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A Hermeneutics of Authorial and Editorial Integrities in *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*

Jūratė Levina

Essay

Abstract: The paper draws on Paul Ricœur's theory of discourse to propose a hermeneutic definition of the author as a functional and semantic correlative of a work and examine *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot* as a case of a comprehensive editorial redesignation of Eliot's own authorial self-positionings. The editors construct a single chronology for Eliot's linguistic productions in various stages of composition and publication to present a coherent development of his public persona. The phonocentric focus of the construed line of development and material dimensions of the print medium chosen for the edition inform the reconstruction and lead to disregarding Eliot's strategies of self-authoring by editing, or failing to completely edit, his writings into larger semantic configurations, or works.

1. Introduction: The corpus and the issue

The publication of the first two volumes of *The Letters of T. S. Eliot* in 2009 (Eliot 2009a, 2009b) began a new era in Eliot studies, initiated by Valerie Eliot who had decided back in 2006 to release Eliot's sources from the archives for what has turned into blanket scholarly publication of his materials. This decision ended the epoch of the T. S. Eliot Estate's protective control of the use of Eliot's work (McCue 2006, 1–2) by going to the opposite extreme of publishing all his materials in critical editions. The enterprise is still under way except for the corpus designated as *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot* and printed in eight volumes in 2021 after electronic publication in 2014–2019.[1] This edition is the body I examine further below from a hermeneutic perspective to capture the operative ways of some common premises about cultural production and its authoriality manifest in the tradition of such editions of an author's collected writings.

The promotion and reception of the *Prose* have been capitalising on three assumptions: that (1) Eliot and his work have canonical value, (2) adequate knowledge of an object (Eliot) is drawn from the full scope of its material manifestations (his linguistic productions) while the knowledge derived from incomplete material is defective, and (3) all epistemological procedures — from

1. All eight volumes are hosted online by *Project Muse*, and can be accessed via https://muse.jhu.edu/primary/eliot/.

collection and examination to publication of the matter — demands scholarly expertise to legitimise the result. Eliot's canonicity has been explicitly reasserted to welcome a critical edition of his *Complete Prose* (Pondrom 2016, 96–97, 102–103; Pritchard 2015) as an essential resource of previously unavailable material for deriving new and more accurate knowledge of Eliot. The general editor Ronald Schuchard assessed it in numbers to say that "roughly 90 percent of [Eliot's] prose ha[d] been out of print and unavailable to literary scholars" since Eliot's death in 1965 (McCabe 2014; see also William 2014) while the available fraction had been read from "corrupted" editions (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xvi–xix). His team's achievement filling this gap has been appreciated by many reviewers (Dirda 2022; Lockerd 2022; McLaughlin 2016, 117, 122; McNamee 2021; Pritchard 2015) alongside characteristic counter-effects of an exhaustive coverage, such as an increased exposure of the subject's personal faults (namely, Eliot's antisemitism (Mackinnon 2020) and exclusion of marginal documents of his creative activities (McRae 2016, 57). As a whole, the *Prose* nonetheless has been perceived as a totality of linguistic matter that gives full access to its author's personality. The edition, as one reviewer assessed somewhat ambivalently, conveys a sense of "implicit pleasure in establishing a poet's early genius" as if driven by "a critical refusal of a death-of-the-author ethos, in pursuit of authorial totality" that, ironically, has been construed for "the champion of impersonality" Eliot was (McLaughlin 2016, 118, 121).

Hans-Georg Gadamer showed these premises and the linking of textual matter to the personality of a canonical author to be an amalgamation of the materialism of the natural sciences with the subjectivism of Romantic hermeneutics, which is intrinsic to the mindset of Modernity and produces internal contradictions in modern cultural discourse because cultural phenomena are subject to hermeneutic, rather than naturalist, laws (Gadamer 2006, 37–101, 175–306). Eliot's *Complete Prose* manifests a characteristic blindness to the constitutive complexity of the link between linguistic matter and its producer's subjectivity which the editors assume as self-evident and explicitly posit in their promise "to restore Eliot's full voice" and "original order" of his development (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xiv, xix) while actually constructing a phonocentric version of Eliot's public persona on every level of editorial procedures. My aim in this paper is to expose the operative mechanism of this construction and thus contribute to facilitating disciplinary self-awareness and control of tacit assumptions that guide textual criticism and scholarly editing beyond this particular case. While my analysis will suggest that claims for restoring the original should not be made by definition and *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot* would have benefited from more rigorous methodological self-awareness and discipline, the underlying purpose remains exploratory. Guided by hermeneutics, I focus on the conditions and effects of editorial decisions in the contexts of overlooked or dismissed alternatives, rather than arguing for or against the validity of the editors' choices themselves.

The textual issue that my examination of Eliot's *Prose* explores is that of the editorial mediation of authoriality by performing an effectively authorial function of shaping textual matter into works. I begin with an outline of Paul Ricœur's hermeneutic definition of the author, which locates the author strictly in correlation with a self-standing semantic architecture of a work and describes authoring as an operation of self-editing to design a work out of previously produced linguistic material. This functional definition differentiates between the author (and/or editor) as a living person who performs the act of authoring a work and the author as a figure projected by it. This distinction informs a description of Eliot's strategies of self-authoring to juxtapose them with analogous strategies of the *Prose* and show that the edition constructs a persona of Eliot's by ordering his linguistic productions in ways that disregard and cover Eliot's own authorial self-designations. Thus the *Prose* goes against its stated purpose of restoring "Eliot's full voice in the public domain" (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xiv, xix). A divergence of the achieved effect from the stated aims is a common and perhaps inevitable characteristic of such mega-projects, but the path to it is paved by tacit assumptions I aim to expose.

2. Definitions: The work and its makers

In his hermeneutic theory of discourse, Ricœur outlines a comprehensive linkage between the work and the author in a hierarchy of differentiated functions of linguistic production. In line with Michel Foucault, whose exposition of the author-function as a function of linguistically mediated discourse (Foucault 1981) widely informs sociologically oriented textual scholarship, Ricœur detaches authoriality from a living subjectivity. In contrast and significant complementation to Foucault's conception, Ricœur binds the constitution of authoriality strictly to the semantic architecture of an authored work which, in turn, he defines hermeneutically as a case of the discursive practice of producing culturally functional forms of human self-understanding. Ricœur's choice of "discourse" over "language" shifts attention from language as an object of scholarly inquiry, which it is for structuralism and its extensions, to discourse where language is the medium of articulating an apprehension of things (Ricœur 1976, 1–23). This hermeneutic turn qualifies both materialist and subjectivist assumptions about the text for, in the hermeneutic function of mediating understanding, a text is never merely material or authorless but always "remains a discourse told by [...] someone to someone else about something" (30). Taking the text out of this structure of mediating sense-making amounts to "reduc[ing] texts to natural objects, i. e., to things which are not man-made, but which, like pebbles, are found in the sand" (30), while a text, even if found in the sand, is not perceived as a text at all without co-perceiving for it a capacity for apprehensibility as discourse. It is from the standpoint of this irreducible condition of apprehensibility that Ricœur redefines both the text's material manifestation in writing and its authoriality.

From this standpoint, writing appears to function as "the fixation of discourse in some exterior bearer [...] which is other than the human voice" (Ricœur 1976, 26). Writing and voicing are the two modes of exteriorising one's sense in language into the "said" of the statement (27, 12–13). But writing does it most fully because inscription detaches the utterance from the speaker's body and non-linguistic aids it provides, such as facial expressions and gestures one can employ in speech, and delegates the articulation of all semantics to the "material 'marks' " of the inscription (26). In this transfer of sense into language, the speaker is born into the text by deictic, lexical, and syntactic markers, which predicate linguistic meanings to both the speaker as the producer of discourse and the things she speaks (10–13) to create a network of linguistically mediated references which, then, can be understood outside the situation of the utterance's production. This detachment of discourse from the situation of its production constitutes discourse's semantic autonomy and marks the birth of the author as a fully semantic, rather than psychophysiological, entity projected by the text:

> The authorial meaning becomes properly the dimension of the text to the extent that the author is not available for questioning. When the text no longer answers, then it has an author and no longer a speaker. The authorial meaning is the dialectical counterpart of the verbal meaning, and they have to be construed in terms of each other.
>
> (30)

The Barthesian death of the author here appears to refer to the death of the speaker as a corporeally living speaking being, while the author, on the contrary, is inaugurated by writing. Writing witnesses an essentially authorial capacity for producing semantically self-standing discourse and, on the other hand, designates the author as a linguistically figured persona abstracted from the living body and the situation of speech into the semantic architecture of the discursive statement mediated by the inscription.

Strictly speaking, the producer of semantically autonomous discourse should be termed the writer, rather than the author for, against the background of "discourse as written," Ricœur distinguishes a further category — of "discourse as work" — for cases of a singularly configured semantic autonomy (76) achieved by works authored in literary genres such as a "poem, narrative, or essay" (32). In addition to the grammatical and phrasal cohesion, works are held whole as semantically integral entities by "dynamic forms" applied to "sets of sentences" according to the rules of genre and comparable to the "technical rules" of craftsmanship which an author uses to manipulate language into an "individual configuration" that is "a singular product or work" (32–33). Language here is "a stuff to be shaped" into works that are "as self-contained as sculptures," and the author is the shaper of the linguistic matter, the "maker of this work, which is his work" (33): a work that manifests his individual style of crafting language as well as his individual mode of apprehending the things

that the work conveys (37, 59–60).

To a textual scholar and editor, these hermeneutic outlines suggest that every edition of a text negotiates and redraws the text's signifying effects on three hierarchically interlinked formative planes, each of which projects a respective kind of authoriality. Ostensibly, an editor works on the middle ground of linguistic production: texts, which manifest "discourse as written" (76) to position their producer as a writer. The text and its writer are distinct but not entirely severed from the utterance as spoken and its speaker on one hand and a literary work and its author on the other. An editorial commitment to a most accurate representation of a text one can achieve thus is a double commitment. To transfer all semantic potential of a writer's text into the edited text, an editor must identify and retain all markers of the lived situation from which the text derived as a semantic configuration. This is especially crucial in editing drafts, revisions, and private documents (Tanselle 2010, 5–13), for they all are genres of writing that are not assumed to strive for a full semantic autonomy from the situation of their production. The writer here refers to a living embodied person marked as the speaker of the discourse, whose biographical development contextualises the writings to ensure their semantic cohesion. In the other direction, an editor respects the higher dimension of the text's semantic organisation: that in which a text mediates "discourse as work" (Ricœur 1976, 76) and positions its writer as the author who is both the writer of the text and the maker of the work this text mediates. This awareness has been termed aesthetic for its respect for artistic forms and reserved primarily for the perception and editing of literary works (Shillingsburg 1986, 18–19, 71–72). The author here points to the singularity of a work's semantic configuration and the individual style which unfolds across all her works, co-constituting her individual authoriality and guiding the perception of each work to inform the editor's choices for the edited text.

Editions of "collected" or "complete" works of an author are compiled precisely for the purpose of presenting the entire body of an author's works in the function of co-presenting the author. Authors may and often do collect their own works for publication, but the practice originated back in the sixteenth century with the humanist printers who collected classical authors (Hunter 2006, 38–39) and largely remains an enterprise of posthumous publications prepared by editors who have not authored the writings. And yet, by selecting, arranging, and framing the writings at hand, an editor performs the function of authoring the edition as itself a work. The editorial authorship is explicitly acknowledged legally by the editor's copyright for such editions, but remains underappreciated in its authorial function, perhaps most complex in editions which include an author's writings beyond unequivocally acknowledged works. Their editors, effectively, reauthor their author, for they shape the linguistic "stuff" the author left behind along with her accomplished works into a comprehensive body — a work in its own right — which refigures the author's individual authoriality and persona for further circulation in cultural discourse.

Conceived in the medium of print, collected writings are often split into separately edited volumes for different generically defined categories of the textual matter, centred around an author's major authorial identity. A poet's "complete works" would include his poetic outputs, while the rest of his writings would be published separately as "correspondence" and/or other "papers" classified as more or less "private" documents of biographical significance or the author's creative outputs in other than his major genre (see also Hunter 2006, 43–52). Given the intrinsic indeterminacy of such generic distinctions, such classification is bound to draw, rather than merely represent, a topography of their writer's authorial self-designations by, for example, foregrounding authorial accomplishments across different genres or, in contrast, subsuming them into generically neutral denominations as her "papers" or, as Eliot's editors have it, *Prose*.

3. Context: Eliot's self-authoring

Eliot could not have known these hermeneutic outlines, but he lived in the age of print and his practices of authorial self-designation by shaping writing into publishable works show a good sense and strategic use of the three functions of authoring. Claiming an authorial identity was a rather early project of self-fulfilment for him: already in 1919, two years after *Prufrock* yet before *The Sacred Wood* and *The Waste Land*, Eliot collected poetry and prose and tried to publish a book before visiting his parents to prove himself a success (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 2: xiv). Publishers were unconvinced, and Eliot went on to assert two authorial identities instead. To designate himself as a poet, he published eight editions of "selected," "collected" or "complete" poems, the first of which came out in 1936, and titled three collections simply *Poems* well before it, in 1919, 1920, and 1925 (McCue 2012, 23). As a critic, he got out his first collection *The Sacred Wood* in 1922, reprinted it in 1928, and collected a new volume of *Selected Essays* in 1932, at the time of intensifying engagements in public lecturing (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xvii–xix). He did not want anybody, including his friend and most trusted editor John Hayward, to compile collections of his writing, insisting that anything he had not collected himself is not worth it (Vol. 1: xiii). At the same time, Eliot was not an alert proof-reader (see e.g., McCue 2012, 5; Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xvii) or was not given an opportunity to proofread (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xii), nor did he fully attend to typesetters' choices for his publications. He praised Liveright's edition of *The Waste Land* as "excellent" when it came out in September 1922, though later remarked that he did not like "poetry books so narrow that long lines have to be folded over — very bad for both sense and metre" (Eliot 2015, 560), which is exactly what Liveright did in 1922 (Eliot 1922). Authorial self-designation by getting out works was a constant point of Eliot's attention, while the matters of their appearance on the page were left to publishers' compositors.

Eliot's strategic self-authoring also involved a clear sense of what is and is not

publishable. He wrote obscene poetry all his life with no intention to ever to make it public (Stayer 2017) and sent the drafts for *The Waste Land* to John Quinn in 1922, begging him to ensure they were never printed (Eliot 2015, 583). He suppressed the publication or re-printing of writing he was unsure about, such as "The Death of Saint Narcissus" which was taken out of print at the stage of galley-proof at Eliot's request (154–155), or the lectures *After Strange Gods*, published in 1934 to meet the terms of the Foundation that initiated them (Eliot [2017] 2021, Vol. 5: 16) with no further editions thereafter. He refused permissions to reprint his poetry in anthologies, frame or remake it in other forms of art (such as illustrated editions or adaptation to music), or publish annotated editions (Eliot 2015, xv–xvii). And he used his power to control public discourse on his poetry, of which the most outstanding case was the suppression of John Peter's "New Interpretation of *The Waste Land*" in 1952, when Eliot sent his lawyers to ensure all copies of the issue of *Essays in Criticism* with this essay were destroyed (Peter 1969, 165).

In all these cases Eliot acted as an editor of his own writing — someone who selected, revised, and rearranged already extant writings into a body that merits the name of an original work he was ready to acknowledge as his — and he generously performed this function for others. As the editor of Faber and Faber, Eliot published Ezra Pound's *Selected Poems* in 1928 in a selection of his own, for he was unconvinced by Pound's own choices for *Personae* although the volume had just won the *Dial* prize of the year (Eliot [2015] 2021, Vol. 3: xxxix). He published James Joyce's most experimental prose twice, first "Anna Livia Plurabelle" and then *Finnegans Wake*, bringing Joyce's Modernist career to culmination (Newcomb 2009, 405). For Djuna Barnes (the only author who was endorsed by Eliot but did not make it to the Modernist canon at the time (403), Eliot served as "a better craftsman" than Pound had been to him: he suggested the title for *Nightwood* and compression of the manuscript, which Barnes did beyond Eliot's specific suggestions to cut her draft by more than two thirds (Madden 2008, 185). To Marianne Moore, whom Eliot convinced to publish a volume of *Selected Poems* in 1935, he showed the effect of organising poems by arranging their sequence in the reverse chronological order to present her most recent Modernist poems first and thus herself as a Modernist poet — which was a move Moore accepted and used in all her subsequent collections (Moore 2017, 346).

For poetry, re-arranging chronology of its production into wholes with an architecture of their own seems to have been precisely the way Eliot's creativity worked. In 1959, he described his creative process as that of "doing things separately and then seeing a possibility of fusing together, altering them, and making a kind of whole of them" (Eliot 1959). At the time, Eliot had already come to value the editorial crafting of writing into works that designate its author above personal self-interest. In 1960, he reflected to Pound: "Hell, there's so much in my life I can't bear to think about for long at a time. Still think *The Waste Land* and three last quartets worthwhile. A lot of very silly stuff in my prose..." (qtd.

in Eliot 2015, 582). He had remembered *The Waste Land*'s drafts with ambivalence in a published essay back in 1946, hoping simultaneously that they "had disappeared irrecoverably" and that they "be preserved as irrefutable evidence of Pound's critical genius" (Eliot [2017] 2021, Vol. 6: 761). But in 1964, when the Eliots heard about the poem's drafts actually turning up, he instructed his wife to publish them, adding that "[it] won't do [him] any good, but [he] would like people to realise the extent of [his] debt to Ezra" (qtd. in Eliot 2015, 585).

The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot does not present Eliot's self-editorial endeavours as authorial accomplishments, but seems to bind authoriality to the middle stage of authorial production, in Ricœur's functional triad marked as writing. The edition presents Eliot's writings chronologically and begins with "the first surviving examples of his prose" (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xxix): the three stories published by the *Smith Academy Record* in 1905, when Eliot was sixteen, along with his two poems. An even earlier fruit of his creativity — "Fireside, A Weekly Magazine" which Eliot compiled of pieces on theatre and European politics, mimicking various discourses on each new page when he was eleven (McRae 2016, 57) — more clearly witnesses an editorial orientation of a budding author and, in the *Prose*, deserves only a passing reference in the editors' Introduction (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xxviii–xxix).

4. Analysis: The matter and the order of the text

The Complete Prose has been edited in the digital age but designed in the traditional paradigm of the printed book and manifests the constitutive significance of its material dimensions (see e.g., Creasy 2017, 563; Mackinnon 2020; McRae 2016, 59). Presented as "an electronic edition" (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xv), the *Prose* is placed on the Project Muse in PDFs designed for print, with searchability for the only fully effective function out of all the basic traits of digital publications (Greenberg 2018, 115). There are no scans of manuscripts and no possibilities for a simultaneous display of multiple variants of items or relinking materials into structurally different modules, which would qualify the edition as a digital, rather than typographical, publication (Sahle 2016, 26–29). As it is, the *Prose* is subject to the material condition of print which, laid over the materiality of Eliot's textual materials, tacitly but crucially informs the editors' construction of Eliot's persona.

The *Prose* seems to have been conceived from the start in terms of generically defined and separately edited sets of printed volumes for, as Valerie Eliot put it, "bring[ing] all of Tom together" (qtd. in Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xiv). With all of the 21st-century Eliotiana in view, it appears that the corpus for it has been designated externally: the edition collects all materials that sit between Eliot's accomplished works and authoriality in poetry (the matter for *The Poems of T. S. Eliot* and a forthcoming edition of his drama) and paradigmatically "private" writings in the genre of correspondence (published as *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*). Within these boundaries, the inclusiveness of the *Prose* seems indiscrim-

inate. Along with the published writings, the edition prints Eliot's materials across multiple categories of archival and bibliographical documents: his Harvard drafts and notes for seminar talks with obscure diagrams, grammatical incompletions, and flawed classifications (e.g., Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: 109, 113, 120–121, 132); lecturing syllabi with or without notes for the lectures (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: 587–593; [2015] 2021, Vol. 4: 758–809); public and broadcast talks edited from typescripts (Eliot [2017] 2021, Vol. 6: 588–591); addresses that had to be reconstructed from "eyewitness accounts" and "reports" (Eliot [2015] 2021, Vol. 4: xxii, 825–849; [2017] 2021, Vol. 6: xii, 781–791), and documents of multiple authorship Eliot signed (Eliot [2017] 2021, Vol. 5: 759–782; [2019] 2021, Vol. 7: 837–880; [2019] 2021, Vol. 8: 579–594). The *Prose* weaves all materials into a single chronology broken into eight timespans by the edition's eight Volumes; each Volume and period is given a thematic subtitle and an editorial Introduction with a biographical narrative to frame the material. The last Volume, *Still and Still Moving*, is subtitled by a quote from *Four Quartets*, the poem quoted in the opening paragraph of the Introduction to Volume 1, too (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xxvii), which rhetorically frames and subordinates the contents of Eliot's *Prose* to his poetic self-fulfilment. His accomplishments in literary and cultural criticism figure in the titles for Volumes 2, 3, and 5, binding them to respective timespans to show, for instance, that Eliot was *The Perfect Critic* in 1919–1926 (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 2), but philosophical accomplishments are contained under the heading of the *Apprentice Years* (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1) to his other achievements.

This arrangement establishes an illuminating continuity of Eliot's development centred on the personal dimension: one that, in the Ricœurian terms of the discursive constitution of authoriality, positions Eliot as the speaker, rather than the author, of the discourse. The edition's phonocentricity manifests literally in the total inclusion of Eliot's talks and the editor's pursuits for their fullest possible reconstruction even in absence of written witnesses of their texts. The *Prose* thus accomplishes its core objective, stated in openly phonocentric terms to anchor Eliot's texts to the immediate situations of their production: the editors "aim to restore Eliot's full voice in the public domain, and to bring back into hearing the voices of those with whom he aimed to resolve the problems and dilemmas of his time" (Vol. 1: xiv–xv). To this end, the edition establishes a single chronology for all material, assumed to represent "the original order of composition or publication to allow the reader to follow closely [Eliot'] developing patterns of thought" (Vol. 1: xix–xx). Yet in fact the editors follow the line of Eliot's corporeal production of the discourse by writing or speech, rather than that of thought as witnessed by his acts of re-authoring his own materials into larger semantic wholes qualifiable as works. In effect, the edition presents Eliot's texts at the stage prior to their shaping into works. The declared pursuit for the origins has demanded that the volumes of Eliot's collected essays be "disassembled and their contents returned to chronological order alongside the uncollected and unpublished prose" (Vol. 1: xx) he produced around the

same time. This deconstruction did not affect the clusters of texts which reached the public in speech: all series of lectures "have been kept intact and edited as the coherent, self-contained works that they were intended to be" (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xx), which betrays a tacit conflation of a chronological proximity of their delivery with the constitution of a semantic wholeness.

Not only Eliot's, but also the editors' own formative role in shaping textual matter seems to be outside the editors' horizon. Eliot's doctoral thesis shows editorial mediation pervading every level of the work's presentation, carried out in pursuit of its original form. Chronologically, the *Prose* places the thesis at the timespan of "1915–16" to mark the end of the Harvard period in Eliot's development, rather than the known precise date when he submitted it, completed, in April 1916 (Vol. 1: vi, 382). The dissertation's title is neither of the two given by Eliot on submission in 1916, but the one with which it was published in 1964 and "has served Eliot studies for nearly five decades," commonly shortened to *Knowledge and Experience* (Vol. 1: 385). The *Prose* takes the title but not the content of *Knowledge and Experience* because the editors remove the two papers on Leibniz, with which the thesis was supplemented in 1964 to provide the contents of the missing pages, and place them in October 1916 among Eliot's journalistic essays (Vol. 1: vii, lv–lvi, 385, 440–470). On the micro-level, the dissertation's text is an editorial composite, too: "a corrected, re-edited, and more readable" one, redacted from textual and contextual sources which document both the completion of the thesis in 1916 and its publication in 1964 "to bring the text closer to the corrected state that TSE would have provided had he returned to defend and revise it in 1916" (Vol. 1: xx, 382–386, 385). The text's "corrected state" is, of course, the editors' eclectic projection, for Eliot did not return for defence or revise the text in 1916 or 1964 when he admitted to being "unable to think in the terminology" of the thesis and explicitly qualified it as a document "of biographical interest" (Vol. 1: 240). In terms of the Ricœurian threefold hierarchy of discourse, Eliot's thesis appears as a text that did not fully complete the passage from discourse as written to discourse as work until the editors of Eliot's *Prose* completed it for him retrospectively, by integrating the text's history and their own redesignations of its significance in the line of Eliot's personal development they construe.

The presentation of a work that Eliot did bring to completion, revised, and promoted himself — *The Sacred Wood* — is the most conspicuous instance of disregard for his authorial self-designation, assessed as both an eye-opening merit of the edition (Donoghue 2014, 80) and a flaw (Creasy 2016, §7–8) precisely for the effect of dissolving Eliot's status of a comprehensive literary critic which the book has instated and sustained.

Dispersed across the timeline of first publications, the essays of *The Sacred Wood* witness the joint effort of Eliot and John Middleton Murry to use the newly established British weekly *Athenaeum* for reviving the role of criticism, to which Eliot contributed by writing thirty-six pieces in sixteen months to build for himself a reputation of the most outstanding critic in Britain and North America

(Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xvi). Eliot's act of crafting a book out of them is marked as a fact by placing his Introduction and Preface to the two editions of *The Sacred Wood* at their respective dates in 1920 and 1928, and the editors elaborate on the book's contents and significance in the editorial Introductions to the respective Volumes (Eliot (2014) 2021, Vol. 2: 294–299, xvii–xx; Eliot (2015) 2021, Vol. 3: 413–415). But the Contents page for *The Sacred Wood* itself is treated as a visual, rather than textual, document, given only in the illustrations (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 2: il.13) with no reference to its inclusion anywhere around the reprinted elements of the book. The fruit of Eliot's acts of composing a whole out of previously written matter is side-lined on the level of an essay, too, in at least one case when a piece's integrity is not reinforced by its post-publication history or the overarching design of the *Prose*. The titular essay of the *Prose*'s Volume in which it appears, "The Perfect Critic" (first published in two parts two weeks apart), and Eliot's most renown essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (first published in two instalments months apart), are treated as "uncharacteristic cases" that deserve "sacrific[ing] adherence to chronology in order to present the complete texts" (Vol. 2: xliv). An essay without these supports, "Imperfect Critics," is broken into five items and scattered across the Volume (Vol. 2: 26–32, 115–121, 176–180, 286–293) to expose the timeframe of Eliot's publishing its first three sections as separate pieces in *The Athenaeum*. To reify the start date of Eliot's self-establishment in literary criticism, the editors correct his apparent misattribution of the essays in *The Sacred Wood* to 1917–1920 by a note that they were published between May 1919 and November 1920 (Eliot [2015] 2021, Vol. 3: 413, 415).

However, in his Preface to the 1928 edition, Eliot says that "[t]he essays were written," rather than published, "between the years 1917 and 1920" (Vol. 3: 413), and moves the origin of his authorial self-establishment in literary criticism back to 1917 at least three times decades apart. Eliot misdated his programmatic essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" to 1917 at least twice: to the publishers of *Selected Essays* in 1932 and again 1963, remembering it as "the best known of [his] essays" (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 2: 112; [2015] 2021, Vol. 4: 575). And he planned his last collection of criticism, *To Criticize the Critic*, to include essays from 1917, although the collection had to be edited by Valerie Eliot because Eliot died before realising this plan (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xv; [2019] 2021, Vol. 8: 469). Such consistency suggests that Eliot had a strong sense of turning to literary criticism in 1917, rather than 1919, and the grounds for it are evident from the Contents of the *Prose* itself. Eliot began writing reviews and lecturing on literature in 1916, and by 1917 this work resulted in a dozen items directly on literature, including four instalments of "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry" and "Reflections on Vers Libre" (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: vii–ix). Among them, there is *A Course of Twenty-Five Lectures on Victorian Literature* which he gave in Autumn 1917 (Vol. 1: 587–588). Only the list of topics for this course survived, but it suffices to see that Eliot came up with a model for a comprehensive examination of literature back in 1917. The

Course begins with a conceptual outline, focused on "the makers of [...] ideas," then moves to a selection of authors to trace the development of literature in two major genres, poetry and fiction, and ends with generically indeterminate "byways" into the realm of literary aesthetics. The Contents of *The Sacred Wood* shows the same three steps from a conceptual grounding through literary problematic to case studies: Eliot starts with an outline of "The Perfect Critic" and proceeds with a discussion of selected "Imperfect Critics", then elaborates on key problematics of literary criticism — literary tradition, originality, and relations between genres, — and finishes with critical analyses of specific authors (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 2: il. 13). The book's Contents show Eliot constructing a comprehensive exposition "of principles of general application", as he promoted it in the blurb for the second edition (qtd. in Eliot [2015] 2021, Vol. 3: 415) to co-present himself as a comprehensive literary critic. Eliot put considerable effort to turn the collection into a whole for the first edition in 1920 and requested improvements for the second edition in 1928, including "a preface, a better quality of paper, and a larger page and type" (Vol. 3: 415). *The Sacred Wood* has been definitive of the kind of literary criticism and the conception of literature Eliot proposed to co-establish himself as a comprehensive literary critic who authored the approach and its major terms to this day, even if the actual comprehensiveness of it has been widely questioned.

The unfortunate effects of dismantling *The Sacred Wood* must have been evident to the editors themselves after the Volume's publication. For later collections, published in subsequent Volumes, they are mitigated by presenting the books' introductory pieces and Contents (Eliot [2015] 2021, Vol. 4: 574) or the Contents and citations of the essays' locations in *The Complete Prose* (Eliot [2019] 2021, Vol. 8: 226, 469) to make the semantic architecture of Eliot's collected volumes more visible and their contents more readily available to the reader. The editorial Introduction to the edition also reflects on the limitations of the medium chosen for the *Prose*: the editors "envision a website" to turn it into "a living edition" open to corrections and inclusion of "fugitive" or other materials they have left out, such as Eliot's translations for the *Criterion* or book reports and blurbs for Faber and Faber (Eliot [2014] 2021, Vol. 1: xxvi). There is no escape from the given that the text and its subject matter an editor (re)constructs emerges from the viewpoint anchored to the activity of their editorial (re)making.

5. Conclusions: A note on editorial authoriality

The threefold functional architecture of a work and its author, outlined in Paul Ricœur's theory of discourse, foregrounds a self-editorial dimension of authoring works from textual matter and enables a differentiation between performances of this function by different personas. In the examined case of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, editorial procedures appear to be conducted without taking this constitutive function of editing into account. The edition returns

some texts of Eliot's works to compositional phases and completes those which Eliot left incomplete in pursuit for a representation of the original line of Eliot's development as a public persona. The editor's construction of this presumably original chronology and Eliot's public persona marginalises and covers Eliot's own authorial self-designations manifest in the works disassembled in the *Prose* and in his acts of recomposing his own and other authors' writings for publication.

The formative force of the printed medium, chosen for the edition, manifests in conflations of a chronological proximity, reembodied in the linear sequence of Eliot's linguistic productions, with a semantic unity of the texts (so that a series of lectures are endowed with wholeness, while a collection of essays is not) and their author's development (broken into biographical periods and thematically designated Volumes of textual material). This seems to suggest that alternative arrangements of Eliot's textual materials would have been more adequate, and yet the obvious alternatives come with significant drawbacks. While *The Sacred Wood* most conspicuously establishes Eliot's authorial identity of a comprehensive literary critic, his criticism as a whole does not easily fit into a generic classification which would present him as, say, an accomplished philosopher and cultural critic alongside. Eliot is also known for conceiving more book projects than he realised, as well as including the same essays into different collections. It is easy to see how a generic classification, traditionally used in editions of collected works, would have required an even more assertive enforcement of generic boundaries and corresponding authorial identities on the material than has been performed in the chosen design of the *Prose* and, then, how an editor, faced with the task of arranging his materials, would have dismissed this option. In the opposite direction, a paradigmatically digital publication seems more accommodating to the heterogenous archive of Eliot's materials, more open to further inclusions, and more inviting to various rearrangements of the materials by the reader (Hunter 2006, 58; Sahle 2016, 29–30). However, foregoing editorial control and appropriation comes with the loss of the hermeneutic potential of the editors' arrangement of the material, and the option as such would have been a further return of Eliot's materials into compositional phases to the effect of further dissipation of larger semantic entities that co-project Eliot's authorial status.

If there is a critical conclusion to be drawn from this examination, it would be a demand for a more assertive acknowledgment of the authorial dimension of editorial decisions and procedures. Critical editions themselves are inescapably authorial works, each with an architecture of its own to negotiate the demands of their case with the imperatives of scholarly publication. And the case of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot* has shown that, to fully respect the edited author's self-designation and authorial self-positioning, an editor cannot afford self-effacement in an illusory pursuit for the origin but, on the contrary, must keep her own and the reader's awareness of the irreducibly formative editorial mediation of the original material alive.

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