

“Darüber muß man schweigen”: The Disquieting Implications of Translating Silence

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1. Introduction

It all starts with a word; it starts with no words at all. “Schweigen” underlies the final proposition of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, a proposition which looms over the entire work. This proposition, the text’s closing statement, sounds as follows: “wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man *schweigen*.” In 1922, C. K. Ogden and F. P. Ramsey produced the first English translation of the text in consultation with Wittgenstein himself. They offered the following translation: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must *be silent*” (own emphasis in both quotations). Later translations include the 1961 Pears and McGuinness version that, upon further analysis of the correspondence between Ogden and Wittgenstein discussing the first translation, proposes the following phrasing: “What we cannot speak about we must *pass over in silence*”. Suddenly, silence moves from adjective to noun.

The English phrase “be silent” from the first translation follows the demands made by syntactic predication: x is y ; *one is silent*.¹ When speaking in this way, the translation turns silence into a descriptor of the indefinite ‘one’; a passive characteristic or state in which man finds himself. “One,” here, is a fairly close approximation of the German “man,” which distinguishes itself in both capitalisation and spelling from the noun “Mann,” a distinction for which the English pronoun “man” would not allow. Pears and McGuinness grapple with this translatory challenge by introducing “we,” welcoming them and us as participants into Wittgenstein’s philosophical world. For now, however, let us maintain our distance. When investigating the phrase “pass over in silence,” we can see that Pears and McGuinness remove themselves from any such predication as the Ogden one possesses; instead, it proposes a state in which “we” find ourselves; *we* must be in a state of silence when we pass over “what we cannot speak about.” While the prepositional phrase (‘in silence’) modifies the verb and so functions as part of the verb phrase, silence is still ultimately a separate unit from the verb itself. The subject (“we”) passes over, and does so “in silence,” highlighting that silence is a state in which the activity is done, rather than part of the activity in itself.

I do not mean to say that either of these translations *fails*; both seek to convey a meaning in a language that does not quite allow for it, opening new interpretative doors in the process. Wittgenstein’s distant “man” *could*, for instance, very well be interpreted as “we” – that is to say, his philosophy could be read as one that seeks to reach out to and include its readers. Such an interpretation is certainly suggested by the relatively recent mode of analysis conceptualised as “resolute reading,” a literary-critical school of thought that advocates so-called “therapeutic” interpretations of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, in which the activity of reading, understood as an affective engagement, becomes central. We become a crucial part of Wittgenstein’s philosophy.

What might our involvement as readers entail? If the text changes us as readers, it will do so in affecting our attitudes or behaviours – our ways of thinking, reading, and acting, rather than in our

essence or circumstance. So what would happen if we embraced the activeness of the verb *schweigen* which has caused its translators such difficulty, allowing its implications to enter into the therapeutic tradition of thinking with the *Tractatus*? Scholars like Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé and Marjorie Perloff write extensively about the implications of Wittgensteinian silence, after all, but have left the importance of the active verb, as opposed to the passive English adjective, to the wayside. Might a shift facilitate our thinking with Wittgenstein “beyond the limits of thought,” and move us from pleonastic stagnation into a generative state of thinking?

Naturally, the act of rephrasing is not in itself unproductive; it can lead to new analytical or affective interpretative insights. Regardless, most analyses of the text have overlooked this potential, precisely because they did not manage to unpack the active implications of “schweigen” to its fullest extent. I will therefore suggest the following translation of the *Tractatus*’s final line: whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must *enact silence*. This is not a perfect translation by any means – after all, the ideal equivalent of *schweigen* does not (yet) exist. However, ‘enacting silence’ emphasises that we bring it into existence – silence becomes an activity. This translation is the closest way of approximating the unity between silence and action contained in the elusive German verb.

Such an understanding of silence, I show, is particularly crucial to our understanding of the *Tractatus*’s transformative potential. Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé notably reads the text as attuning its readers to an implied, second half – her eponymous “different kind of difficulty” beyond the straightforward complexity with which the text’s analytic style (meticulously fashioned in the tradition of Russell and Frege) confronts its readers. She argues that this surface of difficulty demands a particular kind of attention from its readers that allows them to be affected by the text’s true, implicit difficulty: the unspoken, or the ethical. This same pattern she then discerns in various modernist literary texts, showcasing the benefits of Tractarian literary criticism.

This scholarly current is inevitably haunted by its own challenge, though: how does silence manage to affect in the first place? Certainly, a text may raise certain questions, but are these not precisely the ways in which it is *not* silent? Do we not always finally rely on the spoken? An answer keeps eluding us, itself seemingly hiding in the silence of ‘resolute scholarship’. Undeniably, this is not an oversight on these theories’ parts: they function perfectly fine without considering the degree of ontological commitment involved. After all, they do not ascribe it with an ontological reality. Silence, for many of these theorists, is not an absolute domain.

Still, the potential for an active assumption of ontological commitment *is* definitely there. Both Zumhagen-Yekplé and Perloff make explicit reference to the *Tractatus*’s so-called “second part,” a reading that draws on Wittgenstein’s famous suggestion that the *Tractatus* has a second, unwritten part and that it is this part that is most important. And, admittedly, there is probably not a pile of real but unwritten pages, perhaps lying on Wittgenstein’s desk and extensively thought over, but lacking any ink. Simultaneously, though, there is a wall which the scholarly body does not seem to be able to break through: resolute scholars can at times be inclined to show *that* it is possible to engage with ultimate questions of the ethical in confrontation with these texts, but not the extent to which doing so actually involves an engagement with *something that is silent*: it is always still an engagement with the written, and the degree to which something different occurs from the interpretative work with which we are all familiar remains obfuscated. Clarifying the activity of *schweigen* may give the the *Tractatus*’s second part – a part that engages in precisely this act – more specificity.

Informing transformative readings of Wittgensteinian philosophy with a new translation of “schweigen,” I would like to adapt Wittgenstein’s philosophy of silence into a literary technique which I here call *disquieting*. This idea seeks to show how silence’s unsettling quality can be used as a starting point for literary interpretation, unsettling boundaries in ways that cannot be put into words. To flesh out Wittgenstein’s philosophy of silence and develop the concept of disquieting, I engage with the *Tractatus* in terms of its numbering and multilingualism, showing the roles that various forms of affect (of unease, or eeriness) play in their significations. Finally, I will provide a

brief case-study by means of H.D.’s novel *HERmione*, a modernist text filled with the ideas it cannot express, and show the potential my concept has for literary analytical practice.

2. How the *Tractatus* Enacts Silence

2.1 *The Tractatus as Literary Text*

Wittgenstein’s writings on silence have mystified many. Within academic philosophy, there are broadly two interpretive trends that shape responses to the question: “*what did Wittgenstein ever mean by his final proposition?*” It is a common question, certainly, since upon conventional readings of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, the latter part sticks out like a sore thumb. Plainly speaking, it is *weird*. It unsettles, breaking the text away from its conventions, freeing it from the shackles of analytic philosophy – or does it? Scholars remain divided.

There is a paradox at the heart of the *Tractatus*: it extensively describes which kinds of statements can meaningfully be said, and which cannot, after which it finally concludes with our familiar line: “wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen.” All the statements by which Wittgenstein delineates what can and what cannot be said fall outside of the domain that they mark off. The dominant current of Tractarian scholarship advocated by philosophers such as Peter Hacker and David Pears grapples with this paradox through positing a distinction between saying and showing. This approach holds the belief that the text can communicate a theory about which it cannot strictly speak. Beyond such conventional interpretations, though, lies the one emerging from the literary-critical reception of his work: there is no paradox, because there is no *theory*. Not as such, at least.

Alain Badiou famously described Wittgenstein as an “anti-philosopher”: a philosopher whose work acts by “letting what there is show itself, insofar as ‘what there is’ is precisely that which no true proposition can say” (80). At odds with the generally positive character of a theory as a set of proposed ideas, Wittgenstein in this view is understood to propose a philosophy that almost functions as a kind of theology; a way of looking at life that cannot be expressed axiomatically – and it is this quality that makes it so difficult to precisely ascribe to any particular passage a sense of the guidelines he might offer, instead inviting an approach that works by analogy with literary texts. Even such art forms, however, cannot be seen to *represent* Wittgenstein’s project, Badiou (80) continues:

If Wittgenstein’s antiphilosophical act can legitimately be declared *archi*-aesthetic, it is because this “letting-be” has the non-propositional form of pure showing, of *clarity*, and because such clarity befalls the unsayable only in the thoughtless form of an oeuvre (music certainly being the paradigm for such donation for Wittgenstein). I say *archi*-aesthetic because it is not a question of substituting art for philosophy either. It is a question of bringing into scientific and propositional activity the principle of a kind of clarity whose (mystical) element is beyond this activity and the real paradigm of which is art.

It is helpful to briefly direct our attention to the “thoughtless form” in which the unsayable can come to full expression and the “scientific and propositional activity” into which its clarity is ultimately incorporated: for such an ungraspable act to be included into scientific practice is fairly counter-intuitive, after all. However, its combination is precisely what is at stake in the *Tractatus*: enacting silence in the epistemic context where it becomes a “scientific and propositional activity.” In other words: by being silent, the text invites epistemic transformation. And by encouraging its readers to enact silence, the text invites their epistemic transformations, too.

The text seeks to achieve silence through its scientific connotations, and this process becomes particularly clear in the context of its numbering. How to understand its numbering relies heavily on whether the *Tractatus* is read as a theoretical, or literary, text. This distinction may sound misleading, because, one might argue, it is clearly a work of philosophy. However, conventional theoretical interpretations that treat the text as purely philosophical do seem to impede its impact. To better understand the differences between philosophical and literary readings, I will briefly consider the publication history of the *Tractatus*.

Attached to an undated letter, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein sent his friend Ludwig von Ficker the uncorrected manuscript of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. He did so after having earlier asked his friend to consider the text for publication in *Der Brenner*, a magazine that dealt with literary and cultural writings, of which von Ficker served as primary publisher and editor (Wittgenstein, "Letters" 94–95). Some of his reasons for approaching his friend with his manuscript were practical; the text had been rejected at various other publications, had an awkward length for a work of philosophy at the time, and, having previously served as benefactor for some of its poets, Wittgenstein clearly had confidence in his friend's publication. At the same time, though, Wittgenstein's work of philosophy stood at striking odds with the literary aims the magazine had at the time, and he had the means of self-publication. Even if he was not in favour of, as he put it, "[forcing] a work upon the world" ("Letters" 93) in this way, then, *Der Brenner* certainly was not a last resort. What made Wittgenstein so inclined to approach this particular publication?

Von Ficker rejected Wittgenstein's manuscript, which was ultimately published in the 1921 issue of *Annalen der Naturphilosophie*, edited by chemist and philosopher Wilhelm Ostwald – further supporting the idea that Wittgenstein had options for the publication of his work in a more philosophically oriented publication. A clue about his reasons for approaching von Ficker lies in the letter to which Wittgenstein attached his manuscript. This is the frequently-cited letter in which he reveals to his friend what is often considered to be the true point of the *Tractatus*. The letter begins:

Dear Mr. Ficker:

I am sending the manuscript to you together with this letter. Why didn't I *immediately* think of you? Believe me, I *did* think of you right away ... And it will probably be helpful for you if I write a few words about my book: For you won't – I really believe – get too much out of reading it. ... I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. And precisely this second part is the important one. For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book; and I'm convinced that, *strictly* speaking, it can *ONLY* be delimited in this way. In brief, I think: All of that which *many* are *babbling* today, I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it. ("Letters" 94–95)

Explicitly engaging with the text's supposed "silent layer," this suggestion of the book's dual nature underlies much of Tractarian scholarship. It becomes even more surprising, then, that the rest of this passage has generally been left unacknowledged, since it may well affect our understanding of the text's dual content. Specifically, Wittgenstein is clearly making an effort to elucidate the implied second part of his writing to the literary-minded von Ficker, while also deliberately excluding this same explanation from the preface to his published *philosophical* text. The question that remains, then, is why this information might be relevant to a literary reader, but not to a philosopher. Ironically, even critics concerned with Wittgenstein's literary dimensions, such as Marjorie Perloff in *Wittgenstein's Ladder* and Ben Ware in *Dialectic of the Ladder*, have given this question little acknowledgement in the context of the letter above. When focusing on its literary implications, it becomes possible to locate the basis of the *Tractatus*'s "second part" in its almost parodically analytic form. Doing so does not only approach the text as a literary-critical one – something that the various scholars mentioned previously definitely have done extensively on the basis of Wittgenstein's claim that "the work is strictly philosophical and, at the same time, literary" ("Letters" 94) – but as a work of literature that has its own playful and enigmatic poetic style. In this context we can begin to discern Wittgenstein's philosophy of silence.

A relevant caveat to note here is that literary criticism conducted after Wittgenstein's philosophy generally focuses on his later *Philosophical Investigations*, which discusses language in terms of its ordinary usage, and so is much more intuitively applicable to the field than the highly theoretical *Tractatus*. And while the *Tractatus* is arguably richer in its utilisation of silence, *Philosophical Investigations* seeks to make room for the mystical *within* language; Stanley Cavell (37) famously argued that it "exhibits, as purely as any work of philosophy I know, philosophizing as a spiritual struggle,

specifically a struggle with the contrary depths of oneself, which in the modern world will present themselves in touches of madness.” This in stark contrast to the *Tractatus*, which is infamous for even mentioning the mystical in the first place since the work appears to argue against the possibility of doing so. However, it is precisely this contradictory character that makes it such a rich text for thinking of the complexities of Wittgensteinian silence in the context of epistemic subversion; silence becomes a necessity for conveying the ineffable, a particularly productive idea in the context of modernist literature.

The controversy surrounding the *Tractatus*’s mystical character includes an important figure for its construction: the philosopher Bertrand Russell. One of Wittgenstein’s close friends and primary philosophical influences, Russell criticised Wittgenstein for his mystical engagement, suggesting that “he [had] become a complete mystic,” and “that what he likes best in mysticism is its power to stop him from thinking” (Wittgenstein, qtd. in Perloff 30). This is a striking statement in light of Badiou’s description of the “thoughtless form” in which clarity emerges – the “power to stop him from thinking” we will see to be part of the affective pull that Wittgenstein’s mysticism has. In any case, it is unsurprising that Russell’s response was less than favourable: Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* closely resembles his friend’s *Principia Mathematica* in numbering (McGuinness 211), a similarity that suggests at least a partial methodological allegiance with his logically formalist friend. Considering that part of the mysticism in which Wittgenstein arguably engages presents itself in his numbering, the *Tractatus* may be understood as a literary subversion of this method. It is this literary subversion that analytic philosophers seem to overlook in conventional readings of the *Tractatus*, but that I would presently argue plays a crucial part in the text’s thinking.

2.2 Numbers of the Avant-Garde

Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a small book consisting of seven propositions. Six of these propositions contain further sub-propositions, many of which, in their turn, are structured in this same way, and so forth. The continual branching off brings us to propositions with numbers like “5.47321” (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 98–99). This proposition follows number 5.4732, on which proposition 5.47321 serves as a specification. On a surface reading, therefore, Wittgenstein’s numbering appears as a guide to his text’s logical structure, where one proposition gives rise to more specific sub-propositions that ultimately all emerge from the main seven propositions that make up the *Tractatus*.

Such readings are reinforced by recent digital ways of reimagining the text, where the University of Iowa’s “*Tractatus* Map” stands front and centre; its lucid overview of the text’s structure most closely seems to resemble an overview of a large (though strikingly more well-organised, as any inhabitant of its real-life equivalent knows) city’s metro network. In a commentary on this map, one of its creators, David G. Stern, formulates a dual rationale behind the map’s structure: taking seriously Wittgenstein’s instructions about how the propositions relate to each other, and facilitating readings that take into account the text’s genesis, since Wittgenstein’s drafts relied heavily on the numbering system in their development (Stern 392).

However, an *oddity* quickly reveals itself in the text’s numbering: it is quite unclear what the difference in structural position, and therefore in structural meaning, is between propositions with numbers like 3.001 and 3.01. This ambiguity is not quite an inconsistency in the text’s structure, but could potentially destabilise the scientifically naturalised character of Wittgenstein’s numbering. Stern briefly hints at this inconsistency when he describes that

it is not immediately clear from the introductory footnote how to handle the numbers containing zeros, as the footnote appears to be saying that 3.001 is a comment in 3.00. On the one hand, there is no remark numbered 3.00 in the book for 3.001 to comment on Putting that problem aside, we can put these fairly widely accepted ideas about the *Tractatus* numbering system in terms that more closely follow the wording of the footnote. (384)

For the scope of his philosophical project, “putting [the] problem aside” is definitely a sensible decision, but the problem does invite further consideration when understanding the *Tractatus* as a text of literary avant-gardism. The footnote Stern mentions indeed emphasises that “the propositions n.m.1, n.m.2, etc., are comments on proposition No. n.m.” (12–13). Let us now turn to propositions 3, 3.001, 3.01, and 3.1. They form a sequence, with the exception of the final two. In the gap between 3.01 and 3.1, seven other propositions stand. These propositions, I would argue, obscure the gap present here in Wittgenstein’s text: a silence implied by the textual framework that unsettles the same framework that created it. This gap is a first clue in my suggested literary understanding of the text: it is our first instance of the text enacting silence by means of unsettling.

3.1 logically continues on from 3, further explaining its terminology. The same clearly does not hold for 3.01 and 3.001 in relation to 3; they stand in much looser connection to 3. The gaps are strange; unsettling. They do not make sense in the context of the logical aesthetic that Wittgenstein proposes, but his aesthetic engagement seems quite sincere. He might, then, be *opening up* his logical framework, letting the second half of his *Tractatus* speak in the silent propositions 3.0, and 3.00. There might even be propositions beyond the seventh.

Many literary texts of the avant-garde are marked by implicit engagement with silence; one only has to think of authors like Gertrude Stein or John Cage, whose works adhere to Alain Corbin’s understanding that “silence is often speech . . . but it is a speech that is in competition with that which is spoken aloud” (68). It is helpful to consider Wittgenstein in this literary tradition, too; even more so, because the aspect of the *Tractatus* that enacts silence and potentially allows Wittgenstein’s ineffable mysticism to flourish is the same part that aligns the text with a positivist tradition – a tradition that stands at complete odds with the mystical.

Particularly suggestive of such a reading is that the *Tractatus*’s propositions all make up the framework circumscribing all that can be spoken about. Its systematic form is aimed at delineating the totality of what our speech can denote, and gains complexity in the spots where it is unsettled by the strangeness of the numbering. As Wittgenstein’s place in relation to the tradition of logical positivism has always been a multivalent one that refuses classifying him as being within or outside the movement, the stylistic model of the *Tractatus* begins to make more sense: it can be understood as sympathetic of the search for the logical foundations for language, while also critical of the possibility of such a project being all-encompassing. When the propositions – the first half – then make up all that can be spoken about, the second, silent part is the text’s internal critique of the reach that logical positivism has. Thinking may not be enough; silence needs to *act*.

The suggestion that there may be hidden propositions is then an intriguing one; the spoken part may seek to cover all that can be spoken about, while the unspoken part seeks to grapple with all the rest. The paradox of whether the spoken part of the *Tractatus* could be formulated in the first place has long haunted the text; its own project seems to fall outside of its own delineations. After all, it is only possible – or so the text says – to speak about those things that are facts in the world, something which his treatise clearly ventures beyond. The philosopher Oskari Kuusela argues suggests, for example, that the *Tractatus* avoids its paradox by not putting forward theses that may be seen as true or false, primarily seeking to offer a way of seeing.

Such arguments, however, do seem to somewhat throw the baby out with the bathwater, at least where the aims of my paper are concerned: the way of seeing that the *Tractatus* so uniquely offers is arguably strengthened by the strangeness that its paradox brings. It could also be said, however, that Kuusela’s view moves the paradox out of reality and into the subject. Kuusela suggests: “[n]either does Wittgenstein himself ever mention such a paradox. Of course, it would constitute a serious problem for a logical treatise, if it did contain a paradox” (228). Most readings of the text, including Reza Mosmer’s PhD thesis “The Tractatus paradox,” however, beg to differ (1), based on passage 6.54:

My statements are clarifying because he who understands me will ultimately acknowledge that they are nonsense, when he by means of my statements – on them – has risen above them. (He must, to say so, throw away the ladder, after having climbed up it.)

It may be more convincing, then, to acknowledge that the paradox is there to at least some extent. Even if it may be possible to resolve it by means of philosophical discussion, to deny the presence of its suggestion in the text does not seem quite convincing. To act as if Wittgenstein does not confront his readers with this paradox may itself do a disservice to the stylistic dimension of his text.

Ultimately, the fact is that Wittgenstein *did* formulate his paradox, turning logical positivism up against itself. It is a point of strangeness that destabilises the text and makes us look further into it – it is one of the primary points of discussion in contemporary *Tractatus* scholarship, and unsurprisingly so. We might then understand the paradox not as an inconvenience, flaw, or even failure of the text, but as a point of epistemic slippage. It might point towards two epistemic trajectories in the text that stand at odds with each other, turning the paradox into the bridge between the text’s two halves. As Wittgenstein lets the spoken collapse in on itself, the reader might start to look elsewhere. The reader cannot climb down the ladder again to experience the text how they did the first time around; Wittgenstein tells us that the text’s spoken part has been thrown away, leaving the reader who returns to the text after this point to be faced with nothingness; silence.

Returning a moment to the gaps in Wittgenstein’s numbering, they appear to reflect the inevitable inadequacy of language’s representational qualities. There is always a gap between language and the reality it seeks to capture, an inadequacy the text embodies by means of its paradoxicality. Rowan Williams (168) argues that “the admission of this gap” can take different forms. Arguably, the numerical oddities of Wittgenstein’s framework make precisely such admissions; they make the analytically-focused reader who also pays attention to the text’s style – who is, in Zumhagen-Yekplé’s terms, attuned to the text’s *difficulty* – get the sense that something has not quite been said. Williams further specifies that “language as an embodied activity implies that ... the silent physicality of a body – or an object – in certain circumstances is meaningful” (168), and while it is not quite the blank page, the numerical gaps present disturbances that echo on an affective level, unsettling the framework’s calm and orderly character (Perloff 42) – a style directly borrowed from Russell and Whitehead’s seminal *Principia Mathematica*, which contains sections structured very much like Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*.²

Why, then, *must* we be silent? How should we understand the modal character of being silent? By considering our obligation in recognising the *Tractatus*’s silence and enacting it in our own lives, it becomes clear why we ought to incorporate it into our literary strategies, and how deliberate translation practices can facilitate these. In the 1970 article “Some Problems in Translating the Modals,” George F. Peters points out based on a study of Hermann Hesse’s *Das Glasperlenspiel* – a novel mostly written in the 1930s and so only a decade the *Tractatus*’s junior – that “[s]imple phrases such as ‘mussten verzichten lernen’ (36), ‘mussten kehren’ (37) and ‘musste kommen’ (100) cannot be expressed by must; we find rather such equivalents as ‘had to’, ‘were forced to’ or ‘were bound to’” (90). But since “must” is also a possible translation of “muss,” the strength of the modal is context-dependent. However, the aphoristic character of Wittgenstein’s text complicates any such context, especially when considering the seventh proposition – an island of its own. I previously decided on “must” based on the other translations at hand, but the variances in the translations above highlight a possible alternative. What if Wittgenstein was merely saying we are *bound to* enact silence with regard to those things of which we cannot speak? Both “had to” and “were bound to” allow Wittgenstein’s reader to have more agency about their engagement with silence. When speaking on something that we claim is impossible, it can sometimes put us in a position of enacting silence. Some people will still find themselves speaking nonsense, but others will lack speech, or enact silence in other ways.

3. Disquieting

The *Tractatus*’s strange numbering works as an expression of Wittgenstein’s “enacting silence” to reveal an affect of strangeness. Generalising from his own use, I would like to suggest that a renewed

understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy of silence may facilitate literary analysis. Specifically, I propose a literary technique that I call *disquieting*.

I define disquieting as a technique aiming to show how silence's unsettling quality can be used as a starting point for literary interpretation, unsettling boundaries in way that cannot be put into words. It reads silence as an activity of making the unspoken heard by unsettling it; allowing silence to speak *affectively*. By emphasising linguistic experience, it becomes possible for a reader to tread beyond the limits of language, and increase the impact that a text can have. This impact is predominantly epistemological, as traversing beyond the limits of language is particularly necessary for attempts towards reinventing how to know – our language, after all, has developed around the possible ways in which we can know the world, like an ivy branch curling around an existing structure. When we try to reimagine this structure, the extent to which we can rely on such a branch is limited.

To understand how such an interpretation of Wittgenstein may benefit literary analysis, I would like to offer a brief case study. Modernist author Hilda Doolittle, better known as H.D., is primarily known as a poet. Her novel *HERmione*, however, is a striking work of experimental fiction and can arguably be seen to attempt to achieve epistemological reinvention. In particular, I would like to focus on how the novel is unusually entangled with formal logic. To think outside of formal logic may be the most impossible thing of all to do within a signification-driven understanding of language, which is why her bold attempts towards its subversion are especially worthy of exploration.

For this case study, I would like to focus on two elements of this text: its use of chiasmus, and its engagement with syllogisms. First, the text describes a preference for "uncommon syllogisms": "But Her Gart was then no prophet. She could not predict later common usage of uncommon syllogisms; 'failure complex,' 'compensation reflex,' and that conniving phrase 'arrested development' had opened no door to her" (H.D. 1). What might catch a reader off their guard here is the relevancy of "uncommon syllogisms." None of the terms succeeding this phrase are properly syllogistic; they seem mere pseudo-contradictions or common antithetical expressions. To introduce them as syllogisms, however, allows us to consider their place within vastly more elaborate, unspoken logical structures. Their uncommonness, then, seems to welcome uncommon logical structures into Her's world. And the logical structures that are most uncommon tend to be the ones that are considered fallacious.

Consider then the text's use of chiasmus (whereby concepts or grammatical constructions are repeated in reverse order). This prevalent stylistic device is used to give dimension to Her's subjective understanding of the world. "Trees are in people. People are in trees" (3), she muses, a thought that follows in the footsteps of previous ones. "She said, 'I'm too pretty. I'm not pretty enough.' She dragged things down to the banality, 'People don't want to marry me. People want to marry me. I don't want to marry people'" (3). Such soliloquising sets the tone for a contradictory interpretation of the subsequent chiasmus, in spite of its formal logicity. It certainly is not technically fallacious, but continually nods at the inexpressible – though imagined – embrace of contradiction. It *feels* strange; illogical.

Taking these two aspects together, unspoken and possibly contradictory hints make their affective mark. Ultimately, then, Her "felt herself clutch toward something that had no name yet" (6); a way of knowing that itself resists being known. She finds herself within a world that demands "illogical reasoning" (8) time and again, and Her tries to step up to the world's demands. Expressing the strangenesses she sees in the world, Her takes us along, attuning us gradually to the epistemological demands of her worldview.

While a novel like *HERmione* is unable to put its epistemological point of view into words, it attunes its readers through its essential strangeness. This strangeness marks the silent surface, disquieting our perspectives. This is an idea that can emerge from reconsidering Wittgenstein's *schweigen*. We do not have to be silent; we are inclined to enact silence. Let us act on this inclination, and

reinvigorate Wittgenstein’s philosophy of silence. The “second half” of the *Tractatus* has never been more present than in literary-critical practices of attunement; it is here that we can put Wittgenstein’s philosophy into practice once more.

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Notes

¹ Let us sideline the modal character of “man *must be* silent” for the moment.

² See, for instance, Part 1: “Mathematical Logic,” which contains numbered “primitive ideas,” (e.g. “1.”) and “primitive propositions” elucidating these ideas (e.g. “1.1” and “1.11”) (Whitehead and Russell 91–97).

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