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9 Writers' Libraries and Vestigial Notes as Cultural Heritage

Minding the Gaps in the Material Record

Dirk Van Hulle

A crucial question when dealing with literature as cultural heritage concerns our awareness of what is no longer there. When studying the creative process, for instance, we tend to focus on what is still extant, be it notebooks, manuscripts, books in authors' personal libraries, marginalia, or corrected proofs. But these are usually only a limited set of vestiges of a process that is largely immaterial. Calling them vestiges is perhaps a good way of reminding ourselves that they are traces or remnants of something that is disappearing or that is lost. A writer's notebook is often the closest one can come to a creative mind at work. In the recent edition of T. S. Eliot's *Gloucester Notebook*, for instance, Robert McCrum writes:

> The manuscript in literature is a sacred relic. As common readers, we are not so often in the presence of a great work of art so close to the (molten) moment of inspiration, the ink-blots and crossings-out. Such literary treasures are precious and, despite the traffic in print and paper, astonishingly rare.[1]

The comparison with a "sacred relic" appeals to the sense of what Walter Benjamin called the aura of the original work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility.[2] The allure of this aura is so strong that it has led to a phenomenon most archives and libraries are familiar with: while at the end of the twentieth century digitization and online distribution were still seen as a potential threat (as in the initial fear that researchers might no longer visit archives if the images were all available online), the increased online visibility turned out to have the opposite effect. The more people were aware of the existence of these treasures the more they wanted to see the originals.

Treating literature as cultural heritage is a way of drawing attention to its material dimension. Before exploring this dimension in more detail, however, it seems appropriate to start with a disclaimer. The study of

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literature as cultural heritage is an approach that focuses on numerous material traces and archival documents, the preservation of which is something all of us, as members of society and taxpayers, invest in. The huge amount of archival material appeals to a fundamental human curiosity. The most elementary, bare-bones answer to the question why one would investigate the mountains of manuscripts waiting to be explored is therefore essentially similar to George Malory's alleged reply to the question why he wanted to climb Mount Everest: Because it's there.[3] But this "thereness" can easily trigger a material bias that should not blind us to what is not, or no longer, there.

This essay focuses on writers' libraries and reading notes—that is, it starts from *what is left* of writers' libraries and reading notes. This seems evident when made explicit, but it usually remains implicit, which can lead to implicit bias—a form of unintentional prejudice for those books of a writer's personal library that are still extant and/or those texts whose reading has left tangible traces. If this predilection is intentional, the material bias might be employed as a conscious scientific method; from a Popperian perspective, for instance, focusing on tangible traces can be a way of increasing the falsifiability of one's research hypotheses, an attempt to make them disprovable. But even if this material bias is a conscious choice, it is important to be aware of the numerous reading experiences that have *not* left any traces.

Take for instance the personal library of Samuel Beckett. What he left at his death in 1989 was a relatively limited number of books, as will be discussed in more detail below. For an author as erudite as Beckett, this was striking and worth flagging in an examination of his extant library. Because of the perceived danger of a potential bias towards what is still extant, the study of Beckett's library Mark Nixon and I published in 2013 contains several disclaimers such as: "what is still present is evidently useful, as long as it does not blind us to the numerous interests that have left no trace."[4] Making it a habit of calling it Beckett's *extant* library has the advantage of implicitly reminding ourselves of the existence of other types of library reconstruction.

Before taking a closer look at some of these other types, I would like to examine to what extent the reconstruction of an author's library is comparable with what André Malraux called the "*musée imaginaire*" (translated into English as the "museum without walls"). His concept of the "imaginary museum" was the result of two waves of decontextualization in the visual arts. The first wave took place when works of art were taken away from their context, placed in museums, and thus separated from the ritual, religious, representational, or other purposes they may have served originally. The second wave of decontextualization was facilitated by methods of reproduction in the first half of the twentieth century, such

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as photographs of art works on postcards or in art books, which had an equalizing effect as they disconnected works of art from their original sizes. In an art book, the tiniest miniature can be presented next to Géricault's seven-by-five-metre *Raft of the Medusa* as if they were equally big, equally valuable, equally worthy of study. In that sense, Rosalind Krauss points out, "Malraux's notion of the *musée imaginaire* is, in fact, another way of writing "modernism," that is, of transcoding the aesthetic notions upon which modern art was built: the idea of art as autonomous and autotelic, the sense of it as self-valuable, the view of it that had been summarized as *l'art pour l'art*."[5] And in the sense that the *musée imaginaire* is conceived as an "open field," welcoming the perceiver's own imaginative play, Krauss suggests that it presaged the advent of postmodernism, "making the space of modernism itself the ground of a universalization of the power of the artist and of the creative act."[6]

The more pervasive this condition becomes, the more the need may be felt to compensate by means of historicizing and contextualizing research to study literature as cultural heritage. But obviously, the issue is more complicated than an *ad fontes* reaction. The study of literature as cultural heritage can also embrace the notion of the *musée imaginaire* by using the digital medium to further democratize access to valuable manuscripts and rare books. The digital paradigm in scholarly editing has raised the standards not only of accessibility, searchability and usability, but also of accountability: whereas in the early twentieth century a linearized transcription that did not expand abbreviations in a manuscript could call itself "diplomatic" and was the closest most readers would ever come to the original document, in the meantime it is standard practice in digital scholarly editing that users are provided with—often high-resolution, zoomable—facsimiles of the document to check the editors' transcriptions, raising the editors' accountability to unprecedented levels. While on the one hand, these facsimiles offer readers digital access to original manuscripts that are preserved and protected as if they were sacred relics, the fact remains, on the other hand, that these are mere facsimiles, "made like," *but not quite* the originals. Because they resemble the original so closely (at least when we focus on the visual sense), this evolution resembles the photographic revolution that initiated the second wave of decontextualization that contributed to Malraux's *musée imaginaire* and can therefore be considered a continuation and intensification of that second wave.

In the etymological sense of an essay (from Fr. *essayer*) as an attempt to put one's thoughts into writing, this chapter tries to apply the principle of the *musée imaginaire* to the reading of someone else's reading—to the extent that such a reading is retraceable at all—and to provide a framework that eschews the unwitting preferential treatment of "extant" materials over what can only "virtually" be reconstructed. Such a

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reconstruction can be made in several ways, for instance by means of an author's correspondence—the book they mention in their letters—or memoirs by people who knew the author and remember them talking about certain books. As a case study, I focus on reading notes taken by writers acting as "extractors," according to Daniel Ferrer's coinage.[7] As opposed to "marginalists," who write in the margins of the books they read and thus allow their reactions to remain in the same physical space as the text they relate to, "extractors" separate their comments from what they are reading. Sometimes, this modus operandi has the fortunate consequence that, if the original copy of what the author was reading is lost, we sometimes have enough clues from the "extracted" notes to be able to reconstruct the source text. The two-part structure of this essay therefore starts with the way we frame notes and manuscripts, followed by the ways in which they can help us (digitally) reconstitute an author's personal library. My case studies will be James Joyce and Samuel Beckett.

Vestigial Notes

In literary history, the moment the literary public starts paying attention to the holograph sources of modern writing differs depending on cultural contexts. In English literature, keeping one's manuscripts is a relatively recent phenomenon. For instance, Jane Austen's manuscripts were often not considered worth keeping. The ones that survive generally only do so because they did not make it into publication during her lifetime, such as the juvenilia, the abandoned novel *The Watsons* (at the Bodleian in Oxford) or the cut chapters from *Persuasion* at the British Library. In genetic criticism (the study of creative processes and written invention), the term "modern manuscripts" is often used to distinguish handwritten documents from, say, medieval manuscripts, most of which are scribal copies. Whereas these scribal copies had the function of public distribution, most modern manuscripts have a more private nature. The critical commonplace is that the era of the modern manuscript is to be situated around the middle of the eighteenth century since, before that period, holograph manuscripts were usually discarded. We should however take into account that, in bibliography and genetic criticism, we are often working with a frame of reference that is grafted on our own literatures. In textual scholarship, this phenomenon is particularly striking: the German tradition of *Editionswissenschaft*, for instance, is much more historical and document-oriented than the Anglo-American copy-text theory. This has a material reason: the main paradigm of German scholarly editing is Goethe, who kept almost all his manuscripts; whereas the main paradigm of Anglo-American scholarly editing is Shakespeare, who left almost no manuscripts. When it comes to the study of manuscripts and genetic

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criticism applied to earlier periods of English literature, the number of autograph manuscripts—especially in the Medieval period—is rather limited. That is why it is useful, once in a while, to confront this framework with that of a different literature, for instance the long Italian tradition of the keepers of manuscripts, keeping their rough drafts as part of the work of literature, like Ariosto in the early sixteenth century, or even earlier, like Petrarch in the fourteenth century. Petrarch's manuscripts of the *Canzoniere*, for instance, from the so-called *Codice degli abbozzi*, show various stages of revision.[8] It is therefore good to remind ourselves that the role and status of notes and drafts in literature are a matter of framing. For instance, what is the status of a note that was made by an author but that was never used for any of their publications? Since notes are often framed according to the purpose or end (*telos*) they have served, we can distinguish a teleological and a dysteleological approach.

Teleological Approach

Take for instance James Joyce's reading notes. Most of his manuscripts are published in the James Joyce Archive,[9] and since 2018, there is also a James Joyce Digital Archive.[10] Both are arranged teleologically. If you are interested in his last work, *Finnegans Wake*, you start from the published version and then the dropdown menu leads you further upstream, as it were, closer to the sources. Joyce filled about 50 notebooks with jottings and reading notes. Whenever he used a note for the drafts of *Finnegans Wake*, he crossed it out with a colour crayon. The "upstream" approach frames the notes in a particular way and orients the approach to the notes in the direction of source criticism: a detection of source texts. Thus, for instance, the jotting "great taskmaster's eye" on page 50 of notebook VI.B.11 (preserved at the University at Buffalo's James Joyce Collection) turns out to be a phrase from a sonnet by Milton.[11] But of course there are hundreds of sources for *Finnegans Wake*, and this "upstream" *Quellenforschung* (or what Julia Kristeva called a reduction of intertextuality to "the banal sense of 'source criticism' ")[12] is only one part of genetic criticism, an important other part being the "downstream" research, so to speak, to find out *how* Joyce processed his source texts in the narrative of his own work, how it was selected from the notebook and added to a draft at a particular stage in the genesis. This is a way of studying the style of a literary work. Because according to Joyce, "a living style should be like a river which takes the colour and texture of the different regions through which it flows."[13]

Similarly, Joyce jotted down the note "poverty of mind" in his notebook VI.B.6, on page 116. The source text is the essay "Modern Novels" by Virginia Woolf, originally published in the *Times Literary Supplement*

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in 1919, when *Ulysses* was being serialized. Woolf mentions Joyce very favourably ("Mr Joyce is most able"), but she has only one small reservation: "A work of such originality yet fails to compare […] with *Youth* or *Jude the Obscure*. It fails, one might say, simply because of the comparative poverty of the writer's mind."[14] While reading Woolf's essay, Joyce jotted down two reading notes: "incoherent atoms" and "poverty of mind." He only selected the latter to use it in his own work because at that time he was writing chapter 7 of *Finnegans Wake*, which is a negative portrait of the artist character Shem the Penman (obviously modelled after Joyce himself). Woolf's essay was part of a reading campaign during which Joyce reread several negative reviews of his previous book, *Ulysses*, to write this character's portrait. But he also noted down "incoherent atoms," which does not come from a passage where Woolf criticizes Joyce. It was not used for *Finnegans Wake*, and so, from a teleological perspective, the question might be raised: Do these kinds of notes have any relevance? I think they do if we frame them differently.

Dysteleological Approach

In the case of the note "incoherent atoms," for instance, the note derives from the famous passage in which Woolf is defining what the Modernists aim to do, as opposed to the previous generation: "Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness."[15] Joyce's note indicates that, even though he may not have made many statements about Modernism as a literary movement, he was at least aware of some of its important foundational texts. The note did not lead to *Finnegans Wake* directly; from a teleological perspective it was a dead end. But this metaphor changes into just one of many roads-not-taken when reframed from a dysteleological perspective.

The term dysteleological was introduced by Ernst Haeckel, one of the champions of Darwin's theory of evolution in Germany. He tried to explain that evolution does not have a predestined goal. It is dysteleological. To make that point he referred to so-called vestigial organs or limbs. For instance, the atrophic hind legs of the boa constrictor do not have any obvious use for the snake anymore. But that does not mean they have never had any use. The same goes for vestigial notes such as "incoherent atoms"—notes jotted down by an author either without any particular purpose or literary project in mind or with a purpose that was subsequently abandoned, so that the jottings never made it into any published work. They may seem useless, and they do indeed indicate that not every aspect of the literary creation went according to plan or according to an

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overarching intelligent design. The same goes for doodles. From a teleological vantage point, they do not have an immediate "use" in the creative process, but not everything in creative writing is teleological. Just because we do not see any immediate "use" for the published work that does not mean they did not play a role. As Simon Reader comments with regard to Darwin's notes labelled "Old and Useless": "The fact that Darwin left these materials intact indicates something more than neutral tolerance; it suggests that he took care to preserve even those documents that served no purpose in the construction of his argument, pushing them forward into unfinished time."[16]

In this sense, vestigial notes are comparable to pentimenti in the visual arts. The term derives from Italian *pentirsi*, to repent, to regret. For instance, in Diego Velazquez's painting *Philip IV on Horseback*, the horse's hind legs were originally painted in a slightly different position. After several centuries, the original position has started to shine through the top layer of paint again. The vestigial traces of the underlying layer suggest that Velazquez may have "regretted" having painted the hind legs in this way, that he undid and then redid them. Still, "regretted" or not, the original deed was necessary to get the painting painted. Pentimenti are therefore an invaluable element in the study of an artist's modus operandi. Similarly, in literature, vestigial notes can be an invaluable instrument in the reconstruction of an author's personal library, even if it is not longer, or only partially, extant.

Writers' Libraries

Extant Libraries

The books that were still in Beckett's apartment in Paris at his death amount to just over seven hundred volumes, now available to the public.[17] This is just a fraction of the books Beckett once read or owned. During his life, he gave away several of them to friends and to archives. To digitally reunite the dispersed books that once belonged to him, it is necessary to approach private collectors and public archives. In the case of Samuel Beckett, these public archives are the Beckett International Foundation at the University of Reading (25 volumes), the Lilly Library at Indiana University Bloomington (52 volumes), the Dublin (Pearse Street) public library's Dublin Local Studies Collection (1 volume), the James and Elizabeth Knowlson Collection at the University of Reading (JEK A/1/4/3 [photocopies]; 3 volumes). The private collections include those of Avigdor Arikha and Anne Atik (15 volumes), Noga Arikha (4 volumes), Edith Fournier (5 volumes), Terence Killeen (2 volumes), and Helena Walsh (1 volume). In addition to these items, some books resurface

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occasionally, and are put on offer by antiquarians or auction houses. Thanks to the current practice of making scans of such books available online before sale, it was possible to extend the library with a few individual copies offered for sale by antiquarians such as De Búrca Rare Books (March 2016), Peter Harrington, London (April 2016), or Paul Rassam Antiquarian Bookseller (February 2020). In this way, the extant library in Beckett's Paris apartment as it was inventoried at his death in 1989 has in the meantime been expanded by more than 100 books, amounting to 815 volumes so far. Applying a similar methodology as the one proposed by Olivier Delsaux for medieval autographs, we devised the following modus operandi to take stock of the types of reading traces in the writer's library,[18] categorizing them by means of a few yes/no questions:

Is the book in the extant library or not? no/yes
If so, does it contain any reading traces? no/yes
If so, what kind of reading traces?

a. non-verbal codes (to use Heather Jackson's term[19])
b. verbal codes

If so, who is the author of these reading traces?

The traditional non-verbal traces are underlined passages, pencil lines, X's or ticks in the margin. But this category can also contain less conspicuous traces. For instance, David Hayman sent his book *Joyce et Mallarmé* to Beckett. Judging from the extant copy, Beckett did not read much more than the introduction, for the pages in the rest of the book are uncut. Nonetheless, it would be precipitous to conclude that he did not read Hayman's work, for Hayman had previously sent his PhD dissertation, *James Joyce et Stéphane Mallarmé: une étude d'influence*, which Beckett read carefully and on which he commented extensively.[20]

The category of non-verbal codes also contains dog-ears, or even less manifest traces: dog-ears that have been folded open again, so that only the crease testifies to its history as a potential reading trace. How do we know that these are traces made by the author? In the case of Samuel Beckett, the size of the dog-ear can be a sort of signature, because he uses the same (strikingly large) size of dog-ears in other books in his personal library. For instance, thanks to the size of the dog-ear on the page containing the entry on "manichaeism" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (from which Beckett copied excerpts in his theatrical notebook for *Krapp's Last Tape*) we can infer that the folded-open dog-ears in his copy of Darwin's *Origin of Species* are Beckett's.

But we also have examples of non-verbal codes where we are less certain. For instance, Beckett's copy of Fritz Mauthner's three-volume

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Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache. It contains numerous pencil marks in the margins on hundreds of pages in all three volumes. We know Beckett read Mauthner in the late 1930s (excerpting long passages in his so-called Whoroscope Notebook), but since a letter from 1954 indicates that he still did not have his own copy at that time, we had to conclude that the pencil marks in the extant copy in the personal library are most probably not Beckett's; he either purchased the book (with someone else's pencil marks) in a second-hand bookshop or he received it as a present, possibly when he was directing one of his plays in Germany in the 1960s or 1970s.

As to verbal codes, the question of authorship can also be complex. At Beckett's death, the library in his apartment contained a book called *Der Pessimismus* by Olga Plümacher. It was a source that nobody in Beckett studies had ever talked about. It was the only interleaved book in the library, with notes and translations on the interleaves. After a close analysis of the handwriting, however, we had to conclude that the notes on the interleaves were not Beckett's. Still, there were a few pencil notes added to Plümacher's introduction—such as the neologism "Pejorismus"—which correspond with some reading notes on "pejorism" in Beckett's "Whoroscope" Notebook. In this case, the answer is therefore that the book contains both authorial and non-authorial reading traces among the marginalia. Moreover, this is also a case of Beckett acting both as a "marginalist" and as an "extractor."

To make the proof of concept reusable, we envisage a publication environment, based on the model of the Beckett Digital Library. The aim of this editing tool is to enable scholars who are not necessarily experts in digital scholarly editing to digitally reunite any writer's scattered books and reconstruct their personal library. If images of the books exist, they can be added, allowing users to browse through the digital facsimiles of the pages the scholar/editor wishes to include: for instance, the cover, the title page, and the pages that feature reading traces. The editing tool accommodates multiple ways of incorporating images. They can either be loaded from a static folder on the same server or be incorporated via IIIF manifests. Through the use of IIIF, books that are held in multiple institutions across the globe can be digitally reunited in one publication architecture. Users can browse or search through the book collection. The upper horizontal bar serves as a browsing tool that enables users to sort alphabetically among authors, titles, and places of publication. It is also possible to sort the library chronologically according to the date of publication. The browsing bar may also be used to reduce the corpus according to the presence of an inscription, marginalia or other reading traces.

A suitable case study to test this reusable publication environment is James Joyce's extant library—a James Joyce Digital Library which contains

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not just the bibliographic details of the books, but also focuses on the marginalia left in them and includes information about the books' provenance and when they were read. While Beckett was a modest marginalist, Joyce tended to write even less in the margins of his books. He preferred to write his reading notes in separate notebooks (such as the above-mentioned notebook VI.B.6).

Of all the books James Joyce once owned, over a thousand are still extant. The Harry Ransom Center holds more than half of these books (587), more specifically the books that Joyce left behind in Trieste when he moved to Paris. Apart from this "Trieste" library, the "Paris" library is held at the James Joyce Collection of the University at Buffalo (467 books), and several other institutions hold smaller portions of the library: Princeton University (19), the Beinecke Library at Yale (16), Stanford University Libraries (14), the Morris Library at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (7), University College Dublin (8 schoolbooks) and the Zürich James Joyce Foundation (which holds Oliver St. John Gogarty's book *I Follow Saint Patrick*, the copy that was lying on Joyce's desk at his death). At this moment we are aware of 1,119 books that are still extant in public libraries but it is certainly possible that more items resurface, possibly in private collections. Moreover, Joyce read hundreds of newspapers, magazines, and books that he consulted in libraries or through Sylvia Beach's *Shakespeare and Company*. It will never be possible to trace everything Joyce ever read, but we can start from, and work with, the traces we have. These traces range from references in letters to accounts of conversations by friends and acquaintances, but also marginalia in the extant books and reading notes in separate notebooks.

Take for instance Paul Valéry's *Le Serpent*. There is a copy of this book in Joyce's "Paris Library." It is dedicated by Valéry to Joyce, and it contains a drawing of a snake biting its own tail. The edition was published in February 1922 by Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française. Four years later, a deluxe edition of it appeared with a snakeskin cover—another instantiation of the same work. None of these instantiations is the first edition, though. The work appeared for the first time in the journal *Nouvelle Revue Française* in July 1921. Here, the work has a slightly different title: "Ebauche d'un serpent" ("Draft of a snake"), and that is also how it appeared in June 1922 in Valéry's collection of poems, *Charmes*. The dedication copy of *Le Serpent*, which Valéry sent to Joyce, obviously belongs in Joyce's extant library containing all his books of which a physical copy is still in existence. In addition, however, we can also reconstruct a so-called virtual library, for which Valéry is again a good example.

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Virtual Libraries

The virtual library consists of books which we know Joyce must have read, because he mentions them in letters or because he took notes from them, but of which—to our knowledge—no physical copy has been preserved. We know that Joyce read Valéry and took notes, but these excerpts are not taken from his copy of *Le Serpent*. They are most probably taken from a copy of the version in *Charmes*, because in notebook VI.B.5 Joyce wrote a few excerpts from one of the first poems from this collection, "Au platane," as well as a long list of excerpts from "Ébauche d'un serpent," notably one that can only be found in "Ébauche d'un serpent," which has an extra stanza vis à vis the text of *Le Serpent*. In the James Joyce Digital Library, we include both *Le Serpent* as part of the extant library and "Ébauche d'un serpent" in *Charmes* as part of the virtual library.

In the case of the Beckett Digital Library,[21] we have included a virtual library of the books Beckett read as a student, his so-called student library. In the extant library, under the letter B, Beckett's copy of Bacon's *Essays and Apothegms*[22] is followed by 20 items (including Baedeker, Bailly, Barker, Bataille, Bate, Battistini, Baudelaire, Beaumarchais, Bellow, Benstock, Berenson, Berkeley, Bertin, and Besterman) and a substantial set of Bibles in various languages, including Beckett's copy of an Italian Bible.[23] As a student, Beckett owned only relatively few books, which is why, in the "student library," Bacon is followed immediately by this Italian Bible—both still extant. Users have the option to "include books from virtual library"; if they activate this option, many more books appear: between Bacon and the Italian Bible, it shows a dozen books. More than half of these are novels by Balzac, which were on the so-called TCD Calendars, with lists of required reading in the period when Beckett was studying at Trinity College Dublin. This student reading has a considerable impact on Beckett's writings.

If scholars/editors would therefore like to include this kind of student reading in their edition of an author's personal library, this inevitably raises the question: what are the criteria for including a particular book in the "virtual library"? For the Beckett library, we work—roughly—with three degrees of uncertainty. First, if we have reading notes in a separate notebook (like Joyce's notebooks) and we can identify the source, that is rather strong evidence that he actually read the book.

The second category contains slightly less certain sources of information, such as letters or interviews. An author may mention, say, Wittgenstein in an interview, but that does not necessarily mean they read any of the philosopher's works from cover to cover. Similarly, a writer may mention in their correspondence having read a particular book, but one cannot exclude the possibility that they may not be telling the entire

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truth. Judging the reliability of this kind of information will require quite a bit of interpretation. Patterns in the author's correspondence may be of help. For instance, there may be periods in their career during which they appear to be more communicative to a certain confidant than to anyone else (or than in other periods). And sometimes the extant library can be of help in establishing the degree of reliability. On 4 August 1932, for example, Beckett writes to his friend Thomas MacGreevy: "I bought the *Origin of Species* yesterday for 6d and never read such badly written catlap. I only remember one thing: blue-eyed cats are always deaf (correlation of variations)."[24] In this particular case, the book he mentions is still in the extant library, and of the very few non-verbal codes it contains there is one underlined phrase: "blue-eyed cats are invariably deaf,"[25] which lends credence also to other mentions in his letters about books he is reading, such as the ones he writes about in another letter to MacGreevy on 25 March 1936: "I have been reading wildly all over the place, Goethe's Iphigenia & then Racine's to remove the taste, Chesterfield, Boccaccio, Fischart, Ariosto & Pope!"[26] This second category also contains other sources of information, such as the lists of required reading which we just discussed (the TCD Calendars). Of course, one can never be entirely sure that Beckett was a diligent student and actually read what he was supposed to read, which is why this kind of information is in the second category.

The third and least certain category consists of intertextual allusions, at least if intertextuality is understood in Kristeva's original sense of the word, when she coined it in 1966, as a *reader's* perception of links between texts. This autocratic reading method can yield very interesting interpretations. If someone reads an allusion to Balzac's *Le Colonel Chabert* in Beckett's novel *The Unnamable* (which mentions a man who goes to war; who is recorded as dead; who then turns out not to be dead after all; who returns home only to find out that his wife has married another man), this is a very plausible interpretation. But in terms of criteria for inclusion in a virtual library, opinions may differ as to whether such an intertextual reference is enough evidence to regard *Le Colonel Chabert* as one of Beckett's books. It is not mentioned in the Calendars; it is not mentioned in the correspondence; it is not mentioned among his notes; it is not in Beckett's extant library. Since so far there is no evidence that Beckett read it, it will be a matter for an editorial board to decide whether *Le Colonel Chabert* should be included in the virtual library or not. And if the editors decide to include it, they may be faced with questions such as whether or not they should indicate the caution with which such an item should be treated, and if so, how they should indicate the degree of certainty or uncertainty. It therefore seems important to note, especially in the context of literature as cultural heritage, that it is not because we have some empirical data that

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this becomes a hard science. What we do is scholarship. We interpret the data all the time. And most of the time we are trying to fill gaps in the data.

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, digitized writers' libraries can be said to undergo a double wave of decontextualization, similar to the one described by André Malraux. If, by way of *Vor-* or *Nachlass*, the books of an author's personal library are being preserved and made available for consultation in an archive, this act of decontextualization is comparable to what Malraux considered the first wave. When the writer dies, the books in their library lose the function they had in the personal library as works of reference, sources of inspiration or delectation. In terms of Bill Brown's "thing theory," the books in an active author's personal library are "objects" rather than "things":

> As they circulate through our lives, we look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture—above all, what they disclose about *us*), but we only catch a glimpse of things. We look through them because there are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts. A *thing*, in contrast, can hardly function as a window. We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily. The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation.[27]

After the author's death, the books in their personal library lose their function in the writer's professional life—"their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested," so to speak. That is the first wave of decontextualization. When they are digitized and made available online, this entails a second wave of decontextualization.

At the same time, however, there is a form of re-contextualization at work as well. For instance, the catalogue of books in Beckett's library, accompanied by a thumbnail visualization of the covers according to what has quickly become another standard practice in online book sales, reduces each individual book with its individual history to a standardized item, decontextualizing it as in Malraux's *musée imaginaire* and placing it

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in a digital museum as it were. At the same time, this digital museum (say, the Beckett Digital Library) is part of the world wide web, which is rapidly becoming a digital universe in and of itself. If, from a twenty-first-century vantage point, it is hard to imagine which edition of, say, Dante's *Divina Commedia* Beckett read as a student and how this edition differed from other editions that were around at that time, chances are that several of these editions can now be found in digitized format on Google Books or Archive.org. This "virtual" re-contextualization is to a large extent part of the changing role of the editor in digital scholarly editions as *musées imaginaires*.

What is particularly apt about the adjective *imaginaire* is that it positively appreciates the reader's imagination in the "reading" of artworks. The types of reading Malraux's second wave seems to favour are both intensive and extensive—intensive in the sense of a close reading of the work without relating it to context, extensive in the sense of making connections with other works.[28] The combination of photography and printing allowed for the comparison and close examination of certain aspects of a work—a possibility that is now facilitated and intensified thanks to developments such as the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) and the possibility of telling "storiies" by zooming in on details of a IIIF image. The extensive reading experience makes connections with other paintings the way intertextuality links texts to other ones. Malraux gives the example of Rubens, who may (or may not) have been admired only because people saw in him a second Titian. But the *musée imaginaire* has more possibilities than just unbridled comparability. It also offers the possibility of confining this comparability. Instead of reducing Rubens to what he is (or is not) in comparison with Titian, each of his works can also be considered in comparison with the rest of *his own* works. In an illustrated catalogue raisonné of Rubens's complete works, *The Arrival of Marie de Medici at Marseille* is not a painting that is only interesting in its relation to Titian but is presented primarily just for what it means in the context of Rubens's own works ("*L'Arrivée de Marie de Médicis* ne s'y compare à aucun Titien, ne s'y compare plus qu'aux autres peintures de Rubens").[29]

Malraux analyses a way of reading art facilitated through a new medium (or combination of media, mainly photography and print). By analogy, this essay has tried to analyse a way of reading writers' reading practices through the digital medium. While Malraux focuses mainly on the photographic reproduction of extant artworks, the idea of a *musée imaginaire* can also encompass cases of (photographs of) now lost or stolen artworks. Thanks to not just their technical reproduc*ibility* but also their actual reproduc*tion*, they can still be compared to, and serve as points of reference for, other works of art. This aspect of the *musée imaginaire* is highly

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relevant to digital writers' libraries (both extant and virtual) and may contribute to an increased awareness of any implicit material bias.

Notes

1 T. S. Eliot, *The Gloucester Notebook*, ed. Robert McCrum (Cambridge: Galileo, 2022), 7.
2 "Das Hier und Jetzt des Originals macht den Begriff seiner Echtheit aus. […] Der gesammte Bereich der Echtheit entzieht sich der technischen—und natürlich nicht nur der technischen—Reproduzierbarkeit." As a consequence, Benjamin speaks of the "Verfall der Aura." Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," in *Ein Lesebuch*, ed. Michael Opitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 315, 317.
3 Dirk Van Hulle, *De Kladbewaarders* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2007), 12.
4 Dirk Van Hulle and Mark Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 53.
5 Rosalind E. Krauss, "Postmodernism's Museum without Walls," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 243.
6 Krauss, "Museum," 244.
7 See Daniel Ferrer, "Towards a Marginalist Economy of Textual Genesis," in *Reading Notes*, ed. Dirk Van Hulle and Wim Van Mierlo (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), 7–18.
8 The *Codice* comprises "the twenty pages that testify to the first version of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, containing corrections to 57 of the 365 poetic texts of the collection, which Petrarch decided to keep 'non illorum dignitati, sed meo labori consulens' ('not for their merit but for my effort')." Paola Italia and Giulia Raboni, "Introduction to the English Translation," in *What Is Authorial Philology?* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2021), ix. The recognition of this material's importance also came very early. In 1642, Federico Ubaldini made an edition of the *Canzoniere* "which contained not only the final version of the text, but also its drafts found on the 'Codice degli abbozzi' […]. One could therefore say that genetic criticism was born in Italy in 1642 and developed, from the very beginning, a very sophisticated technique of representing authorial variants." Italia and Raboni, "Introduction," ix–x.
9 James Joyce, *The James Joyce Archive*, ed. Michael Groden et al. (New York: Garland, 1978–79).
10 James Joyce, *The James Joyce Digital Archive*, ed. John O'Hanlon and Danis Rose, www.jjda.ie
11 Dirk Van Hulle, *Genetic Criticism: Tracing Creativity in Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 170.
12 Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974), 59–60 (my translation).
13 James Joyce, quoted in Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2000), 79.

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14 Virginia Woolf, "Modern Novels," *Times Literary Supplement* 899 (10 April 1919): 189–90.
15 Woolf, "Modern Novels," 190.
16 Simon Reader, *Notework: Victorian Literature and Nonlinear Style* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 54.
17 The University of Antwerp and the Beckett International Foundation (at the University of Reading) are grateful to Edward Beckett for his generous donation of Samuel Beckett's personal library. The University of Antwerp will house the collection until 2033, after which it will move to the University of Reading.
18 Dirk Van Hulle, "Digital Library History: The Virtual Bookcases of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett," *Quaerendo: A Quarterly Journal from the Low Countries Devoted to Manuscripts and Printed Books* 46, nos. 2–3 (2016): 199.
19 H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 14.
20 See the letter of 22 July 1955 in Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1941–1956*, ed. George Craig, Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, Dan Gunn, and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 536–37.
21 Samuel Beckett, *The Beckett Digital Library*: a digital genetic edition (Series "The Beckett Digital Manuscript Project"), ed. Dirk Van Hulle, Mark Nixon, and Vincent Neyt (Brussels: University Press Antwerp) (ASP/UPA), 2016, <www.beckettarchive.org>
22 Francis Bacon, *Essays and Apothegms of Francis Lord Bacon* (London / Felling-on-Tyne: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., n.d.) Inscription: "S.B. Beckett / Trinity College, Dublin / 1924."
23 *La Sacra Bibbia* (Roma: Società Biblica Britannica e Forestiera, 1924). Inscription: "S. B. Beckett / Trinity College / Dublin."
24 Van Hulle and Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's Library*, 200. See also *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929–1940*, ed. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 111.
25 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: Grant Richards, 1902).
26 Beckett, *Letters of Samuel Beckett*, 324.
27 Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001): 4; original emphasis.
28 Roger Chartier, "Du livre au lire," in *Pratiques de la lecture*, ed. Roger Chartier (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2003), 92.
29 André Malraux, *Psychologie de l'art: Le musée imaginaire* (Paris: Albert Skira, 1947), 19.

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