themselves: the "propertie" of an object will be "half known" in/by the name that people use for that object. For Mulcaster, then, the "forces" of words— "the propertie[s]" which they "implyeth"—are part of a lineage that originates in the "cunning" practices of Adam's name-making in the Garden of Eden (*cunning* here involving both knowledge and skill). For a more sustained treatment of the influence of Plato's *Cratylus* in the Renaissance, see John Leonard's *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve*.

[71] Many studies before and after Craig's 1967 essay have revealed layers of meaning far beyond the "philosophic." The most recent and compelling investigations have proceeded according to Zurcher's turn to "a new linguistic level to Spenser's allegorical thinking across his works, a kind of reading that is attentive, at the level of the lexeme, to the history, semantic scope, comparative linguistic relations, and technical or other discursive affiliations of individual words" (10). Jennifer Summit's *Memory's Library*, Stephanie Elsky's "'Wonne with Custom': Conquest and Etymology in the Spenser-Harvey *Letters* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland*," and Hannah Crawforth's "Strangers to the Mother Tongue: Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* and Early Anglo-Saxon Studies" come to mind.

[72] Cf. Wittgenstein *PI* §25: "Giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, having a chat, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing."

It is in this open-ended space that Spenser's vision of language consists, and it is

in this *terra incognita* that naturalist views of Spenser's concept of lexical analysis

become misleading. But the problems of treating Spenser as "a naturalist etymologizer"

cannot be solved merely by reading him as a conventionalist in other semantic or

semiotic matters—not even when the poet's uses of "Allegoricall deuises" clearly exploit

the plasticity of a signifier's correspondence to a signified (Spenser, *Letter to Raleigh*

[*LR*] 23).[73] In fact, as K. K. Ruthven argues in her entry on "Etymology" in *The Spenser*

Encyclopedia, disparities or ambiguities in the relations between words and objects can

be compatible with and, indeed, *useful* to the (re)naming practices of "naturalist

etymologizers like Spenser" (256).[74] Such studies as Craig's and Ruthven's are

indispensable.[75] Through these scholars' insights, it is undeniable that Spenser aims to

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[73] Cf. Fletcher 2: "In the simplest terms, allegory says one thing and means another. It destroys the normal expectation that we have about language, that our words 'mean what they say.'"

[74] Indeed, Spenser's wordplay often absorbs such a wealth of signification that one senses the possibility of rupture (a complete evacuation of meaning). Ruthven considers the poet's "tolerance" for "complementary etymologies" to be "characteristic of Spenser's interest in names whose multiple significances invite multiple perspectives on the narratives in which they are embedded" (256). Indeed, even when "complementary etymologies raise problems of interpretation," Spenser deftly "manipulates" these hermeneutic uncertainties "for ironic effects" (256). Whether his names reflect nature or not, the poet is poised to instruct his audience through cultivating etymological awareness. Thus, it would seem that, regardless of Spenser's actual convictions regarding naturalism and conventionalism, etymology just *is* a crucial component of how the poet "took his diction, and the ability of his readers to assimilate and understand that diction in all its nuance, seriously" (Zurcher 4).

[75] To these studies, I would add Barbara Strang's entry on "Language" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. Consider Strang's explanation of the "Platonic coloring" in Spenser's handling of names and poetic diction:

> In each case, the etymological meaning is the immutable essence; vagaries in time, in form or meaning, are mere accidents. In proportion as the poet's goal is the permanent in language, variable surface realizations are functionally a matter of indifference. Contemporary variation in the standard language, advanced, even slangy colloquialisms, dialect forms, and archaisms are all on a par. To Jonson, this meant that Spenser writ no language, and in a surface sense this is undeniably true. But it is not a relevant sense. Spenser's exploitation of variation gives him great license, but the sympathetic reader does not perceive him as taking liberties or the easy way out because his freedom is in accord with a deep, pervasive, and coherent intuition about the nature of poetic language—at least for poetry of this kind. (428)

To my mind, Strang's notion of "Platonic *coloring*" seems to be too mild of a term as she elaborates upon it. The picture of Spenser's language described above maintains that ideal forms underlie our words and their uses. Thus, Strang depicts Spenser's diction, "in proportion as the poet's goal is the permanent in language," as *flatly* Platonic. This is not an unreasonable picture to offer, especially in light of the poet's

call his audience's attention to naturalist traditions of etymology—to schools of thought

that "regard etymons as vehicles of truth obscured by the duplicities of everyday

language" (256). His readers are meant to see that "the linguistic restitution" that

naturalist etymology "promises"—that the possibility of "[retrieving] the etymons" from

"decayed" names in order to "repair the original bond between words and things"—is of

"moral and epistemological" consequence (256). For this reason, such investigations as

Åke Bergvall's "The Theology of the Sign: St. Augustine and Spenser's Legend of

Holiness" are salient even where they fail to entirely convince.[76] The poet of *The Faerie*

Queene surely puts into play the concept of an Edenic or Adamic language—an absolute

unity between *res* and *verba* that humanity lost in the Fall. How this idea(l) of a unified

language interacts with the thematic topography of the work as a whole is less certain.

Augustine has faith in his methods of approaching the Word through postlapsarian

language. Spenser's methods are a bit more fraught and frayed. The poet may very well

"[urge] the reader to join Redcrosse in the quest for the transcendental Sign," for any

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ostensible adherence to Neoplatonic tenets on love and beauty in his *Amoretti* and *Fowre Hymnes*. Still, it is a perspective that I intend to complicate, for it considerably oversimplifies Spenser's vision of language.

[76] Adapting theories of semiology mapped out in the works of Augustine, Spenser narrates in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* the dispersal and estrangement of human language(s) after the Fall and the collapse of the Towers of Babel (Bergvall 21-23). In his severance from Una and his seduction by Duessa, the Redcrosse Knight, "named 'only through a sign,'" enacts "his separation from the *Uni*ty of transcendental Sign and his bondage to the *Du*plicity of postlapsarian language" (Bergvall 21-24, 31-37; Cf. Goldberg 7). In *The City of God* and *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine portrays how the faithful inheritors of Babel's "linguistic confusion" (the lexical conventionalism of scattered language communities) may seek the "inner" and "transcendent" *Logos*, or Word of God (Bergvall 24-31). Yet Augustine's linguistic enterprise is more fundamentally theological and exegetical than it is etymological: despite his consciously applying the terms of Cratylus' naturalism in illuminating the "prelapsarian sign," Augustine moves closer to Hermogenes' conventionalism in his resignation that "etymology . . . [does] not lead anywhere: 'Discerning the origin of words . . . is like the interpretation of dreams; it is a matter of each man's ingenuity'" (Augustine, *De Dialectica* 93, qtd. in Bergvall 25-26). See Dorothy Stephens' review of studies in this vein by Heniger, Zurcher, and McCabe in "Spenser's Language(s): Linguistic Theory and Poetic Diction," pp. 379-382. Stephens' closing response to these lines of thought is judicious:

> One might venture to say that if Spenser was fascinated by the idea of an Edenic time in which linguistic body and soul were one, he was also aware that in a post-Edenic world, the slippage between signifier and signified offered him a job. Words needed to be taught how to behave nobly—and if Castiglione was right about the courtier on horseback, even the inner soul could benefit from a good education. (382)

reader can be "implicated in Redcrosse's linguistic alienation . . . [and] follow him in his pursuit of wholeness, or holiness," (Bergvall 37). But how to conduct oneself in this quest—what guides to follow—these are slow and quiet teachings. Readers can only acquire them by walking the winding paths of the poetry.

And in the course of these travels, readers can track the trail that the poet weaves between naturalism and conventionalism. Here even the most illuminating naturalist readings of Spenser's poetic diction are liable to obscure the subtleties of this middle way. (And, to be sure, ascribing the poet's views to those of Socrates in the *Cratylus* will not provide sufficient clarity.) A major source of confusion consists in the degree to which lexical naturalism necessitates a sort of linguistic idealism. Spenser undoubtedly shows (teaches) how words carry histories of use—how learning these "stories" can enrich one's communicative practices and therein one's communal life.[77] But, again, to read Spenser as writing to (re)construct an ideal language is to wander in error. To the extent that readers can obtain an overview of Spenser's corpus, readers can mark the poet's cumulative realization that the ultimate origins of words and their meanings *cannot be recovered*.[78] Our uses of language can only be reordered and renovated, like the

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[77] Cf. Hadfield, *A Life* 259: "In representing the knight as an old-fashioned hero from a romance, and Una as a medieval religious figure, Spenser confronts his readers with the reality of the past as a living entity that has to be acknowledged and absorbed, not simply discarded. The language of the poem is archaic for a reason, forcing readers to realize that the past still lives."

[78] In "'Wonne with Custome,'" Stephanie Elsky illustrates this failing of etymology in the context of Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland*. The political dialogue in Spenser's *View* extends a poetic dialogue from the *Spenser-Harvey Correspondence*, confronting the ways that England's and Ireland's vexed histories of conquest and colonization result in "*dis*continuity" and "rupture" in the "genealogical chain[s]" of etymology (175; Cf. Bloch 86). Consequently, "the claim to the linguistic, and therefore temporal, primacy of customs is always left open to contestation in *A View* as English and Irish race each other into an ever-receding past . . . When Irenius and Eudoxus call upon etymology to arbitrate between native and foreign customs . . . they end up revealing the difficulty, even the impossibility of laying claim to either (183-184).

building blocks of a city or house in ruins.[79] And putting a language community's house

in order is something for which poetry and philosophy are responsible.

Thus, for Spenser, etymology qua linguistic history involves the sort of *anamnesis*

illuminated by Helfer's readings of Plato, Cicero, Augustine, et al.—an "ongoing re-

collection" of "the raw materials of memory and knowledge" through a poetic

reorientation of fact and fiction (8-13).[80] The goal is not to recover original meanings

that are latent in the forms and uses of language, but rather to reorder lexical (hi)stories

that place our words and our lives "in right relation" (Scheman 166). As Wittgenstein

describes in the *Investigations*, the ideal of "complete exactness" in the "final analysis of

our linguistic expressions" (§91)—the picture of "the *essence* of language, of

propositions, of thought . . . as something that lies *beneath* the surface . . . which an

analysis is supposed to unearth" (§92)—will lead to the "bewitchment of our

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[79] I address Wittgenstein's remarks on (re)ordering as opposed to analysis in a prior footnote (p 13, n. 23).
In elucidating his concept of "grammatical inquiry," Wittgenstein is careful to describe the functions of
"'analysing'" when surveying the entanglements of ordinary language. The philosopher purposefully limits
these functions:

> Our inquiry is therefore a grammatical one. And this inquiry sheds light on our problem by
> clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words, brought about,
> among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of
> our language. – Some of them can be removed by substituting one form of expression for another;
> this may be called "analysing" our forms of expression, for sometimes this procedure resembles
> taking a thing apart. (*PI* §90)

Wittgenstein seems comfortable enough with *analysis* as disassembly ("unloosening") or substitution. This
"procedure," though it will only remove "some" of our "misunderstandings," allows for a plurality of
flexible configurations in word-use. However, when one conceives of *analysis* as exhuming a "hidden"
ideal meaning—as digging toward "a complete state of exactness"—then s/he loses sight of "the real goal
of our investigation" (§91). Grammatical inquiry works *to order* and *to survey* the systems of our
language-use in contexts "where everything lies open to view"; thus, "whatever may be hidden"—or at
least *hidden* in the sense of being concealed or interred—"is of no interest" (§126). Rather, "the aspects of
things that are most important to us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to
notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.)" (§129).

[80] Cf. Cicero II.353-354: "Prompted by [his] experience, [Simonides] is then said to have made the
discovery that *order is what most brings light to our memory*. And he concluded that those who would like
to employ this part of their abilities should choose localities, then form mental images of the things they
wanted to store in their memory, and place these in localities. *In this way, the order of the localities would
preserve the order of things*, while the images would represent the things themselves; and we would use the
localities like a wax tablet, and the representations like letters written on it" (my emphases). Cf.
Wittgenstein *PI* §127: "The work of the philosopher consists in marshaling recollections for a particular
purpose."

understanding" (§109). It is crucial to recall at this moment that the word *analysis*—at

least as it is used in English—is a coinage by none other than Edmund Spenser, first

appearing in E.K.'s "*generall argument*" [*GA*] of *The Shepheardes Calender* (Cf.

Zurcher 9). E.K. employs the term in the context of demonstrating it—with a tendentious

and peculiar "αναλυσις" (analysis) of *Æglogue* to justify its archaic spelling and false

etymology in lieu of the standard *Eclogue* (*SC, GA* 1-23). Treating Spenser in this

moment as "demonstrating . . . the kind of research and study [that] a careful reading

demands" has critically advanced our understanding of Spenser's "distinctive call for

lexical 'analysis'" (Zurcher 9, 36, 28-41). But in taking the next step, scholars of Spenser

must approach this concept of analysis more warily. Is Immeritô's concept the same as

E.K.'s? What methodologies does it precisely employ? What purposes does it

practically serve? One cannot rest for long on the word of E.K.[81]

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[81]   I suppose that this is as fitting of a moment as any to recollect a "brief" critical history of "E.K.,"
the glossator of *The Shepheardes Calender* whose debut is as anonymous as that of the "new Poete,"
Immeritô (McCabe, "Annotating Anonymity" ["AA"] 35). As McCanles has incisively noted, "it is part of
the fiction of *The Shepheardes Calender* that E.K.'s glosses and commentary are not part of the fiction"
(5). Moving past those who have been taken in by this fiction, McCabe laments that "speculation
concerning the identity of E.K. has tended to distract critical attention from the literary function of the
material assigned to him . . . material amounting to roughly one half of the entire volume" ("AA" 35).
Indeed, overcoming this distraction has led to far more useful research, albeit with a host of divergent
perspectives. Scholars of Spenser have at least reached the consensus that E.K. is functionally a *literary
persona*—if not Spenser himself, then some complex collaboration among Spenser, Harvey, and *possibly*
Edward Kirke. I too operate with the persuasion that if E.K. is not Spenser himself, then nearly every word
of his is overseen by the poet.
        The *ends* that E.K.'s contributions serve, however, remain richly ambiguous. Critics do tend to
agree that E.K.'s annotations, along with the typographical features of the book, "arrogate classical status"
to the *Calender*, causing it to appear more like an annotated edition of an ancient text than the product of a
contemporary poet (McCabe, "AA" 37; Cf. Heniger, "The Typographical Layout of the Shepheardes
Calender"). But scholars continue to debate whether (and, if so, how) E.K. constitutes an example for the
reader of Spenser's poetry. Bruce Smith remarks in the very first volume of *Spenser Studies* that "E.K.'s
commentary may be a kind of academic in-joke . . . detached, analytical, aware of precedents, full of
schemes, but curiously aloof from the emotional force of the poetry" (89). Others present an even more
skeptical reading of E.K., treating his "glosing" commentary as the many glossy and deceptive surfaces of
"sophistry and disingenuousness" (McCabe, *AA* 41)—not a hard position to hold when one confronts the
leaden pedantry of E.K.'s style and the sheer incorrectness of much of his substance. In his chapters on
Spenser in *A Ciceronian Sunburn*, Edward Armstrong has further argued that E.K. and Immeritô engage
throughout the text in a struggle for the primacy of poetic skill versus scholastic knowledge (41-53). While
I am indebted to this work and exercise a similar vigilance in my readings of E.K., my assessments tend to

Returning to Wittgenstein's later writings can guide the way ahead for these inquiries. From this outlook, Spenser's image of "the kingdome of our owne Language" begins to resemble the ancient city of language that Wittgenstein metaphorically imagines in the *Investigations*. However, Spenser makes all too clear what Wittgenstein largely implies. If "our language can be regarded as an *ancient* city" (§18, my emphasis), then many of its enclaves can decay and require restoration. And if various residents of this city occupy diverse regions, then people can regard other communities as strange, even if they share a heritage. Indeed, people can become strangers to their own heritage.[82] Spenser's earthly kingdom of language is a city divided from itself, a city in ruins. And thus, this poet-surveyor must walk and mark every region in relation to its surroundings, reconnecting and rebuilding the kingdom from within. There is no finality to this "endlesse worke" (*FQ* IV.xii.1): if the poet should build a New Hierusalem of language within Cleopolis, another New Hierusalem would still be out there, glimmering on the horizon.

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be a bit more generous to the glossator. I believe that E.K. functions as an important, yet imperfect model for the kind of lexical analysis that Spenser aims to cultivate in and through his poetry. E.K.'s scholastic and lexicographic labors are a vital part of remaking a kingdom of language. But the theory of language that informs E.K.'s labors has its limits. Spenser aims to show those limits. More importantly, he works to show how the poet can move beyond them.

　　　For a kindred study on the semantic and phonetic resonances of the name "E.K.," see D. Allen Carroll's "The Meaning of 'E.K.'" See also Catherine Nicholson's *Uncommon Tongues*, pp. 104-110, and James Kearney's "Reformed Ventriloquism: *The Shepheardes Calender* and the Craft of Commentary," for treatments of the *Calender*'s similarities to the translation and annotation practices of *The Geneva Bible* editors. For considerations of the political and (auto)biographical rationale for E.K.'s presence, see McCabe's "Annotating Anonymity, or Putting a Gloss on *The Shepheardes Calender*." And, of course, to get a sense of the endless search for E.K.'s factual identity, consult Paul McLane's *Spenser's* Shepheardes Calender*: A Study in Elizabethan Allgeory*, Louis Waldman's "Spenser's Pseudonym 'E.K.' and Humanist Self-Naming," and Louise Schleiner's "Spenser's 'E.K.' as Edmund Kent (Kenned/of Kent): Kyth (Couth), Kissed, and Kunning-Conning."

[82] See my elaborations on the Wittgensteinian figures of a "city of language" and a "philosopher-surveyor" on pp. 17-19. See also my consideration of possible sources of alienation and division within a city of language on p. 30.

And the poet cannot simply rearrange the rough ground as s/he pleases. No one

knows this fact better than the poet, who has so thoroughly roamed the "surroundings of

our words" and has seen how "deeply" and "variously" our linguistic practices are

"rooted" in our forms of life (*PI* §111; *Z* §155, §656).[83] Conventionalism and naturalism

collapse. Custom can run so deep that it becomes natural, and nature, through time and

habituation, can adapt to convention.[84] These conceptual implosions of custom and

nature reveal another crux of the city of language metaphor: the dubious extent to which

a city's inhabitants can adjust or move beyond its borders. Languages adaptively develop

within specific historical and geographical conditions, and these conditions form the

topography upon which any linguistic edifice can be built. The lexical tools and

materials that we use—the grammatical structures that we build with these tools and

materials—accumulate and evolve together.[85] Recall Wittgenstein's image of arranging

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[83] See prior discussion of Wittgenstein's "thickly interwoven" explorations of grammatical environments on p. 20-22.

[84] In the chapter "Natural and Conventional" in *The Claim of Reason* (which impressively manages to avoid any explicit mention of the *Cratylus*), Cavell illuminates this möbius strip between custom and nature. The exploration begins with a question of what "fixes" the "coventions which control the applications of grammatical criteria":

> The conventions we appeal to may be said to be "fixed," "adopted," "accepted," etc. by us; but this does not now mean that what we have fixed or adopted are (merely) the (conventional) *names* of things. The conventions . . . are fixed not by customs or some particular concord or agreement which might, without disrupting the texture of our lives, be changed when convenience suggests a change . . . They are rather fixed by the nature of human life itself, the human fix itself, by those "very general facts of our nature" which are "unnoticed only because so obvious" and, I take it, very general facts of *human* nature . . . [W]e are thinking of convention not as the arrangements a particular culture has found convenient, in terms of its history or geography, for effecting the necessities of human existence, but as those forms of life which are normal to any group of creatures we call human, any group about which we will say, for example, that they *have* a past to which they respond, or a geographical environment which they manipulate or exploit in certain ways for certain humanly comprehensible motives. Here the array of conventions are not patterns of life which differentiate human beings from one another, but those exigencies of conduct and feeling which all humans share. Wittgenstein's discovery, or rediscovery, is of the depth of convention in human society, but, we could say, on the conventionality of human nature itself, on what Pascal meant when he said "Custom is our nature" (*Pensées* §89); perhaps on what an existentialist means by saying that man has no nature. (110-111)

[85] Recall the imagery of radial expansion in Wittgenstein's ancient (yet growing) city of language: "Don't let it bother you that languages (2) and (8) consist only of orders. If you want to say that they are

books in a library—a figure reminiscent of the archival recollection of Eumnestes and

Anamnestes in Books II.ix-x of *The Faerie Queene*: "some of the greatest achievements

in philosophy could only be compared with taking up some books which seem to belong

together, and putting them on different shelves; nothing more being final about their

positions than that they no longer lie side by side" (*Bl. B*. 140).[86] There can be no sense

of order without context. One can only arrange a stack of books from a prior

configuration. And shifting those books will modify the surroundings for the

reorientations that follow. In any case, one cannot discard the books and shelves in

exchange for "new" or "better" ones. Spenser's etymology puts these principles into

practice. His diction (re)orders partially-recollected histories. These lexical histories

overlap and criss-cross, forming what Waswo, Zurcher, and other scholars of early

modern English have distinguished as "relational versus denotative structures of

meaning" (Zurcher 36-37; Cf. Wittgenstein *PI* §65-57).[87] There is no ultimate beginning

or end for our words—no ideals to exhume. Even with a collective awareness of a shared

linguistic heritage, the only authority for one's use of words consists in the ongoing,

polyphonic dialogue of one's language community. Therefore, Spenser deploys his

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incomplete, ask yourself whether your own language is complete . . . (And how many houses or streets
does it take before town begins to be a town?)" (§18). One can appreciate yet another poetic layer to
Wittgenstein's writing when one re-examines *PI* §2 and the four-word command language through which a
builder's assistant learns to retrieve a "block," "pillar," "slab," or "beam." As detailed in my prior footnote
on the accumulation and acculturation of language-games (p. 10, n. 18), Wittgenstein considers this
language-game of ordering and training as a rudimentary component or "building block" itself, from which
evolve higher-order language-games: "we recognize in these simple processes forms of language not
separated by a break from our more complicated ones. We see that we can build up the complicated forms
from the primitive ones by gradually adding new forms" (*Bl. B*. 105). That is, we can unloosen, observe,
and reorder our words and their uses, very much like the tools and materials of construction, but we cannot
alter the basic constituents with which (into which) we are born. Here, as elsewhere in my work, I am
indebted to the counsel of Dr. Walter Jost, who first called my attention to this similarity between the
builders' language-game in §2 and the notion of language-games as units of edification.

[86] See full quote in prior footnote (p. 13, n. 23).

[87] Note the affinity between "structures of relational meaning" and Wittgenstein's concepts of family
resemblance and language-games. See my discussion of these concepts on pp. 9-12, n. 18-22.

archaism and neologism, his polysemy and etymology, in dialogic recurrence—in repeated uses of language by multiple speakers throughout diverse, yet interrelated contexts. The pictures of denotative fixity in E.K.'s Gloss emerge as a contending authority, yet ultimately fall as a foil to the labors of the shepherd-poet.

Thus, even before moving on to close readings of the *Letters* and the *Calender*, it should be quite clear that Spenser does not pursue an Adamic or univocal language.[88] Rather, one could venture to say that Spenser's vision of language is more accurately *Pentecostal*. Of course, the consequences of the expulsion from Eden and the collapse of the Tower of Babel are precisely what the miraculous events of Pentecost momentarily reverse. And this reversal remains a fundamental aspiration of Spenser's cultivation of poetic diction and hermeneutics. But the poet's Pentecostal vision differs in a crucial way from the univocality of an Edenic language:

> And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like fire, and it sat upon each of
> them. And they were all filled with the holy Ghost, and began to speak with other
> tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance . . . Now when this was noised, the
> multitude came together and were astonished, because that every man heard them
> speak his own language. (*Geneva Bible*, Acts 2:3-6).

To be sure, what takes place in this account is far more complex than a univocal language. Instead, what occurs is a universal understanding that embraces every multivocal particularity. Individuals speak in other languages, and hear the languages of

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[88] In "Fantasies of Private Language in 'The Phoenix and Turtle' and 'The Ecstasy,'" Anita Gilman Sherman analyzes fantasies of private language in early modern poetry alongside the well-studied Renaissance conceptions of universal language, i.e., "the Edenic vision" of "perfect legibility" that mythically obtained "prior to Babel" (169). According to Sherman, "Private language, while apparently the opposite of the *Ursprache* or *lingua adamica* imagined by seventeenth-century thinkers, betrays a similar yearning for transparent communication. Both linguistic models aspire to clarity and complete understanding" (169). The private language argument is a major inquiry in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (§243-§315).

others in their mother tongue. Moreover, they do so effortlessly, through the power of

grace. Well before Spenser allegorized discourtesy, discord, and disgrace as a many-

tongued, canine-esque "Blatant Beast" in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*, the shepherd-

poet feared that his voice could be drowned out by barking dogs and bleating sheep. So

he took it upon himself to train his flock and to establish concord. And perhaps he

appreciated the magnitude of these tasks in realizing that he too was in need of

shepherding and edification, saying as Socrates says in the *Phaedrus*, "If I find any man

who is able to see 'a One and Many' in nature, him I follow, and 'walk in his footsteps as

if he were a God.'" (266b).

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