The Allusivity of Grammar:
Developing theory and pedagogy for linguistic aesthetics

by Julia Rosalinda de Boer

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Mr. Bird was happy. He was so happy he had to sing. This was Mr. Bird's song:
'I love my house, I love my nest, in all the world my nest is best.'

The Best Nest, P. D. Eastman

I say, whatever error is to be found in this book alone is to be attributed to me. Whatever is truly and suitably expounded I owe entirely to God, the giver of all good gifts.

De Vera Religione 9.17, St. Augustine

It would seem antithetical to both my faith and the education I have received not to disclose at the beginning my reasons for writing a thesis on this topic and asking the following questions. Here at the Institute, I have felt encouraged to bring my whole self — emotions and interests included — to bear on my philosophical work. Philosophy is an embodied exercise, and who I am and the experiences that I have had will shape the types of questions that I wish to ask when given the chance to research and write about them at length.

My interest in language must have started at a young age. I've included as one of the epigraphs in this book the opening lines of P.D. Eastmans' *The Best Nest,* a book that I begged my parents to read to me several times a day in my toddler life. Let us take a minute to praise the mother who was at home with such a determined child and did acquiesce to reading it frequently (thanks, Mum!). Soon it was chapter books, Astrid Lindgren's *Pippy Longstockings* series being an especial favourite. The teen years were spent pouring over Jane Austen, wondering whether if I were to read all the books quoted in the first chapter of *Northanger Abbey* I would have more sense than Catherine Moorland, who widely failed to apprehend the moral lessons the quotations contained. When asked in high school to read *one* novel and present on the author, I read all *six* of Austen's published novels, wrote a blog about that experience, and taught an hour and a half long class on her to my classmates. Hard to tell if they were floored by my enthusiasm, but my teacher was very impressed.

One summer between years of high school, I was in Washington D.C. on a short service mission with my church youth group, a trip which might better be described as 'missionary tourism' for all the work a group of fourteen-year-olds could do. On our off-day we went to the Smithsonian, and I found a book in the gift shop by David Wolman called *Righting the Mother Tongue: From Olde English to Email, the Tangled Story of English Spelling.* I remember reading it and having the realization that linguistics was a discipline that you could study. I knew that people learned and taught languages and literature, but I did not understand before that point that people used scientific method for analysing language, and that there were professional linguists, orthographers, and etymologists. I enrolled in a BA in Linguistics at Queen's University. Eventually I switched to a Latin major and did not declare a minor, so that I could take as many Latin and Greek classes as I wanted while also taking courses in linguistics, archeology,

psychology and foreign languages. I was happy studying Latin because it came with a corpus of great literature, including philosophical thought about stories and language. Studying Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and German gave me a good historical background about the way languages changed and were formative to the histories and cultures of various people groups.

The one thorn during my undergrad was that I had questions about language and grammar that I could not find anyone to answer. I was doing reading in my own time about constructed languages and other bizarre linguistic phenomena like glossolalia, and had philosophical questions about them that seemed to suggest I needed to shift disciplines ever so slightly. I was accepted to do an MA at Queen's, but a visit to ICS showed me how being able to talk about the Bible and faith was going to add to the quality and experience of my graduate work. I came in knowing what I wanted to write for my thesis, perhaps to the surprise of my professors and annoyance of my classmates. I had learned about the methodology used by current linguists but felt like those methodologies were unable to talk about grammar in terms of better or worse anymore. I was not eager to advocate for a return to the days of prescriptive grammar, nor was I wanting to end up affirming some sort of relativism. My faith had convicted me that life is about continually refiguring ourselves to be more like Christ, so why could we not talk about being constructive with our grammar? Certainly, we can discuss using our words for building up or tearing down, but what about the very components of grammar? How far down could we discuss critique? To the clause, to the word, to the morpheme? To the phoneme, even? I have got a bit of an eclectic approach to grammar myself: I appreciate people thinking critically about their words and trying to be elegant in their speech, but I do not desire to police grammar or outright correct someone if unbidden. I prefer the more antiquated determiner "which" to "that". But I also love split infinitives because it allows you to interestingly rearrange the word order of an English sentence (see what I did there?), in the way that languages like Latin can play fast and loose with their syntax by virtue of having a highly inflected case system. I think there is beauty in changing and irregular grammar because it shows that it is an imperfect and living thing, as we humans all are. So my desire to reintroduce a rubric for judgement should not be interpreted as an attempt to control language use, but merely to ask how we are to use even the smallest elements of our grammar for gradually more holy purposes.

This brings me to the last thing I wish to address before you, dear reader, proceed into the first chapter of my thesis. I am a Christian, and my life of faith has certainly influenced my

desire, as I have just explained, to talk about quality in grammar. The Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto is a revolutionary sort of Christian institution, beholden neither to a specific church nor the State. Scholars here can feel the freedom to think independently and follow the leading of the Spirit where other scholars of faith might feel that they need to censor their thoughts or silently agree with all the theology of the church who is supporting them. ICS has committed to rigorously engaging with the Continental tradition of philosophy, and I think even non-Christian philosophers will be impressed with the high-quality and conscientious scholarship that our professors and students produce. ICS is quite anti-hierarchical, and goes out of their way to support female scholars and students from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. MA and PhD students are called 'Junior Members' to emphasize that we already provide worthy philosophical insight and are valued members of the community. It was my utter delight to study at a school which promotes interdisciplinary study with professors who were always present and truly believed I had something to offer. I am forever grateful.

<u>Chapter 1: Why linguistic aesthetics? A short history of grammar</u>

Πρῶτον δεῖ θέσθαι τί ὄνομα καὶ τί ῥῆμα, ἔπειτα τί ἐστιν
ἀπόφασις καὶ κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφανσις καὶ λόγος.[1]

First we must settle what a name is and what a verb is, and then what a negation, and
affirmation, a statement and a sentence are.[2]

In this chapter, I must tell a story. A story of the history of grammar in the broadest of

swathes, so that I can demonstrate why I feel it is a good time to open the possibility for aesthetic

grammar. Grammar is one of those words that has such a confusion of meanings following it

around that it can only be defined for use in later chapters by addressing the history of the

discipline. In the most general sense I take it to mean 'the structure of a language; its

permutations and forms'. That language has a structural basis is not normally a disputed fact;

various methods for studying grammar stem from the question that arises secondarily. 'What

does that mean, that it has a structure? What is the purpose of analyzing these structures and

teaching them to our youth?' In generalizing terms I will distinguish three approaches to

understanding the implications of grammatical structure in language: *prescriptive* grammar

(usually concerned with clarity of communication), *descriptive* grammar (usually associated with

the Chomskyan linguistic theory of universal grammar), and *aesthetic* grammar (a new category

for which I shall advocate).[3] Prescriptive grammars teach that any given language has a finite

numbers of ways to be spoken, and students are encouraged to merge their idiolects to be more

and more similar to a norm. In contrast are descriptive grammars which teach the equality of

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[1] Aristotle. *Peri Hermenieas* (Clarendon Press, 1945), 49.

[2] Aristotle. *On Interpretation* (Internet Classics Archive, MIT), pt. 1.

[3] 'Descriptive' and 'prescriptive' are the terms used currently in linguistics, so I wish to employ this useful distinction and discuss this philosophy on the plane of what it may offer practicing linguists as well as philosophers of language. Separation of disciplines is a very unhelpful distancing to this discussion.

languages but also, consequently, a type of linguistic relativism. It is good that they have removed the concept of linguistic superiority from their practices, but in moving away from prescriptive grammar, they have lost an element of critique between better and worse uses of grammar within a given language. Words and styles of communication shape the individual and the community, so talking about how those individuals and communities use their speech is automatically a conversation about the development of the self as an ethical agent. In distinction to prescriptive grammar, an aesthetic approach to understanding and teaching grammar could acknowledge the many uses of language beyond the logical proposition and clarity of speech. Furthermore, in contrast to descriptive grammar, it could, while still affirming that no one language is superior to another, discuss the formative nature of grammar to the patterns of thought within a specific language, by reference to the long history of philosophical aesthetics. In a basic sense, this means asking what would be discovered about speech in a community if the grammar were treated as an art, and examined for its ability to produce allusive content. In a more complex sense, this means understanding the way that humans, as aesthetic and linguistic beings, shape their language aesthetically, so as to connect that understanding to patterns of human thought and behaviour. This thesis is more demonstrative than explicative, bringing a variety of diverse thinkers together to consider afresh the triangulation of aesthetics, grammar and ethics.

Logic in grammatical analysis:

From the dawn of Western philosophy, the study of grammar and logic have been intertwined. The quotation at the beginning of this chapter is the opening line of Aristotle's *Peri Hermeneias,* one of six works on logic which form the *Organon. Peri Hermeneias* examines the

parts of speech insofar as they are the different categories of words needed to form logical propositions. Of course, the terminology and meaning of the terminology between the two disciplines do overlap, as when *subject* means *the one whose thematic role is to enact the predicate* in the realms of both logic and grammar. *Peri Hermeneias* investigates this second act of the mind which involves enunciation and the type of verbal action which is already present in and foundational to a logical proposition.[4]

> "Every sentence is significant (not as a tool but, as we said, by convention), but not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity. There is not truth or falsity in all sentences: a prayer is a sentence but is neither true nor false. The present investigation deals with the statement-making sentence; the others we can dismiss, since consideration of them belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or poetry."[5]

Although grammar and logic are examined in the same treatise here, Aristotle acknowledges that the discipline of logic is only interested in sentences which have a propositional value and that other types of sentences are better examined under other disciplines.

Within the Aristotelian tradition, Aristotle himself and then Aquinas and others, philosophers debated widely the use and purpose of various language arts, asking how poetry, rhetoric, and logic differed from each other by mode and by instrument. A good philosopher was to love myth for its ability to create wonder and encourage inquiry into the Causes,[6] and part of loving myth was a knowledge of poetic form and what it accomplished in distinction to those of other modes of language. Logic employed syllogisms, poetry employed a type of imaginative syllogism called metaphor, and rhetoric was a primitive psychological exercise which examined

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[4] The first two acts of the mind for Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle are the intellectual acts of apprehension and composition while the third act is an act of judgment (*logos/ratio*) which takes place within a discourse.

[5] Aristotle, *On Interpretation,* pt. 4.

[6] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1, pt. 2.

what types of propositions, syllogisms, and metaphors would be persuasive to a specific crowd of people. Poetic speech was allowed to be a vehicle for possible truth, but as such its methods were distinctly different from those of logic. Eventually Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* were appended to editions of the *Organon* and it seemed to readers as if they were part of the logic treatises, when really they were appended as resources to help the readers understand the logic treatises. If Aristotle acknowledged that the type of analysis which is proper to propositions and poetic sentences should differ on account of their character, why has the majority of human utterance since that time been forced to adhere to rules of grammar which are in service of logic? Why has this early revelation been passed by? And what are the problems which arise when language is always understood to be in service to reason?

One origin for such abuse is sadly to be found in Christian theology and in the philosophies of language that developed from it. The trouble partly comes from a fascination for *propria operatio,* or 'proper usage.' L.G. Kelly attributes the obsession with *propria operatio to* grammar's close connection to theology: "In their eyes the natural good language sought was expression of ideas, and the good sought by grammar was the knowledge of how this was achieved. Grammar analysed the processes by which language conveyed meaning. Having accepted that immaterial beings are in passive potency to receiving form, they relied heavily on the physics of potency and act and on the allied issues of matter and form and propria operatio."[7] Grammar, as all other aspects of creaturely life, was supposed to increasingly become an expression of the work of the Holy Spirit and the imitation of Christ in the life of the believer. The invitational character of such a project, to have even human speech participate in redemptive work, was quickly perverted in grammatical studies when it became a normative

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[7] L.G. Kelly, *The Mirror of Grammar: Theology, philosophy and the Modistae.* (John Benjamins, 2002), 206.

search for that set of grammatical constructions which would best share and interpret the theological propositions of the Bible in their inherent logical coherence and harmony. In *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning,* Barbara Carvill and David I. Smith acknowledge that the original zeal for effectively spreading the Gospel was quite open to linguistic diversity, more concerned with getting the message out than how the message was encoded, but this gave way to a new elitism when Christianity was introduced to the Latin intellectual tradition.

> "Gradually, the intellectual leadership of the church shifted to the Latin-speaking classes. Christian scholars such as the Roman monk Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus (ca.477-ca.570) advocated the fusion of classical learning and Christianity in Christian education, with the goal of facilitating the study of Scripture. Isidore of Seville (ca.560-636), a major figure in the early church, expressed a continued interest in linguistic diversity… However, he also clearly emphasized the growing dominance of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew at the expense of other languages."[8]

It is not the turn to an intellectual tradition here which is in and of itself troubling, more so the turn to an intellectual tradition which did not have as an *ethos* diversity of language and care for the strange and foreign. Greek society was not marked by affection for the mysteries of foreign languages as much as it was for labeling them 'barbaric,' and Roman culture gradually sidelined the Greek language, solidifying the position of Latin as the hegemonic language precisely by teaching it as a *second* language and not maintaining a bilingual society.[9] In the medieval period, not only were certain languages considered to have little utility for sustaining theological discussion, such as the Romantic and Germanic languages well past the days of justifiable classification as merely dialect, but only a single way of speaking or using the acceptable

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[8] David I. Smith and Barbara Carvill. *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning* (Eerdmans, 2000), 23.

[9] ibid.

languages of Greek and Latin was taught. Certainly, precision in Latin and Greek was important

for those who were reading and dissecting Scripture, but many dialects of Latin were

pronounced as bastard Latin rather than legitimate regional variations of the language as was the

case with Frankish Latin and others. What wisdom in the scriptures might have been uncovered

if each language were valued as a fresh perspective on familiar texts! This poisonous valuing of

certain languages over others is still present in my Canadian context; take the example of

Aboriginal Canadian children forced to speak only English in residential schools because their

mother tongues were deemed unsuitable for the sustenance of spiritual life and Christian

theology.[10]

It is important to state at this juncture that the trajectory of grammatical studies has not

been entirely unilluminating because it frequently denatured the experience of language by too

close a friendship with logic. I am simply suggesting that we now begin to look at language

through the lens of aesthetic knowledge. And indeed the history of grammatical inquiry shows

the times and places where various thinkers struggled to articulate just how sensate and

instinctive a practice human speech really is. An early passage from Tertullian is useful for

situating aesthetic experience as formative of intellectual processes:

> "The senses of man have been given the mastery over all God's creation that by
> them we might understand, inhabit, dispose of, and enjoy His goodness - and
> these you accuse of deliberate falsity!… We now come to the matter of the
> distinction between the sensitive and the intellectual powers, which is seen to be
> based on the nature of the objects perceived. While corporeal, visible, and tangible
> things belong to the province of sense, the spiritual, visible, and secret things are
> under the dominion of the mind. Yet, both classes come under the soul for the
> purpose of being at its service; thus, the soul perceives corporeal things with the
> help of the body and spiritual things by means of the mind, since the soul is really
> exercising sensation when it is thinking. Isn't it true that to feel is to understand

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[10] Tamsyn Burgmann, *Residential day school survivors who lost language and culture seek redress.*
(CBC News, April 15, 2012).

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and to think is to have sensation? For what else is sensation than the perception of the thing felt?"[11]

Tertullian's view, a helpful precedent for the interaction of sensation and intellection in early Christian theological activity, stands in direct opposition to Platonist thought about aesthetic expression as purely mimetic.[12] Instead, the intellective process is constantly refigured by this interplay with aesthetic activity. In this light, language may be considered one of those intellective processes which is formed by aesthetic experience of the world around and continually participates in the appreciation and continuation of aesthetic activity, since it is by its nature inherently aesthetic as well.

As seen, Aristotle demonstrated that some examinations of human speech should take place under poetic and rhetorical methodology and not just dissected for their ability to convey truth and falsity, but that such a separation was not maintained when his texts were transmitted and employed. There were too many functions of language that were not propositional in character to ever be viewed through a single paradigm: beware grammarians who claim their view of human language is completely articulated and universal rather than a single perspective which should be considered alongside those of other disciplines.[13] Where might we, in the myriad of philosophies of grammar, find moments where investigation was genuinely focused on the way in which language use is shaped by sensate experience, and in turn became an

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[11] Tertullian, "On the Soul," *Theological Aesthetics: a Reader*. (Eerdmans, 2004), 55.

[12] Early in this piece, Tertullian places his view in contrast to Platonists, Stoics, and Epicureans.

[13] I feel very strongly that my experience of grammar was nurtured by an interdisciplinary methodology at various stages: considering what current socio- and neuro-linguistics are saying about speech in the community and brain, the experience of teaching a foreign language to small children and being a second-language learner myself, acquiring a historical understanding of the various contradictory paradigms for language apprehension and education and competing philosophies of language. It's an enriching experience which I cannot undervalue in my formation as a philosopher of grammar.

intellective process which involved the aesthetic? Think of Platonic and Aristotelean *mimesis* in education: students imitate styles, structures and *topoi* until they have developed a familiarity with the topic which will carry them forward, so familiar with the material that it becomes a sort of unconscious instinct as they create and discourse beyond the auspices of their teacher. Certainly, there have been paradigm shifts throughout the history of grammar, but useful examples of grammar and grammar education focused on instinct and intuition can be found all over, whether or not the grammarian viewed language as an result of thought or constitutive of thought itself. Even educational techniques which promoted the perfection of a certain grammar of a language over and against divergent grammars placed emphasis on a compounding fluency and awareness of the shape of a language's grammar in the mind of the student.

One finds a strong example in the 13th century in the grammars developed by students of Donatus and Priscian, whose work has been called *speculative grammar* and *modistic grammar,* respectively. Speculative grammarians include Martin of Dacia, Boethius of Dacia, and Thomas of Erfurt. This work was largely enabled by the rediscovery of the Aristotelean corpus, since the Arabic commentators emphasized a general inquiry into epistemologies of semantic content.[14] The Modistae proposed that the grammatical categories are the same as structures of thought and experience in the world around. Unlike many former grammars which focused on Latin or Greek grammar, and often their superiority in ability to sustain discourses on metaphysics, speculative grammarians wanted to see what in the structure of grammar was more universal than particular. "[S]peculative grammarians including the modistae claimed that they were looking for the universals by which all languages were generated from one's understanding of

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[14] Jan Pinborg, "Speculative Grammar." *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy from the Rediscovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism, 1100-1600.* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 255.

the world. The central issue here was distinguishing their grammar from traditional grammar, from out-of-date speculative models created by the antiqui, and from current rival models of which they did not approve."[15] So while they were still within the scope of Latin grammar, their gaze was broader, assuming that Latin was, in metaphysical terms, an accident of larger structures. "In their works we find a coherent linguistic theory, in which every grammatical feature treated is fitted into a single descriptive framework, based on expressly formulated premisses. The attitude governing this endeavour has several points of resemblance with later types of rationalistic or universal grammar."[16]

According to their theories of *modi significandi,* a verb is the part of speech which conveyed change and movement and attributed its essence to the subject of the verb. Nouns were, by contrast, static subjects. The grammatical categories showed themselves to be shaped by the sensate knowledge of the world around the speaker. Speculative grammar increased one's ability to understand the purpose and utility of various parts of speech as they were on their way to forming a complete sentence, a phenomenological ontology of the parts of speech which was considered lacking in previous grammars. The difference between main and dependent clauses was not yet articulated: "Certain grammatical notions which we today consider self-evident, like parsing a sentence into 'slots' or main components or, indeed, analysing a sentence into main and dependent clauses, were either foreign to medieval grammarians or tackled on a rather different basis. The grammarians analysed and systematized the explicit and implicit semantic relations of the Latin language, rather than furthering, as such, a more abstract operation of syntactic

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[15] Kelly, *Mirror of Grammar,* 9-10.

[16] ibid, 10.

analysis."[17] The Modistic grammarians, as they started to consider what differed between the parts of speech by quality or manner, were on their way toward a universal grammar rather than an account of the Latin language and only the Latin language. There was a reversal of the questions being asked. Rather than 'what should each part of speech do (and only do)?' the Modistae asked 'What does each part convey, and how does it differ in its accidental character?' This line of inquiry, however, did not truly cross from Latin grammar to other languages before the growth of comparative linguistics, and recently, Chomskyan universal grammar.

Truly, the Modistae are favoured today because of their inclination to describe usage rather than offer normative rules, viewing the parts of speech as reflective of and in-line with phenomenological experience and metaphysical theory. Today, after the linguistic turn, we might say that their assertion that parts of speech are imitations of intellective thought processes was correct but inverse; thought itself is the result of a human's capacity for language. Modistic grammar is one of the more clear attempts in the medieval world to describe the grammatical structures as a type of human instinct, the result of careful reflection on and perception of sensate life rather than a mutable structure to be overcome or improved. In the 17th and 18th century a group of philosophers in France, known as the Port-Royal grammarians, gained reknown. They similarly articulated a type of universal grammar, but because they believed that certain aspects of grammar were transcendent (literally, out of time and not bound by temporal circumstances), the way a language was spoken at the time was not to be the locus of discovery for rules of how to speak the language. Etienne Gilson gives an example of this phenomenon in the Port-Royal work, *Grammaire générale et raisonée,* by Claude Lancelot and Antoine Arnauld. The grammar said "according to this notion, it can be said that the verb itself should have no

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[17] Karin Margareta Fredborg. "Speculative Grammar." *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*. (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 186.

other use than to mark the binding together in our mind of the two terms of a proposition." To this, Gilson replies: "This 'should' is a pearl. As if the proper job of grammar were to tell us what spoken usage should be, instead of telling us what it is!"[18] Consequently, current usage was not relevant for how a language *should* be spoken, and with the Port-Royal grammarians' close association with a tradition of philosophy concerned with logic, they ended up promoting quite a staunch prescriptive grammar. Aristotle's suggestion that logic and language were not unrelated but that there were many uses for language beyond logical proposition went similarly ignored in this period of time. Following the Port-Royal grammarians was the genesis of comparative linguistics sparked by the study of Indo-European languages by Sir William Jones in the 18th century. Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* was published in 1916, representing the start of the discipline of Structuralist linguistics.

It is within the discipline of Structuralist linguistics that Noam Chomsky began his theorizing. He characterized the discontinuity to the history of linguistics that his work created in this way: "Within cognitive capacity, the theory of mind has a distinctly rationalist cast. Learning is primarily a matter of filling in detail within a structure that is innate. We depart from the tradition in several respects, specifically, in taking the *'a priori* system' to be biologically determined."[19] Universal grammar has been helpful for stimulating dialogue about the inherent equality of all languages, eschewing the idea so often present in presecriptive grammatical philosophy that Latin or French or some other language was superior to others in its ability to encode semantic content. Modern linguistics has been similarly conscious about addressing how colonialism has shaped its methodology in a way that privileges English and Indo-European

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[18] Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), 197.

[19] Noam Chomsky, *Reflections on Language* (Pantheon Books, 1975), 39.

languages instead of viewing them as permutations of universal features. There is still much

investigation and work to be done on this front, in my opinion, but I affirm the healthy attitude

toward diversity which I see present in the spirit of current linguistics.

Conclusion: the arising questions:

The critique I would level at modern Chomskyan linguistics, however, is that in their

motion toward teaching the equality of all languages, they have leaned toward a type of

relativism, losing a paradigm for the critique of grammar which was present in prescriptive

grammar. Specifically, they are not able to discuss the *quality* of usage, just to remark on the

patterns of usage. Of course, it is at its heart a scientific method, and so there must be a realm of

inquiry from an outside, non-scientific source, about what the quality of usage means for moral

and ethical thought. This is not to downplay the importance of this type of scientific inquiry, but

to state that it does not provide a whole picture of human linguistic phenomena on its own.

Indeed, philosophers of language owe much to linguistics for their examination of how an innate

capacity for language presents itself. An aesthetic grammar could partner, however, with

descriptive grammar to add such a consideration of quality, creating a more holistic approach to

understanding the way grammar shapes individual persons and people groups of all sizes.

Indeed, the need for another type of grammatical analysis has been noticed, even within the

discipline of linguistics itself. In my second chapter, I will discuss the origin of the term 'linguistic

aesthetic' in the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, and use him as a case study for aesthetics in the structure

of grammar. My third chapter is an examination of Reformational modal theory, using the work

of Dr. Calvin Seerveld to develop the idea of the aesthetic present in everyday speech. In the final

chapter I will suggest that the potential fields of ethical and aesthetic linguistics should be

transvalued into a single avenue of investigation, through interactions with Michel Foucault, since grammar may be understood in one light as the medium through which all ethical thought in a community takes place. My overall goal is to argue for the development of aesthetic methods for grammatical analysis which are in response to and aware of this historical development of grammatical studies and the type of pedagogies which it produced.

Chapter 2: Tolkien, the linguistic aesthetic, and invented languages

"Of course, I do not deny, for I feel strongly, the fascination of the desire to unravel the intricately knotted and ramified history of the branches on the Tree of Tales. It is closely connected with the philologists' study of the tangled skein of Language, of which I know some small pieces. But even with regard to language it seems to me that the essential quality and aptitudes of a given language in a living moment is both more important to seize and far more difficult to make explicit than its linear history."   J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, pg. 19

"We shall see that the dream of a perfect language has always been invoked as a solution to religious or political strife. It has even been invoked as the way to overcome simple difficulties in commercial exchange. The history of the reasons why Europe thought that it needed a perfect language can thus tell us a good deal about the cultural history of that continent. Besides, even if our story is nothing but a series of failures, we shall see that each failure produced its own side-effects. Punctually failing to come to fruition, each of the projects left a train of beneficial consequences in its wake. Each might thus be viewed as a sort of serendipitous felix culpa: many of today's theories, as well as many of the practices which we theorize (from taxonomy in the natural sciences, from formal languages to artificial intelligence and to the cognitive sciences), were born as side-effects of the search for a perfect language. It is only fair, then, that we acknowledge these pioneers: they have given us a lot, even if it was not what they promised. Finally, through examining the defects of the perfect languages, conceived in order to eliminate the defects of those natural ones, we shall end up by discovering that these natural languages of ours contain unexpected virtues." Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*. pg. 19-20

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of the beloved *Lord of the Rings* series and *The Hobbit* needs no introduction. J.R.R. Tolkien, philologist, lexicographer and translator, similarly needs little introduction. Rarely has the character of a novelist and professor captured the public imagination of several generations in the way that Tolkien's has. What does require introduction, however, is J.R.R. Tolkien, the linguistic aesthetician and invented languages commentator. In this chapter I will discuss Tolkien's use of the phrase 'linguistic aesthetic', examine his consideration of the linguistic aesthetic in creating artificial grammars for his literary works, and consider what his insights mean for constructed language projects and aesthetic analyses of grammar.

The phrase 'linguistic aesthetic' has a fairly short history, finding its traceable origins in Tolkien's personal letters, and while almost all subsequent uses are to be found within the context of Tolkienian scholarship, there are a few recent occurrences in linguistics manuals. Dimitra Fimi and Andrew Higgins' introduction to the recent edition of Tolkien's essays on invented languages, *A Secret Vice,* lists two early uses by Tolkien in his letters from around 1967.[20] "It must be emphasized that this process of invention was/is a private enterprise undertaken to give pleasure to myself by giving expression to my personal linguistic 'aesthetic' or taste and its fluctuations."[21] In another letter, he explains that his novels were an "essay in 'linguistic' aesthetic.'"[22] Later uses drop the quotation marks around either linguistic or aesthetic, and 'linguistic aesthetics' becomes a codified phrase for commentators of Tolkien as they discuss the role of taste, pleasure, and instinct in Tolkien's linguistic creativity. In 2007 Ross Smith published a monograph on the subject of Tolkien's personal linguistic aesthetic and the notion of linguistic aesthetics in several of his contemporary linguists.[23] Here, Ross gives Tolkien's definition: "'Linguistic Aesthetics' is a term which Tolkien employed on a number of occasions to refer to the fickle relationship between the sounds of words, their meaning and our emotional

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[20] J.R.R. Tolkien, *A Secret Vice: Tolkien on Invented Languages*. (HarperCollins, 2016), xii.

[21] The 'invention' to which Tolkien alludes is the action of building languages for the characters in his book. It is hard to tell sometimes in Tolkien's writing whether he is trying to use 'aesthetic' and 'taste' as synonyms. What is clear though is that he is indulging his taste in the creation of these languages, but he is also considering the audience he is writing for, asking how the sounds and syntax of these constructed languages will affect them, so it is not just personal taste but also considering the aesthetic as it relates to a wider communal context.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien.* (George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 380.

[22] Tolkien, *A Secret Vice*, pg. xxi

[23] Ross Smith, *Inside Language: Linguistic and Aesthetic Theory in Tolkien* (Walking Tree Publishers, 2007).

responses to them."[24] The appropriation of this phrase among non-Tolkienian academics was slow, but the 2009 *Bloomsbury Companion to Systematic Functional Linguistics* contains the following entry: "[A]esthetic linguistics could emerge as field of investigation dealing with 'exploring' texts concerned with the negotiation in a community of the value of works of art (and other artefacts evaluated in terms of aesthetic considerations), focussing perhaps in particular on the resources of *appreciation* within the system of *appraisal*." [25] The same book also states the possibility of an *ethical linguistics:* "similarly, 'ethical linguistics' could emerge as a field of investigation focussed on 'exploring' texts concerned with the exploration in a community of moral values, focussing perhaps in particular on the resources of *judgement* within the system of *appraisal*."[26] In another instance, Paul Ratsall wrote an article discussing the same possibility of linguistic aesthetics as an emerging field.[27] Ratsall mentions the origin of this mode of inquiry in the experience of artists and writers: "There have, of course, been many valuable stylistic studies of verbal art works or the rhetorical features of texts. However, the range of aesthetic considerations is not restricted to works of art or rhetoric. Every text or utterance can be (and is) considered from an aesthetic perspective. This has led some writers to speak of an aesthetic, or poetic, 'function of language'. We shall consider whether, and in what sense, one can legitimately speak of such a function." Wider academia is beginning to awaken to the importance of this type of analysis of linguistic phenomena in a very technical sense, but Tolkien's writings about his own

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[24] ibid. pg. 53

[25] *Bloomsbury Companion to Systematic Functional Linguistics*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009), 37

[26] ibid. It is hard to tell the implicit modal theory which these editors are evincing, i.e. the relationship they see between the aesthetic and the linguistic? What these quotations serve to demonstrate is how the question is rising to the fore in current linguistics.

[27] Paul Ratsall, "Aesthetic Responses and the "cloudiness of language: is there an aesthetic function of language?" *La Linguistique*. Vol. 44, 2008.

experience of encountering the aesthetic nature of language have the potential to illuminate this discussion through the shared cultural heritage that his novels and academic work represent.

<u>Part 1: Tolkien develops his linguistic aesthetic</u>

Tolkien was a philologist and lexicographer by first training, working on the *W* section of the Oxford English Dictionary and co-editing an edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* before becoming a professor of Anglo-Saxon studies at Pembroke College, Oxford. In his later years at Oxford, he moved to Merton College as Professor of English Language and Literature. Tolkien's linguistic curiosity began at a young age, and is a theme throughout his academic and authorial work. In his essay, *A Secret Vice,* in which he discusses his relationship to various invented language projects like Nevbosh and Esperanto, he alludes to the infinity of such a curiosity.

> "The linguistic faculty…It is more highly developed in others, and may lead not only to polyglots but to poets, to savourers of linguistic flavours, to learners and users of tongues who take pleasure in the exercise. And it is allied to a higher art of which I am speaking and which I had better now define. An art for which life is not long enough, indeed: the construction of imaginary languages in full or outline for amusement, for the pleasure of the constructor or even conceivably of any critique that might occur. For though I have made much of the secrecy of the practice of this art, it is an inessential and accidental product of circumstances. Individualistic as are the makers, seeking a personal expression and satisfaction, they are artists and incomplete without an audience."[28]

This stirring testimony demonstrates a few essential characteristics of the linguistic aesthetic, as he himself understood it and as it has later been understood in linguistic and philosophical circles. First, that creative uses of language, such as poetry and language invention, are primarily *personal*, the result of a deeply ingrained instinct in an individual to be playful with language, to make, develop, or uncover new meaning by means of linguistic playfulness. As will be shown

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[28] Tolkien, *A Secret Vice,* 11.

later, the importance of this deeply personal experience of language will be the thrust of Tolkien's critique of the Esperantist project. Second, that the aesthetic is, as the name suggests (but as bears repeating) concerned with *pleasure*. There is a pleasure derived from this forenamed playfulness with language, which he acknowledges may find stronger resonances in some inventors than others.[29] Third, the connection between invention and *community,* that while the aesthetic creates a personal instinct toward meaning and pleasure in language use, it is rarely done without reference to an audience, or a community of hearers and speakers that could similarly be affected or changed by their own interaction with the results of this invention.

These intuitions of the personal and social character of linguistic invention were largely a result of Tolkien's philological training. Philology was largely falling out of favour in the academy during Tolkien's time. As he put it, "Philology has been dethroned from the high place it once had in the court of inquiry."[30] In contrast to the increasingly popular structuralist methods of applied linguistic analysis, philology's focus on word and origin seemed quaint.

> "To the philosopher, the old-style philologist seemed what we might call a pedant, concerned with the tricks of style, with purity of expression, never going below the surface of human speech and writing to the deeper truths that lay beneath… Tolkien would certainly reply that even if that had been true of old-style Classical philology, it was completely untrue of the new-style of *comparative* philology which had been born in the 19th century: for this entirely new discipline, of which Plato and Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas knew nothing, had opened up completely new perspectives."[31]

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[29] He continues later: "This idea of linguistic faculty for amusement is however deeply interesting to me. I may be like an opium-smoker seeking a moral or medical or artistic defence for his habit. I don't think so. The instinct for 'linguistic invention' — the fitting of notion to oral symbol and pleasure in contemplating the new relation established — is rational, and not perverted." 16.

[30] Tolkien, J.R.R. *On Fairy-Stories.* (HarperCollins, 2001)

[31] Franco Manni and Tom Shippey. "Tolkien between Philosophy and Philology," *Tolkien and Philosophy* (Walking Tree Publishers, 2014).

Ferdinand de Saussure's assertion that the sign was arbitrary was somewhat antithetical to the

generations of philologists who understood the relationship between the sign, its meaning, and

the users of those signs.[32] To explore the relationship between sound and meaning, especially

within his academic writings, would have been an unpopular project, a fact of which he was all

too aware. The awareness of his ideas' unpopularity meant that he either discussed it jokingly in

public lectures and relegated it to a quirk of personal taste, or left it to the realm of his fiction.[33]

During the time he worked at Oxford and wrote his novels, Tolkien and his colleagues were

reading and processing the insights contained in these publications of structuralists and

linguistics of other persuasions.[34] His interaction with the diverse work of Leonard Bloomfield,

Otto Jespersen,[35] and Edward Sapir is well documented.[36] Tolkien's essays and publications on

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[32] Tolkien, *A Secret Vice,* liii.

[33] Ross Smith. "Fitting Sense to Sound: Linguistic Aesthetics and Phonosemantics in the Work of J.R.R. Tolkien," *Tolkien Studies*, Vol. 3, 2006, 1.

[34] Smith acknowledges the stronghold of structuralism in Tolkien's contemporary academic context: "The influence of Saussure and Chomsky on 20th century linguistics has been immense, and few have had the confidence to contradict them. Even the great humanist, literary critic and polyglot George Steiner, who criticized Chomsky's insistence of a universally structuralist approach in the face of vast linguistic diversity to be found in the real world, affirmed in his most important work that "languages are wholly arbitrary sets of signals and conventional counters." That someone as linguistically sensitive as Steiner accepted the Saussurean doctrine without question…is indicative of how deeply that doctrine has become rooted in Western linguistic thinking." Smith, *Inside Language,* 55.

[35] Smith also points to the difficulty of refuting the Saussurean linguists at this period of time: "There are some exceptions to this rule, however, thanks to those illustrious thinkers who have had sufficient intellectual status to swim against the tide without ridicule. The great Danish linguist Otto Jespersen had no doubts on the subject and stated categorically: 'Is there really much more logic in the opposite extreme which denies any kind of sound symbolism (apart from a small class of evident echoisms and 'onomatopoeia') and sees in our words only a collection of accidental and irrational associations of sound to meaning? There is no denying that there are words which we feel instinctively to be adequate to express the ideas they stand for.'" Smith, *Inside Language,* 55-56.

[36] Tolkien, *A Secret* Vice, liii.

philology and language invention should be situated within a context of academic and social upheaval; in addition to the advent of structuralist linguistics, many were asking what role language could have played in preventing the animosity which resulted in World War. His novels might also be viewed as an artistic out-working of the dilemmas presented by these rigorous, international linguistic debates.

At several points, Tolkien explained that his novels were simply outlets for his hobby of creating new languages.[37] Even if the languages were the inspiration for the books, his interactions with Anglo-Saxon and Indo-European myth had taught him of the inherent interconnectedness between the narrative of the story and its linguistic character. In his famous essay, *On Fairy*-Stories, he decries views of mythology which do not acknowledge their mutual dependency:

> "Max Müller's view of mythology as a 'disease of language' can be abandoned without regret. Mythology is not a disease at all, though it may like all human things become diseased. You might as well say that thinking is a disease of the mind. It would be more near the truth to say that languages, especially modern European languages, are a disease of mythology. But Language cannot, all the same, be dismissed. The incarnate mind, the tongue, and the tale are in our world coeval."[38]

Tolkien's philosophy of language, as expressed in this passage, is remarkably similar to the constitutive view of language, where language is to be understood as constitutive of thought itself. He correctly identifies that thought and its extension into story and narrative is always already a linguistic exercise. In many ways, his building of myth and language simultaneously was for practical ends, ensuring that the story resembled something true about human experience, that it contained something *real* and not *artificial*.

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[37] ibid, xii.

[38] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, 21-22.

"As one suggestion, I might fling out that view that perfect construction of an art language is found to be necessary to construct at least in outline a mythology concomitant. Not solely because some pieces of verse will be part of the completed structure, but because the making of language and mythology are related functions… [T]o give your language an individual flavour, it must have woven into it the threads of an individual mythology, individual while working within the scheme of natural human mythopoeia, as your hackneyed limits of human, even European, phonetics. The converse indeed is true, your language construction will breed a mythology."[39]

This relation to mythology fully explains these three themes of aesthetic sensibility of language which are maintained throughout his writing: that it is personal, that it is a pleasurable phenomenon, and that it is always situated in a context of community or shared history. His myth-making participates in his larger theological and philosophical idea of "subcreation," whereby humans become co-creators with God and dig deeper into the first fruits of creation to create new things with the material already provided. All humans are similarly called to deepen and unfold creation through their on-going artistic endeavours, of whatever variety or type is most appropriate to them. "Fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker."[40] A language or myth-maker crafts a smaller world, entirely new, within an already divinely created world, an idea which might be considered his unphilosophically trained response to philosophical themes of the possibility for invention.[41] Tolkien was always aware of the apparent frivolity of such endeavours to the uninitiated observer. "To many, Fantasy, this subcreative art which plays strange tricks with the world and all that is in it, combining nouns

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[39] Tolkien, *A Secret Vice,* 23-24.

[40] ibid, 56.

[41] That is, Tolkien is seeking to understand how humans are to create, asking whether human making-activity will always be derivative or if it could create *ex nihilo*.

and redistributing adjectives, has seemed suspect, if not illegitimate."[42] Similarly, his emphasis on

the aesthetic in this process of linguistic invention can be understood in contrast to the

philosophy of language presented by logical positivists or philosophers like Hobbes or Russell,

who were not able to fully account for or value poetic uses of language, or the importance of

non-logical uses of language.[43] Instead, he posits myth-making as being an activity which

participates in reason, and is indeed heightened by it. "Fantasy is a natural human activity. It

certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor

obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and the clearer is the

reason, the better fantasy will it make."[44] The profound sensitivity to these themes show Tolkien's

novels (and his own personal record of the experience of writing them) to be an excellent site of

examination of the linguistic aesthetic, and his commentary on other language projects makes

him a valuable first interlocutor.

Linguistic aesthetic has a fairly specific focus for Tolkien, for his greatest pleasure in his

own invention projects was phonology. Etymology was close to his heart as a philologist and

lexicographer, but the marriage of phonology and etymology gave him decided pleasure.

"Certainly it is the contemplation of the relation between sound and notion which is a main

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[42] ibid, 54.

[43] "Hobbe's notion of reason as reckoning takes its sense from this context. Reasoning is combining, and language helps us to do this expeditiously and on a grand scale. The great proviso is that we be clear about the meaning of our terms. Each must be carefully defined semantically, and then must retain the same meaning in all the larger reckoning in which it figures…In the context of modern epistemology, Hobbes sees language as first designative; that is, words take their meaning from what they are used to designate. And he sees it secondly as instrumental. Clear designation, fixing unambiguously the meaning of each term, is the indispensable instrument of reasoning." Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The full shape of human linguistic capacity* (Belknap Press, 2016), 105.

[44] Tolkien, *A Secret Vice,* 55.

source of pleasure."[45] There is a comparable methodology of analysis in linguistics today called

'phonosemantics'.[46] Crucially, Tolkien was trying to name an experience of the pleasure

generated by sound that he had experienced when studying foreign languages.

> "We see it in an alloyed form in the peculiar keenness of the delight scholars have
> in poetry or fine prose in a foreign language, and long after they have become
> reasonably familiar with it. Certainly in the case of dead languages no scholar can
> ever reach the full position of a native in regard to the purely notional side of the
> language he studies, nor possess and feel all the undercurrents of connotation
> from period to period which words possess. His compensation remains a great
> freshness of perception of the word-form. Thus, even seen darkly through the
> distorting glass of our ignorance of the details of Greek pronunciation."[47]

This description, that the pleasure of phonosemantics is widely available even for the uninitiated

or novice learners of foreign languages returns to a central theme, that it is an *instinct* which the

speaker has for the material she studies. Namely, the role of wonder is present at any stage of

learning, and skill merely provides a set of tools for intellectually understanding the mystical

nature of that experience. "[W]e need not believe we are feeling something that was not there;

we are only in a position to see some things better at a distance, others more dimly."[45] There is a

real danger in laying aside or undervaluing this phenomenological moment; such an ignorance of

it he describes as being a form of self-deceit.[48]

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[45] ibid, 16.

[46] Since Tolkien was most aware of the phonosemantics of his languages, it will be a task of this work to tease out moments of the linguistic aesthetic applied to other branches of language, like syntax and morphology, and then later in Chapter 3 to evaluate these categories in light of aesthetic methods of critique.

[47] ibid, 16.

[48] ibid.

The Lord of the Rings trilogy and its accompanying corpus of novels, poems and encyclopediae about Middle Earth demonstrate the attention to detail Tolkien believed was required to truly make the artificial become real in the mind of the reader. Words in his languages not only had phonetic appropriateness for their author, but also etymological significance. This meant that Tolkien invented several complete grammars and vocabularies for the languages of Middle Earth, but also that he created several "older" versions of those invented languages, according to the predictable patterns of natural human language change which he had learned as a philologist. As a result, he was able to compose poems and songs for characters which would feel antiquated to them as well, as if the characters themselves could feel the happy weight of linguistic history and the lives of their ancestors pressing down to the present moment of oration. This is comparable to reciting Chaucer in the present day, Middle-English in Modern English, except that the Old, Middle, and Modern versions of each of his languages had to be created from scratch. It took years. He began with *Qenya* (within his created world this language would eventually become *Quenya*), an Elvish language, and composed whole grammatical and phonological treatises for it. Then a second language *Noldorin* (descendent of a language called *Gnomish*, later to become *Sindarin*).[49] "Tolkien had invented Gnomish as a language related to Qenya but designed to linguistically model what could happen to a language over many years of its speakers wandering and mixing with other peoples. Gnomish was associated with the *Lost Tales* narrative of the exiled Elves…who left Valinor and wandered in the Great Lands."[50] Sometimes a desire to sub-create greater etymological or historical meaning into these languages

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[49] ibid, xviii.

[50] ibid, xix.

required massive revisions. "Tolkien had also gone back to his Qenya Phonology and revised

sections of it to reflect the idea that both Qenya and Gnomish derived from a common source

called Primitive Eldarin, thereby giving both Qenya and Gnomish a more complex sense of

historical depth and coherence."[51] Establishing the etymological narrative to link various ages of

Middle Earth languages was merely the first step.

Despite the work required to perform such a task of back-forming an etymology, and the

ease with which he undertook the task, Tolkien was never boastful or showy about the

profundity of his invention. The goal was to make the artificial into the natural, not to dazzle the

reader.[52] Any dazzling would be generated by the feeling of being pulled into an entirely new

world, and being swept along by the narratival dexterity.[53] This humility should again be

examined within the theological framework of his 'sub-creation', where the role of the inventor is

to create something which is as real as the things made *ex nihilo* by divine hands at the first

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[51] ibid.

[52] There is a similar recommendation in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*. In Book III, the students are encouraged to only use enough grammatical stylistics (*lexis*) that the speech appear natural, not artificial. To be showy would give the impression that the speech was rehearsed, or that the rhetor was being manipulative and his message was false. The *logos* of the argument could speak for itself, without embellishment. There is an inversion of this principle in the rhetorical training provided in Late Antiquity. Specifically, in Cicero, there is a linking of *eloquentia* to truth, such that speech lacking eloquence must not be true and was indeed doing an injustice to the *logos* of the argument. To be more precise, eloquence became a modality of truth in rhetoric, and indeed a component of *logos* itself.

Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: a theory of civil discourse* (Oxford University Press, 1991)

[53] "His foremost consideration was doubtless that the names suited the characters and he happened to know the names from his academic work, but he was also seeking to create a bridge between Old Norse and Germanic mythology and modern English literature, and one way to do this was to mingle ancient ingredients in his modern creations. Thus, scholarly and imaginary elements combine, ancient characters are recast in new settings, and real languages and fictitious languages are used side by side. However, this is done with apparent ease and Tolkien never gives the impression that he is trying to be clever." Smith, *Inside Language,* 10.

moments of time. Consequentially, most of Tolkien's brilliance in regards to his invented

languages is only available to those who spend time in its analysis. There is a comfort or

invitation into the text which is created by Tolkien's use of Anglo-Saxon and Norse roots to form

the words of his new languages; it was precisely because the words were so unfamiliar to most

readers, largely uneducated in these ancient languages, that the authenticity of the text, as a

piece of writing that really *could* be as old as Beowulf, was established. This manufactured

distance was a stylistic technique, the power of which Tolkien understood and exploited.[54] The

success of this technique, using foreign roots to build his languages and to pepper his dialogues,

was an exercise in his aesthetic for sound, an exercise of manipulating the phonosemantic

sensibilities of his audience.[55]

      In *A Secret Vice*, Tolkien offers a poem in Quenya to the audience, titled *Oilima Markirya*,

which he says demonstrates his linguistic aesthetic. He cautions the audience, saying that his

poems were "constructed deliberately to be personal, and give private satisfaction — not for

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[54] There is, I believe, a similar experience in the taking-in of a Latin mass. I wonder if this accounts for the return of so many young Catholics to the traditional Latin services, since there is an aesthetic not being attended to when a believer attends mass in their own language. Asking these questions would have to be paired with an examination of the discourses in current Catholic thought about the benefits of older forms of the mass. That is, is the move backwards because they sense a rich aesthetic, because they are withdrawing to former liturgy in response to the supposed 'impurity' of current social practices, or a bit of both? Perhaps an appreciation of the old aesthetic has been used to legitimate concerns over societal decay.

[55] We might say, then, that Tolkien is deliberately adding allusive content to his languages, playing with double-meanings and sound association. Phonosemantics are one vehicle for the aesthetic, which I will discuss more in Chapter 3.

"It seems paradoxical that the text which is incomprehensible to virtually all readers should lend credibility to the story, yet this is the effect that Tolkien achieves when he sprinkles Elvish expressions or verses through his prose. Readers get that familiar feeling of being faced by an unknown foreign language, yet at the same time the words, though not understood, sound pleasant when spoken (whether openly or mentally) and certainly look as if they pertain to a real language." Smith, *Inside Language*, 16.

scientific experiment."[56] Again he emphasizes that a project concerning the linguistic aesthetic began as a *personal,* internal urge. Since he did not create them for any purpose other than linguistic pleasure, he says they have a tendency, "too free as they were from cold exterior criticism, to be 'over-pretty', to be phonetically and semantically sentimental — while their bare meaning is probably trivial, not full of red blood or the heat of the world as critics demand."[57] So, what does the linguistic aesthetic, developed in secret and deeply personal, sound like to Tolkien? Below is the first stanza, though the poem is printed in full in the most recent edition of *A Secret Vice.*

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Oilima Markirya:
Man kiluva kirya ninqe
oilima ailinello lúte,
níve qímari ringa ambar
ve maiwin qaine?

The Last Ark:
Who shall see a white ship leave
the last shore, the pale phantoms
in her cold bosom
like gulls wailing?

</center>

Like all instances of his invented languages, there is a tremendous amount of pleasure available to both those who never decide to learn them and those who become their disciples. One who has never heard the Queyna poem "is forced to concentrate on the words' shapes and sounds, and what is immediately noticeable is that the majority of them end in a vowel."[58] The phonology of Quenya was chosen from the sound palettes of Finnish and Welsh, and to a certain extent Italian and Spanish (languages considered 'beautiful' to the English ear, based on

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[56] Tolkien, *A Secret Vice,* 26.

[57] ibid, 26-27.

[58] Smith, *Fitting Sense to Sound,* 7.

culturally-shaped phonosemantic values), eliminating guttural phonemes (a Germanic heritage in the English tongue). Word length is restricted, again in distinction to German but also Ancient Greek.[59] The Quenya word for 'butterfly', seen in the second stanza of the poem,[60] is *wilwarin,* derived from the verb *wilwa* (to flutter), meaning that 'butterfly' directly translates as something like "flutter-flutter". Smith points to other examples of the same lexical composition of 'butterfly' in other languages: Welsh *pili-pala,* Portuguese *borboleta*, Italian *farfalla*, and Hebrew *par par*.[61] "Tolkien's choice of phonemes, therefore, met a double purpose. On the one hand, he 'found' a beautiful name for a beautiful creature; on the other, he used phonetic resources that can readily be recognized by the language processing centres in our minds to convey the kind of movement which that creature makes."[60] Tolkien was also not just concerned that the words 'sound good'; he also took distinct pleasure in building words from one lexical category into another (*wilwarin* is verb to noun), in the way that natural languages do. Finally, this entire act of invention was done in reference to the phonosemantic proclivities of his intended audience. This was a process of 'finding-out' what the words wanted to be;[62] however, even if Tolkien felt the words disclosed themselves to him, making the words function aesthetically on each of these levels of consideration was an immense undertaking.

It may surprise loyal readers of *The Rings* trilogy and *The Hobbit* that Tolkien ever received criticism for his use of these, and other, phonosemantic techniques. To a few, these borrowings were archaic, and not in a good way.

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[59] ibid.

[60] Produced in full in *A Secret Vice*, 27-29.

[61] Smith, *Inside Language,* 63.

[62] Smith, *Fitting Sense to Sound*, 7.

> "His critics have traditionally sniped at the use of words like 'thither' and 'yonder', the antiquated 'thou' form and other such archaic modes, but Tolkien used these terms with full knowledge of their potential impact, as an inevitable part of his creative process…Tolkien first rebutted the criticism by offering a farcical version of the same sentences in modern English to illustrate the erroneousness of [the] condemnation and show how out of place a non-archaic register would be."[63]

As with his etymological and phonological ingenuity, he manipulated the syntax of his sentences. Tolkien took full advantage of punctuation and conjunctions, allowing the gradual building of short, descriptive clauses throughout the sentence. The result was a *layered* feeling to the text, as if the colossal weight of the real experience of the story could be recreated in the experience of the reader. In a similar move, there is a preference for nouns and adjectives in his descriptive narration. Creating these fantastical realms was, as he describes it in *On Fairy-Stories*, an action of "combining nouns and redistributing adjectives."[64] Here again the effect would be cumulative toward the end of the sentence.

Those translating his novels into other natural languages were not left without guidance in their task, for Tolkien at various moments provided advice about how to capture the 'texture' of a piece of text in the new language. These pieces of advice are more than just helpful to the translator, because his discussion of how to translate an aesthetic into a new equivalent demonstrates his conception of the linguistic aesthetic. Ross Smith points to some of the vocabulary that Tolkien employed in his discussion of translation: he refers to the 'texture', 'compactness', and 'colour', of words, and suggests ways in which these may be preserved in the act of translating. "He has no easy answer to the translator's dilemma, but he tries to express in metaphorical terms what will be lost and gained in each case: 'compactness' may be retained, 'colour' may be kept or lost, 'texture' may be loosened or weakened. Putting this into plainer

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[63] Tolkien, *A Secret Vice*, 25.

[64] Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories*, 54.

language, when he refers to retaining the 'compactness', we can infer that Tolkien means keeping

the translated term similar in size, or number of syllables to the original term, which assures that

the poem's metre will not be excessively distorted."[65] Tolkien emphasizes that the act of

translating is a series of small, individual choices about word use (he calls this act of discernment

a 'kenning') and that there is an internal relationship among these modalities of colour and

compactness. For example, in some cases, the compactness of the term may be preserved, but the

colour of the word may be lost in that valuing. The translator, to a great extent, becomes a

language inventor, employing instinctive aesthetic sense, to make these word-by-word

judgments. In some cases, he explains, the translator must be a literal inventor, with the freedom

to create a new word which conveys the appropriate colour or compactness and has a similar

effect on the hearer as the word in the original language would. "Alternatively, the translator can

invent a new, imaginative compound term which retains the 'colour' because it is aesthetically

pleasing, but then again there is a downside because such a choice may distort…the overall

'texture' of the poem."[65] This awareness of texture is also captured in his advice to those

translating Beowulf into a Modern English, whether it be prose or verse. "Tolkien advises

prospective translators to be careful in the treatment of apparent synonyms in the Anglo-Saxon

poem because although the words in question may be semantically close, in phonetic terms they

can differ widely and each phoneme chosen by the poet evidently produces a different impact on

the reader, or listener."[66]

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[65] Smith, *Inside Language,* 65.

[66] ibid, 64.

International Auxiliary Languages:

      Given the shrewdness of Tolkien's linguistic gaze, as demonstrated in his language invention and his academic writings about the linguistic aesthetic, it should come as no surprise that he had profound things to say about other invented languages of the same era.[67] In 1932, Tolkien wrote a letter to *The British Esperantist,* which began, "I take an interest, as a philologist, and as every philologist should, in the international-language movement, as an important and interesting linguistic phenomenon, and am sympathetic to the claims of Esperanto in particular."[68] His philology would of course predispose him to be interested, but what of the motivations which spurred on these invented languages in the first place? Recall his subscription to the idea of sub-creation, that humans stand as co-creators with God, digging further into the already provided material goodness of creation, further unfolding new meaning. Within this ideology, there is generous space for projects like Esperanto which might wish to do something different and new with language.

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[67] Minimal explanation of the cultural genesis of these languages, their motivations and their relative successes, will be undertaken here, aside from the following few comments: IALs (not to be confused with 'art languages' like those of Tolkien's Quenya) are usually constructed in response to perceived deficiencies in natural languages. Specifically, the deficiency of natural languages to solve societal or political strife. There is a deep tradition of invented languages being employed toward humanist ends.

The role of the linguistic aesthetic in invented languages beyond art languages, i.e. those in use in various linguistic communities, is a topic too large to really be articulated in so short a work. The briefest of sketches, especially as regards the three themes of the linguistic aesthetic as learned from Tolkien, that it is personal, generative of pleasure, and for an audience, will be attempted here as a place-marker for future research.

[68] J.R.R. Tolkien, "A Philologist on Esperanto." *The British Esperantist* (Vol. 28. May, 1932).

The Esperantists, like Tolkien, had faced much ridicule for daring to question the commonly-held assumptions about socio-linguistics held by their contemporaries. Esperanto was the creation of L.L. Zamenhof, an ophthalmologist. By the numbers, his is the most successfully implemented, fully artificial constructed language.[69] Zamenhoff took his inspiration from his own neighbourhood in Bialystok, Poland. Seeing the disfunctionality and violence of a city which housed Russians, Poles, Jews, and Germans, he believed that a shared language would lead to an end of discord. Many of these insular groups were poly-lingual (speaking Yiddish, Russian, Polish, and German simultaneously). He constructed a language using a Slavic sound palette, syntactic rules that were common to most Indo-European languages, and vocabulary from the languages derived from Latin. The shared lexicon of Esperanto meant that Russians and French learners were equally advantaged at learning the language.[70] There were only sixteen rules to his simplified grammar, including a reduction of all definite articles to *la*, only two grammatical

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[69] Arguably, modern Hebrew is more successful in terms of invented languages, because it was resurrected in the Post-War period by Jewish nationalists and is now the first language of millions of people. Esperanto differs from the reimplementation of Hebrew because it did not have an existing insular culture or history to draw from, nor was it a re-awakening of a dead language. Hebrew, Esperanto, and Quenya are all invented or constructed languages, but Hebrew could be classified as a "revitalized language", Esperanto an "invented international auxiliary language," and Quenya an "invented art language".

[70] Esperanto was formed entirely in a European context, though its ease and simplicity meant that a great number of Chinese speakers learnt Esperanto, despite the fact that no non-European languages were used to form its lexicon. Still, it is very telling of its inherent Euro-centrism that many Esperanto speakers wanted non-Europeans to learn a language based on European roots to create world peace, rather than looking to build a language based on sound palettes and grammatical structures which are universal the world over.

cases (nominative and accusative), a one-to-one correspondence of phoneme to orthography, and a very simplified system for marking the tenses of verbs.[71] A dedicated speaker can gain fluency in about six weeks, or so Zamenhoff claimed. Critics and supporters of Esperanto were many. Initially published in 1887, public discussion about Esperanto came to a head in 1904 and 1905, as tensions were raised on the European continent. Immediately there were several questions to be answered: Would understanding be enough to guarantee peace? Was Esperanto sophisticated enough to sustain complex dialogue? Would not any language that gained fluent use also be subject to language development and change? Esperanto was lauded and struck down in newspapers and academic halls, and proselytized at political rallies and in private living rooms. Today, Esperanto is a relic of a truly modernist time. It now seems quite ludicrous that translation alone could solve the world's problems, or that a Euro-centric project would be the one to do it, if it were possible.[72] The speed at which Esperanto may be learned worked in its favour, and several other language projects have aimed to simplify existing languages so that they can be more easily picked up by foreigners. Unnecessary complexity has been the downfall of many a

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[71] Zamenhof received a lot of push back against his retention of the accusative case. Many argued that it was unnecessary. A great number of European languages have nominative and accusative, and the accusative is perhaps the easiest case aside from the thematic role of the subject because of the subject-verb-object relationship, so it would not have been very difficult for people to adapt to.

Janton Pierre, *Esperanto : language, literature, and community* (State University of New York Press, 1993), 43-45.

[72] "Nevertheless, the Esperanto movement refuses to die. There are those who continue to believe that an international language is necessary for communication and cooperation between nations, and that English's too closely associated with Anglo-American political, economic, and cultural imperialism to fill that role satisfactorily, or indeed to be accepted by the people of all nations. So even though Esperanto now has a much lower profile than in the past, it remains visible and vital." Arden R. Smith, "Confounding Babel: International Auxiliary Languages." *From Elvish to Klingon: Exploring Invented Languages¸* 37-38.

constructed language. The history of invented languages is, to a very great extent, a history of spectacular, albeit creative, failures.

What would Tolkien make of all this? The ingenuity and boldness of it would be appreciated, as he indicates when he compares it to the resistance of an "orthodox church facing not only unbelievers but schismatics and heretics."[73] He was aware of its favourable outcome in comparison to other IALs. "Esperanto seems to me beyond doubt, taken all round, superior to all present competitors, but its chief claim to support seems to me to rest on the fact that it has already the premier place, has won the widest measure of practical acceptance, and developed the most advanced organisation."[74] Aside from the Esperantists' ability to pull together and work toward specific goals in an unprecedented fashion, Esperanto itself had, in his estimation, also avoided one of the other large pitfalls of constructed languages; it had not become so simplified that it risked loosing aesthetic appeal. "Actually, it seems to me, too, that technical improvement of the machinery, either aiming at greater simplicity and perspicuity of structure, or at greater internationality, or what not, tends (to judge by recent examples) to destroy the "humane" or aesthetic aspect of the invented idiom."[75] Esperanto did indeed have a simplified grammar, but Tolkien makes a strong contrast here with Novial, the IAL developed by Otto Jespersen, which Tolkien said was "ingenious, and easier than Esperanto, but hideous — 'factory product' is written all over it, or rather, 'made of spare parts' — and it has no gleam of the individuality, coherence and beauty, which appear in the great natural idioms, and which do appear to a considerable degree (probably as high a degree as is possible in an artificial idiom) in

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[73] Tolkien, *A Philologist on Esperanto.*

[74] ibid.

[75] ibid.

Esperanto."[76] Novial lacked the aesthetic, the 'humane' part of speech which Tolkien prized so greatly and related so strongly to work of a dutiful sub-creator; it did not contain the *personal*, the *pleasurable*, or the *communal*. However, while Tolkien praised Esperanto in his letter to *The British Esperantist,* his personal letters with colleagues show a larger measure of critique.

> "It was just as the 1914 War burst on me that I made the discovery that 'legends' depend on the language to which they belong; but a living language depends equally on the 'legends' which it conveys by tradition. (For example, that the Greek mythology depends far more on the marvellous aesthetic of its language and also of its nomenclature of persons and places and less on its content than people realize, though of course it depends on both. And vice versa. Volapük, Esperanto, Ido, Novial, etc, are dead, far deader than ancient unused languages, because their authors never invented any Esperanto legends.) So though being a philologist by nature and trade (yet one always primarily interested in the aesthetic rather than the function aspects of language) I began with language, I found myself involved in inventing 'legends' of the same 'taste.'"[77]

The mythological aspect of speech, even every day speech, was missing from the IALs.[78] Invented languages were doomed to failure if not connected with myth or story, in the general sense of 'fantasy' as well as the discrete sense of 'fairy-story' and perhaps more generally as 'communally formative story.' This much he had learned from his work with Indo-European mythology: that

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[76] ibid.

[77] Tolkien, *Letters,* 231.

[78] Similarly, Umberto Eco points to the *pragmatic* aspect of conlang implementation: "Furthermore, natural languages do not live on syntax and semantics alone. They also have a *pragmatic* aspect, which concerns rules of usage in different contexts, situations, or circumstances; one can also use language for rhetorical purposes, so that words can acquire multiple senses - as happens with metaphors. We shall see that some projects tried to eliminate these pragmatic and rhetorical aspects of a language — while others tried to make them possible." Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language* (Blackwell, 2006), 23.

Eco is demonstrating more explicitly the *sociolinguistic* concerns which must be addressed in IALs, which does include consideration of the way a person or community's aesthetic sensibilities will or will not engage with a particular invented language. Tolkien's insight is that he makes this aspect of planning more explicit.

language and myth are coeval and to remove one is to kill the other. IALs would never be real if they did not learn from natural languages and partake in myth-making.

The wisdom of Tolkien's critique is affirmed by a revisiting of the Esperanto history as recently as the 21st century, and an examination of another language, revitalized modern Hebrew. Esperanto did not go on to become the international language of peace which Zamenhof hoped it would become. Nevertheless, research in 1990 suggested that Esperanto was spoken by a larger number of people than 6,000 of the other living languages known to linguists at the time (6,160 by estimate).[79] Arika Okrent, a journalist and researcher on invented languages, spent some time interacting with the current Esperanto community, attending workshops and conferences to understand what the community means to those who speak it. In many ways, she echoes Tolkien's insight that what was lacking in previous generations of Esperanto speakers was the shared mythology and culture. "The Esperantists worked to create a community and a culture. Yes, they did this somewhat artificially and self-consciously, but it did work (forced tradition + time = real tradition), and it turned out that many people who may not be inspired to learn a language in order to use it for something would learn a language in order to participate in something."[80] Today there are Esperanto rock bands and an entire literary corpus of new and translated works; they have the cultural currency to give life to the language.

> "Still it is not hard to understand why so many people find Esperanto so repellent. Language is not just a handy tool for packing up our thoughts and sending them along to others. It's an index to a set of experiences both shared and extremely personal. More than any other expression of our culture, it is the way we do things — the way we complain, argue, comfort others. We love our languages for this. They are the repositories of our very identities. Compared with them, Esperanto is an insult. It asks us to turn away from what makes our language personal and unique and choose one that is

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[79] Smith, *Confounding Babel*, 38.

[80] Arika Okrent. *In the Land of Invented Languages: Adventures in Linguistic Creativity, Madness, and Genius.* (Random House, 2010), 117.

generic and universal. It asks us to give up what distinguishes us from the rest of the world for something that makes everyone in the world the same. It's a threat to beauty: neutral, antiseptic, soulless."[81]

Okrent is clear, though, that the vitality which Esperanto enjoys today within its niche subgroup is the result of time; the aesthetic developed when the language was used by a group of people, who added to it values and stories that were meaningful to them and in turn learned what was aesthetic about Esperanto. She notes that Esperanto had and has a monumental task: because language is so personal, it must begin to develop its aesthetic, through story and community. Use of the language by persistent and dedicated Esperantists has resulted in the culture and myth that Tolkien said were necessary to make it vital. And it is vital, to a small group, but missed its moment to become a vast, international language.

Reconstruction of ancient Hebrew:

Modern Hebrew provides a clarifying example of the role of myth and aesthetic in implementing an invented language into genuine use, because it did thrive and accomplish what its supporters had worked toward. The Hebrew spoken today is classified as an invented language, or more precisely a 'revitalized' language, because it had "died" as a spoken language, remaining only an academic or religious language, albeit sacred and beloved, but not a mother tongue. Many knew ancient Hebrew as a second or third language, used for literary and ritual ends but not conversation. Following the Second World War, as the world discussed the possibility of a Jewish nation state, a man named Eliezer Ben-Yehuda set about trying to revive it

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[81] ibid, 112.

as the mother tongue of this developing nation.[82] Many argued that Yiddish should be the official

language, since it was actually in use, a language which was both natural and living, but this was

dismissed for its geographic specificity. Ben-Yehuda displayed a similar sort of fevered ingenuity

for his project as Tolkien did for his languages, but the stakes were considerably higher in Ben-

Yehuda's case since the Jewish immigrants, arriving from diverse countries and linguistic

contexts, needed a language in common to bond them together in their new country. But first

they need *a* language, to speak, and ancient Hebrew had a quite limited vocabulary. "Although

Modern Hebrew's planners attempted to use mainly internal sources of lexical elaboration,

ancient Hebrew lacked sufficient native roots…there are 8,198 attested words in Biblical Hebrew

and fewer than 20,000 in Rabbinic Hebrew. Over 100,000 new words have come into Hebrew

from a variety of sources, including foreign borrowings and words coined from Hebrew/Semitic

roots."[83] The result of such sparsity of lexemes was a period of rapid word-invention. Ben-Yehuda

created many of these new words himself, though he had many supporters who also worked

tirelessly, perusing Scripture and rabbinic texts for words that could be adapted for modern

conversation. "Ben-Yehuda sought simple, natural-sounding solutions, and he often resorted to

making them up himself. Others did the same, and this led to a great deal of variation in the way

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[82] "There was no Zamenhof of Hebrew to sit down and draft its rules and vocabulary. But there was an Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who, as one biographer put it, "made it possible for several million people to order groceries, drive cattle, make love, and curse out their neighbors in a language which until his day had been fit only for Talmudic argument and prayer." Okrent, 117.

[83] Suzanne Romaine, "Revitalized Languages as Invented Languages." *From Elvish to Klingon: Exploring Invented Languages,* 186.

Hebrew was spoken."[84] The actual implementation of Hebrew was the result of two things: First, the education of school children only in Hebrew, and second, vigorous anti-Yiddish campaigns.[85] It was perhaps a harsh and (very) artificial way to effect linguistic change in a community, but it was surprisingly adept, and within about two generations, Hebrew was veritably a living language again.

Where does the aesthetic, as outlined by Tolkien, fit into this account of the revitalization of Hebrew? Firstly, though it had political and social impetus like Esperanto, it was an endeavour backed by the stories and histories of a particular people group. Secondly, the revitalization was dependent on word-invention, according to the aesthetic considered proper by bearers of the linguistic tradition of Hebrew, who were at the same time native speakers of various languages (each of which brought their own aesthetics). "[T]he revitalized form is sufficiently different from earlier forms of Hebrew to be considered a separate, only partially related language. This manifests itself not only lexically but grammatically. While Biblical Hebrew is genetically clearly a Semitic language (related to Arabic), modern Hebrew… is a hybrid of inherited Semitic traits and influences from Yiddish and other European languages spoken by its creators."[86] The aesthetic of other languages and linguistic communities influenced the form of the Hebrew language in the process of its reinvention. Okrent says the largest factor in the success of Hebrew over Esperanto is the timing, that there was an entire population, recently relocated, who were willing to educate their children in the new language, in a manner never seen with Esperanto

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[84] Okrent, 120.

[85] Romaine, 188.

[86] ibid, 186-187.

even in its heyday.[87] However, as is seen in conversation with Tolkien, the aesthetic, all the while rooted in shared mythology, must also be present in order to make a language truly vital.

Conclusion:

J.R.R. Tolkien's academic writing and novels are an exemplary place to begin outlining the possible characteristics of a linguistic aesthetic, due to his theoretical engagement with the topic and subsequent pragmatic employment of its principles toward artistic ends. In many respects, the linguistic aesthetic is elusive and defies description, but its presence is seen clearly in Tolkien's work. Tolkien's research into Esperanto, an IAL which similarly was required to grapple with the linguistic aesthetic, by means of different vocabulary, demonstrates the need for an account of the linguistic aesthetic in a wider linguistic context. The successes and failures of various language projects, like Tolkien's Quenya, Zamenhof's Esperanto, and Ben-Yehuda's modern Hebrew, are further case material for identifying the characteristics of this aesthetic. Tolkien himself was aware of the elusivity of the linguistic aesthetic, suggesting that "ascertaining the "why" in linguistic aesthetics is probably impossible using traditional analytic methods."[88] This will be the subject of the next chapter, the identification of a methodology which *is* appropriate for the analysis of the linguistic aesthetic.

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[87] Okrent, 122

[88] Smith, *Inside Language,* 69.

In this chapter I discuss modal aesthetic theory as may be applied to grammar in everyday speech, through conversation with the work of Calvin Seerveld. My intention is threefold: to suggest the compatibility of constitutive language theory with modal aesthetic theory, to discuss Seerveld's theories on allusivity as may be applied to language, and to open the possibility of a linguistic aesthetic which aimed at quotidian speech in the first instance and poetics in the second. This will be done with reference to Kantian aesthetics, generative grammar, and constitutive language theory. This will be followed by an examination of some examples of the aesthetic as it appears in various linguistic phenomena, including glossolalia and the legacy of Latin vocabulary and syntax in the English language, to demonstrate that even the component parts of a language's grammar are formed by aesthetic activity.

Part 1: The foundation of linguistic aesthetics in modal and linguistic theory

Modal theory in the Reformational tradition:

Calvin Seerveld is professor emeritus in philosophical aesthetics at my own institution, the Institute for Christian Studies. He was greatly responsible for developing *Christian* philosophical aesthetics as a field distinct from that of theological aesthetics. In his major (and trailblazing) monograph on aesthetics, *Rainbows for a fallen world: aesthetic life and artistic task*,[89] he writes about the modal ontology of the Reformational tradition as regards the aesthetic mode, as well as the aesthetic character of everyday life. My purpose here is not to provide an apologetic for modal aesthetic theory or the Reformational tradition out of which it is born, but

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[89] Calvin Seerveld. *Rainbows for a fallen world: aesthetic life and artistic task.* (Toronto Tuppence Press, 1980 and 2005).

to suggest compatibility of the Reformational tradition's approach to aesthetic and linguistic phenomena and key features of current linguistic theory. I will use Seerveld's suggestion that allusivity is an irreducible mode of daily life to argue for an aesthetic analysis of everyday utterances in distinction to intentionally poetic language. There will be a reoccurrence of the theme of *imagination*, since the human *instinct* or *capacity* for imagination is what allows humans to develop allusivity in ordinary living and subsequently, for those who feel artistic vocation, in works of fine and liberal arts.

Seerveld's aesthetic theory is based on the modal ontology of the Reformational tradition, as was first developed by Herman Dooyeweerd and D.H. Vollenhoven.[90] Vollenhoven's *Isagoge* provides a modal scale as follows: arithmetical, spatial, physical, organic, psychic, analytical, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, jural, ethical, and pistical.[91] He defines the aesthetic mode as "the field of harmony," and of the lingual says, "By the lingual, we are to understand everything that is language, that is, not only the spoken but also the unspoken part of it."[92] Subsequent reformational philosophers have discussed the validity of certain modes, renamed or removed them, and suggested the inclusion of new modes not in Vollenhoven's initial scale. Seerveld's contribution to this discussion is his vigorous assertion that the aesthetic is an irreducible mode, and indeed should be placed closer to the bottom of the scalar system, between the techno-formative and the lingual modes. His scale looks as follows: numerical,

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[90] Affiliated with the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam.

[91] Dirk H. T. Vollenhoven. *Isagôgè Philosophiae* (Dordt College Press, 2005), 37.

[92] ibid, 26

spatial, physical (movement), organic, psychic, techno-formative, aesthetic, lingual, analytic, social, economic, jural, ethical, and confessional.[93]

There are definite and confessed commitments to structuralism in Seerveld's philosophy, but he clarifies that the search for modalities is not a positivist move of identification nor an act of sifting between differences in form, but rather a search for irreducibles. A mistake is made when these modes are considered to be static entities. "Philosophical idealists normally recognize, rightly so I think, the legitimacy of delimiting, in an open-ended way, certain irreducible features of things that cannot be conceptually determined… Idealism goes wrong, however, in ascribing entitary reality to what is essentially an abstraction from modal structuration. As if *modes* be *things* — which they are not."[94] It is necessary to state the irreducibility of an aesthetic mode in response to philosophies which undervalue its importance and consequently are prone to denaturing the artistic and creative in both their theory and praxis. Seerveld contextualizes his modal aesthetics anthropologically. Nevertheless his aesthetics are not a search for an essentialist-turned-authoritarian definition of human nature, since his commitment to valuing imaginativity means that aesthetic activity is a continual dialogue between Creator and created about who the person *may* become through the artistry of living. It emphasizes the aesthetic as irreducible so that an artist may feel confident in defending it as a valid source for epistemological discovery. Seerveld contrasts this type of structuralism to its antithesis in pragmatics: "Pragmaticistic analysis tends to undo any hypostatization of structure…Pragmaticists, by and large, are also happy to functorialize entities, and by a kind of perverse, kenotic logic convert any internal, nature-defining criteria of something into various

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[93] Calvin Seerveld, *A Christian Critique of Art & Literature*. (Toronto Tuppence Press, 1995), 100.

[94] Italics within quotations are Seerveld's own emphasis. *Rainbows for a fallen world*, 106.

external use-relations, so that things only be what they function as."[95] To avoid the abuses of both these extremes, definition instead serves the following limited but useful purpose for philosophical discussion: "But definition, rightly conceived, gets at only *one*, albeit crucial, *factor* of what may be several necessary ingredients to what you are investigating, and the ontic status of the defining feature is an (abstract) how, not a simple what-totality."[96] Discussing the aesthetic mode makes conversations about human creativity gain a certain tangibility.

Human imaginativity and allusivity:

For Seerveld, the aesthetic is marked by its 'allusive' character. "Allusivity" is itself a bit of aesthetic linguistics on the part of Seerveld, an onomatopoeia of meaning, in that the word demonstrates the layers of nuance-making that he believes constitutes aesthetic activity. It is a conglomerate of "illusive" and "elusive"; the aesthetic is both the creation of demonstrative metaphorical meaning and also incredibly hard to outline or describe due to the abstract nature of our theoretical access to it.[97] The irreducible 'how' which constitutes the aesthetic mode is not allusivity itself but rather a human proclivity to discover this sort of allusive meaning. Allusivity itself cannot be *the* irreducible since not everything has allusivity but rather the potential to contain it if a human observer or maker intends it. "Imaginativity is making-believe and doing as-

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[95] ibid, 107.

[96] ibid, 108.

[97] This is a hallmark of Seerveld's writing (and translation!) style which I have really come to appreciate; he does not hesitate to coin a new word or mess-about with a pre-existing one in order to convey his intended meaning or produce a certain affect in mind of the hearer or reader. If one wants to understand what Calvin Seerveld thinks about allusivity in language, one should start by reading his books. He has oft-times apologized to me that Chapter 4 of *Rainbows for a fallen world* is so "jargony" but I think the quirky character of the invented words in the chapter is effective in communicating the many tiny nuances to his thought.

if, a blessing that provides nuanced knowledge: The crux of imagining as an irreducible kind of

human activity is found in making-believe, as we say, in doing as-if. I am not yet talking about

artistic activity. Imagining is more elementary than making art."[98] "Art' is secondary, and is then

the relationship between a human aesthetic subject (possessing this natural bent toward

allusivity) and an artefact "qualified by an aesthetic object-function."[99] It is crucial that 'art' is

understood as being born out of a relationship between the subject and object since artwork

cannot be created or conceived of without a human mind bent toward producing allusive content

in their work.[100] The difference between art activity and non-aesthetically qualified activity is the

presence of this suggestivity or nuance, and the difference is most easily marked by anecdotal

evidence due to its elusive nature: "What sets off art from peeling potatoes and riding a bike or

bare handicraft is not that it is 'fine' art or that it is marked necessarily by 'beauty.' Peculiar to art

is a parable character, a metaphoric intensity, and elusive play in its artificial presentation of

meanings apprehended. Art calls our attention in capital, cursive letters, as it were, to what

usually flits by in reality in fine print. There is a type of exploratory, uncovering, at-the-frontier

element prevalent in art."[101] Seerveld's writings on human creativity writ large could not be

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[98] Seerveld, *Normative Aesthetics: sundry writings and occasional lectures* (Dordt College Press, 2014), 5.

[99] Seerveld, *Rainbows for a fallen world,* 129.

[100] "Although I cannot develop a full-blown, biblically framed anthropology here, it is important for my argument still coming that I call your attention to the fact that this quality of imaginativity characteristic of humans resides in all the other ways the Lord created us to be too…I do not propose surgeons make imaginative guesses at which organ to excise when they pick up the scalpel, nor that theologians rest with fanciful hunches on exegesis of texts. And I do not hold that there is a lockstep consequence between the proportion of imagination one has and its effect on one's speech or friendships…But one's speaking and love-making and ability to implement plans are deeply coloured by the caliber and exercise or atrophied lack of muscle tone to a person's imagining." *Normitive Aesthetics: sundry writings and occaisional lectures,* 5.

[101] Seerveld, *Rainbows for a fallen world,* 27.

confused for open theism, but his account of human creativity is at certain points startlingly similar to the description of creativity provided by many open theists, such that the comparison should be mentioned. The largest similarity comes with the overwhelming emphasis that imaginative thought *must* be part of reading scripture, or it will run contrary to a certain facet of God's design for humans. Nicholas Berdyaev was an early writer in the open theist tradition, and he phrased it this way: "It is imperative to bear in mind that human creativity is not a claim or a right on the part of man, but God's claim on and call to man. God awaits man's creative act, which is the response to the creative act of God."[102] Berdyaev maintains that creativity is a core theme of Christianity, beginning with Christ's creation of the world, such that both Christian life and the means of salvation must involve some creativity, or it would not be fitting with respect to the nature of life as God created it. Berdyaev describes creative life as a 'flight toward the infinite', a sort of transcendental work carried out by material means.[103] So while Seerveld does not proclaim open theist ideas concerning the means of salvation, there is a shared view that the eschaton cannot be precisely defined because it is an on-going process dependent on humans creatively responding to the Gospel message. Life with and through biblical texts must be of an unfolding character, where much is yet to be discovered and it is not just a recapitulation of earlier answers or forms, a conviction that clearly comes through in Calvin Seerveld's approach to biblical hermeneutics as well.[104]

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[102] Nicholas Berdyaev, "Dream and Reality," *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* (Eerdmans, 2005), 277.

[103] ibid.

[104] There is also a certain whiff of Hegelian notions of the Spirit working in History, looking to see where the Spirit might popup next, though these are subtle and not direct associations in Seerveld.

Seerveld discusses imagination along Kantian lines; for both, imagination is an irreducible type of intellection. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant separates intellective activity into three kinds: apprehension (sensibility), recognition (understanding, perception) and imagination.[105] There is a synthesis between sense and perception, a circular relationship in which knowledge is born. Imagination, by contrast, is dependent upon that synthesis of apprehension and recognition but they are not dependent on imagination. Imagination is dependent because it seems to rely on the presence of concepts, abstracted thought which is created in the mind by the synthesis of apprehension and recognition.[106] For Kant, the relationship of imagination to that synthesis of apprehension and recognition, as well as its important roles as the intellective process associated with concepts rather than objects, places imagination in the realm of 'transcendental' faculties. "The synthesis of apprehension is therefore inseparably combined with the synthesis of reproduction. And since the former constitutes the transcendental ground of the possibility of all cognition in general (not only of empirical cognition, but also of pure *a priori* cognition), the reproductive synthesis of the imagination belongs among the transcendental actions of the mind, and with respect to this we will also call this faculty the transcendental faculty of the imagination."[107] Compare Kantian vocabulary of "transcendental faculties" to that of "irreducible modes" in the Reformational tradition, that is, both describe a prior aesthetic knowing to other, analytic or logical ways of knowing. As Seerveld attempts to understand aesthetics within the Reformational framework, he moves aesthetic

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[105] Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason.* (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

[106] Andrew Brook. "Kant's View of the Mind and Consciousness of Self." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online)*.

[107] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* 230.

activity (the product of imaginative thought), close to the bottom of his modal scale, aligning it with Kantian aesthetics.

Allusivity in ordinary utterances:

The next problem is how to discuss allusivity in the 'everyday.' It is that irreducible imaginativity, a proclivity toward allusivity, which accounts for the presence of the aesthetic in things and experiences which are not objects of art. Being imaginative is so central to human living that even the ordinary and common get peppered with it. The common object and the artistic object (material or otherwise) can be distinguished by their degree of allusivity. Concerning allusivity in language, Seerveld wrote: "Also, the feature that determinatively marks certain language as poetry, distinct from quotidian discourse, is allusiveness."[108] Allusivity in the everyday is a matter of degree; in poetry and poetic uses of language allusivity dominates, not that it is only present in the poetic. "When language is heightened aesthetically, that is, when the connotative layer embedded in every language is given free play, so to speak, so that the metaphorical underside of language comes to dominate rather than just remain latent, then the speaking becomes poetic. In an oral culture the flowering of public speech as an art becomes story-telling, and that act becomes crucial for the transmission of that language community's tradition."[109] In the quotidian, suggestion and connotation are present, but in works of fine art (or poetry, dance and other art forms) connotation dominates and suggestivity is heavier. The aesthetic becomes condensed.

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[108] Seerveld, *Rainbows for a fallen world,* 128.

[109] Seerveld, "Babel, Pentecost, Glossolalia and Philoxenia: No Language is Foreign to God." *Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages* (Vol 2, 2001), 10.

This modal description, where the allusive content is present in ordinary life but not dominant, allows for a discussion of the aesthetic in everyday speech as well. Previous discussions of aesthetics in language have focused on poetry and literature, the places where artists have had opportunity to pause and reflect on how to best shape words to generate allusive meaning. Aesthetic activity happens in ordinary utterance as well, not just poetics, and identifying the aesthetic as an irreducible mode defends the idea that there can be allusivity present in even the non-intentioned and non-deliberative speech humans utter, in the utterances gathered by linguists in the field and not just by admirers of poetic verse. The presence of the aesthetic is already assumed in the lingual and analytical modes because it precedes, that is, the aesthetic is a prior condition for the emergence and meaning of the lingual and the analytic modes and its character is present in them by retrocipation. The ludicrous idea, then, is not that humans make ordinary language allusive, but rather that allusivity could ever be removed from a discussion of ordinary grammar, since aesthetic judgments will always be changing and shaping the grammar of persons and communities. Tolkien, as seen in Chapter 2, was especially attuned to this when crafting his artificial languages to seem as natural as possible. Consider a child learning a language and using it to create allusive meaning: What is commonly overlooked is that the language the child inherited from their parents and previous generations is almost an aesthetic artefact. As languages are used, words and grammatical structures are brought into and dropped out of use,[110] such that when it arrives at a new generation and the child interacts with their language environment, the language they encounter is the result of successive aesthetic judgements about how to use that language. Before anyone actually uses their speech allusively, they are employing an already aesthetic-ed language. Language differs from other employments

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[110] Perhaps for their ability or inability to help the speaker create allusive content.

of the aesthetic in that it is passed down to a new generation with an implicit history of continuous though non-static aesthetic use rather than being spontaneously created. Discussing the formative role of the aesthetic in language will look different than discussing the formative role of the material out of which a vase is made, because the lingual material that forms a grammar changes with use, unlike the way that potter's clay was just clay before it was brought into aesthetic use for the making of pottery. Speakers inherit language from a previous generation, and as a 'medium' it is already aesthetically informed.

The lingual in the modal scale, discussions with current linguistic practice:

The argument for moving the aesthetic further down the modal scale has been made, with reference to Kantian theories of the mind. How does the lingual category, indeed the one where we find the phenomenon of language and the subject of this thesis, relate to the aesthetic mode? To recall, Seerveld places the modes as follows: numerical, spatial, physical, organic, psychic, techno-formative, aesthetic, lingual, analytic, social, economic, jural, ethical, and confessional. The techno-formative is a new category since Vollenhoven, and the aesthetic mode is seventh position from the bottom in ordering rather than eleventh. Lingual also follows the aesthetic rather than proceeds it, however both the modes have moved downwards.

Consider for a moment what the field of linguistics says about the phenomenon of language, particularly generative grammar. Methodologies of Chomskyan linguistics operate on the theory that humans are 'hard-wired' for language. Every human is born with a capacity for language and a "generative theory of grammar proposes a single set of rules from which all the grammatical sentences in a language can be derived."[111] Each human language is a particular

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[111] *Typology and universals: similarity and difference?* The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language. ed. by David Crystal. Cambridge University Press, 1987. pg. 84

manifestation of some of the possible grammatical structures which the human brain can allow for, but not all of them. The boundaries of human language are set as the range of possible grammatical structures contained in all languages, the hypothesis being that if a structure were possible, it would have presented itself in one of the thousands of languages in use or previously used by humans. The 'universal' grammar is an analysis of the features of all individual languages, and is constantly being updated or amended as new languages are studied or discovered.

There are similarities within the discipline of linguistic *philosophy* to these Chomskyan articulations of *a priori* ability, namely constitutive language theory. Not only are humans hardwired to be linguistic creatures, but it is that ability which makes thought possible at all. Charles Taylor discusses the 'constitutive' view of language in *The Language Animal*, placing constitutive theorists Herder, Hamann, and Humboldt in contrast with 'designative' language theorists Hobbes, Locke, and Condillac. Of the designative view Taylor says, "This is the classic case of an enframing theory. Language is understood in terms of certain elements: ideas, signs, and their associations, which precede its arising."[112] That is, the designative view says signs and naming come first and speech comes out of some logical congruency. Constitutive theorist Herder focuses instead on the 'reflective,' a type of background competency for linguistic activity which enables the thinker to make distinctions between things around them. It is that competency which allows for the existence of Kant's transcendental imaginative faculty to work with concepts instead of objects, to permit the creation of signs and metaphorical meaning. "We might try to formulate it this way: prelinguistic beings can react to the things which surround them. But

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[112] Taylor, Charles. *The Language Animal: the full scope of human linguistic capacity*. (Belknap Press, 2016), 5.

language enables us to grasp something *as* what it is."[113] Furthermore it reorders the discussion

of the relationship between the sign and the signified: "What is being lost from sight here[114] is

the background of our action, something we usually lean on without noticing. More particularly,

what the background provides is being treated as though it were built to each particular sign, as

though we could start right off coining our first word and have this understanding of linguistic

rightness already incorporated into it."[115] Taylor further lines up Kantian theories of the mind

with Herder's notion of reflection. "So Kant by articulating the background understanding of

aboutness sweeps away the empiricist atomism of experience. I want to suggest that Herder does

something analogous. By articulating the background understanding of the linguistic dimension,

he also undercuts and transforms the designative theory of language dominant in his day. And to

make the parallel closer, one of the features swept away is precisely its atomism, the view that

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[113] ibid, 6. Emphasis is Taylor's own.

[114] That is, in the designative philosophy of Hobbes, Locke and Condillac.

[115] ibid, 13

This brings to mind Tolkien's *Mythopoeia*, from *Tree and Leaf,* and its statements on naming:

"You look at trees and label them just so,
(for trees are 'trees', and growing is 'to grow'); you
walk the earth and tread with solemn pace one of
the many minor globes of Space:
a star's a star, some matter in a ball compelled to courses
mathematical amid the regimented, cold, Inane, where
destined atoms are each moment slain." (stanza 1)
and later…
"Yet trees and not 'trees', until so named and seen -
and never were so named, till those had been who
speech's involuted breath unfurled, faint echo and
dim picture of the world…" (stanza 3)
Here, the act of naming and the creation of signs is secondary to and dependent on the presence
of a human (and that that human also be a linguistic being).

language is a collection of independently introduced words."[116] Wittgenstein's theory of language games helps Taylor articulate the problems of the designative view. "Wittgenstein pushes our intuitions to the following revelatory impasse: what would it be like to know what it is you're attending to, and yet be able to say absolutely nothing about it? That answer is, that this supposition shows itself to be incoherent."[117] At this juncture it is important to point out the startling similarities between Wittgenstein's *language games* and Chomsky's own distinction between competence (the awareness of how one's language is often used; a type of prescriptive grammar) and performance (how one actually uses their own language in practice). For Taylor, Herder in conversation with Wittgenstein, Kant, and other German romanticists show that there must be some prior linguistic ability (the type of reflection which produces distinction) to proceed and indeed enable thought, or theories of the mind and intellection crumble. "Being in the linguistic dimension not only enables a new kind of awareness of the things which surround us, but also a more refined sense of human meanings, and hence a more complex gamut of emotions."[118]

How should all of this linguistic philosophy be understood in relation to Seerveld's reordering of the modal scale? Would not the theory that language permits thought in the first place be contrary to placement of the lingual after the aesthetic mode, since imagination is a lingually based phenomenon and the action of creating allusive content would be dependent on the ability to think imaginatively? Indeed there maybe a synthesis of these philosophers available if this apparent *contretemps* is not dismissed at surface level. Seerveld has told me that he

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[116] ibid.

[117] ibid, 32.

[118] ibid, 28.

believes that linguistic activity is separated between two modes, with the structure of grammar

(read: Chomskyan generative grammar) at the techno-formative level and actual utterance and

use of language at the lingual level, leaving the aesthetic mode in between grammar and

utterance.[119] This fits with Chomskyan description of language where competency and

performance are not coeval. Additionally, there are similarities between Seerveld's allusivity and

Wittgenstein's language games, wherein a child has to be aware of the context in which the

language is used (grammatical rules of play) before they can play and do something new.

Seerveld's separation of lingual activity between the techno-formative and lingual modes not

only fits these pervasive philosophies of language, but his placement of the aesthetic between the

two draws out further comparisons with Wittgenstein. Allusivity, the nuance-making activity

present in everyday speech and life, matches the attention to 'play' and game theory in

Wittgenstein. Within a language game, new meaning is created when a speaker knows the game

in which a word or concept is being used, but then does something new with it. Wittgenstein's

chosen vocabulary of 'game' and entering into 'play' emphasizes the inherent imaginativity or

playfulness which characterizes lingual activity. Playing-about in the language game is not only

how nuance is created, but also the means for language acquisition,[120] and Seerveld has deep

allegiance to the vital role of imagination in any educational or learning context. To say that

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[119] Personal meeting. May 9th, 2017. We discussed the premise of my thesis, and I asked a few
questions about grammar and his arrangement of the modal scale.

[120] "6. We could imagine that the language of (2) was the whole language of A and B; even the
whole language of a tribe. The children are brought up to perform these actions, to use these
words as they do so, and to react in this way to the words of others… 7. In the practice of the
use of language (2) one party calls out the words, the other acts on them. In instruction in the
language the following process will occur: the learner names the objects; that is, he utters the
word when the teacher points to the stone. — And there will be this still simpler exercise: the
pupil repeats the words after the teacher — both of these being processes resembling language."
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1986), 4-5.

language acquisition could occur without allusive playfulness is self-referentially incoherent, since imaginative thinking is the means of acquisition.

<center>Part 2: Linguistic aesthetics in practice</center>

Situating the conversation:

It is my contention that the methodologies and vocabulary from the field of philosophical aesthetics can be usefully employed by grammarians, linguists, and literary critics as they distance themselves from atomist and logic-centric views of language. Similarly, aestheticians should be interested in the way the aesthetic is taken up in common language and not just poetry, if it were viewed not as pedestrian but rather as a more primary occurrence of the aesthetic in language and the fomenting context for later poetic uses. Specifically, a focus on allusivity, if properly understood as the main characteristic of the aesthetic, could illumine discussions of semantics, syntax, and phonology. More broadly, an eye toward allusivity will assist philosophical inquiry into the phenomenon of human lingual activity due to the irreducibility of the aesthetic from the acquisition of grammar and its use.

Where does one begin discussing allusivity? An easily accessible anecdote of the linguistic aesthetic at work in everyday speech is the humble pun. Unfortunately, even a good pun elicits groans of half-frustration-half-amusement rather than being understood as a perfect example of the building of allusivity in common language use. Anne Carson explains this beautifully in her essay, *Eros the Bittersweet*:

> "A pun is a figure of language that depends on similarity of sound and disparity of meaning. It matches two sounds that fit perfectly together as aural shapes yet stand insistently, provocatively apart in sense. You perceive homophony and at the same time see the semantic space that separates the two words. Sameness is projected onto difference in a kind of stereoscopy. There is something irresistible in that. Puns appear in all literatures, are apparently as old as language, and

unfailingly fascinate us…Within a pun you see the possibility of grasping a *better* truth, a *truer* meaning, than is available from the separate senses of either word. But the glimpse of that enhanced meaning, which flashes past in a pun, is a painful thing. For it is inseparable from your conviction of its impossibility."[121]

Certainly, there are 'punsters' who are quite equipped to notice and point out pun-worthy wordplay, but the fact that people play with words all the time and indeed have the imaginative capacity to notice the potential for word-play, be it in puns, rhyme or some other kind, points to how ingrained play is in our linguistic experience. Carson also describes the ability of a pun (as a poetic device, but also toward more workaday, humdrum ends beyond poetry on a page) to participate in the conveyance of truth, as the aesthetic is equipped to do in a way that is different from other types of truth-telling. Allusivity as a *layering of meaning* is clear in the phenomenon of puns. Puns are sort of midway between bland speech and poetry, but how have even the minutiae of grammar and non-poetic speech been shaped by aesthetic use?

In the previous chapter, I examined the way that J.R.R. Tolkien was applying aesthetic analyses of spoken and written language to his creation of invented languages. One of his first considerations was the matter of sound.[122] There is a small and growing consideration of phonosemantics (sometimes called sound symbolism or phonesthesia) within linguistics,[123] focusing on onomatopoeias and other attempts to encode non-morphological sounds (i.e. sound effects not words) through morphology. This is not limited to 'whoosh' and 'bang,' but can also be

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[121] Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 34-35. Emphases are author's own.

[122] "Certainly it is the contemplation of the relation between sound and notion which is a main source of pleasure." Tolkien, *A Secret Vice*, 16.

[123] Most examinations of phonosemantics have been language-specific (and encouragingly non English!), as they should be. See *Sound symbolism,* by Leanne Hinton, Johanna Nichols, and John J. Ohala. (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

seen in the way *glisten* and *glimmer* employ a *glossy* "-l" sound to convey the smoothness[124] and shine of an object. Notice the alliteration in the sentence I have just written. *Glisten* and *glimmer* required *glossy* to describe the quality of the phoneme which causes their similitude, and *smoothness* and *shine* were required to denote the quality of the thing *glisten*, *glimmer*, and *gloss* describe without re-using those words. It's a circular game; euphony and alliteration are central to our linguistic experience. Phonosemantics is perhaps the sub-section of current linguistics which most closely resembles aesthetics in practice, since the answer to understanding the encoding of meaning within the mechanisms of a grammar itself does not strictly lie in analyzable phonemes and morphemes. Instead, phonosemantics relies on an understanding of the historical context surrounding the language being studied and what constitutes pleasure (or shock, outrage, delight, or ambiguity; whatever the desired outcome is) in the receiving audience.

A case study of phonosemantics:

Phonosemantics has been quite useful in settling debate and providing clarity on a specific issue which has divided scholars, particularly Christian scholars, for several decades: 'speaking in tongues'. The 60's and 70's bore the attempt of many linguists to analyze these glossa, and it was estimated that in 1971, 4 million people in the United States were frequent practicers of the phenomenon.[125] A more specific analysis of the phonology, morphology, syntax, and syllabification of a native English speaker practicing glossolalia was performed in 1982 by

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[124] Example provided by Ross Smith, "Fitting Sense to Sound: Linguistic Aesthetics and Phonosemantics in the Work of J.R.R. Tolkien." Tolkien Studies (Vol 3, 2006), 1-20.

[125] Michael T. Motley "A linguistic analysis of glossolalia: Evidence of unique psycholinguistic processing." *Communication Quarterly* (Vol. 30, 1982), 1.

Michael T. Motley. His goal was to examine ways in which the speech samples he collected were within or beyond the boundaries of human language ability (as defined by universal grammar, or cross-linguistic patterns), asking whether glossolalic utterances resemble natural languages. The answer was both a resounding yes and a resounding no. For Motley, glossolalia showed evidence of a distinct type of linguistic encoding, different from that of other speech acts, which if not properly examined, would require a complete reworking of the encoding theory present at the time. Motley's phonemic work-up confirmed what was previously expected: there is little phonologic variation or utilization of diverse phonemes, but rather a repetition of a few key phones and clusters, i.e. the 'babbling' that is commonly associated with glossolalia. Within a lengthier speech, however, there were more "outlying" phones: where in natural language a smaller number of sounds would be repeated and recombined throughout, there was a greater number of sounds or clusters used only once. To summarize, glossolalic speech had a wider sound palette, but sounds were used very frequently or very rarely, with no median in phonological frequency. The phonemic inventories did not match that of the native language of the speaker (in this case English) nor was it similar to that of the natural languages with which it might initially be confused (listeners cited that two of the samples sounded like Spanish and Russian, respectively, but neither sample bore more than a passing phonemic resemblance to these languages).[126] The samples also related a higher number of consonant clusters (CCs) than English, but given the broad phonology of English vowels, any language which employs fewer

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[126] ibid. It is important to consider at this juncture that glossolalia produces languages not spoken by any language group (i.e. supernatural languages), and glossolalia should be differentiated from xenoglossia, or the ability to spontaneously speak a previously unknown foreign language. Xenoglossia is not a proven phenomenon, and even attested cases can be explained through other phenomena. In summation: it is probably not real.

vowels is prone to CCs.[127] From these analyses, it is possible to know that speaking in tongues does not resemble a specific language or even the language in which the speaker is most comfortable. The sound palette of the speaker is not prescriptive for the sound palette of the glossa, and so in this way, glossa are not like natural languages. Human mouths are only able to articulate a finite number of sounds, meaning that all phones produced occur in some natural language somewhere, although not in the same combinations. As an embodied phenomenon, glossolalic statements are bound to the possibilities of manner and place of articulation which are found in natural language, and in this way, resemble it.

Once it was determined that no actual morphemes were encoded in the utterances and that there was no definable syntax, linguists lost interest since they did not fit any of their working definitions of what a language is. And to be sure, speaking in tongues glossolalia has none of the hallmarks of *natural* languages but these 'super-natural' utterances are nevertheless an interesting occurrence of some kind of pre-lingual activity. They are speech and sound without any of the powers of distinction that typify Herder's linguistic dimension: pre-linguistic in the sense that children's babbling is pre-linguistic, which is not to say that those who practice glossolalia are childish or that their utterances are meaningless, because children imitate sounds around them, testing to see what is the essence of the sound before they are capable of using it to generate thought about that sign in a constitutive way. Similarly, the characteristic feature of glossolalia is the ideophone. In 2015, Evandro Bonfim published a study observing a Brazilian charismatic movement known as Canção Nova.[128] His goal was to use an ethnographic understanding of speaking in tongues to develop the foundation for a more thorough ontology of

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[127] ibid. pg. 24.

[128] Evandro Bonfim. "Glossolalia and Linguistic Alterity: The Ontology of Ineffable Speech." *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* (Vol 6, 2015), accessed online.

glossolalia.[129] Bonfim notes that glossolalia is "very relevant for the contemporary ethnographic debate that has been persuading anthropology to move 'beyond the human.'"[130] For Bonfim, "glossolalia thus represents extreme linguistic alterity because the glossa is unknown to a degree that is greater than any foreign language."[131] In this way, glossolalia is a foreign, exciting experience to the speakers; the thrill of interaction with or use of foreign language is multiplied as they consider themselves in contact with the Divine. In talking with members of the Canção Nova, it emerged that glossolalia was viewed not in terms of individuality or 'innerness,' but externality or alterity. The practice was not viewed as beneficial only for the speaker, but was an expression of otherness. Rather than looking for any syntactic or segmental meaning, an interpreter should look for meaning in the ideophones of the speech. Those ideophones have origins in biblical themes of language, spirituality, and the person of God. First, the fast rate of speech can leave a forceful impression upon the hearer, thought to mimic the sound of thunder and reference John 12:28-29 where God's voice is confused for thunder: "Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.'" [132] Second, the consonant ʃ has also been noted for its similarity to whispering of the Holy Spirit through the medium of wind. Employment of this phonosemantic, aesthetically-heavy methodology to analyzing glossolalia was able to uncover the origins of such allusivity in a way that other linguistic methods were unable to. These examples show that glossolalia is actually an aesthetic

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[129] In this way, my project has a similar goal.

[130] Bonfim, 1.

[131] ibid.

[132] The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (Good News Publishers, 2001).

activity born out of a deep connectedness to its historical and literary context. There are perhaps

many deconstructions which should be made of the pneumatology which undergirds the

phenomenon of glossolalia, but its existence should always be recognized as an allusively-heavy

practice within a religious, aesthetic framework of meaning. While glossolalia probably cannot be

considered in any way an example of "everyday" grammar, the usefulness of phonosemantics in

providing clarity about the means of signifying in glossolalic utterance suggests that there are

other phenomena in need of aesthetic analysis. What layers of allusivity have been missed and

passed over because the aesthetic in language was restricted to poetics and not a wider

consideration of linguistic activity?

The role of the linguistic aesthetic in building words and sentences:

Phonosemantics is not the only potential form of inquiry that could develop from

linguistic aesthetics. Syntax and matters of word-order have been taken up under poetics, often

with a connection to their rhetorical value, but if allusivity is only more highly condensed in the

poetic it must be present and identifiable in everyday speech as well. Linguists classify the

syntactic typology of languages at the most basic level according to the ordering of their thematic

roles within a phrase or larger sentence.[133] English and Mandarin are Subject-Verb-Object

languages (SVO) while Hindi and Latin are SOV. The vast majority of the world's language are

either SVO or SOV languages, while VSO, VOS, OVS, and OSV are represented but only make up

about 15% of the world's languages all together.[134] The smallest of these groups is the OSV, a

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[133] "Thematic role" is a better term for how something functions in a sentence than 'case', because there are instances were the subject of a phrase may be in the accusative case, and not the nominative case at all, as is the case with indirect speech in Latin. Therefore, 'subject' and 'object' are not interchangeable with 'nominative' and 'accusative.

[134] Charles F. Meyer, *Introducing English Linguistics* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36.

collection of Amazonian languages which make up less than 1% of the world's languages. There

is a topic-then-comment orientation in American sign language which is at certain points similar,

but OSV is best known as being the syntax of Yoda. Yoda's word-order has always been a

distinctive character feature, an amusing trait that lends itself well to comedic GPS settings, but

what unconscious effect do various configurations of syntax have upon the hearer? The legacy of

Latin poetry is an easily recognizable example since Latin poetry, so prized and lauded in its own

day and afterward, was so copied and mimicked even in English poetry (as can be so clearly seen

in the lineage of Vergil, Dante, and Milton[135]) that Latin syntax has a silent but bound association

with sophistication and intelligence. The result is that even in everyday English speech a speaker

is tailoring their syntax, likely employing more Latinate word-order when giving a speech,

talking to someone older than them, or when they want to give an aura of authority. A child

asked to deliver a message to their sibling knows instinctively that there are several ways to

convey the same conceptual piece of information, but only one way to say it that will really

frustrate that sibling and amuse herself. "To err is human" will always be a punchier translation

of Seneca's "errare humanum est" than "humans make mistakes," not only because it is more

faithful to the Latin syntax but because, as a result of careful translation throughout the

centuries, we associate the employment of the infinitive-as-subject construction with wise Roman

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[135] I probably come by my love of the linguistic aesthetic honestly. After an email correspondence with my father, John de Boer, about the curiosity of Latin syntax in English poetry, he sent me the following verse, which I treasure always:

I did think Milton's phrasing, now disused, To
be like unto syntactical nuts:
Hard shells have they which must first be crackèd
But within the tender fruit doth savour Of our
two-fold linguistic heritage.

scholars and their philosophical insight. "To err" has a punchy judiciousness that we have grown to admire.

In the same way that Latinate syntax sounds authoritative, so does Latinate vocabulary. Due to the English language's strange German-Romantic genealogy there has been a subtle divide and judgment cast between the two parents of its vocabulary, with French vocabulary viewed, again, as more sophisticated than its rustic, Anglo-Saxon counter-part. In English, we have a word for the animal and then a separate word for its meat: cow-beef, chicken-poultry, pig-pork. Some will argue that this linguistic duplicity is one reason so many people have trouble mentally connecting the food on the table with the animal which produced it, but the double occurrence of this semantic content is due to an old class divide. After the Norman invasion, the aristocracy was French, the commoners English, and so the highest culinary culture employed French vocabulary, leading to jokes that food is English in the barn, and French when it hits the table.

> "These lexical invasions did leave some cute little wrinkles here and there. Because when French ruled the roost, it was the language of formality; in modern English, words from French are often more formal versions of English ones considered lowly. We *commence* because of French; in a more mundane mood we just *start*, using an original English word. *Pork, très* culinary, is the French word; pig — *très* beastly — is the English one. And even cuter are the triplets, where the low-down word is English, the really ritzy one is Latin, and the French one hovers somewhere in between: Anglo-Saxon *ask* is humble; French-derived *question* is more buttoned up; Latinate *interrogate* is down-right starchy."[136]

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[136] John McWhorter. *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold History of English.* (Gotham Books, 2008), viii-ix. Emphases are the author's own.

Quite interesting to me is the fact that some of the most basic and common words, *bread, fire, house, wife, love* are all Germanic. The most common and most intimate of words could not be ousted by French aristocracy. Huzzah for the commoners!

Frequently, French and Latinate roots are given more posh associations, and not just culinary words. This has persisted, backed by the use of French and Latin as *linguae francae*, and Latin as the universal language of science and Linnaean classification. They are even called the *Romance languages*, with all the allusive connotations of gentility and knighthood. Everyday language, both the snobbish and the humble, is marked by allusivity with a back-story. This examination shows that the most minute components of language, down to the sound palette they employ and the morphemes with which words are built, have an aesthetic history which is already present and constantly being differently reformed.

Conclusion:

In this chapter a parallel has been drawn between Calvin Seerveld's modal aesthetic theory and current linguistic philosophy in order to show the potential for a type of linguistic aesthetics which, working in reference to both fields of inquiry, might be a new voice in linguistic analysis. Some examples of the type of inquiry that linguistic aesthetics could offer has been provided, through case studies of how allusivity is encoded in phonology, syntax, and morphology. The envisioned methodology for linguistic aesthetics may look like a type of sociolinguistics which benefits from the aesthetic philosophical tradition's concepts and vocabulary, such as Kant's theories of the mind and Seerveld's "allusivity". As will be seen in the next chapter, language education which is attentive to the aesthetic in language gives students a further set of skills for thinking critically about texts or an awareness that there are many ways to convey the same piece of information which will produce diverse results.

> "What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is
> related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something
> which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life
> become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not
> our life?" Michel Foucault, *Ethic: Subjectivity and Truth.* pg. 261

An understanding that language is constitutive of thought demands a reorientation of the

conceived relationship between grammar and experience of every kind. It is no longer possible to

ignore the importance of a language education which teaches the student about how language

shapes their experience and action. Such a reorientation makes explicit the entry of grammar

into the realm of ethical decision-making, because language is the medium through which all

thought and activity are undertaken, including the formation of the self as an ethical agent. The

methods by which grammar is taught and introduced in the first place may determine how a

student views language's relationship to ethical living once they leave formal education.

Language education which focuses strongly on an inherent logic to human language or suggests

that clarity of communication is its final telos is not an education which can highlight the link

between language and the formation of the ethical subject, nor can it emphasize the allusivity in

language if its methodology is not aesthetically undertaken. It is in this way that Michel Foucault

becomes a useful interlocutor because of his ability to demonstrate how the technologies which

form the self shape the sort of self that it will be. Foucault's early deconstructive work has been

used by linguists and language educators to slowly undo an unhealthy paradigm of prescriptive

linguistics, but his later reconstructive thought on how to identify healthy technologies for

formation has been largely disregarded by these same linguists and teachers. Foucault's later

work can show how to open technologies of the self to be aesthetically minded and aesthetically

undertaken without losing sight of the fact that such self-formation requires *ascetic* discipline; use

of both *aesthetic* and *ascetic* activity for ethical formation is of particular utility to language

teachers because it can emphasize that language learning should be a creative endeavour which

will also require hard work to accomplish. In this chapter I will show why a connection between

grammar and the self must be made in the moment of grammatical education and how Michel

Foucault's later philosophy is able to be a resource to teachers of the language arts.

The self shows itself in grammar:

      In 2004, psychologists from the University of Texas analyzed the grammar of texts

created by undergrad students, spurred by research into depression which suggested that

depressive states shaped the thought structures of those in depressive states.[137] Hoping to see

whether these thought structures could be seen in the grammar as well, students were given

questionnaires about their history of mental health and asked to write longer essays on various

health related questions so that their grammar could be analyzed. Student responses were

separated into "currently-depressed", "formerly-depressed", and "never-depressed" and then

researchers looked at pronoun usage and distribution, and word-choice. They discovered that the

currently-depressed and formerly-depressed authors used a higher number of first-person

singular pronouns (I, me, mine, etc), as well as a higher frequency of negatively 'valenced'

vocabulary (concerned with thoughts, emotions, and situations they perceived as negative):

> "In keeping with the notion that depression-vulnerable individuals struggle to keep
> depressive thoughts at bay, formerly-depressed students showed significantly
> greater use of 'I' words (compared to the use shown by never- depressed
> students) only during the third segment of the essays. Our interpretation is that as
> formerly-depressed students wrote about the self-relevant experience of coming to
> college they became progressively more ensnared in self-preoccupations, while

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[137] Stephanie S. Rude, Eva-Maria Gortner, and James W. Pennebaker. "Language use of depressed and depression-vulnerable college students." *Cognition and Emotion* (2004), 1121-1133.

never depressed students perhaps became progressively more absorbed by other non self) aspects of their narratives."[138]

Since this study, James W. Pennebaker and his colleagues have discovered that this is a cross-linguistic phenomenon. Even in languages where personal pronouns are non-essential and only used for emphasis (like Italian's *(io) parlo* and French's *je brosse les dents* rather than *je brosse mes dents*) the first person singular was still used more frequently by the currently- and previously depressed.[139] Pennebaker and fellow researchers have gone on to investigate the way that pronouns vary by a speakers' position in various social hierarchies, whether narcissism is reflected in pronoun use, and the possibilities of using writing as a therapy because traumatic emotions and events can be addressed at the sight of their arising to consciousness: the grammatical level.[140]

This study, along with thousands of similar studies into the effect of various internal and external factors upon the idiolect of individuals makes explicit the close relationship between the self and the language of the self: it is in language that a self is developed and formed, as well as

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[138] ibid, 1130.

[139] James W. Pennebaker, *The Secret Life of Pronouns (*Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

[140] Ewa Kacewicz, James W. Pennebaker, Matthew Davis, Moongee Jeon, and Arthur C. Graesser. "Pronoun Use Reflects Standings in Social Hierarchies." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* (Vol 33:2, 2014), 125-143.

Angela L. Carey, Matthias R. Mehr, Mitja D. Back, Fenne Große Deters. "Narcissism and the use of personal pronouns revisited." *Journal of personality and social psychology online* (Vol. 109:3, 2015), 1-15.

Janel D. Sexton and James W. Pennebaker. "The healing powers of expressive writing." *The psychology of creative writing.* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 264-273.

any self-reflective-of-self thought, and the self in turn shapes the grammar generated. Grammar is both shaped by and shapes the thoughts and actions of the speaker. Showing the results of this study is certainly a tool for educating students on the connection between the way they speak and their internal life, but how can the methodology through which all of language education takes place be created to reflect the relationship between grammar and the formation of the individual? It is in this context that I propose Michel Foucault as a valuable resource due to his clear articulation that the means of formation, the technologies of the self which an ethical subject employs, are not incidental to the final outcome, but rather inform it and outline its possibilities.

Part 1: Foucault, language, and technologies of the self

The early and late Michel Foucault, 1926-1984:

The ethical dimensions of Foucault's work appears chronologically later in his work. This area of his work focuses on how each person must undertake the difficult, life-long task of remaking one's self again and again toward an aesthetically shaped and aesthetically driven ethical self. Earlier writings were more focused on genealogy, in the footsteps of Frederick Nietzsche. These genealogies traced the history of ideas, including thought about historiography itself, as well as sexuality, politics, and religion. What Foucault was interested in was not the type of questions that a society would ask about a given topic, but rather what enabled a society to ask questions which were previously taboo or disallowed; not so much the discourse as the powers surrounding the discourse which outlined what the discourse could accomplish. Foucault suggested that certain events, titled perhaps as scientific breakthroughs, could have happened at other moments in history, but the discourse in which the inventor found himself or herself would

restrict arrival at certain conclusions. In other words, discourses provided the limits of what

could be discovered, not human cognition.[141] He wrote extensively about the rise of the clinic as

the context for treating madness, showing how the discourse about what "madness" was led to

the formation of new practices for treating it. Along similar lines, he wrote about various themes

relating to sexuality: pleasure, homosexuality, and pastoral intervention. The focus here was the

same: asking what allowed certain ideas to gain a foothold, where was their genesis, and what

practices and habits developed as a result of those changing discourses.

In the last few years before his death, Foucault turned his attention toward ethics. His

later work does not represent a discontinuity with his earlier deconstructive work, it is his

attempt to understand how to construct the self ethically once one understands, as his early work

suggested, that all the practices, habits, and styles of education which contribute to the

formation of an individual are born out of discourses which are quite often lacking self-

awareness and transparency. How does one become an ethical agent in the midst of discourses

on ethics which are often ignorant of the abuse they cause? These two parts of his scholarly life,

the one concerned with humans as objects of manipulation by external powers and the other

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[141] From the infamous Chomsky-Foucault debate of 1971, concerning *grilles* or paradigms of knowledge which shift and disappear:

Foucault: "Take for example medicine at the end of the eighteenth century: read twenty medical works, it doesn't matter which…what one talked about, the way one talked about it, not just the remedies of course, not just the maladies and their classifications, but the outlook itself. Who was responsible for that? Who was the author of it? It is artificial, I think, to say Bichat, or even to expand a little and say the first anatomical clinicians. It's a matter of collective and complex transformation of medical understanding in its practices and its rules. So if one studies the history of knowledge, one sees that there are two broad directions of analysis: according to one, one has to show how, under what conditions, and for what reasons the understanding modifies itself in its formative rules, without passing through an original 'inventor' discovering the "truth"; and according to the other, one has to show how the working of the rules of an understanding can produce in an individual new and unpublished knowledge." Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault. *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature* (The New Press, 2006), 18.

with building a self as subject, are not to be viewed as in tension with each other but as an early

diagnosis of the pathologies of power, and then a later consideration of how to resist these

powers in life-giving ways. He outlines his notion of power in *Discipline and Punish*: "this power

[on a body or object] is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or

preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions — an effect that

is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated."[142] Power, in

this sense, implies action. Power does not always mean, though it can mean, direct force. Rather,

it can manifest itself in discipline and manipulation of one person by another, through various

modes of gesture and behaviour in the relationship between the two persons or groups. Because

power is action, and can be enacted through so many mediums, power relations can be found in

every level of our society, in any form of societal discourse. Zachary Simpson, whose book *Life as*

Art describes the connections between Foucault's thought on power and his later aesthetics of

existence, explains the all-encompassing nature of power relations this way: "If power is

disseminated across multiple domains and through manifold strategies, then its techniques and

sites of application are just as varied: the body and its ways of acting, seeing, ingesting, and

excreting; the mind and its ways of representing, signifying, and expressing."[143] The presence of

power relations in every mode of discourse is what requires any ethical response to it to be just

as wide in its aim. Herein lies the freshness of Foucault's answer to his own project of

deconstruction: the formation of the ethical self is a creative process.

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[142] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage Books, 1977), 26.

[143] Zachary Simpson, *Life as Art: Aesthetics and the Creation of the Self* (Lexington Books, 2012), 243.

Foucault's philosophy of language:

        Outlining Michel Foucault's personal philosophy of language is a slow, piecemeal activity, which must rely on a variety of his written works for full articulation, partially because his corpus is so vast that his own opinion of various philosophical schools of thought changed during his career and partially because he was not a philosopher of language specifically. It is clear from his writings that Foucault was reading grammarians quite early in his academic career, as can be seen in his work, *The Order of Things* from 1966. That book, described as structuralist by those who did not understand his archeological work as being in response to structuralist methodologies of history,[144] contains a chapter broadly titled *Speaking* which covers a wide range of disciplines concerned with language, including etymology, grammar, and psycholinguistics. Section I, *Criticism and Commentary* suggests something of a constitutive language theory, positing that language "is not an exterior effect of thought, but thought itself."[145] Then: "Language is the original form of reflection, the primary theme of any critique. It is this ambiguous thing, as broad as knowledge, yet always interior to representation, that *general grammar* takes as its object."[146] He calls language "reflection," employing the same word as Herder, to name it an *a priori* and not *a posteriori,* something "interior to representation," included *within* representation and not resulting *from*. Of representation he says:

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[144] Thomas Flynn. "Foucault's Mapping of History," *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault.* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32.

[145] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (Vintage Books, 1994), 78.

[146] ibid, 84.

"Representations are not rooted in a world that gives them meaning; they open themselves on to a space that is their own, whose internal network gives rise to meaning. And language exists in the gap that representation creates for itself."[147] He nods toward the necessity of considering discursivity in translation of words and ideas between languages: "For the enigma of a speech which a second language must interpret is substituted the essential discursivity of representation: the open possibility, as yet natural and undifferentiating, but which it will be the task of discourse to fulfil and to determine."[148] He finishes this section with a discussion of the recent trend of critiquing language itself as incapable of sustaining philosophical dialogue, or conversely 'sacralizing' it as privileged in its ability to perfectly represent human experience. "Such is the diversity of the critical dimension that is necessarily established when language questions itself on the basis of its function…These two ways by which language established a relation with itself were now to enter into a rivalry from which we have not emerged — and which may even be sharpening as time passes."[149] He speaks of this widening dichotomy as being stifling to the philosopher, rendering them unable to act if these philosophers of linguistic criticism are to be believed: "However, until the connection between language and representation is broken, or at least transcended, in our culture, all secondary languages will be imprisoned within the alternative of criticism or commentary."[150] In this section, Foucault has shown affinity to a constitutive view of language and argued for a mediation between philosophies of language which argue for a privileged relationship between language and truth (logical-positivists

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[147] ibid.

[148] ibid, 79.

[149] ibid, 81.

[150] ibid.

included) and those which are critical of language's suitability as a vehicle for truth (as was popular with some French intellectuals of his time).

In the second section, *General Grammar*, some agreement may be found with the methodologies or theoretical commitments of current linguistic practice, in the tradition of Chomskyan and Saussurean linguistics. Foucault's interaction with structuralist linguistics was complicated by his distaste for the use of linguistics by linguists and others to describe the 'nature' of a human. In this chapter, he discusses the stronghold of general grammar as an epistemological domain, as a discourse which captured the imagination of the French academics throughout the 18th century. It is important to remember why Foucault is writing about general grammar here; he is performing an archeological reading of the discipline in itself, to uncover why certain methodologies were privileged by those in academic power as accessing truth. It becomes an influential form of epistemology because "in relation to the evident, necessary, universal order introduced into representation by science, and by algebra in particular, language is spontaneous and un-thought-out. It is, as it were, natural. It is equally, according to the point of view from which one looks at it, an already analysed representation and reflection in the primitive state."[151] Modern linguistic methodology is used to analyze spontaneous speech fragments rather than provide commentary on novels, poetry, and other clippings of writings for this reason, that it is a more primary linguistic experience. The act of composing a prescriptive grammar in the manner of the 17th and 18th century grammarians "presupposes languages, even the most primitive and spontaneous ones, to be rhetorical in nature," because rhetoric regards

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[151] ibid, 83.

the spatiality of a language, while grammar provides information about how one language positions its boundaries within that space.[152]

It is here that Foucault addresses the issue of prescriptive grammar. 20th century linguistics may have moved from prescriptive grammars to descriptive accounts of grammar in specific contexts but still struggled with how to create new methodology:

> "[I]t is easy to see how the sciences of language are divided up in the Classical period: on the one hand, rhetoric, which deals with *figures* and *tropes*, that is, with the manner in which language is spatialized in verbal signs; on the other, grammar which deals with articulation and order, that is, with the manner in which the analysis of representation is arranged in accordance with a sequential series. Rhetoric defines the spatiality of representation as it comes into being with language, grammar defines in the case of each individual language the order that distributes that spatiality in time. This is why, as we shall see, grammar presupposes languages, even the most primitive and spontaneous ones, to be rhetorical in nature."[153]

This proclivity toward seeing language as logical representation, so inherent of the old grammars, is the reason for the change toward descriptive methods of data collation, and also why Chomsky stresses linguistic capacity, in so far as it does indeed have finite boundaries for an infinity of utterance, as the site of creativity, rather than determination. Most interestingly, however, is that Foucault does not settle on descriptive grammar as being the final solution to the problems presented by prescriptive grammar.

> "It is thus part of the very nature of grammar to be prescriptive, not by any means because it is an attempt to impose the norms of a beautiful language obedient to the rules of taste, but because it refers the radical possibility of speech to the ordering system of representation. Destutt de Tracy once observed that the best treatises on logic, in the eighteenth century, were written by grammarians: this is because the prescriptions of grammar at that time were of an analytic and not an aesthetic order."[154]

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[152] ibid, 84.

[153] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 84.

[154] ibid, 87.

It is an *aesthetic* order which is described here as the antithesis to logical prescriptions of grammar, not a *descriptive* order. As its name suggests, descriptive grammar is able to call attention to and name features of languages, but it ultimately ends in the type of linguistic relativism that Foucault was searching to avoid.[155] An aesthetic grammar of language would be able to affirm the ability of language to partake in truth-telling, be itself a locus for poetic unfolding of meaning, as well as reintroduce an element of critique which descriptive grammars fail to provide.

The section *General Grammar* also includes a discussion of etymology and lexicography, and the intended end goals and aims that practitioners of these types of linguistic inquiry have had throughout time. "The history of various languages is no longer anything more than a question of erosion or accident, introduction, meetings, and the mingling of various elements; it has no law, no progress, no necessity proper to it."[156] It is crucial that etymology, insofar as it is a backwards looking search for the origin of words, avoid becoming a teleology of how certain words should be used, becoming prescriptive of usage. A useful analogy can be made here, between Foucault's genealogy and etymology and between archeology and lexicography. Etymology and genealogy (in the tradition of Nietzschean method) both look for origin without suggesting *telos*. Archeology and lexicography examine strata, at a specific time and place, to look at usage or employment of specific words or ideas within a larger discourse of ideas or words. Paul Veyne says of him, "Foucault shows on the contrary that words mislead us, that they make us believe in the existence of things, in the existence of natural objects, of governed

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[155] Remember how earlier he set up a dichotomy between logical positivists and those in the French academic circle who felt language was ill-equipped for truth-telling.

[156] ibid, 90.

subjects, or of the State, whereas these things are only correlatives of the corresponding

practices. For semantics is the incarnation of the idealist illusion… Finally, discourse and its

hidden grammar do not belong to the realm of the implicit; they are not logically contained in

what is said or done, they are not axiomatic to or presupposed in what is said or done, for the

good reason that what is said or done obeys a grammar of chance and not a logical, coherent,

perfected grammar."[157] Foucault's use of genealogy and archeology, the times when he is

essentially attempting an etymology or lexicography of a word or idea, he is unraveling their

complicated history, showing how they 'mislead', to use Veyne's term; he is deconstructing a

teleology rather than constructing one.

The analysis of power relations in his early deconstructive work was also deliberately

couched in a grammatical framework, employing the language of 'object' and 'subject'. This use

of a meta-grammar, in order to conceive of the self as both acting and acted upon, is able to

discuss power over the subject in a way that Cartesian emphasis on the subject-above-all-else was

unable to articulate. Certainly, Foucault had a deep understanding of the dangers of not fully

outlining constitutive language theory. Failure to do so was to do abuse to users of language, to

fail to recognize it as creative potential which precedes and enables thought, rather than an *a

posteriori* act which could be berated and manipulated into submission. If Foucault uses language

as his metaphor to explain power relations, how might the action of moving from an acted-upon

object to an acting-subject be understood? An expansion of this metaphor might be the Greek

middle voice, a set of verbs which express that the action is done by the subject to itself, where

the person or thing is both the actor and the recipient at the same time. Most languages have a

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[157] Paul Veyne. *"Foucault Revolutionizes History," Foucault and His Interlocutors.* (University of

Chicago Press, 1996), 157.

grammatical way of encoding this phenomenon, such as deponent verbs in Latin, or the use of reflexive pronouns in many Indo-European languages (I make *myself* a work of ar*t. Je me fais une ouevre d'art)*.[158]

Care of the Self and the art of living:

It is appropriate to discuss this move by the object toward greater subjectivity as some sort of Greek middle voice because Foucault's ethics were created in an encounter with Greco-Roman thought. How does one move from being only an object into an acting, ethical self? What is the process of this conversion? Fully aware of the distinction between wishing to be free of external powers and actually being able to free oneself of them,[159] Foucault describes this action of self-formation as a sort of creative resistance to discourses of power. Creativity is a necessary facet, because discourses of power are everywhere in our society and the modes of resistance must be equally varied. Honesty about the self and its formation, the way in which it has been shaped by the powers which are subject over it, is the first step. Simpson also writes: "The constructive dimension of Foucault's ethics therefore begins with his invocation to create true discourses about the self and the world which reciprocally modify both… Foucault's call for creating true discourses about oneself is to wrest the locus of agency away from normalizing discourses and place it within one's own control."[160] Because, for Foucault, power is enacted in every relation but is not always negative, other subjects or people can help in this process of discernment or genealogy. "And most importantly, power relations do not act purely as negative

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[158] It is with a small sense of shame that I admit I do not know how the reflexive action of a verb is encoded beyond the Indo-European sub-group.

[159] A note regarding usage: 'oneself' is used in translations of Foucault's works into English more frequently than 'one's self'.

[160] Simpson, *Life as Art*, 254.

or repressive: power relations are productive and generate forms of normality by inciting one to act or behave in certain ways."[161] To show power is to influence, always formative, never neutral, but not always negative. He points to the role of a sage or wise *other* in ancient discourses, but is always clear that the presence or absence of such a sage does not exempt the self from being self-aware. Foucault speaks of creating alternative discourses of the self, which differ from the normalized discourses that are commonly held and enabled by power.[162]

In the last few years of his life, Foucault examined the idea that philosophy had always been and henceforth should be considered as an *art of living*. Tracing the genealogy of this idea started with the Delphic oracle's words, *gnothi seauton (*know thyself). Knowing the self was the first step to living well. Foucault traced this theme through Greek, Roman, and early Christian texts, showing that wherever there was a commitment to the wisdom of *gnothi seauton* there was also *epimeleisthai seautou¸* (take care of thyself). He demonstrated in much subsequent history, care of the self was overshadowed by the Delphic oracle, rather than properly understanding that care of the self was a means of fulfilling the oracle.

> "There are several reasons why 'Know yourself' has obscured 'Take care of
> yourself.' First, there has been a profound transformation in the moral principles
> of Western society. We find it difficult to base rigorous morality and austere
> principles on the precept that we should give more care to ourselves than to
> anything else in the world...We also inherit a secular tradition that sees in external

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[161] ibid, 244.

[162] This action of creating an alternative discourse reminds me greatly of Richard Kearney's notion of "re-narrating" a past event or dialogue, so that there is the possibility of conceiving of it or acting about it differently in the future. See Kearney's *Strangers¸ Gods and Monsters.* It seems similar to Stoic practices of preparation unto death, whereby the subject considers situations not yet extant so that they may have control over them before they arise, but lacking any sort of purification or suppression of the emotions which typifies Stoic and Cynic practice. Foucault works quite a lot with Stoic technologies of the Self[capitalization?], but plays up the double meaning of *askesis* as both ascetic and aesthetic, such that creativity and aesthetic/sensate living are still vital to the project of self-formation.

law the basis for morality…The second reason is that, in theoretical philosophy from Descartes to Husserl, knowledge of the self (the thinking subject) takes on an ever-increasing importance as the first step in the theory of knowledge."[163]

Not only were *gnothi seauton* and *epimeleistha seautou* guiding principles in much of pre-modern philosophy, but wherever they were present, habits and practices were set up to support them. "In this practice, which is at once personal and social, self-knowledge occupies a considerable place, or course. The Delphic principle is often recalled; but it would not be sufficient to see this merely as the influence of the Socratic theme. In reality, a whole art of self-knowledge developed, with precise recipes, specific forms of examination, and codified practices."[164] Foucault had demonstrated in *The Birth of the Clinic* that the practices for treating madness were to make the subject aware that they were "mad," following the overwhelming Western opinion that knowledge of the self was true freedom, instead of encouraging the subject to care for themselves and alleviate symptoms.[165] By going back to the Stoic and Epicurean sources, Foucault was able to find occasions where attentions were given to both care and knowledge, and as a result, the practices and habits that emerged were quite different. The great insight in this stage of his work is that it matters *how* the self is formed, not just what it becomes, since the *how* will shape *who* the self is in the end. Foucault began to outline what technologies of the self were created for the formation of ethical agency within this alternate tradition of thought.

Within the three traditions, Greek, Roman, and early Christian, Foucault analysed the types of power relations at work within all the technologies. Greeks and Romans often emphasized the importance of teacher-student or mentor-mentee relationships, a technology

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[163] Michel Foucault. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth.* (The New Press, 1994), 228.

[164] Foucault. *The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of the History of Sexuality.* (Vintage Books, 1988).

[165] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An archeology of Medical Perception.* (Routledge, 1973).

taken up in a slightly altered manner by monastic Christianity, where an individual gained

knowledge of the self and freedom from affliction of the soul by submitting to an authority,

particularly the monk or mother superior in charge of their order. "In Christianity, asceticism

always refers to a certain renunciation of the self and of reality because most of the time the self

is a part of that reality that must be renounced in order to gain access to another level of reality.

This move to attain the renunciation of the self distinguishes Christian asceticism."[166] In later

periods of Christian history, an emphasis on confession was the hallmark of pastoral care; one

could not truly receive forgiveness until the sin had been confessed verbally to a priest, who had

the authority to grant absolution. The power relations were clear. Foucault's definition of power,

as never neutral, but not necessarily negative, meant that he identified how technologies of

confession and submission were complex; sometimes abusive, but not in all cases. The emphasis

on telling the truth verbally and to an audience was a healthy technology for him so long as not

coerced, and *parrhesia* (a subject telling a truth about his- or herself in a move to cement the self

in distinction from other subjects) remains an important theme in his work.

In distinction, increasing renunciation of the self was not the hallmark of Stoic

philosophy. "In the philosophical tradition inaugurated by Stoicism, *askēsis* means not

renunciation but the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not

through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth."[167] Both

the means of arriving at the self and the type of self that resulted from those means differed: "It

has as its final aim not preparation for another reality but access to the reality of this world. The

Greek word for this is *paraskeuazō* (to get prepared). It is a set of practices by which one can

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[166] Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 238

[167] ibid.

acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action."[168] Care implies

that labour or work is involved: "This time is not empty; it is filled with exercises, practical tasks,

various activities. Take care of the self is not a rest cure. There is the care of the body to consider,

health regimens, physical exercises without overexertion, the carefully measured satisfaction of

needs. There are the meditations, the readings, the notes that one takes on books or on the

conversations one has heard, notes that one reads later, the recollection of truths that one knows

already but that need to be more fully adapted to one's own life."[169] He highlights several Stoic

practices, *praemeditatio malorum, melete/meditatio,* and *gymnasia*, all types of training which

require the subject to pay attention to the situation and train themselves to respond. The best

known of these is *praemeditatio malorum* (preparation for [future] evils) where the subject

imagines the worst possible outcome now, so that if such a situation were to ever arise, they can

respond in a considered way, but also save some mental anguish because they will have already

processed the horror in advance. One of the other practices is that of *publicatio sui* (self-

examination), either journal keeping or writing letters to a trusted mentor or confidant,

examining the actions and thoughts of one's day to see how to improve in the next. In order to

emphasize how different the types of practices and habits which arise from an attention to or

ignorance of *epimelesthai seautou* really are, he makes a strong distinction between Stoicism and

Christianity. In reality, there are resources within the Christian tradition for talking about care of

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[168] ibid, 238-239.

[169] Foucault, *The Care of the Self,* 51.

I have always found it interesting the way care of the self shaped Greek medical practice. They
were fascinated by the effects of seasons, food, and activity on the body, and readily formed
practices towards the maintenance of the body, but that care of the body was never far separated
from the spiritual implications of such care or seen in contrast to the project of knowing one's
self.

the self as a form of knowledge of the self, particularly within the preaching of Jesus. It is, as

Foucault pointed out, that mentions of building the self through technologies of self care have

been systematically overlooked, especially after Descartes' *cogito*.[170] Distinctions between

traditions of practice are often exaggerated in Foucault for rhetorical effect, but the

nuancefulness of his understanding that these traditions are historically interconnected and

conforming is still evident in the way his own technologies for ethical formation draw from Stoic,

Epicurean, and Christian sources.

In reading these ancient and pre-modern sources, Foucault is attentive to the times when

care of the self is seen as a means of knowing one's self. What he noticed in reading those

sources is that while care and formation of the self (toward ethical agency or other ends) is

conceived of as an ascetic task of long dedication toward self-mastery, it was as much a creative,

aesthetic act. "[The] elaboration of one's own life as a personal work of art, even if it obeyed

certain collective canons, was at the centre, it seems to me, of moral experience, of the will to

morality in Antiquity."[171] While an individual would be forming herself as an ethical subject

within the moral framework provided by her society, she would at the same time be undertaking

this poetically, artfully, and creatively. If philosophy was truly an *art* of living, that *art* had an

aesthetic. Foucault relates art to ethics in this way: "What strikes me is the fact that, in our

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[170] The theme of preparation is a good example, heavily emphasized in both Stoicism and the Christian gospels and pastoral letters: "The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray." 1 Peter 4:7 NIV. Also, control of fear and negative emotions so that there is peace of mind in times of trouble: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?" Matthew 6:25 NIV. Self-examination is another permutation of Stoic practice in monastic life.

[171] Foucault, *An Aesthetics of Existence. Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interview and other writings, 1977-1984* (Routledge, 1988), 49.

society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?"[172] His insight on practice and habit comes back again: if the *how* is important, the aesthetic that a technology of self-formation has testifies to its goals and commitments. Of a technology one may ask: what is the aesthetic of this practice, what are the identifiable features, and what is the subject's reaction to the aesthetic of the practice which they undertake? Foucault must have in mind the dark aesthetics of insane asylums, hospitals and prisons in the Victorian era, the panopticon model; the grim spirit that was exuded by that whole set of practices which aimed at healing the body or reshaping a subject's soul. Since these technologies are part of a sensate environment and as such have identifiable form and characteristics, one of the ways the benefits of those practices can be judged is by examining the aesthetic they produce. Foucault even suggested that Nietzsche's genealogical work was one attempt among many to argue for an aesthetics of existence; in Nietzsche's case, whether practices could be seen in light of their potential for *zoë*, or life. "However, a whole section of nineteenth-century thought can be reread as a difficult attempt, a series of difficult attempts, to reconstitute an ethics and an aesthetics of the self. If you take for example, Stirner, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, dandyism, Baudelaire, anarchy, anarchist thought, etcetera, then you have a series of attempts that are, of course, very different from each other, but which are all more or less obsessed by the question: Is it possible to constitute, or reconstitute, an aesthetics of the self?"[173]

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[172] Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth¸* 261.

[173] Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France¸ 1981-1982.* (Palgrave McMillan, 2005), 251.

Talking about an aesthetics of ethical living pulls on another large theme in Foucault's work: power and resistance. If Foucault's early work is called 'deconstruction' this stage in his work could be titled 'reconstruction', how to live well once you realize the falsities contained in discourses around you about how to act or how to be. To fashion one's self as art is to be resistant to normalized discourses about the way one should or should not interact with the world around oneself. After a new discourse of the self has been created (an on-going project certainly, but a necessary first step to other modes of creative resistance) the ethically-oriented subject can work to counter-act the negative forms of power received from those previous and well-entrenched discourses. This is where the vocabulary of aesthetics and self-as-art come to bear. "Ethics, if they are to have meaning for Camus or Foucault, must be formulated as a creative response to dominant modes of thought, action, and oppression."[174] The self might not always have agency to counter these powers, but can always continue to cultivate a *will* toward this power. As mentioned, such a will must be creative in its resistance. One of the ways to act against normalizing discourses is to take pleasure in life, especially in things which the discourses typify as perversions, because even where one lacks agency, one has a will to derive pleasure. Volumes 2 and 3 of his history of sexuality begin to develop this theme of pleasure as a subversive action. Foucault's concept of taking pleasure should not be equated to any promotion of wantonness. The development of an art of existence "likewise emphasizes the importance of developing all the practices and all the exercises by which one can maintain self-control and eventually arrive at a pure enjoyment of oneself."[175] Ascetic life and aesthetic life are not polar opposites, as if the ethical self was built in a purely rational manner, but rather work

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[174] Simpson, *Life as Art,* 241.

[175] Foucault, *The Care of the Self,* 238.

harmoniously as a method of building the self toward more ethical behaviour and genuine

appreciation of human life.[176]

Part 2: Language education and aesthetics of existence

Deconstruction and modern linguistics:

　　　Since Foucault's work on deconstruction in the 1970's, linguists have been looking to his

work to understand the roots of modern linguistics in some colonialist thought about the

superiority of certain languages over others, English especially. By and large, and with

intentionality, modern linguistic has replaced a colonialist discourse of English's superiority with

one of the equality of all human languages. Alastair Pennycook's *English and the discourses of*

Colonialism relies deliberately on Foucauldian theories of power and discursivity.

> "This line of thinking draws explicitly on Foucault's view of history. At the
> beginning of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault's (1979) broad-reaching study of
> prisons, punishment, and institutions such as education he asks why he is
> engaging in such a history… Following this notion of 'histories of the present', this
> books is not, therefore, a linear history of development of certain ideas over time,
> and certainly not a story of progression from bad past to better present; rather, it
> is an attempt to understand historical periods and events in their own terms and
> then to trace, *genealogically*, how ideas, concepts and beliefs have both shifted and
> continued into the present."[177]
> "Thus my interest here is in exploring not so much whether such discourses are in
> some sense *true* but rather what such discourses *produce*, what, in a Foucauldian
> sense, are their true effects. And I want to argue that it is in adherence of such
> discourse to English that we can see the continuing effects of the cultural
> constructs of colonialism."[178]

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[176] Here is a question that was much asked in our classes at the Institute: Why did Foucault not interact more in his writing with Epicurean thought? Truly, this is an interesting question, since Epicurean philosophy and ethics have mechanisms for both the actions of seeking pleasure and continual *askesis*.

[177] All italicizations are those of the original author. Alastair Pennycook, *English and the discourses of Colonialism.* (First edition, 1998. Routledge, 2002), 40.

[178] ibid, 138-139

Besides understanding how colonialism shaped the methodologies of linguistics, there has been a large scale attempt to record endangered languages before they are extinct so that the 'universal grammar'[179] may include their parameters and structures as well and not be wholly guided by languages which have political or cultural heft. A recent resource on the methodology for data collection which is mindful of the diversity is Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald's *The Art of Grammar: A Practical Guide*. She writes in her introduction: "To remember: Every language has a grammar, and no grammar is primitive. However, some grammatical descriptions are. A few missionaries of the colonial era claimed that non-European languages (Chinese, South American — you name it) have 'no grammar.' What they meant was that the grammatical mechanisms of these languages were beyond them to discover: they do indeed differ from what a European might expect."[180] There is now a wider understanding that a failure to study the intricacies of foreign languages led to wide xenophobic behaviour and abuse, but also resulted in the purported 'universal' of universal grammar being defined by only a select number of languages. Similarly, linguists have asked whether certain methods of analysis work from an Anglo-centric framework and view other languages as permutations or bastardizations of English, rather than acknowledging that

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[179] See chapter 3 for a discussion of what the "universal grammar" means.

[180] Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald, *The Art of Grammar: A Practical Guide*. (Oxford University Press, 2015), 5.

English is merely one combination of features possible according to universal grammar, as each language also is.[181]

<u>Late Foucault and language education:</u>

        While Foucault's early deconstructive work has been largely employed by linguists, his later reconstructive work has largely been ignored and not meaningfully employed by those same linguists or by language educators.[182] There is a stand-alone exception in the research of Nelson Flores of the University of Pennsylvania, who writes, "However, those in the field attempting to develop alternative pedagogical approaches to language teaching aligned with these new understandings have yet to systematically engage with Foucault's later work that attempted to reconstruct the world outside of modern relations of power. Specifically, these alternative pedagogical approaches continue to be embedded within a discourse of truth that is antithetical

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[181] See the article, "How much linguistic philosophy is Anglo-linguistics?" from C.W.K. Mundle, *A Critique of linguistic philosophy: revised edition with Second Thoughts — an Epilogue after Ten Years.* (Glover & Blair Limited, 1970)

I certainly remember syntax classes in my undergraduate training, as late as 2010, where we started with English syntax trees and then rearranged them to show non-English examples. Understandably, we had to move from the familiar and readily-accessible into the unfamiliar, but it was never framed such that we understood English was a selection of certain features, as were all the others. When there was verb movement in a tree, it was described as verb movement from the English, not the universal; never was it suggested that English also had verb movement from the neutral framework. So often trees are set up to accommodate English and then adjusted to other languages, as if English were the universal and not a permutation of it as well. The very methods seem Anglo-centric, and we were never told they were not. So there is much yet to be learned.

[182] At some point in a course I was taking on Foucault, Nietzsche, and genealogy, I wondered why, if Foucault felt he had found an answer to his own earlier work, it was similarly not taken up by the same people who liked his genealogies. I went looking for examples of Late Foucault in linguistics, and found only one person working on this: Nelson Flores. To my surprise and delight, he opens his article with a similar disbelief and conviction to use the art of existence as a resource for classroom teachers.

to Foucault's project."[183] Working on the late Foucault within the context of a bilingual

classroom, Flores wishes to argue "that a more thorough engagement with Foucault's later work

related to developing an *aesthetics of existence* offers insights in developing a new paradigm for

language teaching aligned with Foucault's conceptualization of truth to complement the insights

developed through language governmentality research."[184] Crucially, globalization proves the

invalidity of the idea that languages are stand-alone, such that there could be a 'superior'

language, since languages are always blending and language is no longer a reliable indicator of

social or class distinctions. "The first strand of the recovering the truth paradigm explicitly makes

connections to the context of modern-day globalization. The basic argument made by this school

of thought is that increased mobility associated with globalization has allowed for new fluid

language practices to develop that do not fit neatly into the national/colonial framing of

language governmentality."[185] Flores pulls from linguists who suggest a 'heteroglossic' view of

languages, "where languages are not seen as separable and countable but as interacting in

complex ways, and argues for a reconceptualized language education where fluid linguistic

processes would be allowed to co-exist through *translanguaging*."[186]

In discussing the aesthetics of existence, Flores demonstrates that its benefit lies in the

notion that attempts to resist or reshape normalized discourses must be creative so that it is not

draining or deflationary to the one resisting but instead freeing and invigorating. This is

especially important in an educational context, where students must be engaged and feel that

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[183] Flores, Nelson. "Undoing Truth in Language Teaching: Toward a Paradigm of Linguistic Aesthetics." *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* (Vol 28:2, 2013), 1.

[184] ibid. All emphases are those of the original author.

[185] ibid, 7.

[186] ibid.

their learning equips them. He describes the types of subjectivities which are developed as in "contrast with traditional notions of individuality in that the ultimate goal is not to discover one's supposedly true self but rather to experiment with various forms of being that attempt to challenge conventional norms. It is perhaps ironic to draw any normative ethos from this interaction with Foucault's thought, but if there is a normative aspect of Foucault's philosophy it is to constantly push the boundaries of what is considered normal and to constantly imagine, reimagine, and experiment with ways of being outside of these norms."[187] If the purpose of education is not simply to fill the child with knowledge but also to teach them how to think about that knowledge, the aesthetics of existence is a valuable tool for generating creative thought in students.

Flores undertook a case study in a middle school bilingual classroom where teaching methodologies were shaped by Foucault's aesthetics of existence.[188] Helpfully, he admits that using Foucault's late work is not setting up a supposed hegemony of truth. Instead, it was trying a new method among many for increasing subjectivity in the students. "[W]hat follows should not be read as *the* way of developing an aesthetics of existence through language but rather as one possible way thought of by one person attempting to develop his own language teaching practice into a 'work of art'".[189] He also suggests that his work be understood in reference to his teaching context, an English-Spanish bilingual classroom where each student has a different level of competence in the two languages, rather than a list of teaching methods for every

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[187] ibid, 9.

[188] There is a good discussion of aesthetics of existence, though the article does not outline what may have been Foucault's personal philosophy of language. I have tried to do so in the first part of this chapter, so that later I am discussing formation of methodologies which are consistent with what I understand of his linguistic philosophy.

[189] ibid, 11.

classroom.[190] In this bilingual classroom, the goal is not only to improve the students' ability for English, so instruction and work is done in both languages.

> "Yet, there is one major difference between this classroom and the classrooms described in the best practices literature for 'English Language Learners'— namely the ultimate goal of providing these supports. The goal in the current literature on "best practices" is to support students in the development of English as a second language—a language separate from the home language practices of 'English Language Learners.' In contrast with this, the major goal of the classroom described below is to add to students' linguistic repertoires and provide spaces for them to experiment with various subjectivities. As opposed to the traditional classroom for 'English Language Learners' which seeks to mold students into idealized speakers of Standard Academic/American English, this classroom seeks to create students who experiment with their linguistic repertoires in ways that undermine current linguistic relations of power through developing their use of language into works of art."[191]

To that end, students are allowed to work in either language when completing an assignment, a move which allows a student to consider why they prefer doing science in one language while writing poetry in another. Students demonstrate to themselves that each language will allow them to accomplish certain things, to do them in a way that the other cannot. Another child may find that the reverse topic-language combination works for them, but linguistic diversity is honoured in the method, and the students themselves wrestle creatively with the phenomena of linguistic features in multiple languages.[192] Following exercises, especially those that involve translation, students are asked questions about what was easy and difficult about the project

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[190] ibid.

[191] ibid, 11-12.

[192] It is hard as a teacher to remove from the classroom what ends up being a core motivator for young students: competition. I imagine that having students working on the same project in different languages means that the ability to directly compare one's work to that of another student is quite difficult, and subsequently, the student works creatively and independently without reference to the work of another.

because they chose one target language over another. This bilingual instruction also highlights examples of translanguaging in writing.

> "A second major learning experience that students participate in is to conduct a literary analysis of the work of authors who use translanguaging for stylistic purposes in exploring the theme of adolescence. Each of the pieces of writing will create an aesthetics of existence that creates new subjectivities that do not represent a static identity seeking to convey truth about oneself but rather represent attempts at consciously creating new subjectivities that will change once they have been written and/or performed."[193]

Students are similarly asked to reflect upon writing samples from translanguaging authors, to understand what was made possible by not limiting their writing to one language or another.

> "A culminating project for the unit is for students to produce a piece of writing exploring the theme of adolescence which experiments with language in ways that make their language use into works of art that create new subjectivities. In order to help them with this process, they are provided with graphic organizers that help them brainstorm ways of blending language forms in ways that convey the particular subjectivities they are attempting to produce. One student may experiment with blending a scientific linguistic form conveyed through English with poetry written in Spanish in the form of a comic as an attempt to convey her interest in science and comics as well as her commitment to challenging scientific language to become more culturally inclusive and more aligned with modern youth culture. Another student may decide to write and perform a spoken word piece in Spanish with a few key words in English that were key vocabulary words for the unit to demonstrate how his linguistic repertoire is growing to include academic words in English and challenge the dichotomy of academic and nonacademic language. Still another student might develop a written text in English but include some dialogue in a blend of English and Spanish to provide a more complex representation of the home language practices of her family along with an accompanying video that emphasizes the fluidity of her home language practices."[194]

Flores emphasizes that this type of project challenges the student to not only incorporate different types of media, but gives reflective distance for the student to consider how her language shapes how she approaches learning, communicating, and many facets of life which are

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[193] ibid, 13.

[194] ibid, 13-14.

all linguistically formed. Using multiple languages to discuss topics of adolescence and home life makes real for the student the idea that language is the medium through which all her ethical discernment takes place, and that the language or medium of language used for thought can shape the thought and choices made. The centrality of grammar and whole languages in how humans think, feel, and live is demonstratively proven in this type of educational instruction.

The classroom examined in Flores' research is a bilingual classroom, where instruction is carried out fairly equally in two languages. How might this approach to translanguaging, as an extension of Foucault's aesthetics of existence, be carried out in a monolingual environment, or in a second language classroom, where the goal is to learn a target language? By examining Flores's classroom and Foucault's own philosophy of language it is possible to arrive at some general themes for choosing instructional methods. The principle remains the same for a monolingual classroom: by allowing the students to choose the medium of language in which they wish to complete the project (or even taking out the choice factor but varying it deliberately from one activity to another), be it poetry, journalling or rhetorical presentations, the student is able to examine the aesthetic which can be produced by using language appropriate to each of those media. Using a variety of linguistic styles means that the student can see what aesthetic arises in poetry, what it allows and what it makes difficult. Similarly, by choosing to experiment in non-poetic genres of writing, they can examine how to shape the aesthetic in those genres, seeing that there is an aesthetic present in non-poetic speech as well. What can be discovered about her mother tongue when a student is allowed to report on diverse topics through keeping a journal or writing a poem about it instead of a paper? Exercises like that provide a reflection on the structure of one's own language which always doing projects in the same way every time cannot. In a second language classroom, where the goal is to have the student speaking a target

language and not the mother tongue, simply having a different genre of writing can allow students to learn about the flexibility of the target language (just as they are familiar with the flexibility of their own language), and also allow them to learn about the aesthetics which are present in various genres of the target language. Suddenly, they are exploring the aesthetics of a new language, and also establishing themselves as a subject in a new language by means of aesthetic and ascetic activity. They will come to embody the new language in a fresh way because they are interacting with its forms aesthetically and not through memorization or repetition. Memorization and repetition certainly have their place in the early stages of learning and memorization may mean that the student carries aspects of the language around inside them, embodying it in a certain way, but there are other ways to embody a language. Treating life as an artistic outworking is how Foucault suggested forming the self as an individual who could be aware of his or her interaction with normalized discourses. These may be tactics which have been employed before, but never as a self-conscious attempt to follow the expository wisdom of Foucault's early work with the solution he himself suggested.

Teaching a student to see the aesthetic in language by aesthetic methods of instruction requires a focus on delight; the delight of the sound of words, for the rhythms of language, and for the effects that they can have upon other people. Children can be taught not to associate grammar only with logic or with effective communication by talking in terms of pleasure and delight, by asking them what sounds are pleasant, asking them what caught their attention when listening to stories and reports. As they grow, they can be encouraged to think about how they can use words to delight others, what the role of creative language is in community, what can be accomplished by saying things in unconventional ways. Many children will have thoughts about these things, but have never been asked, so latent impressions can become stated thoughts.

Conclusion:

In Foucault's *Order of Things*, he discussed some of the large schools of thought about grammar which have shaped linguistics in approximately the last two millennia. In the broadest strokes, we see that the decline of prescriptive grammar led to a type of relativism in descriptive grammars. The problem that this presents is how to avoid prescriptivism in language education while maintaining that how we speak does matter, because it forms the self. Foucault demonstrated that prescriptive grammars could not be counter-acted by descriptive grammars alone. Descriptive grammars have been able to add a vocabulary of equality to linguistics, that all languages are diverse but no language is superior; in suggesting that descriptive linguistics is not the final end to the study of grammar, I still hope to find ways of maintaining this egalitarian and affirming wisdom from linguistics. To suggest an aesthetic account of grammatical structure is not to say that the problems of prescriptive and descriptive grammars have been solved, but to suggest that a grammar which focuses on an overlooked aspect of everyday communication, the aesthetic, mediates between denaturing language to the point of being merely for exact communication and attempts by relativists to sideline the possibility of forming the self through speech. Foucault makes explicit in his works that the technologies used to form the self as an individual matter, and if we wish to make the aesthetic of everyday language known to students, the means of education must be constructed toward this end. The wisdom in Foucault's aesthetics of existence, it seems to me, if brought into conversation with theories of language education, is that it can place emphasis on the aesthetic, but also the ascetic discipline required to create the self, the deep work of learning that student and teachers undertake. Educators who see the significance of Foucault's genealogical work should be excited by the opportunity for development that his theory of an aesthetic of existence presents.

<u>Conclusion: What now?</u>

I realize that in some respects I have been quite vague or underhanded about the way in which I am using the words 'aesthetic' and 'grammar.' In a way it has been very difficult to define or explain these words because I have struggled to find sources on this subject of 'linguistic aesthetics' and have thus had to rely on eclectic and inter-disciplinary areas of scholarship. Due to the allusive nature of the material itself, it was only appropriate to undertake this project itself somewhat allusively. Rather than being a traditionally explicative thesis, I have held up several thinkers within the same space so that my interaction with all three of them might generate new philosophical insight.

What is found in J.R.R. Tolkien's account of creating various invented languages is a consideration of the way sound and syntax, the matter of building discourse, can create affect. Tolkien considered his 'linguistic aesthetics' to be for his personal delight and interest. It may have been for personal interest, but I hope that I demonstrated in Chapter 2 the extent to which he was considering his audience and the literary history out of which his works would be presented, such that his attention to aesthetic is not merely personal style but allusively built within an artistic, poetic, and narratival context.

If I think of possible, future 'aesthetic grammars', I am envisioning how descriptions of various languages could be constructed along similar lines to Tolkien's, describing the phonosemantics and stylistic ways of constructing diverse speech and text, even within the same language. Aesthetic linguistics will also be attentive to historical linguistics, showing how a language's grammar was shaped through time by aesthetic considerations. Hopefully, this will be

done in the moment of elementary language education, and not as an afterthought in some buried poetry unit, but encouraging students to see the difference aesthetically between dialects of the same language or between two sentences with similar semantic content but rearranged syntax. The second goal of describing and teaching grammar with an eye toward its aesthetic history is to show how even every day speech contains allusivity and nuancefulness, that all grammar is aesthetic and not just poetics. Not only does this affirm the artistic side of the ordinary lingual interactions we all experience, but it also shortens the distance between poetic language and ordinary speech so that poetics are not seen as some higher order and unattainable way of linguistic being but a deeply accessible and human way of creating meaning. My interactions with Calvin Seerveld's writings were helpful for me in bringing these connections into the intellectual framework and vocabulary of the Reformational philosophical tradition.

Bringing Michel Foucault into the same thesis as medieval philologist J.R.R. Tolkien and Reformational aesthetician Calvin Seerveld is quite an unorthodox choice. For me, it seems that Michel Foucault speaks into his philosophical tradition with a large amount of hope. His large import from his early deconstructive work into the latter moments of his career is his insight that ways of being matter, that life should be undertaken aesthetically if it is to buck normativity and small-mindedness. I get excited thinking about how educational methodologies could be organized to open-up ways of being, and Foucault has taught me that aesthetics must be a driving force in the creation of new ways of being if the final subject is ever to be aesthetically inclined. Foucault's aesthetics of existence also suggests to me that aesthetic grammars created through the study of linguistic aesthetics are necessary modes of inquiry if we ever want to get

better at connecting language to ethics, to create in the mind firm links between the way we talk and the people we become.

If I could preempt or predict some of the reactions to my thesis from various strongholds of grammatical theory it would look something like this: To the linguistic relativist asking whether or not this is just a return to prescriptivism and also to the supporter of prescriptivism, I say that it is intended to open ways of being lingually but also reintroduce a measure of discussion about quality and influence. I'm very curious to see what people make of it. The great question for readers of this thesis and indeed for myself is where scholarship goes now. I would be very interested to see created or to construct myself an aesthetic reading of the English language which eschews prescriptive grammar while still making clear that the aesthetic of language cannot be ignored if it is to be life-giving. Secondly, I see the need for more foundational philosophy in aesthetic linguistics, to make the poetic speech and everyday speech at once both more clearly connected as well as distinct. My greatest hope is that I can begin to do some more research on these questions which is, as I hope this thesis has been, both concerned with the philosophy of grammar, and its praxis in grammatical education.

Many thanks, JRdB.

Good afternoon to everyone, and thank you very much for agreeing to participate in my defence. As nervous as I am, I am aware what a privilege it is to have so many doctors of philosophy give attention to my work and make themselves available to discuss it.

This thesis came about, in its broadest sense, when I began to wonder what grammatical pedagogy would look like if descriptive grammar, of the Chomskyian-universal variety, was taken seriously by language teachers. I noticed that two separate sets of philosophical commitments were enacted by language teachers and linguists. So it is not merely insincere flattery when I say I am pleased to have Doctor Carvill on my panel, because her philosophy of language and language teaching seem to be of a singular impetous. Even after admitting a preference for descriptive grammars over prescriptive ones because descriptive grammars stopped placing value judgments on languages, accents, and dialects along racial and class lines, I considered there to be an imminent trainwreck at the end of such linguistic relativism. In aesthetics I found similar concerns and conversations.

In the first chapter, *Why linguistic aesthetics?: A short history of grammar,* I tried to demonstrate that both philosophy of grammar and grammatical pedagogy have been in flux, that each mode of grammatical education in turn shows allegiance for or against the logical/analytical side of human speech, and that even purposing "clarity" as a goal of human speech is disregard a more primary characteristic: the aesthetic mode. In light of this, I call grammar more of an 'art,' and ask what might be found if grammatical structures were considered to be patterns of human behaviours which are aesthetically qualified. In this chapter I employed the terms

"descriptive" and "prescriptive grammar" as antithetical in much the way these terms are bandied about in the linguistics world, ultimately suggesting "aesthetic grammar" as meditation of the two, not as a replacement but as an addition. I think this binary of terms has more rhetorical clout than it does structural reality, as rules and suggestions are always muddled in the moment of teaching a language's grammar. Still, I stand by their rhetorical usefulness in widening the dyad to a triad. Since writing this chapter, I have been reading quite a lot of Wittgenstein, and would extend my thoughts on logic and clarity to call them one possible 'language game' among many, for one can imagine a variety of language games where clarity is not the goal (fooling an enemy, finding a legal loophole based in ambiguity, poetic opening of meaning, or spurring dialogue on a controversial issue by causing people to look twice). Additionally, a consideration of Stanley Cavell's work with Wittgenstein, where he posits the mediation of rule and description as 'normativity' would be a nice connection with my later work on Seerveld's 'normative aesthetics'. I've read and thought a lot even in the short time since I finished the last draft of this thesis, so I hope you will join me in considering it a transitional piece, a snapshot of a specific time in my academic life.

My second chapter, *Tolkien, the linguistic aesthetic, and invented languages* uses J.R.R. Tolkien's invention/early use of the phrase 'linguistic aesthetic' as a case study for spotting the aesthetic mode, since, to play with 'allusivity', the aesthetic in grammar is elusive. Tolkien is of course not a philosopher of aesthetics or linguistics, but he was certainly reading and reacting to some of the broader strokes of modernist philosophy of language, including Saussure's structuralism. Because Tolkien was a philologist and poet and not a philosopher by training, I hit some methodological difficulties, but tried to highlight in his thought about linguistics three

themes I had identified in my reading. Firstly, that linguistic invention is for personal delight.

Secondly, that each human's aesthetic taste is as varied and unique as their own subjectivity. And

thirdly, that although it is personal and personally pleasing, human speech (artificial or real) is

created within a wider communal context of aesthetic judgment. Tolkien shows how these

themes interact as he discusses phonosemantics, syntax, and hermeneutics of translation in his

works. Understanding his thoughts about the aesthetic in his created literary languages then

illuminates his commentary on invented auxiliary languages from the 19th and 20th centuries,

that they fall flat without aesthetic liveliness.

It is in *Modal theory for an aesthetic grammar* that I try to pull together some more

rigorously philosophical interlocutors. It was Calvin Seerveld's adaptation of the modal scale that

allowed me to address the undue divide between the attentions of poetics and linguistic

investigation into everyday utterance, since both types of lingual generation presuppose the

presence of the aesthetic mode. Seerveld says that the aesthetic is present in both, but

deliberately heightened in poetry and literature, so that we may speak of the aesthetic in

everyday utterance as well, since that always seemed to be missing to me in linguistic analysis. In

this chapter I say, "*The ludicrous idea, then, is not that humans make ordinary language allusive,*

but rather that allusivity could ever be removed from a discussion of ordinary grammar, since

aesthetic judgments will always be changing and shaping the grammar of persons and communities."

(49) I also try to show the compatibility of Seerveld's notion of 'allusivity' with other

philosophers and linguists, most notably with how Wittgenstein described the addition of

newness to language games as a nuancing of previously acquired rules, and similarly how

Chomsky makes a distinction between learned 'competency' and the actual, innovative 'performance' of language by adult speakers.

The final chapter, *Grammar and the Self,* is a convergence of several questions: 'What does it mean that language's and their grammars have identifiable aesthetic features?" "What are the consequences of taking Foucault's assertion that modes of life have identifiable aesthetic features seriously look like?" "Can the aesthetic of a language be considered to witness or promote better or worse modes of life, such that our speech is not disconnected from attempts to increase one's ethical agency?" And finally, "How does an agreement that language is the medium through which we think about agency change the way we teach grammar?" I was able to find one secondary interlocutor, Nelson Flores, who intentionally takes up Foucault's 'aesthetics/ethics of existence' within the context of a language classroom. [the one person to seriously use reconstructive Foucault in linguistics] It seems to me that calling attention to the aesthetic layer of speech helps establish a link between how we use our language and who we are becoming. [This chapter requires more triangulation of diverse ideas, where the other chapters were expositions of immanent themes, synthetic vs. expositional).

This all begs the question of where I wish this work to take me next. There are two directions that seem of equal interest to me: One is strengthening the philosophical foundation for linguistic aesthetics. Two philosophers that I would like to engage more are Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty, since they both write on the relationships between aesthetics and language, but from different perspectives. The other, I would enjoy doing some aesthetic readings of grammars, such as I have done in Chapter 3 with glossolalia and the legacy of Latin vocabulary and syntax

to English dialects. For example, what are the differences between the encoding of the subjunctive cross-linguistically, where some languages change the morphology of the verb itself and others rely on auxiliary verbs to make this change in grammatical voice.

In summation, I am very thankful for the opportunity to have done this research, and I thank you for your attention and questions.

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