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Jeremiah R. Mercurio , Daniel Gabelman
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THE FORM AND THEORY OF LITERARY DOODLING

Jeremiah R. Mercurio

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ABSTRACT: This Element investigates the phenomenon of literary doodling – the making of playful verbal and visual creations by professional authors while engaged in another activity. The first part, Demarcation, focuses on defining the form and structure of doodles, comparing and contrasting them with adjacent genres such as sketches, caricatures, and illustrations. The second part, Exploration, explores the modality of doodling, examining doodles through the lenses of spectrality, liminality, and play. Drawing on a wide range of theories and backed up with numerous close readings, the Element argues that doodles, despite their apparent triviality, provide valuable insights into the creative processes, authorial habits, and finished works of literary doodlers. Ultimately, this study aims to legitimise doodles as worthy of serious critical attention, demonstrating how they trouble the meaning of texts, introduce semantic flexibility into literary works and their reception, and rejuvenate the joy of readerly discovery.

KEYWORDS: doodles, literary doodling, marginalia, illustration, long nineteenth century

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