

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Wittgenstein's visit to Ithaca in 1949: on the importance of details

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In this paper, which is based on secondary material as well as new and primary material, we present and analyze the visit that philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein undertook to Ithaca, NY in the summer of 1949. During the visit Wittgenstein met with Norman Malcolm, his host, and also with a number of other philosophers. He also participated in the Philosophy Club at Cornell University. Most importantly, we trace and reproduce several of the conversations that Wittgenstein had during meetings and walks. These conversations covered a huge range of topics, from the Mormons and hamburgers to critical philosophical problems. We try to theorize this sprawling empirical material by problematizing the concept of details. We also draw on W.G. Sebald's work in this effort.

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During the summer of 1949 Ludwig Wittgenstein visited Ithaca for about three months and stayed at the home of one of his students, Cornell professor Norman Malcolm.¹ There currently exist three accounts of this visit that are based on primary sources: those of Norman Malcolm (in his 1958 memoir), Sister Mary Elwyn (in her 1966 dissertation), and Ray Monk (in his 1990 biography of Wittgenstein) (Malcolm 2001, 68–77; Elwyn 1966, 78–81; Monk 1990, 551–9). These accounts are all biographical in nature: they present what happened during Wittgenstein's stay primarily as a contribution to our knowledge of his life. They are also all rather brief, since Wittgenstein's visit in 1949, after all, was quite short compared to the time he spent in, say, Austria and England (Malcolm 1958, 84–95; Elwyn 1966, 78–81; Monk 1990, 551–5).

In this paper we will present Wittgenstein's visit to Ithaca in considerably more detail. We have had access not only to the three accounts just mentioned, but also to some new primary materials that we have located.² Our new information does not substantially alter the picture of Wittgenstein's visit. It does, however, add to the details of his visit; and since details are the focus here, the new information comes in very handy.

When we say that we are making details our focus, we have the following in mind. Details are often parts of descriptions and accounts, scientific as well as non-

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scientific. They are also prominent in biographies and a number of artistic genres, from painting to novel-writing. Yet details have attracted next to no attention as a topic in their own right. They have typically been passed over and pushed aside. One of our goals here is to open up a discussion about details; and we will do this by using Wittgenstein's visit to Ithaca as an example.

Details, as we shall try to show, play a key role in accounts of Wittgenstein, not least in the form of anecdotes. Many are, for example, familiar with the story of how the philosophy students at Cornell gasped in shock as if they had seen Plato, when Wittgenstein walked into their class room. Or how Wittgenstein lost his composure when he fell ill in Ithaca and started to scream that he wanted to die in Europe, not in America. Malcolm has also made famous 'Leave the bloody thing alone!', an expression that Wittgenstein used in all kinds of situations, to indicate that there was no point in continuing. There even exists an article which exclusively consists of fake anecdotes about Wittgenstein, mocking the way that people have retold their encounters with the famous philosopher.³

Wittgenstein struck most people as very strange, both in his behavior and in the way that he looked; and paying attention to details was one way to handle this. According to the philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch, 'his extraordinary directness of approach and the absence of any sort of paraphernalia were the things that unnerved people' (Murdoch 1999, 59).

Details, it should be added, were also important to Wittgenstein himself. He often used them in the form of examples to explain what he meant. They were also of interest to him as elements in descriptions; and Wittgenstein was firmly opposed to philosophers engaging in explanation; only description would do. 'We must do away with *explanation*, and description alone must take its place', to cite a famous passage in *Philosophical investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953, 109; see e.g. Gert 1997; Gruender 1962).

Wittgenstein never addressed the issue of how details are linked to descriptions, a topic that seems natural enough. He does, however, implicitly suggest how to carry out an analysis of details; and this is by studying their use in language games. The following account will try to do this, by drawing on material from his visit to Ithaca. We shall also attempt to show how Wittgenstein himself used details; and finally also engage in some speculations of our own, about the role of details.

Travelling to Ithaca

The background to the visit is as follows. Wittgenstein resigned his professorship in Cambridge in 1947, since he wanted to finish *Philosophical investigations* and since he felt it was meaningless to teach philosophy. At this point he was in his late 50s; and from now till his death he spent much time staying with other people.

While Norman Malcolm was extremely interested in Wittgenstein's ideas, it is not so obvious what Wittgenstein saw in Malcolm and why he wanted to come to the United States. Wittgenstein had made a very short visit to the United States in 1939 and disliked the experience ('the people were awful [...] I was glad to get on the boat – the Holland-American line – away from America').⁴ When Malcolm published the second edition of his memoir on Wittgenstein in 1984, he appended the full correspondence between the two. From these the reader gets the impression that Wittgenstein was not very interested in Malcolm as a philosopher. Malcolm knew

about Wittgenstein's taste for American detective stories and he repeatedly sent him packs of detective magazines.⁵ Malcolm's wife, Lee Malcolm, looked after Wittgenstein in her own way, sending him food and the like.

The correspondence also allows the reader to follow how Wittgenstein, after his resignation, gradually became more positive to Malcolm's invitation to stay with the Malcolms for a while in the United States. A decision was eventually made to visit for about three months in the summer of 1949. According to the rules for entry in the United States, Wittgenstein could bring with him only a very small amount of money and would therefore be dependent on the Malcolms for food and housing. He seems to have experienced this as a burden and was eager to give of himself as a philosopher as a way of showing his appreciation for their generosity.

In the spring of 1949 Wittgenstein bought a third-class ticket on the *Queen Mary* and was now set to travel from Southampton to New York on 21 July. He also bought a railroad ticket from New York to Ithaca since he did not want to bother Malcolm to pick him up in New York. It soon became clear, however, that Wittgenstein felt awkward about making his way to Ithaca alone; he did not feel very well and it was a foreign country. Max Black, another professor of philosophy at Cornell who also admired Wittgenstein and whom he had met while he was a student in Cambridge, offered at this point to drive to New York by car and pick him up. Wittgenstein was not happy with this suggestion, since he felt it would make him obliged to Black. The problem was solved by Malcolm's decision to take the train to New York and then travel back to Ithaca with Wittgenstein.

On Thursday 21 July, Wittgenstein began his trip to the United States. During the spring of 1949 he had felt sick and been diagnosed as suffering from anemia. The sea air and perhaps the enforced rest on the *Queen Mary*, however, seem to have done him well. In a letter, written while on board, he says 'the crossing is going very smoothly and healthwise I am doing rather well' (Wittgenstein 1949a).

On Tuesday 26 July Wittgenstein arrived in New York, early in the morning, and was met by Malcolm. In his well-known memoir, written some eight years after Wittgenstein's visit, Malcolm describes his first view of his guest:

I went to New York to meet Wittgenstein at the ship. When I first saw him I was surprised at his apparent physical vigor. He was striding down the ramp with a pack on his back, a heavy suitcase in one hand, cane in the other. (Malcolm 2001, 68)

There is one item in this account that Malcolm registered, but whose importance he did not understand: Wittgenstein's rucksack. Since his youth the rucksack had been Wittgenstein's constant companion. In World War I he carried around the manuscript for *Tractatus* in his rucksack; and shortly before he died he had given orders to a friend to burn the content of three rucksacks (Stern 1996, 473). In a letter from 1938, his sister Margarete bemoans Wittgenstein's absence at the coming celebration of Xmas; she will miss, she says, seeing that rucksack which always signals his presence (Stonborough-Wittgenstein 1938).

Throughout his life Wittgenstein tried to get rid of everything in his surrounding that he considered superfluous; and he lived an ascetic life. He had nearly reduced what he needed to what he could carry around in a rucksack. His apartment in Cambridge, for example, was very Spartan. There were a bed, a chair, shoe boxes full of notes, and little else.

In one of his novels W.G. Sebald mentions Wittgenstein's rucksack:

That rucksack which his sister Margarete once told him in a letter was almost as dear to her as himself, went everywhere with him, even, I believe, across the Atlantic on the liner Queen Mary, and then on from New York to Ithaca. (Sebald 2001, 41)

The story in which this quote is to be found is about a person called Austerlitz, who, just like Wittgenstein, always carried around his belongings in a rucksack. Austerlitz also tended to act and feel as if he was a visitor in a foreign country, again like Wittgenstein.

From the harbor in New York, Wittgenstein and Malcolm proceeded to Penn Station where they caught the 9.55 a.m. train to Ithaca. The trip with the Lehigh Valley Railroad took a little more than eight hours; and Malcolm would later recall how Wittgenstein whistled for him during part of the time. 'He whistled for me, with striking accuracy and expressiveness, some parts of Beethoven's 7th Symphony' (Malcolm 2001, 68).⁶

The city of Ithaca, to which Wittgenstein arrived, is situated about 200 miles from New York in the Finger Lakes region in central New York State. In 1949 it had about 30,000 inhabitants and was in a vigorous state of expansion since World War II. Malcolm lived just outside Ithaca, about 10 minutes by car from the Cornell campus. Malcolm and his wife had recently moved into a new house at 1107 Hanshaw Road, which today looks pretty much as it did in 1949. The house is painted white and has two floors (for a photograph from around the time of Wittgenstein's visit, see Nedo and Ranchetti 1983, 333). Wittgenstein's room was on the second floor. In the days of Malcolm, the house had a nice garden and also a room in the basement where one could sit and talk.

The day when Wittgenstein arrived it was quite hot in Ithaca, more precisely 92°F or 33°C. This was too much for Wittgenstein who soon complained in a letter: 'it's too damned hot. I've never had such heat in all my life' (Wittgenstein 1949b). The heat would continue in August and September. The summer of 1949 was unusually hot, according to Malcolm, making it uncomfortable for Wittgenstein in his room on the second floor.

Wittgenstein knew Malcolm's wife Lee since Cambridge and was on good terms with her. He also liked her cooking. Once in Ithaca, however, he told his hosts that he wanted the same food all the time. 'Wittgenstein declared that it did not much matter to him *what* he ate, so long as it was always the *same*' (Malcolm 2001, 69).⁷

Wittgenstein's philosophical discussions and his own work

During his first few weeks in Ithaca Wittgenstein's health was fine, even if he felt pain in his shoulders and his mood fluctuated. He took walks in and around Ithaca, sometimes alone and sometimes with Malcolm or some of his colleagues. He also engaged in vigorous philosophical discussions, nearly on a daily basis, with Malcolm and the small circle of philosophers and graduate students around him.

In early September Wittgenstein got very sick and had to stay in bed. It seems that he gradually recovered a few weeks later and could resume a bit of the walking and also take part in the discussions. The record does not allow us to say very much more about what happened with Wittgenstein's health after mid-September. He did not any longer keep a pocket calendar (as he had done as long as he taught); and

whatever records that exist do not provide information about his health for the period after mid-September till his departure in October.

While we know something about the topics that Wittgenstein discussed with Malcolm and his colleagues, little is known about his own work while in Ithaca. Before Wittgenstein embarked on his trip to the United States, he had just finished working on a manuscript that was partly to be included as Part 2 of *Philosophical investigations* after his death (MS 144; Hacker and Schulte 2009, xxi–xxii). It is, however, clear that many of the ideas that resulted in *On certainty* come from the time in Ithaca and the discussions Wittgenstein had with Malcolm, Black, and some of the other philosophers he met with in Ithaca. This would mean, for example, that some of the innovative arguments in this work about the limits and presuppositions of knowledge probably date from the summer of 1949. This includes not only Wittgenstein's critique of G.E. Moore's theory of knowledge but also his famous argument about hinges or that in order to make a statement you always have to leave some things unanalyzed; and that it is the latter that make the statement possible (e.g. Anscombe and von Wright in Wittgenstein 1972, vie).

The reason why it is hard to determine exactly what Wittgenstein learned and worked on while in Ithaca is that he nowhere discusses what impact the 1949 visit had, in terms of his own work. It is also hard to determine exactly what manuscripts Wittgenstein worked on during the summer of 1949. A good guess is that he wrote some of the texts that make up part of what is today known as *Last writings on the philosophy of psychology*.⁸ It is today gradually being realized that Wittgenstein's work after *Philosophical investigations* represent a new beginning; and to the extent that this is true, the Ithaca visit appears to have been important to his intellectual development.

During his time in Ithaca, Wittgenstein made a great effort to discuss philosophy with Malcolm and his colleagues. He often asked them to suggest a topic of discussion; and worried afterwards if he had been of any help. As always, he was very intense in his discussions. A graduate student who happened to look in through the window of the Malcolms's house, just when Wittgenstein had arrived, describes the following scene:

I went out to Malcolm's to consult about my dissertation. Malcolm must have been in the back yard. In any case, I passed on the outside of the house by the living-room windows. As I passed I peered in briefly – as one might. I saw Willis Doney [an assistant professor of philosophy at Cornell] hunched over, almost as if in anguish. Sitting across from him was a slight, rather oldish man, with a terribly intense expression, leaning forward. I went on, puzzled. I believe I asked Malcolm what was what and who was it and was told that the stranger was W., that Doney was having a discussion with him, and that I must not tell anyone that W was staying at Malcolm's or was in the U.S. I might add: I did not even tell my wife, or not until W's presence was made generally known. (Nelson 1966)

While in Ithaca Wittgenstein often met and discussed philosophy with the following six persons: Malcolm, O.K. Bouwsma, Max Black, Stuart Brown, Willis Doney, and John Nelson. He once also went to dinner at the house of Gregory Vlastos (also a professor of philosophy), which was followed by discussion. Sometimes the discussions were one-to-one; and sometimes they involved three or more people. Wittgenstein avoided certain persons, while seeking others out. He was, for example, not very fond of Max Black; and he did not want to see his former student Alice

Ambrose and her husband Morris Lazerowitz who were at Cornell during the summer (Black 1987, 91–2; Bouwsma 1949).

Wittgenstein had strong views about people in general and famously quarreled with a number of people, colleagues as well as family members. In a letter written from Ithaca, Wittgenstein put forward his own inimitable views on how he thought about these sorts of relationships:

The older I get the more I realize how terribly difficult it is for people to understand each other, and I think that what misleads one is the fact that they all look so much like each other. If some people looked like elephants and others like cats, or fish, one wouldn't *expect* them to understand each other and things would look much more like what they really are. (Wittgenstein [1949] 2008)

Wittgenstein also had discussions with other academics from Cornell. Given his long-standing interest in the philosophy of mathematics and his famous Cambridge encounter with Alan Turing it is interesting that he met with Cornell mathematician Wolfgang Fuchs. Fuchs apparently found Wittgenstein one of the most extraordinary people he had ever met.⁹

Before presenting the people who made up the small circle that Wittgenstein spent much of his time with, something should be said about the Department of Philosophy at Cornell. The Head of the Department was a man named Edwin Murphy, who was not a follower of Wittgenstein but who had read the Blue Book in 1937 and been very impressed by it (Murphy 1996, xxii). Murphy had come to Cornell in 1945 as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy. In 1946 he hired Max Black and in 1947 Norman Malcolm.

Malcolm and Black did not like each other, but got along in public. They were also interested in different aspects of Wittgenstein: Black preferred the early Wittgenstein, the author of *Tractatus*, whereas Malcolm was interested in the type of ideas that can be found in the works of the later Wittgenstein, such as his *Philosophical investigations*. Neither Black nor Malcolm was sensitive to Wittgenstein's religious side or to the despair with which he regarded professional philosophers. 'They made him out to be the same sort of hard-nosed positivists they were', as one of their students put it (Gass 1996, 147).

The graduate students in philosophy found Cornell a very tough place. The discussions were intimidating and the atmosphere authoritarian. Yet the quality of teaching and research was high; and many of the faculty members and the graduate students would make names for themselves in the discipline. One of the graduate students stated that:

when I arrived [to Ithaca in the late 1940s] I didn't know that Cornell's department was widely regarded as one of the better in the country, or that it was so sharply divided over one man, or that its graduate students were so well prepared and so black board smart I would be thoroughly intimidated. We learned how to argue in that bloody tough place. We called a spade a saw and hacked away. (Gass 2011)

We now turn to a presentation of the individuals who made up the small group around Wittgenstein in Ithaca. The key person was clearly Norman Malcolm (1911–1990) (e.g. von Wright 1995). Malcolm had studied philosophy as an undergraduate at the University of Nebraska, with O.K. Bouwsma as his adviser. He then went on to Harvard as a graduate student in 1933. In 1938 he went to Cambridge, where he attended the lectures of G.E. Moore and Wittgenstein. Whereas he soon began to

admire the work of Moore, he came under the spell of Wittgenstein; and for the rest of his career he would be one of Wittgenstein's most ardent followers.

The two also became friends. While Wittgenstein liked Malcolm personally, he was skeptical of his desire to be a professional philosopher, once Malcolm had graduated from Harvard in 1940. It would also seem that Malcolm's ideas did not interest Wittgenstein very much. He was, however, clearly fond of Malcolm and also liked Malcolm's wife Lee (Leonida) as well as Raymond, her son from an earlier marriage.

Max Black (1909–1988) had met Wittgenstein long before Malcolm, more precisely in 1929 in Cambridge where he was a student between 1927 and 1929. In an unpublished interview Black would later describe how he met with Wittgenstein in 1929 and how he often invited Wittgenstein to his student room during this time (Black 1987, 85).¹⁰ On these occasions Black made lunch for Wittgenstein, and the two talked about various non-philosophical topics. Black sometimes tried to entertain Wittgenstein by performing certain tricks. He would later recall that,

[During these lunches] I always tried to have something ready that would interest him. For example, one of these occasions I remember I mentioned some tactile and optical illusions. If one takes two fingers of the hand and puts one over the other and then rubs that down the nose, it feels as if one has two noses. A very childish sort of thing, but he'd never heard of it and when I mentioned it to him he was very interested and did that. (Black 1987, 85–6)

Max Black appreciated Wittgenstein's work while in Cambridge, but he did not consider him a genius. If I had done that, he later said, I would have taken notes after our meetings (Black 1987, 88–9). What Wittgenstein thought of Black is not known. By the time he was heading for Ithaca, however, it is clear that he did not like the idea of getting too close to Black. In 1949 he wrote to Malcolm that 'I never thought highly of him as a serious thinker, and we were never particular *friends*' (Malcolm 2001, 121). His verdict in 1949, after having met with Black, was as follows: 'Black is intelligent surely, but not serious' (Bouwsma 1949). Black went on to become a notable philosopher of science, and his 1962 book, *Models and metaphors: Studies in language and philosophy*, is still highly regarded. Black also became an important figure institutionally at Cornell, founding the Society for the Humanities as well as Cornell's Program in Science, Technology, and Society.

Another important figure in the small circle around Wittgenstein in Ithaca was O.K. Bouwsma (1898–1978). At first Bouwsma was interested in idealism, then in the work of G.E. Moore, and finally in Wittgenstein. Some of his students became followers of Wittgenstein – such as Malcolm, Alice Ambrose, and Morris Lazerowitz – and they introduced him to Wittgenstein. By 1949 he was, for example, well versed in the Blue Book. Bouwsma was deeply engaged in Christian issues and made a deep impression on many people through his sincere and humble personality.

Stuart M. Brown Jr (1916–1996) and Willis Doney (1925–2005) were at the time assistant professors of philosophy at Cornell. Brown was mainly interested in moral philosophy and Doney in seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophy. Brown, who went on to become Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell, had an undergraduate degree in zoology and later developed an interest in philosophy of science and with Black went on to found Cornell's Program in Science, Technology, and Society and Cornell's undergraduate major in Biology and Society. The reason

for their inclusion in the group around Wittgenstein was probably that they were close to Malcolm, and that Malcolm wanted them to become interested in Wittgenstein's ideas.

The last member of the group – John Nelson (1917–2005) – was a graduate student in philosophy at the time of Wittgenstein's visit and Malcolm's first PhD student. He would later say that he had been allowed to participate in the meetings with Wittgenstein because he owned a car, something that Malcolm did not. Nelson, for example, would take Wittgenstein to the doctor. Nelson's dissertation was about memory; and at one occasion he got to discuss this topic with Malcolm and Wittgenstein.

The discussion that went on in this small group mostly took place at the house or garden of Malcolm, but also at the house of some of the other participants. Different topics were discussed at different times. At one point, for example, they talked about Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. At other times they discussed Frege, *Philosophical investigations* (Part 1), and free will and determinism.

The person who got the most out of these discussions was probably Malcolm. In his many conversations with Wittgenstein, Malcolm steered the discussion in the direction of a problem that he was already working on. This was the status of knowledge, a topic that Malcolm had published an article on in 1949 (Malcolm 1949a). He had sent this article to G.E. Moore, who had responded with a long and important letter (Moore 1949). Malcolm had Wittgenstein read Moore's letter; and the discussion went from there.

In his memoir Malcolm explains in great detail what his and Wittgenstein's discussions about knowledge were like. The account covers four pages and is based on Malcolm's notes, which were written up one or two days after the conversations.¹¹ In 1952 he published an article that drew on these discussions entitled, 'Knowledge and belief' (Malcolm 1952; 1963, 72). That Wittgenstein all along had had been working on the same topic, and was developing his ideas in a novel and highly original direction, as evidenced by *On certainty*, would later come as a total surprise to Malcolm (2001, 83–4).

While Malcolm's work on knowledge has been forgotten by now, *On certainty* still excites (and puzzles) many readers through its complex and original arguments. The coming into being of this work has been summarized by Elizabeth Anscombe and Georg von Wright as follows:

[During the time Wittgenstein visited Ithaca] Malcolm acted as a goad to his interest in Moore's 'defense of common sense', that is to say his claim to *know* a number of propositions for sure, such as 'here is one hand, and here is another', and 'The earth existed for a long time before my birth', and 'I have never been far from the earth's surface'. The first of these comes in Moore's 'Proof of the external world'. The two others are in his 'Defense of common sense'; Wittgenstein had long been interested in these and had said to Moore that this was his best article. Moore had agreed. This book [*On certainty*] contains the whole of what Wittgenstein wrote on this topic from that time until his death. It is all first-draft material, which he did not live to excerpt and polish. (Anscombe and von Wright in Wittgenstein 1972, vie)

Wittgenstein's public appearances at Cornell

Malcolm, as we know, kept Wittgenstein's visit to Ithaca a closely guarded secret. There exists no information that Wittgenstein had demanded this. Malcolm may

simply have felt that Wittgenstein did not want any attention drawn to his visit. The very idea that he would be held up as a famous philosopher would no doubt have made him very unhappy.

While a publicly announced lecture at Cornell was presumably out of the question, Wittgenstein did agree to attend a meeting of the Philosophy Club at Cornell. Since his ideas were much discussed at the time, but little was known about their mysterious author, his appearance at the Club was apt to become an event that many of the attending members would remember. There currently exist several accounts of Wittgenstein's appearance and of what he said at this meeting. Since all of them are somewhat different, when it comes to the details, they will be presented verbatim.¹²

The first is written by William H. Gass (1924–), who was a graduate student in philosophy in 1949 and who later went on to become a major novelist. His account appeared in 1968 in *The New Republic*, that is 19 years after the event itself. The relevant section reads as follows:

Professor Gregory Vlastos had completed his paper on Reinhold Niebuhr. The paper was excellent but the discussion had swallowed itself as such things sometimes do (one was only inclined to cough), and even the effort to be brilliant at someone's expense seemed no longer worth the trouble, when the funny, shabby man began speaking. At least he seemed shabby, though I remember giving him small notice at first. Old, unsteady, queerly dressed, out of date, uncomfortable in space, he struck me as some atheistical, vegetarian nut who'd somehow found his way to this meeting of the Cornell Philosophy Club and would, at any moment, heatedly, endlessly, support and denounce with wild irrelevance whatever simple, single thought was burning him up. But he'd been silent and I'd forgotten about him. Now he spoke, clearly yet haltingly, with intolerable slowness, with a kind of deep stammer involving not mere sounds or words but yards of discourse, long swatches of inference; and since these sentence lengths, though delivered forcefully, indeed with an intensity which was as extraordinary as it was quiet, were always cut short suddenly – in midphrase, maddeningly incomplete – and then begun again, what you heard was something like a great pianist at practice: not a piece of music, but the very acts which went into making that performance [. . .] A murmur ran round the seminar table, heads turned towards Malcolm, his student, who'd brought him, but I don't know for how many this movement was, as it was for me, a murmur, a movement, of recognition.

I was also amused. Malcolm's mannerisms were like his master's, and nearby sat Nelson, one of Malcolm's students, whose own mannerisms, in that moment, seemed to me but one more remove from the Form. The three men had fashioned, whether through affinity or influence, a perfect Platonic ladder. (Gass 1970, 247–9)

Unbeknownst to Gass, another graduate student who took part in the meeting, John Nelson, had written an account of the same meeting two years earlier, in response to a question from a student who was doing a Master's thesis on Wittgenstein (Elwyn 1966). This account reads as follows:

The philosophy-club meeting at Cornell was a most important meeting, attended by practically all the graduate students and most of the Sage School faculty. Members of the graduate faculty sometimes gave papers; but more often it was the lot of the graduate students to do so [. . .] This particular night Gregory Vlastos was giving a paper: it was on Kant and 'ought implies can'. The room was a long narrow room occupied by a very long table, about which the faculty and graduate students and a few of the better undergraduate students sat. The entrance to the room was in its middle. I was sitting across the entrance. Next to me was Gass, the president of the phil. club. From the entrance a narrow corridor extended, ending in a flight of stairs. Just before the meeting was to get underway Malcolm appeared approaching down the corridor. On his arm leaned a slight, older man, dressed in

wind-jacket and old army trousers. If it had not been for his face, alight with intelligence, one might have taken him for some vagabond Malcolm had found along the road and decided to bring out of the cold. It was, of course, W.

Until this moment only a few persons knew that W was in Ithaca – some of the members of the Sage School and (because I was then doing my dissertation under Norman's supervision, etc.) myself, Mrs. Malcolm, of course, and so on. But none of the other graduate students. I leaned over to Gass and whispered, 'That's Wittgenstein'. Gass thought I was making a joke and said something like, 'Stop pulling my leg'. And then Malcolm and W entered. Vlastos was introduced and gave his paper and finished. Black, who was conducting this particular meeting, stood up and turned to his right and it became clear to everyone's surprise (I mean, the graduate students' surprise) that he was about to address the shabby older man Malcolm had brought to the meeting. Then came the startling words; said Black, 'I wonder if you would be so kind, Professor Wittgenstein' [...] Well, when Black said 'Wittgenstein' a loud and instantaneous gasp went up from the assembled students. You must remember: 'Wittgenstein' was a mysterious and awesome name in the philosophy world of 1949, at Cornell in particular. The gasp that went up was just the gasp that would have gone up if Black had said, 'I wonder if you would be so kind, Plato'. (Nelson 1966)

A little more than 10 years later, in 1978, the same John Nelson wrote to Malcolm, criticizing William Gass' account in *The New Republic*. According to Nelson, who had kept some notes from the meeting at the Philosophy Club, Gass was wrong in saying that Vlastos had given a paper on Reinhold Niebuhr. In fact, Vlastos had spoken about Kant. Nelson also felt that Gass, in describing the meeting in a very specific way, had 'staged [it] for an effect'. Wittgenstein was, for example, not all 'shabby' but 'neat and clean', including his shoes ('oxfords [...] of the finest English make').

Nelson also said that when Black asked Wittgenstein for a comment on Vlastos' paper, the following took place:

W got up, took the few steps needed to bring him in front of the moveable blackboard on which Vlastos had drawn some diagrams and equations having to do with 'ought implies can', stared incredulously for a long period, and then said, 'What is this hooley?' And then proceeded, in a very crisp, knowledgeable way, to comment on Kant's 'ought implies can'. (Nelson 1978, 7–8)

Malcolm responded to Nelson's account by saying that Gass was definitely wrong about Niebuhr; Vlastos had spoken about Kant. He said that he did not remember that Wittgenstein had said 'What is this hooley?' – but added, 'What a marvelous remark! I think he may have picked up the word "hooley" from me – because it is American, not English' (Nelson 1978, 9).

Malcolm added that he remembered one more thing from Wittgenstein's comments on Vlastos' paper:

I also recall one scene where W. was talking about 'can', I believe, and stood above Max [Black], dangling an imaginary rope above his (Max's) head. I remember that the scene struck me as incredibly funny – although I can't remember the exact point W. was making. He was, I believe, trying to illustrate something about the word 'can'. (Nelson 1978, 9–10)

And finally, there exists a third account, written by a third graduate student who took part in the 1949 meeting. His name is William Kennick (1923–2009); and he wrote his account some time between 1993 and 2008. It reads as follows:

In the autumn semester of 1949 I attended, as was my wont, a meeting of the graduate philosophy club (the philosophy graduate students and the faculty). On the evening in question, Gregory Vlastos was scheduled to present a paper on the Kantian question 'Does "ought" imply "can"?' I arrived at the meeting, held in a large room in Morrill Hall, a little early. I noticed a strange man standing alone beside the door to the room. He was of medium height, gray haired, clean but not stylishly dressed in a tweed jacket, unironed tan (?) trousers, brown leather oxfords, and a blue cotton shirt open at the neck. He carried a tweed cap and a walking stick I had never seen him before, and I took him to be the janitor of the building, waiting for us to assemble so that he could go home. When we were all assembled in the room, with Vlastos at the head of the table and Max Black in the chair, the 'janitor' came in and took a seat just at Vlastos' right. This was either no janitor at all or one interested in philosophy. Vlastos read his paper, in defense of an affirmative reply to the title-question of his paper. Black then turned to the man I had mistaken for the janitor and said, 'Dr. Wittgenstein, would you care to comment?' Jesus! There was a great gasp. We all leaned forward to look at the great one, and a dead silence filled the room. Wittgenstein put his head down on the table and stayed in this position for what seemed to be a week. He then raised his head and said (in almost these very words: I took notes): 'A nurse says to me, "swallow this tube, please" [Rumor had it that Wittgenstein was having some tests run to see whether he had stomach cancer.] "I can't". "But you have to do it; otherwise they can't run the tests". "I can't". "But you really ought to, you know". "Yes, but I can't." That was it. Does 'ought' imply 'can'? Is 'I ought to, but I can't' contradictory? No.

But precisely this is the *beginning* of a philosophical investigation. I forget what Vlastos's reply was; I was too busy thinking about this simple rejoinder to a famous question. I was sure that there was something fishy about it, but the more I thought about it, the more I came to appreciate what had happened, and eventually my whole view of philosophy was changed forever. (Kennick 1993–2008, 40–1)¹³

The three accounts of Wittgenstein's participation in the meeting of the Philosophy Club at Cornell allow us, among other things, to see how academic anecdotes come into being. Nelson complains that Gass has 'staged' his account, to make an effect. He is correct – but does more or less the same thing himself when he says that the graduate students were as surprised by Wittgenstein's appearance, as if they had seen Plato himself. The surprise of suddenly seeing Wittgenstein, which was the result of Wittgenstein's visit having been kept silent to the graduate students, in combination with the general mystery surrounding his writings at this time, is in Nelson's case skillfully compressed, and then turned into something entertaining to tell an academic colleague. Likewise the contrast between the 'janitor' and the image of the great philosopher 'putting his head down on the table for what seemed a week' is beautifully staged by Kennick.

The three accounts also differ in their attempts to give the reader a sense of what Wittgenstein looked like. They all try different metaphors to convey the impression Wittgenstein made on them – a vegetarian nut, a vagabond, a janitor. They then back this up, or legitimate it, with details about Wittgenstein's clothes. According to one, he is shabbily dressed; according to another he is oddly dressed; and according to a third he is properly dressed and has a tweed jacket (but still looks like a janitor).¹⁴

The descriptions of how Wittgenstein dressed are pretty full, but what no-one mentions is a small detail that only Jonathan Black, the 10-year old son of Max Black, noticed at another occasion. This is that Wittgenstein wore his shoes without socks. 'The only thing I remember clearly about Wittgenstein's visit', Jonathan Black told one of the authors of this article, 'is that he wore his oxfords without socks. I had never seen anyone wear shoes without socks' (Black 2011).

The three accounts also attempt to catch Wittgenstein's voice, posture, and what he said. But they all differ over details. What the authors describe is something that took place many, many years earlier, and one gets a sense that their accounts are partly invented, while their description of the emotional impact of the surprise of suddenly seeing Wittgenstein is what rings true. For us the account that is most 'telling' about the intellectual exchange which occurred that evening at the Philosophy Club is Kennick's detailed rendition of Wittgenstein's use of the stomach tube example. Clearly for Kennick this was a 'telling' moment in his career – the moment when he suddenly 'got it'. This example nicely captures the power of Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy developed in *Philosophical investigations*. A practical example from ordinary language, probably based on Wittgenstein's own medical encounters, will tell us when philosophy has gone to sleep and how 'ought' and 'can' are related within the detailed language game of the medical encounter.

There also exists information about Wittgenstein's only other activities at Cornell, which consisted of attending two meetings with the graduate students in philosophy. Again, the accounts are quite different. According to William Gass,

A few weeks later [that is, after the meeting at the Philosophy Club] he met with us, the graduate students in philosophy, for two two-hour sessions. Monologues they were really, on the problems of knowledge and certainty, but since it was his habit merely to appear – to appear and to await a question – it was we who had to supply the topic, and for that delicate mission one of us was carefully briefed. G.E. Moore had once asked, staring, I suppose, at the end of his arm (and with what emotion: anguish? anxiety? anger? despair?): how do I know that this is a hand? and it was thought that the opening question might properly, safely, touch on that. Not all of us were primed, though, and before anyone realized what was happening a strange, unforeseen and uncalculated question had rolled down the table toward the master. Aristotle? Had it to do with Aristotle? And Wittgenstein's face fell like a crumbled wad of paper into his palms. Silence. Aristotle. We were lost. He would leave. In a moment he would rise and shuffle out, pained and affronted. Then Paul Ziff¹⁵ put his question – ours – for it was he who had been the student appointed; and after a terrible empty moment, Wittgenstein's head came up, and he began. (Gass 1970, 249–50)

Nelson did not remember very much of Wittgenstein's other meetings with the graduate students. In fact, he only mentions one:

It was in the session on the verifiability principle, to which only students were invited, that W grappled with his thoughts and words described (indeed aptly) by Bill [Gass]: but grappled, not because he was attempting to show the unsayable but because a mistake had been made and the thread of the argument was forming knots of nonsense. In *unmistakable* anguish W said, 'What has gone wrong? Can anyone help me?' Lalumia (the fellow who went to teach at Kent State)¹⁶ volunteered an answer. He was told in no uncertain terms that he was a fool (or that his answer was stupid – I forget which). I volunteered an answer. Ditto. In painful silence the meeting broke up. (Nelson 1978, 8)

Just like Nelson, Kennick can only recall one of the two meetings that Wittgenstein had with the graduate students:

Wittgenstein met the next day with the philosophy graduate students alone – no faculty. We were seated in the seminar room of the evening before. Wittgenstein walked in alone, put his cap and walking stick on the table, and asked for a question. I wish I

could remember what the question was and who asked it, but I can't. All I recall is that Wittgenstein paused for a moment. Picked up his cap and stick, and said, 'I refuse to stand here and discuss stupid questions'. He started for the door. But Paul Ziff, bolder than the rest of us, called a question after him, and Wittgenstein stopped at the doorway. He thought for a moment, then turned, came back to the table, put down his cap and talked. Alas, I have no memory of what he said; just that he held us in rapt attention for at least half an hour. (Kennick 1993–2008, 41)

The memories that Gass, Nelson, and Kennick have of the two meetings alone with Wittgenstein are much less elaborate than of the first, spectacular event at the Philosophy Club. The students only recall Wittgenstein's odd mannerisms, nothing of what he said. Unused to listening to Wittgenstein, and to have a teacher that behaved strangely, they could not retain anything except for a few marginal details.

Walking and talking

There also exist other reminiscences of Wittgenstein that are of interest for a full picture of Wittgenstein's trip to Ithaca. Wittgenstein liked to take a daily walk; and sometimes he wanted company. One thing that stands out from the accounts of these walks in Ithaca is how curious Wittgenstein was. He had a way of focusing in on details and using them in his own work and talk. This was also something that others had noticed about Wittgenstein. According to a friend in England, one of the 'traits especially characteristic of Wittgenstein' was precisely 'his close observation of details' (Drury 1999, 244).

One day Stuart Brown was driving in Ithaca when he suddenly spotted Wittgenstein walking and stopped. He stopped and offered to give him a ride back to the Malcolms:

Ordinarily, he would refuse the offer of a ride. But [this time it was raining]. He accepted gratefully, and once in the car asked me to identify for him the seed pods of a plant which he had picked. 'Milkweed', I told him, and pointed out the white sap for which the weed is named. He then asked me to describe the flowers of the plant. I failed so miserably that I at length stopped the car by a grown-up field, walked out and picked him more plants, some with flowers and some with seeds. He looked in awe from flowers to seed pods and from seed pods to flowers. Suddenly he crumpled them up, threw them down on the floor, and trampled them. 'Impossible!' he said. (Brown 1966)

John Nelson has a similarly vivid memory of Wittgenstein. The two once took a walk late in the evening:

I remember that conversation proceeded in a halting manner as we slowly walked through the darkness. I found it difficult to engage in small talk with W. I think he found it difficult. Suddenly, to the north and almost overhead, colored lights began flashing: red and pink lights. For a moment I imagine we were both thunderstruck. I do not remember which of us or whether both at once identified the lights as northern lights. We watched them for some time. These were the first colored northern lights I had ever seen. I am quite sure I said as much to W. I forget whether he said he had seen colored northern lights before or not. (Nelson 1966)

What day the walk with Nelson took place is not known. Late October, however, Wittgenstein mentioned to Bouwsma that he had seen the northern lights in Ithaca;

and he was surprised they could be seen so far south (Bouwsma 1986, 50). He told Bouwsma that they had a somewhat different color from the ones he had seen in Norway.

Wittgenstein mentions his walks in a letter, written when he had been in Ithaca about a month. He also touches on the nature around Ithaca and what the people were like:

There are some nice walks here though nothing compared with the Gower coast. Nature here doesn't look as *natural* as in Wales. The only thing I really enjoy here is the engineering; that's superb. I like to see American machines. The people I've met were often very nice but mostly, though not always, very foreign to me. (Wittgenstein 1949e)

The most important source by far for Wittgenstein's walks, as well as the conversations he had with people while walking, is to be found in the notes that O.K. Bouwsma took during the summer of 1949. Since many years back, Bouwsma was in the habit of writing down what he was thinking about or found interesting, on small notepads that he was carrying around.

The notes in which Wittgenstein figures were published in 1986 by J.L. Craft and Ronald Hustwit in a small volume called *Wittgenstein: Conversations 1949–1951*. This work is unique in that it contains what is probably the most authoritative material on Wittgenstein in Ithaca. There are two reasons for their authoritativeness: they were written down immediately after the events; and Bouwsma was just interested in writing down what Wittgenstein said, not to interpret it. He tried to get every detail as correct as possible.

What drove Bouwsma in taking these notes was his strong sense that Wittgenstein was unique among philosophers, and very different from the usual academic philosophers. Wittgenstein understood things much better than anyone else, Bouwsma felt; and he wanted, humbly and sincerely, to learn from him.

Wittgenstein appreciated Bouwsma's integrity and tried to be gentle with him. He also seems to have opened up to Bouwsma more than to anyone else in Ithaca, Malcolm included. As a result, Bouwsma's notes contain what is probably some of the most important primary material from Wittgenstein's visit to Ithaca in 1949.

After having met with Wittgenstein for the first time in late July 1949, Bouwsma realized that Wittgenstein's personality was very different from anybody he had met before. He also noted that Wittgenstein expressed himself in a very special way: 'What characterizes his talk is the ready availability of example and imaginary situation to clarify the uses of expression' (Bouwsma 1986, 3).

In the evening of 5 August Wittgenstein asked Bouwsma to take a walk with him and told him that he wanted to see the suspension bridge at Cornell. Bouwsma drove to the engineering building (today Sibley Hall), from which they proceeded by foot. As they crossed the bridge ('where the cracks in the bridge bothered him, made him uncomfortable'), Wittgenstein brought up the discussion they had had earlier at Malcolm's house (Bouwsma 1986, 9). Wittgenstein then switched topic and talked about his fear that he was going crazy and why he had resigned his position in Cambridge.

The suspension bridge that Bouwsma and Wittgenstein walked across had been built around 1900 and was replaced in 1961 by the current bridge. The old bridge was only half as broad and swayed dangerously when someone walked across it. Students enjoyed standing on the bridge and making it swing like a hammock. According to

Cornell Alumni News, 'it is said that the late Henry S. Jacoby, professor of bridge engineering at the time the Suspension Bridge was built, refused to cross it' (Anonymous 1961).

Some time after walking across the bridge Wittgenstein mentioned the Mormons.¹⁷ He was clearly fascinated by them and said, by way of explanation, that they showed what could be done if you had faith. But it was hard to understand the way their faith operated. Wittgenstein continued, 'to understand a certain obtuseness is required. One must be obtuse to understand. He likened it to needing big shoes to cross a bridge with cracks in it. One mustn't ask questions' (Bouwsma 1986, 11). At another time Bouwsma drove Wittgenstein to the doctor and afterwards invited him for ice-cream. Wittgenstein began to talk about the fact that when he was young people lived a different type of life people from today. 'It is the machines of course', he said, but also something else is involved. In the past people's existence was more stable. Today people move around, and neighborhoods change; and as a result 'we live in surroundings to which we are not sentimentally attached' (Bouwsma 1986, 39).

Bouwsma continues,

On the way out [from the ice-cream parlor] he was interested in the jukebox. Juke! What's that word? We talked about the bicycle – when was it invented? I remembered my father riding one before 1910. Early French models. He talked about his father's first automobile about 1900. (Bouwsma 1986, 39–40)

Wittgenstein had been trained as an engineer, and his interest in technology is well known.¹⁸ Sometimes he also used technology as a metaphor, as exemplified in a discussion about Descartes. Wittgenstein wanted to show that Descartes had made an error when he said that to be aware that you are thinking means that you know you exist. According to Wittgenstein, Descartes had not understood that what we think in the present is linked to what we have thought in the past, and what we will think in the future. Thinking, he said, reminded him of the movies¹⁹:

I always think of it as like the cinema. You see before you the picture on the screen, but behind you is the operator, and he has a roll here on this side from which he is winding and another on that side into which he is winding. The present is the picture which is before the light, but the future is still on this roll to pass, and the past is on that roll. It's gone through already. Now imagine that there is only the present. There is no future roll, and no past roll. And now further imagine what language there could be in such a situation. One could just gape. This! (Bouwsma 1986, 13)

Two other of Bouwsma's accounts are worth mentioning for their general interest. Both are also related in an interesting way. In one case, Wittgenstein links details to description; in the other to rules. The first discussion was triggered by Bouwsma's suggestion that he, Malcolm, and Wittgenstein should discuss 'What is good?' Wittgenstein soon began to talk about the value of definitions and their role in language:

Definition of good? What would one do with this? Law courts have a use for definitions. Physics has a use for definition. It is hard in any case to see what a definition here could be like. What one can do is describe certain aspects of the uses of the word 'good'. (Bouwsma 1986, 40–1)

In describing the uses of a word, Wittgenstein continued, you have to pay very close attention to details, since these uses are ‘infinitely complex’. The use of a word is also part of something else – ‘a tremendously complex game’ (Bouwsma 1986, 41). This means that you cannot determine the use of a word simply by focusing on the word itself and how it is used. You also have to see how it is related to other words and their uses. Wittgenstein ends his comment as follows: ‘The use of the word “good” is too complicated. Definition is out of the question’ (Bouwsma 1986, 42).

The second example is from a walk that Wittgenstein and Bouwsma took together above the gorge at Taughannock, outside of Ithaca. Wittgenstein began to talk about the Oxford Movement and John Henry Newman. He said that he thought it was odd how Newman believed in miracles. Then he added that when he was younger he would have considered Newman’s stance incomprehensible and perhaps insincere, but not any longer. Bouwsma asked him what had made him change his mind, and Wittgenstein answered: ‘life is not what it seems’ (Bouwsma 1986, 35).

Wittgenstein was then silent for several minutes, after which he said:

It’s like this: In the city, streets are nicely laid out. And you drive on the right and you have traffic lights, etc. There are rules. When you leave the city, there are still rules, but no traffic lights. And when you get far off there are no roads, no lights, no rules, nothing to guide you. It’s all woods. And when you return to the city you may feel that the rules are wrong, that there should be no rules, etc. (Bouwsma 1986, 35)

Bouwsma writes that he did not understand what Wittgenstein meant by this. By way of explaining, Wittgenstein said: ‘It comes to something this this. If you have a light, I say: Follow it. It may be right. Certainly life in the city won’t do’ (Bouwsma 1986, 35).

Being sick in Ithaca

A large part of his time in Ithaca Wittgenstein was very sick. During the spring of 1949 he had begun to feel ill and had been diagnosed as having ‘severe anemia’ (Malcolm 2001, 119). He had also had his stomach X-rayed, for possible cancer, but nothing was found. As mentioned earlier, Wittgenstein felt invigorated by his boat trip across the Atlantic. Malcolm later wrote, ‘when he came he was pretty vigorous, although he had severe pain in his shoulders’ (Malcolm 1949b).

In early August, Wittgenstein wrote to a friend that ‘my health is pretty good’. (Wittgenstein 1949c). He continued to have pain in his shoulders, but the pain was not so bad. About two weeks later, however, Wittgenstein felt so bad that he had to go to a doctor. On 31 August, he wrote to the same person, that the doctor had diagnosed his problems as ‘neuritis’ or inflammation of a nerve, perhaps related to a tooth infection (Wittgenstein 1949d).

The pain continued, and Wittgenstein was dubious about the skill of his doctor. He decided to go to a second doctor, and this time he was satisfied with the result. His new doctor confirmed the diagnosis of the first doctor, but did not link the problem to Wittgenstein’s teeth. Wittgenstein liked his doctor very much. Little is known about her except that her name was Louise Mooney.²⁰

The fullest account of Wittgenstein’s illness can be found in a letter that Malcolm wrote to Georg von Wright on 15 September, at which point Wittgenstein had been in Ithaca for about seven weeks. The relevant passage follows:

Wittgenstein has been very ill. When he arrived he had a severe pain in his shoulders, that gradually became worse. He had great difficulty in sleeping. Despite that his mind was pretty vigorous and he enjoyed long walks daily, during his first few weeks here. Then he became really ill, and has been so for about two weeks. He was in bed a large part of the time and so weak that he could hardly move. For two days now he has been somewhat better. He has begun to eat again, to discuss, and even went for a little walk yesterday. He has a very good doctor now, although he didn't at first. He has been receiving x-ray treatments for his shoulders, which have greatly relieved the pain. His condition varies so from day to day that it is impossible to make any predictions. (Malcolm 1949c)

Wittgenstein had spent two days in hospital where he had various tests and also underwent some treatments. The results from the tests were positive, something that made Wittgenstein enormously relieved since the idea of ending his life so far from home was deeply upsetting to him. 'I don't want to die in America. I am a European – I want to die in Europe', a frightened Wittgenstein told Malcolm (2001, 77).

In a letter to Bouwsma, written about a few weeks later, Wittgenstein reported that he now felt 'a good deal better' (Wittgenstein 1949f). Yet his progress was 'slow'; and he did not know whether he would be able to visit Bouwsma in Northampton as planned. But Wittgenstein did visit Bouwsma, so presumably his health did not deteriorate in October.

A person who met Wittgenstein in England in late October 1949 would later recall that 'he came from the United States and was already marked by illness' (Tranøy 1999, 124). Around this time Wittgenstein was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and after two difficult years he died on 29 April 1951.

Once back in England, Wittgenstein often inquired about his second doctor in Ithaca, Dr Louise Mooney, and sent greetings to her, via Malcolm. She had failed to detect Wittgenstein's cancer, but this was something that he appreciated since it meant that he did not need to have surgery, something he feared would make him infirm. It also meant that he did not have to stay in Ithaca but could go home to Cambridge.

Wittgenstein's doctor in Cambridge wrote to Dr Mooney in the fall of 1949 and asked her for information about Wittgenstein. To be able to give a full account of Wittgenstein's health, Dr Mooney contacted Malcolm. She also figures in the very last letter that Wittgenstein wrote before his death. The very last lines of this letter read: 'Remember me to Dr Mooney. I like to think of her' (Malcolm 2001, 134).

On one of their walks, Wittgenstein and Bouwsma discussed humility. The two agreed that while it is impossible to be truly humble, one can *try* to be humble. Bouwsma writes,

Later when I pointed out that trying to be humble may not be clear at all in the way in which trying to lift a weight is, he said: You are completely right – then he went on with an analogy: It may be something like the doctor who does not pretend he can cure you, but he tells you to rest and not to eat certain foods, and sit in the sun – and as for the rest nature must do the work. (Bouwsma 1986, 38)

Leaving Ithaca

Since Wittgenstein's health did not take a worse turn during October, he could visit Bouwsma as promised. Bouwsma was at the time at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts where his student Alice Ambrose and her husband Morris Lazerowitz worked. Wittgenstein arrived on October 17 by train to Springfield where Bouwsma

picked him up.²¹ Exactly how long he stayed in Northampton is not clear, but it would appear that that he left for his sister in New York on 19 October.

Wittgenstein made no public appearances at Smith College, but seems to have spent all of his time with Bouwsma and his family, who lived on 115 Elm Street. Again, Bouwsma took notes and has provided us with some interesting information about his conversations with Wittgenstein. At one point, for example, Bouwsma asked Wittgenstein if you had to have some special talents to be a good philosopher. The answer Wittgenstein gave was that a philosopher must be curious, interested in things, and ask questions. 'A philosopher is someone with the head full of question marks' (Bouwsma 1986, 48).

But even if asking questions constituted the essence of a philosopher, there was another important quality a philosopher must have, namely a 'talent for disentangling things' (Bouwsma 1986, 49). Moore, for example, was according to Wittgenstein interested in finding things out, but he had no talent for clearing up confusions.

Wittgenstein also discussed the importance of hints – of picking up on hints and on providing hints. An author worth reading, he argued, was someone who left hints for the reader. 'He [that is, Wittgenstein] did not want another man's thoughts all chewed' (Bouwsma 1986, 46).

Often a word or two were enough for a hint. Wittgenstein also said that as a young man he had once seen a play that was very poor; and he described it as follows:

One detail in that play had made a powerful impression upon him. It was a trifle. But here some peasant, ne'er-do-well says in the play: 'Nothing can hurt me'. That remark went through him and now he remembers it. It started things. You can't tell. The most important things just happen to you. (Bouwsma 1986, 46)²²

Kierkegaard was an author who was much too explicit for Wittgenstein's taste. The Danish philosopher was also a bit of a snob, 'not touching the details of common life' (Bouwsma 1986, 46). Wittgenstein also made a distinction between good hints and bad hints. He finally said that one can only give hints to those who are ready for them: 'to people who are looking for something, to people who are eagerly set to follow a hint' (Bouwsma 1986, 48).

In his notes from the time at Smith College, Bouwsma also gives an example of how Wittgenstein could take a trivial detail and turn it into a meaningful analysis. When they passed a sign that said 'cheeseburgers', Wittgenstein got upset and told Bouwsma about Fénelon's famous letter to the French Academy. The French writer only wanted pleasant-sounding words to be included its dictionary – like the sweet-sounding 'cheeseburger'! To Wittgenstein this idea was as bad as Esperanto: 'a language without any feeling, without richness' (Bouwsma 1986, 47).

From Northampton Wittgenstein went to New York to visit and stay with his sister Margarete, before taking a ship back to England. Nothing is known about this visit except that Wittgenstein was scheduled to be in New York for two days and that he also made an attempt to visit his brother Paul, the well-known pianist (Stonborough-Wittgenstein 1949; cf. Prokop 2003, 256). The two brothers had not met or communicated with each other since 1938; and in the few cases later when Wittgenstein had tried to meet with Paul, he had been silently rebuffed (e.g. McGuinness 2006). Wittgenstein now made a new attempt and went uninvited to his brother's house on Long Island. Paul, however, was not in (Waugh 2008, 273). On 21

October Wittgenstein left New York by boat, heading back to Cambridge via Southampton.

Concluding remarks – on telling details

Hilary [who was our classroom teacher] could talk for hours about the second of December 1805 [when the Battle of Austerlitz took place], but nonetheless it was his opinion that he had to cut his accounts far too short, because, as he several times told us, it would take an endless length of time to describe the events of such a day properly, in some inconceivably complex form recording who had perished, who survived, and exactly where and how, or simply saying what the battlefield was like at nightfall, with the screams and groans of the wounded and dying. In the end all anyone could ever do was to sum up the unknown factors in the ridiculous phrase, ‘The fortunes of battle swayed this way and that’, or some similarly feeble and useless cliché. All of us, even when we think we have noted every tiny detail, resort to set pieces which have already been staged often enough by others. We try to reproduce the reality, but the harder we try, the more we find the pictures that make up the stock-in-trade of the spectacle of history forcing themselves upon us: the fallen drummer boy, the infantryman shown in the act of stabbing another, the horse’s eye starting from its socket, the invulnerable Emperor surrounded by his generals, a moment frozen still amidst the turmoil of battle. Our concern with history, so Hilary’s thesis ran, is a concern with preformed images already imprinted on our brains, images at which we keep staring while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered. (W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*)²³

One result of Wittgenstein’s visit to Ithaca was that it strengthened the impact of his ideas at Cornell’s Philosophy Department, which in the 1950s became the main center in the United States for Wittgensteinian studies. Malcolm brought Georg von Wright, Wittgenstein’s successor at Cambridge, a number of times to Ithaca (e.g. von Wright 2001). He and von Wright also made Cornell Library partly finance and film the many manuscripts that Wittgenstein had left behind. According to philosopher Thomas Nagel, Cornell was in the 1950s ‘probably the best place in the country to study Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophy’ (Nagel 1995, 4–5).

But not only Wittgenstein’s ideas had made an impact at Cornell; this was also true for his mannerisms. Already when Wittgenstein arrived in 1949, the students were perplexed when Wittgenstein spoke up. Who was this man who sounded like Malcolm – or was it Malcolm who sounded like Wittgenstein? According to the folklore of Cornell, a student who arrived late to the meeting at the Philosophy Club, asked a neighbor, ‘Who is this guy sounding like Malcolm?’ (Carmichael 2011).

Malcolm himself liked to point out that Wittgenstein had picked up certain expressions from him, such as ‘hooey’ and ‘hot ziggety’. Maybe this was because people in his surroundings knew that it was usually Malcolm who sounded like Wittgenstein. But even if this was true, Malcolm also enjoyed the illusion that people thought they were listening to Wittgenstein, when it was Malcolm who spoke. According to a Cornell undergraduate in the 1960s:

I recall one class he [Malcolm] told us of the time when some roguish graduate students had planted a tape recording in his desk, consisting of someone doing a tolerably good impression of Wittgenstein. Malcolm found this hilarious and seemed to enjoy telling the story. (Serafini 1993, 310)

And just like a second generation of students of Wittgenstein eventually soon appeared at Cornell, so did a second generation of people with the master’s mannerisms. The result, as Edward Murphy said of a Malcolm student, was ‘an echo

of an echo' (Murphy 1996, xxvi). James Wallace, who was a graduate student in philosophy in 1959–1962, not only learned philosophy at Cornell but also picked up a gesture of Wittgenstein. The gesture – hitting himself in the back of his head, to indicate what a fool he was – was then passed on to his son, David Foster Wallace, who eventually figured out its origin.²⁴

From Cornell, Wittgenstein's various mannerisms seem to have traveled to other universities in the United States and taken on a life of their own. 'Daniel [Rogers] Albritton and [Stanley] Cavell had these mannerisms: long delays in formulating a philosophical idea and slapping the head (forehead, not the back of the head)' (Little 2011).²⁵

The mannerisms of Wittgenstein that were cultivated at Cornell and elsewhere represent one of the many details that have been presented in this paper and belong to the history of his visit to Ithaca in the summer of 1949. More generally, we have tried to draw attention to the role of details; and it is now time to say something about what we have found.

We began this section of the paper with a long quote from *Austerlitz* by Sebald, in which the message is that one can never fully capture something that happens in history without resorting to preformed images that do not adequately express what really happened. And what really happened are all the details that make up the event when it takes place. But some details are more important than others. What makes for a 'telling detail'? Some details, we would like to say, with a deliberate double entendre, are 'telling details'. For example, in describing Wittgenstein's appearance at the famous encounter at the Philosophy Club meeting no one describes, say, the buttons on Wittgenstein's jacket. These are details too, but presumably not telling details. We suggest that a telling detail is one that can be told to some rhetorical effect in recalling or describing events. The details that matter in telling a story about Wittgenstein's appearance are those details which mark him as standing apart from the ordinary the 'cane', the 'uncomfortable in space', the 'queerly' or 'shabbily' dressed man, the 'army trousers', and so on. Even when some details are contradicted, as in Nelson's account correcting 'shabby' and substituting 'neat and clean', other details are resurrected to back up this version such as the 'oxfords [...] of the finest English make'.

A telling detail, we suggest, is 'telling' in another way – it is a detail which can be told for rhetorical effect. If Wittgenstein had, say, been missing a button on his jacket then this might have entered the story as part of rhetorical construction of the persona of the 'janitor' or the 'strange man' or the 'shabbily dressed man' and so on. But just describing the color or shape of the buttons that were there (unless they were oddly colored or shaped) serves no rhetorical purpose. It is in the usual meaning a matter of 'mere detail'.

For Wittgenstein himself and for the way he put philosophical examples to work details really mattered. Yet it seems that details were not there 'just for the sake of details' or in the way of 'mere details' as if 'more of the same' would suffice. Wittgenstein seemed to choose his detailed examples always to carry a larger point – in a way to make the example 'tell' in the business of the work of what a philosophical example can do.

It would also seem that one can look at details from the perspective of Wittgenstein's idea of language games. Details should not and cannot be defined; what matters is how they are used, and for that one needs to describe minutely – describe in full detail! – how they are used. Some details may, for example, be used to

construct anecdotes that academics pass along for amusement. Others may be used to legitimate memories that have faded or that otherwise would not seem authentic. Other details are to be used for philosophical examples. In a way one can think of all these sorts of activities of 'telling' as different language games. And here the telling of details gets layered by wider institutional contexts. In some institutional contexts there are tensions between the telling of detail and the telling of abstraction. Science is such a case in point. In 'field sciences' it is the behavioral details observed in the wild or the 'natural habitat' of a species which serve to produce authentic knowledge. In other parts of science it is repeatable controlled observations carried out in a laboratory which carry the day.²⁶ In some putative sciences such as parapsychology this distinction is rendered with terms such as 'anecdotal' evidence versus laboratory evidence. The anecdote – the detailed story that often carries personal conviction as to an ESP experience lacks the warrant of repeatable, laboratory-based science. The same sort of tension is found in other institutional contexts such as when science enters the courtroom. Tort cases in regard to putative damages brought about by technological entities, such as silicone breast implants amongst US women in the 1980s, are a case in point. The traditions of case law such as testimony by individual victims as to their own damages are replaced by a new type of victim, which Jasanoff (2002) labels 'statistical victims' – their individual differences and details of their maladies rendered into a more persuasive form of statistical discourse about injuries. The telling of detail is, in such cases, subject to institutional pressures.

If details are always 'details to be told', then there exists a clear link between description and details – a position that is close to that of Wittgenstein, who felt that description, and not explanation, was what mattered in philosophy. It also throws us back into the fabric of mundane social life, materiality and technologies and all, which Wittgenstein so liked to cull for examples. For Wittgenstein understanding language was all about its use, and that meant paying attention to how words actually lived and breathed in a real language not a constructed one such as Esperanto. To pay attention to details also goes well with Wittgenstein's hostility to generalizations and theory. One must try to control one's urge to generalize; 'what we do is the opposite of theorizing. Theory blinds' (Monk 2009, 135).

There are many popular sayings or pieces of folk wisdom which pertain to detail. The devil (or God as in the original saying) is in the detail, we are told. We teach our students that they need to be able to tell the wood from the trees. A stitch in time saves nine, is a popular proverb. A camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle, and so on. These popular sayings all attest to details and how they are to be dealt with or not dealt with in the course of our lives.

For Wittgenstein who sometimes led the life of a philosopher and who perhaps enjoyed raising more question marks than most, details also helped to set off his thinking in fruitful ways, say in the form of a hint as a reaction to something (like the cheeseburger sign). Or it could help him to construct an analogy, as in the example of the cracks in the suspension bridge. Wittgenstein did not present logical and persuasive arguments of the type that academics like. 'He wasn't a reasoner at all', as Max Black once put it. 'He was doing something else [. . .] and some of the things he said were tremendously stimulating' (Black 1987, 99).

We would like to draw attention also to the details of the noises and silences in our account. Wittgenstein liked the metaphor of silence, famously saying, 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be *silent*'. Silence and sounds reverberate throughout our account. There is the silence of what we do not know – the details

that were not told and which may never be told of what happened in Ithaca during that long-ago summer. There is the silencing, even secrecy, around Wittgenstein's visit to Cornell – a silencing which led to one of the few details which all accounts of that legendary Philosophy Club meeting agree upon: 'the audible gasp' when it was revealed that the tramp/janitor/strange man was in fact Ludwig Wittgenstein, arguably then the world's greatest philosopher. The 'gasp' speaks to the silence in ways which we cannot write about.

There are also the 'echoings' of Wittgenstein's voice and ways of speaking in his students which were passed on through subsequent generations. There is the prank with the tape recorder making sonorous the mimicry of Wittgenstein's voice. What is silenced forever is, alas, the sound of Wittgenstein's own voice. As another former Cornell philosophy student, the composer, Steve Reich, discovered when trying to incorporate the voice of Wittgenstein into his own works, no tape recording of the voice of Wittgenstein exists. We can imagine that Wittgenstein, a very private man, despite being fascinated by American machines, avoided the tape recorder like the plague. He also avoided the camera, and no authentic photograph of his visit to Ithaca has yet been uncovered. In an age where visual and oral rendition is the de facto standard of fidelity we have to rest our case on the tools that have served the folklorist for aeons – words and story-telling.

By paying attention to the details of a tiny part of Wittgenstein's life we have done something which we are sure Wittgenstein himself would have found wholly hooey! We are indeed somewhat uncomfortable in culling the life of a scholar, sickness and all, sockless or not, for the purposes of an academic paper. In the end for us the details of Wittgenstein's visit to this tiny part of the world far off the beaten track only become 'telling details' if we too have told the story well, or if its details have resonance with more than mere historical anecdote. There are many other ways of approaching details that can make use of Wittgenstein – the life that he led as well as his work – as a point of departure. Since it is details, to follow Sebald, that make up what happens to us, they need to be thought about and discussed much more than they have been so far.

Notes

1. We want to thank the anonymous reviewers at *Distinktion* for very useful suggestions for how to improve this article. We also would like to extend a very heartfelt thank you to the many people who have helped us with information and/or with finding information on Wittgenstein's visit to Cornell. A special thanks goes to three people: Sr. Elwyn, William H. Gass, and Ron Hustwit, who all generously gave us valuable information. We are also very grateful to: Randall Collins, Ben Cornwall, Jonathan Black, Naomi Black, Monika Blank (Rockefeller Archive Center), Calum Carmichael, Elaine Engst, Claudia Fuchs, Lars Hertzberg, Glen Hopkins, Carol Kammen, Michael Kelly (Amherst College Archives), Eila Kupias (The Manuscript Collection, The National Library of Finland), Laura Linke (Cornell University Library), Daniel Little, Stanley James O'Connor, Bernt Österman, Ruth Reisenberg-Malcolm, Sarah Schnuriger (Special Collections assistant, Washington University), Sydney Shoemaker, Jonathan Smith (archivist at Trinity College Library), Alan Sica, Ilse Somavilla, James D. Wallace, Chelsea Weathers (The Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin), and Nanci Young (college archivist at Smith College). We also gratefully acknowledge permissions of the people mentioned above to cite our correspondence with them and/or our interviews with them.
2. See Appendix 1 on primary sources on Wittgenstein's Visit to Ithaca in 1949.

3. Several of these imaginary anecdotes are inspired by Malcolm's *Memoir*, such as the following:

One afternoon when taking our customary walk across the nearby fields, Wittgenstein, Malcolm and I came across a windmill, gently turning in the breeze. W was much impressed by its austere efficiency, and insisted that we inspect its workings more closely. (He never ceased to be an engineer at heart!) Later on, when returning home, W asked Malcolm why a child should not believe that windmills were responsible for PRODUCING the wind? W went on: 'How could we persuade him otherwise? By reasons given after the fact? Or rather, would we not here find ourselves floundering? All we could do is shew him by means of examples – or perhaps force'. To this Malcolm could only concede defeat. What a remarkable mind W has! (Perhaps I should become a postman). (Plant and Baumann 2011)

4. Wittgenstein visited the United States in July 1939 for a little more than a week, probably arriving on 17 July and probably leaving on 26 July. The main reason for the trip was that he had to attend a meeting between Nazi officials and the Wittgenstein family, in which money was offered to the Nazis in order that two of Wittgenstein's sisters could remain unharmed in Vienna. During the negotiations to buy Aryan citizenship for the two sisters (which Hitler personally granted), Ludwig and Margarete Wittgenstein had a serious fallout with their brother Paul. For accounts of the negotiations, see Prokop 2003, 224–35; Waugh 2008, 206–52. The only account in which Wittgenstein talks about other things that happened to him is to be found in O.K. Bouwsma's notes from a conversation with Wittgenstein on 16 January 1951:

Then he told me about his visit to New York in 1939. The people were awful. Only one person he liked, an Italian boy in Central Park who shined his shoes twice. The boy hoped someday to shine shoes in a better location. He was genuine. W. paid double for his shine.

He stayed in a large hotel on Lexington Avenue off from – opposite Rockefeller Center on Fifth Avenue. He couldn't sleep for the noise, even on the twenty-seventh story.

On the last day just before he left he took a taxi to see a doctor in New Jersey. Going through the tunnel the taxi driver shut off the fare meter. It stood at four dollars and W. saw it. The taxi driver stopped just beyond the tunnel and told W. the fare was seven dollars. W. got out, undecided. Then he went up to a policeman standing by and told him what had happened. Should he pay? The policeman went up, seized the driver by the neck, wrenched him out of the cab, and said to W.: Pay him \$4.50.

He was glad to get on a boat – the Holland-American line – away from America. (Bouwsma 1986, 74)

5. Wittgenstein liked the hard-boiled detective genre and especially the work of Norbert Davis (1909–1949), whom at one point he wanted to contact. The book by Davis that Wittgenstein liked so much is called *Rendezvous with fear* (1943; published in the United States as *The mouse in the mountain*). For Wittgenstein and the detective story, especially Norbert Davis, see Hoffmann 2003
6. Felix Salzer, a professor of musicology, writes:

- I recall also that he [Wittgenstein] whistled most brilliantly and expressively. He – in this particular way – went through a lot of his favorite songs by Schubert and Schumann and I accompanied him at the piano as if he were a singer. (Salzer 1965)

According to William H. Gass, Wittgenstein did not only use his whistling for musical purposes: 'He [also] whistled to keep people away' (Gass 2011). Wittgenstein's love of music in general and his sometime fraught relationship with his older brother, Paul – a well-known concert pianist who played with one hand after losing an arm in World war I – is described in Waugh (2008).

7. For Wittgenstein's preference to eat always the same thing, see Steven Shapin, 'The philosopher and the chicken' (1998, 21–50).
8. Thanks to the careful work that has been done over the years on Wittgenstein's manuscripts, it is possible to state with some precision which manuscripts Wittgenstein worked on during the whole year of 1949 and which he therefore *may* have worked on during his visit to Ithaca. The former include MS 137, MS 138, MS 168, MS 169, MS 170, and MS 171. The ones that Wittgenstein *probably* worked on while in Ithaca are the last three (MS 169, MS 170, and MS 171). These have been published in Vol. 2 of Wittgenstein's *Last writings on the philosophy of psychology* and amount to some sixty pages (Wittgenstein 1992, 1–59). The number of pages is small for Wittgenstein, who produced some thirty thousand pages of material between 1929 and 1951 (Malcolm 2001, 84). The reason for the low productivity was presumably that Wittgenstein was sick during much of the time in Ithaca; he also lacked the kind of privacy and solitude that he was used to.
9. This is according to Fuchs' daughter Claudia Fuchs, who still lives in Ithaca. Wolfgang Fuchs' own memoir of his conversation with Wittgenstein has unfortunately been lost.
10. As one reviewer pointed out to us, there exist some discrepancies between the information about Wittgenstein that can be found in Black's account and that which has been established in the secondary literature on Wittgenstein.
11. We have been unable to locate Malcolm's notes or, more generally, his papers.
12. We have located three accounts, but William Kennick indicates that there are more (Kennick 1993–2008, 41).
13. One of Kennick's students, James Wallace, recalls the following:

Kennick's story of his first encounter with Wittgenstein was vivid. It happened at a philosophy discussion club meeting. There was a scruffily dressed stranger at the meeting, Kennick said. Someone read a paper, and then, during the discussion that followed, Max Black, who was moderating the meeting, turned to the stranger and asked, 'What do you think, Mr. Wittgenstein?' Wittgenstein first responded by pitching forward and striking his head on the table with a thump. Of course, the students were astounded. This was the first they knew that Wittgenstein was in Ithaca, and Wittgenstein's behavior was unusual to say the least. Wittgenstein remained with his head on the table for several moments but he began to move his hands in the air. Then, he gradually began to talk, and, of course, from that point on he dominated the discussion. (Wallace 2011)

14. One undergraduate at the time, Stanley James O'Connor, has told us that he once saw Wittgenstein crossing the Quad at Cornell together with Malcolm. Wittgenstein was oddly dressed, 'like a scout', and had 'piercing eyes' (O'Connor 2011).
15. Paul Ziff (1920–2003) received his doctorate in philosophy at Cornell University in 1951.
16. Joseph Lalumia (1916–1998) received his doctorate in philosophy at Cornell in 1951.
17. The finding of the tablets upon which the Mormon faith is based at nearby Manchester, New York, could possibly have provided a further impetus to Wittgenstein's interest in the Mormon religion at this time.
18. See Sterrett (2005) for the links between Wittgenstein's early interest in aeronautics and his work in philosophy.
19. Wittgenstein famously loved watching popular movies (e.g. Szabados and Stojanova 2011).
20. The only information we have been able to find about Dr Mooney is a note in *Cornell Alumni News* from 1942 about the new hires at Cornell's Infirmary and Clinic: 'Dr. Louise C. Mooney, appointed resident physician at the Infirmary, received the AB at Goucher College and the MD at Wayne University. The last two years she has been resident physician at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, Ill.' (Cornell Alumni News 1942).
21. Bouwsma's book *Wittgenstein: Conversations 1949–1951* has an entry dated 'October 11 [1949]', which should be 19 October (Bouwsma 1986, 45). On 15 October Wittgenstein sent a telegram to Bouwsma with the following text: 'If convenient to you shall arrive

- Springfield Monday [17 October] 610 pm train please wire reply – Wittgenstein' (Wittgenstein 1949g).
22. At another occasion Wittgenstein told Malcolm that these words in the play had made him realize the importance of religion ('for the first time he saw the possibility of religion'; Malcolm 2001, 58–9).
 23. (See Sebald (2001), 71–2).
 24. 'We met with David Wallace in his hotel suite in downtown Cleveland, the day after his reading. He wore a striped mock turtleneck, gray chinos and tan work boots. During the first half of the interview, Wallace spat Kodiak tobacco juice into a small white bucket, with one leg up on the gold and violet couch, then smoked and drank diet cola for the second half. He wore his brown hair parted in the center, which often necessitated brushing it out of his eyes, and had a habit of lightly striking the back of his head with an open palm, a habit which, Wallace noted, descends in a direct line from his father, a philosopher at the University of Illinois Champagne/Urbana; through his father's teacher, Norman Malcolm, Wittgenstein's last student; back to Wittgenstein himself.' (Kennedy and Polk 1993)
 25. Rogers Albritton (1923–2002) taught at Cornell in the early 1950s. How Stanley Cavell came to pick up Wittgenstein's mannerisms is less clear. He began to read Wittgenstein on his own in the late 1940s but never met Wittgenstein. In 1953, however, he took part in a discussion group at Harvard on *Philosophical investigations*, which was led and organized by Paul Ziff (Cavell 2001, 91). Ziff, as earlier mentioned, was a graduate student at Cornell at the time of Wittgenstein's visit in 1949.
 26. There is a vast literature in science studies on field and laboratory sites and their differences. A useful entry to this literature is Kohler (2002).

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Appendix 1. Primary sources on Wittgenstein's visit to Ithaca in 1949

The three accounts of Wittgenstein's visit to Ithaca that exist, besides this paper, are those of Norman Malcolm (in his *Memoir*), Sr. Elwyn (in her 1966 dissertation) and Roy Monk (in his 1990 biography). The primary sources used in these works are: Malcolm's own experience with Wittgenstein in 1949 as well as his correspondence from just before the visit; letters on the visit as experienced by some people who met Wittgenstein in Ithaca, written in response to Sr. Elwyn's requests (from Jon Nelson, Stuart Brown, and Willis Doney); Bouwsma's notes on his conversations with Wittgenstein 1949–1951; and a letter from Wittgenstein to Roy Fouracre dated 28 July 1949.

Besides these sources, we have located and used the following material. In the electronic edition of Wittgenstein's collected letters, there are nine letters that he wrote while in Ithaca (including the one to Fouracre). We have located two more letters and also a telegram. The two letters include one to Sraffa, dated 23 August (McGuinness and von Wright 1995, 410) and one to Bouwsma, dated 5 October (for which we thank Ron Hustwit). On 15 October 1949 Wittgenstein sent a telegram to Bouwsma, which today can be found in the Bouwsma Papers at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

We have also located two letters by Malcolm that describe Wittgenstein's illness while in Ithaca: one, dated 11 September 1949, to G.E. Moore (Rothhaupt, Seery, and McManus 2002, 272–3) and one dated 15 September 1949 to Georg von Wright (for which we thank Eila Kupias at The National Library of Finland). Little is known about Wittgenstein's visit with his sister Margarete Stonborough-Wittgenstein in late October 1949 except for a letter to her husband dated 19 October (available at the Brenner Archives Institute at the University of Innsbruck) and information in Ursula Prokop's *Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein* (2003, 256) and Alexander Waugh's *The house of Wittgenstein* (2008, 273).

Sr. Elwyn has generously supplied us with copies of the letters on Wittgenstein's visit that she used for her thesis, something which has made it possible for us to use other parts than those she herself used. (The originals were donated to Cornell University Archives in 2011.) We have had access to William Kennick's unpublished memoirs (in the archives of Amherst College), which contain information on his meeting with Wittgenstein in 1949. William H. Gass's 1968 article on his meeting with Wittgenstein in 1949, as published in *The New Republic*, is clearly important; he also kindly answered a question we asked him by email. The librarians at Washington University in St Louis, where Gass's papers have been deposited, provided us with copies of some material that Gass had received about Wittgenstein's appearance at Cornell's Philosophy Club.

We have had access to a long unpublished interview with Max Black (in his papers, at Cornell), in which he describes his interaction with Wittgenstein as a student in Cambridge in the late 1920s, and in all brevity also Wittgenstein's visit to Cornell in 1949. Jonathan Black, the son of Max Black, briefly spoke to us.

Ron Hustwit generously gave us xerox copies of the original notes that Bouwsma took from his conversations with Wittgenstein in 1949. Many librarians at Cornell University Library have helped us to locate material on the people at Cornell that Wittgenstein spent time with, especially Laura Linke. Callum Carmichael and Sydney Shoemaker have helped us with information on Malcolm and Wittgenstein as well as the Department of Philosophy at Cornell.

Information on what boats (and in which class) Wittgenstein traveled across the Atlantic in 1939 and 1949 (only back to England) is provided by ancestry.com. A timetable for the train between Ithaca and New York City at the time when Wittgenstein took it can be found on p. 27 in the July 1949 issue of *Cornell Alumni News*. For historical data about the weather in Ithaca in 1949, the following source has been used: http://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/KITH/1949/10/13/DailyHistory.html?req_city=NA&req_state=NA&req_statename=NA (we thank Ben Cornwell for this reference).

Finally, we have been unable to locate any photograph of Wittgenstein from his 1949 visit to Ithaca (the one on p. 2 in Bouwsma, *Wittgenstein: Conversations 1949–1951* is from the 1930s in Cambridge and therefore does not depict, to cite the text, 'Wittgenstein at Cornell'). While Nabokov was in Ithaca during some of Wittgenstein's visit, the two never met (Nakata 2000).