Legerdemain/Gaucherie: Doodle Theory with Barthes and Beckett

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The point of departure of this essay is that, in and at the margins of their writing, Roland Barthes and Samuel Beckett both produced prolific bodies of doodles and drawings. My central claim is that doodling and literary criticism are wedded, and can be made to work together, in unacknowledged ways. Recently, both Barthes's and Beckett's bodies of visual work – if, indeed, we can call them *work* - have been the subject of critical discussion, commentary and public exhibition.[i] As is the case for most inveterate doodlers, for both Barthes and Beckett the space of graphic play seems to represent a reprieve, or a relief, from the exertions of writing: a space in which to vent and procrastinate. Similarly, more conventional literary studies often exhibit a reflexive suspicion of any work of literary criticism that takes doodling as its object as being the product of a certain exhaustion or lack of available impetus. This is the first point of comparison between doodling and criticism as dialogic modes.

Beckett's doodles interrupt, punctuate and illustrate his handwritten manuscripts. Typically, they play out upon the verso side of the page, opposite the incipient text on the recto. In contrast, Barthes's drawing practice unfolded in an adjacent stream to his writing career: a discrete avocation, a diurnal activity (or an 'exercise', as Sunil Manghani usefully characterizes it), which Barthes took up increasingly in the 1970s, after the visit to Japan that informed *L'Empire des signes* (1970 – translated as *Empire of Signs*) and evidently energized his desire for calligraphic non-signification.[ii]

I will lean more towards Barthes in this introduction, since Barthes's critical writings will help to inform a theoretical approach towards doodling. The division of Barthes's working routine between committed writing and idle drawing recalls Marcel Proust's reflection in the final volume of *A la recherche* (translated by Ian Patterson as *Finding Time Again*), that 'the

writer realizes that while his dream of being a painter was not realizable in a conscious and deliberate manner, it has nevertheless been realized and that the writer, too, has created a sketch-book without being aware of it'.[iii] Conceivably influenced by Proust, Barthes himself described his own symptomatic '*produit latéral*' ('side-product') in similarly oneiric terms.[iv] In a short fragment published in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* in 1978, he attributed his visual work to the 'dream of being a complete artist: painter and writer', and perhaps also, as he put it, the result of 'the need to express a little of the impulse that is in the body' (*OC* V, 453). He imagines the drawings, then, as an outlet for the immediate pleasures and caprices of the lived body – the body subjected to the frustrations and sedentary labours of writing. I highlight this in order to mark a subtle distinction between Barthes's corporeal approach to doodling and the model of unconscious expression associated with Surrealist automatism, to which Barthes's visual style bears a resemblance – and which E.H. Gombrich regarded, uncontroversially, as the 'climax' of the doodle's assimilation into the repertoire of European art.[v]

As a bodily, gestural product, an autographic record and a genre of visual production that relates primarily to the immediate affective circumstances of the graphic subject, doodling is more approachable through a discourse on life and living than a discourse on art. In keeping with this, the ambiguous vitality of the doodled line plays a role in Barthes's autobiographical *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, insofar as graphic play bookends the text. Barthes designed the cover of the first edition (published by Editions du Seuil in 1975) – a characteristic farrago of colorful lines on a white background – and the book's back-matter similarly features two simple calligraphic doodles (*'graphie pour rien*' as Barthes puts it there, which Richard Howard translates as 'doodling').[vi] More speculatively, the melancholy association between doodling and the lived body extended beyond Barthes's own writing – and life – into the posthumous reception and exhibition of his drawings. The first exhibition of Barthes's drawings took place in Rome in 1981, the year after the writer's death in Paris.[vii] The catalogue

essay to the exhibition, by Carmine Benincasa, assumes an inevitably funereal tone, evoking the proleptic reticence with which Barthes demurred, in his life, from discussing his own graphic work. Reticence, in death, becomes silence. As Benincasa puts it: 'a discourse on Barthes's drawing is a discourse on the veil with which he concealed it [translation mine]' (*CS,* 9). The nonverbal production of a writer evokes a kind of melancholy of criticism or 'discourse': a desire to remove the veil, to pin down the life behind it. The literal death of the author – here, Barthes himself – seems to inform an affective critical turn away from writing, and towards its graphic satellites and marginalia: an imagined restitution, perhaps, of the *corps* (body) of the author, through an investment in the objects of his productive life about which he was most modest, but which bear the starkest material trace of his having been.

Beckett, too, was sensitive to the association between the processes of doodling and living, both thematically and biographically. In a 1973 letter to his friend, the writer John Kobler, a backwards-looking Beckett framed and abjected his doodles as a byproduct of a life of writing: '[m]y life', he wrote, 'is strewn with dirty little exercise-books full of doodles and aborted writing'.[viii] Doodles and failures: the *matter* of life. In *Watt* (1953)*,* Arsene similarly aligns doodling with other unthinking, vital activities: 'I neither eat nor drink nor breathe in nor out nor do my doodles more sagaciously than before'.[ix] The doodle is, thus, a kind of excremental product: one cannot doodle with intelligence in the same way that one cannot respire or subsist with intelligence. Barthes makes a similar point in one of his two essays on the artist Cy Twombly: '[h]ow to draw a line that is not stupid?' (173).[x] The corresponding question for the critic is, of course: how to read a drawing, or doodle, without stupidity? What does it mean to embrace the inescapable stupidity of doodles? The gesture of the doodle and the gesture of the critic have a lot in common: doodling and criticism are both practices of idiosyncratic annotation, neither of which add anything to the text, but both of which respond, in theory, to a deeply felt but obscure imperative. Between Barthes and Beckett, I want to work towards a

critical approach to the limits of reading such marginal practices, a line of thinking that finds an overlap among three contemporary theoretical impulses: genetic criticism, New Materialism, and the post-critical turn derived from Eve Sedgwick's account of weak theory, which I want to try to rearticulate along the lines of a Barthesian stupidity.

To describe this intersection: not only do doodles inscribe the lived materiality of the author – for instance, the New Materialist thinker Jane Bennett's recent work relies heavily on the interaction of her own doodles as an interface between the subject and the material world – but they also affirm the role of the stupidity of the line.[xi] Doodles inscribe loose, frustrated, proto-semantic, impulsive thinking, and, more to the point, the bearing that such vague expressions of thought have upon the processes of literary composition. While there is a tendency to think of doodles as a turn *away* from the work of writing – this being a recurring tendency in many examples of doodle criticism I discuss in this article – I want to reclaim doodles as a valuable resource for both writing and thinking. As such, I want to develop the kinship between the doodle as a 'weak' mode of expression and 'weak theory' as a mode of critical reading. Kathleen Stewart's rendition of weak theory makes this clear: weak theory, she writes, is '[t]heory that comes unstuck from its own line of thought to follow the objects it encounters, or becomes undone by its attention to things that don't just *add up* but take on a life of their own'.[xii] Weak theory interacts with the text it reads in much the same way as the author's doodle interacts with the manuscript. Perhaps we can call it a critical ethics of the doodle, which values modes of reading that depart from both rigid lines of rational argument and theoretical biases that deny the role of material processes upon acts of literary production. What I will refer to as the analogical mode of genetic criticism will provide further support for thinking the analogy between doodling and reading.

As an articulation of the materiality of writing, and in the spirit of my francophone interlocutors, the two French loanwords that will aid my thinking both relate to handiwork and

handedness: *legerdemain* and *gaucherie.* I do not wish to reify these two terms as concepts, but instead to deploy them in the spirit of the ethics of the doodle: that is, recursively and associatively. In the first instance, I have these two terms in mind as internal cautions against what can go awry in any case of two-handed comparative criticism. Legerdemain - etymologically, lightness of touch – would refer to the deft, light and perhaps a little spurious, imposition of a mediating third term, introduced in order to force a dialogue between two discrete corpuses: the comparatist's conjuring trick. Gaucherie is, meanwhile, in this rendition anyway, the opposite of legerdemain. Whereas legerdemain inveigles, gaucherie blunders. Gaucherie (of course derived from left-handedness) is, in fact, a term that Barthes uses in reference to Twombly: '[c]lumsiness (*gaucherie*) is rarely a matter of lightness; generally, to be *gauche* is to press too hard; real awkwardness insists, stubbornly' (*RF,* 165). As I am repurposing it here, gaucherie refers to the awkwardness of attempting to force or overstate – perhaps through rhetoric, perhaps through selective attention – an affinity or resonance from one hand to the other. In a sense, any dexterous work of comparative criticism must pass through the gap between the artifice of legerdemain and the awkwardness of gaucherie, must try to exert the right level of pressure of the hand. In what follows, I will negotiate this passage, but also aim to rearticulate both these metaphors of handedness according to two ways of thinking about the values of doodling for critical thought.

Legerdemain: Conjuring the Critic

I want briefly to account for the critical interest in Barthes' and Beckett's doodles. In Barthes's case, it has a lot to do with his arguably unparalleled status as a theoretical writer who has exerted a deep influence upon 'primary' fields of literary and artistic practice (in contrast to contemporaries like Derrida or Deleuze whose influence is comparatively greater in the 'secondary' domains of theory and criticism). Critical writing on Barthes's drawings often

represents an effort to conjure, from behind the veil, a genetic model of Barthes as a creative practitioner in his own right. The drawings constitute, according to Barthes's own brief descriptions of them, a kind of pure praxis. Sunil Manghani and Ryan Bishop's work on Barthes and the conceptual artist Victor Burgin, for instance, turns to Barthes as a practitioner in order to shore up his influence on the latter artist, but, also, so that the two might be regarded as somewhat symmetrical theoretician-artists.[xiii] Peter Schwenger's recent study of the so-called 'asemic' writing movement similarly posits Barthes's drawings as an ancestor of the asemic movement, in addition to considering his theoretical writings as a crucial current of influence upon it.[xiv]

In Beckett's case, on the other hand, critical interest in the doodles is, obviously, an upshot of the genetic turn in Beckett studies.[xv] Viewed on their own merits, there is nothing particularly exceptional about Beckett's doodles. The trinity of modern influences upon Beckett – Proust, Kafka and Joyce – were all prone to doodling too, but none of their doodles has attracted as much commentary as Beckett's. This disparity is owing in first instance to the level of critical attention garnered by Beckett's manuscripts. But, more significantly, there is the obvious affinity between the axiomatic qualities of doodling in general – idle, recursive, devoid of meaning – and similar such Beckettian themes, an affinity that makes his doodles particularly amenable to the gaucheries of interpretation. That resonance – between compositional habits and thematic or theoretical concerns – belongs to a broader analogizing current in genetic criticism: a critical position that spurns the perception of what Dirk Van Hulle calls 'mere source-hunting' and positivistic rummaging, and tries to retain a place for epistemological and theoretical reflection through the expanded field of authorial activity revealed by manuscripts.[xvi] Van Hulle, for example, makes the analogy between 'Beckett's interaction with [his] manuscripts' and the philosophical theory of the extended mind, which holds that thinking does not just take place within the brain or body, but also upon material

supports like notebooks.[xvii] Similarly, though not specifically in relation to Beckett, Finn Fordham argues for an analogy between the activities revealed by manuscripts – vacillation, erasure, revision – and modernist 'formations of subjectivity' – that modernist literature constructs its narrative subjects in an analogous way to how it prepares its drafts.[xviii] Genetic form, here, relates to content as much as any other account of form. Sympathetic to the analogizing trend, I want to focus on the question of the kinds of subjectivity implied not just by doodling, but by reading doodles.

I will turn, at last, to some actual drawings via a reflection on terminology. Although Barthes was not limited to pencils and ink as materials, I refer to his visual productions as 'drawings' since they almost always foreground linear play – what Barthes refers to as 'graphism'.[xix] Furthermore, although they are materially separate from any manuscripts, I refer to the drawings as doodles for the way in which they relate, laterally, to Barthes's writing practice as a dream or reprieve. The distinction between drawing and doodling here is that doodling is related, metonymically, to writing, whereas drawing is not necessarily. Surveying them, Barthes's drawings can be figurative, like a drawing of a thickly outlined kimono (Fig 1) that becomes the surface or field for an explosion or exhaustion of colours and lines, a picture of the Barthesian analogy between the garment and the text.

Fig 1. Roland Barthes, 29.3.72

Barthes's strokes are often ideographic, a gesture towards a singular, illegible practice of writing, which is something they have in common with the drawings of the Surrealist artist and poet Henri Michaux. Some of his drawings depict rough and inchoate stickmen in an array of postures, whereby the gesture of the pen-stroke becomes the gesture of the figure. Elsewhere, rapidly sketched lines and blocks resolve, in their totality, into urban and rural scenes. However, the majority of Barthes's drawings, whether filling or sparsely marking the surface of the paper, are non-figurative, playful explorations of graphic gesturality. Often, the pictures titillate modes of visual interpretation, orientation and sense-making, like reading a text, or deciphering a map. Some resemble scrambled cartographical lines – shorelines and borders and dotted archipelagos. Some resemble chaotic jumbles of letters and lines, invoking the horizontality of reading, the desire for legibility, just as they dispel the possibility of it, such as the pseudo-letterings of a drawing from 1972 (Fig 2).

Fig 2. Roland Barthes, 22.7.72. Held at Bibliothèque nationale de France

Studies of Beckett's manuscripts generally hold that the more doodles there are, the more Beckett was struggling to write. In *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Malone Meurt/Malone Dies*, Dirk Van Hulle and Pim Verhulst find that 'there is a clear correlation between the apparent difficulty of writing (…) and doodling on the verso'.[xx] Here, doodling is

a negative activity, resorted to in the time and space spent not writing. Beckett's doodles are, typically, categorized as either illustrative or associative, as David Hayman suggests in his study of the doodles in the six *Watt* notebooks.[xxi] That is, they either reflect what is happening in the text, or they drift away from it. In their catalogue of the doodles within the *Endgame* manuscripts, Dave Williams and Chris Taylor suggest an additional conceptual binary, which they map onto a relation between Beckett's writing and his drawing: that of the reductive and the expansive. They suggest that we 'place the writing itself on the side of the reductive, and the drawings on the side of the expansive'.[xxii] There is, in general, a stylistic consistency between the content of the manuscripts and the depictive force of the doodles. For instance, in a doodle from the *Malone Meurt* manuscript, the undulating line of a figure's mouth forms, or is formed by, the curves of the letter 'M', the initial to which Beckett's narrative voices try to shore themselves throughout the trilogy of novels and beyond.

In another doodle, a debilitated or bound figure averts its gaze from a figure seemingly flaunting its relative mobility. Viewing Beckett's manuscripts as documents of a graphic practice, we can see how his line-making oscillates, interminably, between insemination and erasure. The doodling line is that which excises and places under erasure, as well as that which pursues a sketch in order, apparently, to relieve literary blockage. Ultimately, the critic cannot know which function the doodle bore in the original process of composition. Fortuitously, this twofold capacity finds a visual metaphor in the undecidable doodles of scissors - which also appear to be phalluses – that appear throughout Beckett's manuscripts (particularly the *Malone meurt* and *Endgame* notebooks) as one of his graphic tics.

Each body of doodles is, in part, a visual synecdoche of the corpus of which it is both a part and from which it is excluded. Barthes s'drawings often effect an exploration of, or experimentation in, semiotic neutrality; an effort to skirt the limit between the letter and the line, between writing and gesture, and, through drawing, to explore the persistent absence of

the body. Beckett's doodles, meanwhile, depict a sort of ludic persistence, a way of passing the time in the lulls of activity, of transcribing the difficulty of composition. Where Beckett is writing on graph paper, the doodles suggest a compulsive and improvisational will hemmed by structure and space, which does not mean so much as it wills: especially the doodles which retrace and embellish the squares of a grid notebook from the *Molloy* manuscript.

Turning to Beckett's prose, we can read moments where the famous imperative to 'go on' is as much the articulation of a graphic imperative as it is a linguistic or existential imperative.[xxiii] I am thinking, in particular, of Malone, with his pencil and notebook, for whose bed-bound writing the Barthesian '*graphie pour rien*' (doodling) seems a particularly apt phrase, carving out a vital zone of indistinction between the drawn and the written: '[a] few lines to remind me that I too subsist'.[xxiv] Drawing, after all, concatenates the inaction or immobility of the subject, with the action, theoretically associated with libidinal inarticulacy, of the graphic mark.[xxv] All Malone does is draw, a double-meaning present in the English version of the text, which connects his graphism to his obsessive manipulation of his possessions, drawing them to and from himself: both activities of play, to occupy time, from a fixed position.

Genetic criticism reminds us that the technologically reproduced text is a kind of illusion that obscures the history of the work as a discrete process of fabrication. This brings me back to another version of legerdemain. In stage magic, the disappearing trick is, of course, a simple, deceptive act of displacement. Like the audience beholding whatever object the magician intends to disappear, the reader of the manuscript cannot help but behold the obtrusiveness of Beckett's handiwork, and reckon with the simple, insistent materiality of graphic marks. But, if doodles, like all traces, are acts of disappearance (or, in French, *retraits*), then the displacement that occurs in the act of reading doodles is a displacement of presence *onto* the reader. Bill Prosser, who has researched Beckett's doodles extensively, seems to

articulate this displacement when he states that '[the doodles] are cooked up from ingredients too anonymous to be pinned down. This, surely, must be to our advantage, for denied the more traditional route of exegesis, we are forced to take from the pictures simply what they offer on their own terms, as presented'.[xxvi] If exegesis constitutes an act of critical disappearance – the reader effacing themselves within the currents of reading and interpretation – then the physical 'presentation' of the doodle has the opposite effect: one of exclusion, denying the reader entry, rendering them ineffectual – but also of exposure, unveiling the reader as a subject.

Being 'denied the traditional route of exegesis', as Prosser puts it, resonates with Barthes's critical experience of reading and viewing the work of Saul Steinberg – most renowned for the doodle-like cartoons he drew for *The New Yorker* magazine between the 1940s and 90s. Beholding Steinberg's oeuvre in its totality – as a *text,* as Barthes puts it – Barthes evokes a similar sensation of stark critical subjectivation: '*Le spectacle m'attire et me rejette tout à la fois (...). Une voix incessante parcourt l'oeuvre de Steinberg; on n'entend qu'elle et elle dit: All except you. Et de cette exception je tire à la fois profit et douleur*' (The spectacle attracts me and rejects me at the same time (…). A ceaseless voice runs through Steinberg's work; it says: *ALL EXCEPT YOU*. And from this exclusion I take advantage and pain) (*AE,* 42). Much like the experience with Beckett's doodles – and, indeed, Barthes's own doodles – Steinberg's graphism invites reading, conjures the subject of the critic – or, more precisely, the *body* of the critic – before promptly leaving them standing. Doodles do not merely remind us of the crucial role played in the composition of literary works by the complex material circumstances of the writer in a given place at a given time. They also remind us, through the transference of their abandonment onto the manuscript or sheet – of the determining roles such circumstances play through and upon acts of criticism too.

Gaucherie: The Language of the Hand

Barthes and Beckett were both left-handed. While Beckett remained left-handed throughout his life, Barthes, as a child, was 'constrained to draw with [his] right hand', as he recalls in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (*RB,* 98). In a formative subjection to what Barthes would later refer to as the *doxa* – the *law* – the young Barthes started drawing with his right hand. Having drawn the lines, though, he would switch back to his left hand when adding in the colours. This is what Barthes calls the 'revenge of an impulse' (*RB,* 98). Developing the lines of thinking I have been associating with the lightness of legerdemain, I want to return to the notion of gaucherie in order to unpack this unstable distribution between Barthes's hands – the right-handedness of the line, which stands for form and structure (and, by extension, language) – and the left-handedness of colour, which stands for matter and the body.

Indeed, throughout Barthes's writing, colour is tied to the vague rebelliousness of the body asserting itself upon, and subverting, codified expression. In the 1978 note from *Les Nouvelles Littéraires,* Barthes refers to his drawings as '*le degré zéro de la couleur*' – a title to which he does not add any gloss or explanation, but which I suggest be understood as the point at which colour and line become inseparable. The vibrancy, colour and sheer abandonment of Barthes's drawings at their densest contrasts with his interest in what he calls, in *Writing Degree Zero*, the 'colourless', and, later on in his work, 'the Neutral'.[xxvii] The metaphor of colour, therefore, is one of the means of thinking the medial difference between writing and drawing in Barthes's imaginary. There is, throughout Barthes's oeuvre, a certain sense of resignation to the confines of linguistic nativism: the writing subject's rootedness in a mother tongue. I should add, too, that Barthes also somewhat fetishizes this nativism, making it an inflexibly definitive feature of literary writing *as such*. It is in relation to this account of writing that we find one of the few direct references to Beckett in Barthes's work. In *The Preparation of the Novel*, Barthes writes that the '[f]irst requisite feature of the language of writing: it's *native*; it partakes (…) of the subject's mother tongue: (let's set aside the altogether exceptional

case of those writers who produce a Work in a language other than their mother tongue; I say, spontaneously: Conrad, Beckett, Cioran)'.[xxviii] Beckett therefore constitutes an exception who does not conform to the fantasy of monolingualism, and who thus does not present much interest to Barthes's critical gaze.

Barthes switched hands; Beckett switched languages. This basic distinction between two different foundational acts of substitution articulates one of the principal distinctions between the two writers. I want to conclude by considering the tension between one's natural or naturalized language and one's natural or naturalized handedness – a distinction that falls along the medial boundary between literature and visual art, and which, furthermore, the activity of doodling cuts across. Handedness brings the untutored singularity of the body to bear upon the scene of writing. It is instructive to contrast the way in which Barthes parenthesizes Beckett for alienating himself into a foreign language – what Barthes refers to as the right-handed language of French (*RF,* 163) – with the way in which he, elsewhere, hails Twombly for alienating his drawing practice by using his left hand instead of his natural right hand. In his 1976 essay on Twombly, 'Non Multa Sed Multum', Barthes writes that '[i]n a certain sense, TW liberates painting from seeing, for the "gauche" (the "lefty") undoes the link between hand and eye' (*RF,* 163). The *gauche,* the left hand – as a figure for the material and materializing impulses of the body – supplants the perspectivizing and structuring drive of vision, and also the linearity of writing and syntax. Barthes continues in the essay to reflect on the graphic production of the *infans*, the child before speech: 'entirely without mediation, it directly conjoins the objective mark of the instrument and our little student's this or that' (*RF,* 175). For Barthes, with drawing, the subject can attain a kind of true speechlessness, since the expression – the pressing of the pencil – coincides exactly with the singularity of the 'this' or 'that'. In a reading of Barthes's essays on Twombly, Marjorie Welsh notes that, here, Barthes has found a visual analogue to the 'verbal prelinguistic utterances remarked by Julia

Kristeva'.[xxix] Perhaps one of the more persistent nodes of phonocentrism is the theoretical privileging of speechlessness and voicelessness over what Barthes refers to as *dysgraphia*, that is, the inability to handwrite coherently or legibly, which is articulated by the graphic infancy of the doodle. In this context, writing simultaneously excludes and inscribes drawing. What a doodler like Beckett, who wrote in a foreign, right-handed language but never stopped drawing with his left-hand, on the left-hand side of his notebooks, illustrates is that the two graphic subjectivities are always one.

I want to conclude by lingering on this comparison between Barthes switching hands and Beckett switching languages. These respective incidents of Barthes' and Beckett's *practices* throw into relief a broader line of distinction between what we might think of as two basic motivating principles behind the trajectories of their work – Barthes' desire to place and displace his own body, and Beckett's desire to scramble and weaken the foundations of linguistic subjectivity. However, as Sinead Mooney has argued, Beckett's turn from English to French itself was attended by an 'increased interest' in embodiment and corporeality which, as she puts it, 'suggests a form of pathology whereby writing in a foreign language crystallizes an allied sense of the disturbing materiality and otherness of body *and* language'.[xxx] Linguistic alienation is curiously indexed with corporeal alienation.

Handedness and dexterity (or lack thereof) are seldom far from Beckett's evocations of bodies negotiating themselves and each other. Notably in *How It Is,* the narrator's reminiscences of an adolescent encounter with a girl attains a moment of unity when he, 'dextrogyre' (that is, right-handed) and she, 'sinistro' (of course, left-handed) briefly become complements – 'the empty hands mingle'.[xxxi] There is a sense in which the opacity of terms like 'dextrogyre' become part of the narrator's broader immersion in a field of prostheses – of tools, objects and other bodies. The prehensile hand, a commonly foregrounded image in Beckett's prose, figures the way in which language might be grasped or gripped, but never

incorporated. To follow this line of thinking into its correlates in the scene of *reading*, the bodily identification inevitable in the act of reading doodles – identifying the traces of the unique subject of the author – activates by association a mode of reading that is motivated by an identification with the obscure and ungraspable role played by the embodied life of the author in the production of texts.

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[i] I will discuss critical approaches to both throughout this article. To give an indication of recent exhibitions: Barthes's drawings were exhibited alongside work by Victor Burgin in the exhibition *Barthes/Burgin* at the John Hansard Gallery in Southampton in October 2016. The exhibition of Beckett's *Murphy* manuscript at the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading received significant press attention in in 2014.

[ii] Sunil Manghani, 'An Exercise in Drawing' in *Barthes/Burgin,* edited by Ryan Bishop and Sunil Manghani (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 63.

[iii] Marcel Proust, *Finding Time Again*, translated by Ian Patterson (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 208–9.

[iv] Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes,* edited by Eric Marty, revised edition, 5 vols (Paris: Seuil, 2002), V, 453. Henceforth *OC*.

[v] E. H. Gombrich, *The Uses of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication* (London: Phaidon, 1999), 217.

[vi] Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes,* translated by Richard Howard (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2010), 187.

[vii] See Carmine Benincasa, *Carte Segni* (Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Electa, 1981). Henceforth *CS*.

[viii] Samuel Beckett, 'Letter to John Kobler', 17 July 1971, HRHRC, UT.

[ix] Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: Grove Press, 1970), 62.

[x] Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation,* translated by Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press 1991), 173. Henceforth *RF.*

[xi] See Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing Up with Walt Whitman* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

[xii] Kathleen Stewart, 'Weak Theory in an Unfinished World', *Journal of Folklore Research* 45:1,71–82 (72).

[xiii] See *Barthes/Burgin,* edited by Ryan Bishop and Sunil Manghani (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

[xiv] See Peter Schwenger, *Asemic: The Art of Writing* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

[xv] See, for example: David Hayman, 'Nor Do My Doodles More Sagaciously: Beckett Illustrating Watt' in *Samuel Beckett and the Arts: Music, Visual Arts and Non-Print Media,* edited by Lois Oppenheim (New York, NY: Garland, 1999), 199–215; Dave Williams and Chris Taylor, 'Peripheral Expressions: Samuel Beckett's Marginal Drawings in *Endgame*',

Journal of Beckett Studies 28:2 (2010), 29–55; Bill Prosser, 'Beckett's Barbouillages', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 22:1 (2010), 373–95.

[xvi] See Dirk Van Hulle, 'Modern Manuscripts and Textual Epigenetics: Samuel Beckett's Works between Completion and Incompletion', in *Modernism/modernity* 18:4 (November 2011), 801–912 (806).

[xvii] Dirk Van Hulle, 'The Extended Mind and Multiple Drafts: Beckett's Models of the Mind and Postcognitivist Paradigm', *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 24 (2012), 277–89 (288).

[xviii] Finn Fordham, *I do I undo I redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 75.

[xix] See, for example, Roland Barthes, *All Except You* (Paris: Galerie Maeght, 1983), 56. Henceforth: *AE.*

[xx] Dirk Van Hulle and Pim Verhulst, *The Making of Samuel Beckett's 'Malone Dies'/'Malone Meurt'* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 34.

[xxi] See Hayman, 'Nor Do My Doodles More Sagaciously'.

[xxii] Williams and Taylor, 'Peripheral Expressions', 53.

[xxiii] See Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable,* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 134.

[xxiv] Samuel Beckett, *Molloy; Malone Dies; The Unnamable,* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1958), 283.

[xxv] By libidinal inarticulacy, I am thinking specifically about the theoretical legacy of Surrealist practices of drawing (for example, Andre Masson and Henri Michaux). For a philosophical reflection on the libidinal qualities of drawing, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le Plaisir au dessin,* translated by Philip Armstrong (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013).

[xxvi] Prosser, 'Beckett's Barbouillages', 383.

[xxvii] See Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero and Elements of Semiology,* translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 64.

[xxviii] Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978–79 and 1979–80),* edited by Nathalie Léger, translated by Kate Briggs (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 288–9.

[xxix] Marjorie Welsh, 'The Art of Being Sparse, Porous, Scattered: Roland Barthes on Cy Twombly' in *Of the Diagram: The Work of Marjorie Welsh,* edited by Aaron Levy and Jean-Michel Rabaté (Philadelphia, PA: Slought Books, 2003), 221–37 (223).

[xxx] Sinéad Mooney, *A Tongue Not Mine: Beckett and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), 109.

[xxxi] Samuel Beckett, *How It Is* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), 58.