T. S. ELIOT AND THE PROBLEM OF THE ARCHIVE

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The final section of T. S. Eliot's early series "Goldfish (Essence of Summer Magazines)" has been read as the student poet packing away mementoes from his summer vacation before embarking on his year abroad in Paris:

> Among the débris of the year
> Of which the autumn takes its toll: –
> Old letters, programmes, unpaid bills
> Photographs, tennis shoes, and more,
> Ties, postal cards, the mass that fills
> The limbo of a bureau drawer –
> Of which October takes its toll
> Among the débris of the year
> I find this headed "Bacarolle"
>
> (IV, 1-9).[1]

In his recent study of the poems in the Inventions of the March Hare notebook, Jayme Stayer observes a key moment of personal transition at work here: "While the speaker sifts the contents of a bureau drawer, the poem registers a more existential cleaning out."[2] The poem's phrasing catches us off guard; these are not items "on which the autumn takes its toll," as the idiom might lead us to assume, but "of which." The preposition strikes us as curious, working to complicate our understanding of these objects which now appear as a form of payment,

facilitating the speaker's progression beyond "October" and into the next stage of life. In Baudelaire's "Spleen," which Christopher Ricks offers as a precursor to this passage, the débris represents concealed information; the drawer "cache moins de secrets que mon triste cerveau."[3] But Eliot makes it more ambiguous. In "Goldfish," the "limbo" is associated not only with the potential revelation of secrets, but with the uncertain ontological status of the objects themselves. The bureau drawer encompasses different frames of time; some items belong to the past, "Old letters, programmes," "photographs," and "postal cards," some may have future use, "unpaid bills," "tennis shoes," "ties," and yet their collected presence in the drawer also situates them in a subjunctive space. As long as the drawer remains closed, the objects are positioned out of time, waiting for the opportunity to emerge from their transactional "limbo."

The "limbo of the bureau drawer" is, for Eliot, a theoretical space, but for those who collected his "debris" it was a highly practical term. Informing Donald Gallup that he had acquired two letters from his brother in which he and Pound discussed whether to prefix The Waste Land with "Gerontion," Henry Eliot conceded that "EP's letter is so peppered with obscene phrases that it won't do for general exhibition."[4] In his role as curator of the Eliot Collection then at Eliot House in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Henry looked for a way around: "TSE prohibited its inclusion in the Collection; but I think some kind of limbo might be instituted for such items." Since Eliot's death, many of his archives have been plagued by this kind of limbo, with scholars forced to wait out decades-long embargoes and restrictions imposed on access and quotation. In the initial gifting of copies and drafts of his work, however, Eliot proved comparatively amenable.

When Henry Eliot began his Collection in 1936, he did so with the primary aim "of making available to students everything that his brother had written."[5] The scope of its contents was intended to astound even the poet himself: "When you see this collection," Henry wrote in June 1938, "you will behold your whole past rising up before you. Diligent scholars will be able to

confound you with things that you do not remember ever having written."[6] As for Eliot himself, he conveyed scepticism concerning his brother's enterprise. He wrote to Gallup in December 1942: "I don't really take any interest in my own early editions and indeed I never even want to read anything I have written six months after publication."[7] Privately, however, Eliot was more contemptuous. He referred to Gallup as a "pathetic young man," whose archival "fetish" gave him "the creeps."[8] Henry's interest, meanwhile, was less puzzling, and more pitiful. "The thought of that collection," Eliot told Emily Hale, "and Henry's loving pains over it, has always been a distress rather than a pleasure to me. It represents to my mind not merely his devotion but also a substitute for the successful creative activity he never had himself."[9] Although Eliot indulged Henry's newfound hobby for a time, "digging out" copies of the Egoist, Commerce, and La Nouvelle Revue Française, and sending drafts and copies of works as they appeared, he warned Henry about material he didn't ever want to be published, and appeared willing to contribute only what he thought worth preserving.[10] Eventually, he found Henry's persistence something of a nuisance: "Do not forget to hoard all reviews and comment which F&F get from the clipping bureau"; Eliot claimed Henry was "consoling himself for his own disappointment in life by become [sc. becoming] his brother's curator."[11]

In fact, Henry's decision to begin building up the Eliot House Collection in earnest had caught the poet slightly unawares. In 1934, Eliot had given the drafts of three of his most recent works, The Rock, "Marina," and Anabasis to the Bodleian Library at Oxford, perhaps with the intention of making it the primary site of his archive.[12] It was the Bodleian which, in their letters of the early 1930s, Eliot first mentioned to Emily Hale as the place which "gives up its dead."[13] When Henry made enquiries at Harvard in 1932 to establish his own Collection, then, Eliot was faced with the prospect of scattering, rather than burying, his remains. But there are also hints that this was a welcome development. When Henry requested the manuscripts of "The Dry Salvages," Eliot denied him: "I have thought I ought to give it to Magdalene: Eliot

House already has a good deal of stuff, and the Bodleian."[14] Indeed, according to the acquisition description, it was Eliot who reached out to the Cambridge College, where he had been made an Honorary Fellow in 1939: "Eliot wrote to Turner, then the Pepys Librarian, asking whether the College would like to have some manuscripts of his latest poems ('my prose is not worth bothering about')."[15] As a result, Magdalene acquired the manuscripts, typescripts and proofs of "The Dry Salvages" and "Little Gidding," and "Eliot charmingly thanked the College for accepting the manuscripts, thus reducing the volume of 'national pulp.'" Around the same time in 1941, Eliot had been consulted by Harriet Weaver about her collection of Joyce material, "the cream of what Quinn did not get."[16] Though Eliot expressed his favouring of a symbolic bequest, "that they should repose eventually in Dublin," he agreed with Weaver's requirements: "(1) their careful preservation (2) their accessibility to qualified and responsible students of J.J.'s work (3) their protection against irresponsible students." Eliot's preference for "qualified and responsible" scholars was important for his own work; he stipulated to the Librarian of Eliot House that those given access to his "rough and illegible notes" from a Harvard class he taught in 1933 could only "quote from them, or use them in any way" after "obtaining my consent in each case. After all, I don't in the least remember what is in those notes, and they may require a good deal of interpretation."[17]

Given the eternal opposition in Eliot's life between preservation and pulp, it is fortuitous that he found himself surrounded by collectors. Indeed, for a writer preceded by a reputation for having one of the most daunting permissions processes, Eliot had a talent for attracting hoarders, and when he moved in with John Hayward in 1946, he acquired a flatmate who would also become editor of The Book Collector. "I am glad that you are a collector," Eliot wrote, "because it makes it easier to give you my odd volumes."[18] As the 1940s progressed, Henry's Collection (now at the Houghton Library), Magdalene's Pepys Library, and the Bodleian were demoted in favour of Eliot's friendship with Hayward. Hayward soon began styling himself as

"Keeper of the Archive," and his biographer, John Smart, writes of his waiting "impatiently for the next instalment of what he came to call 'le très riche cabinet.'"[19] Living with Hayward meant Eliot could convey his feelings about conditions of preservation, and consequently Hayward's "cabinet" – his equivalent of Eliot's "bureau drawer" – came complete with its own version of "limbo." Though Hayward died just nine months after Eliot in 1965, he restricted access to his collection to the Librarian of King's College, Cambridge until the year 2000, "except with the permission of Eliot's literary executrix."[20] Explaining these rules was the executrix herself, Valerie Eliot, who was responding to the playwright Matthew Hastings's accusations in 1984 that "access to the Eliot canon is indeed difficult."[21] Despite such restrictions having been of Hayward's devising (mirroring Eliot's own to the Librarian of Eliot House), Hastings's letter in the *TLS* led to a critical pile-on at Valerie's expense, with Robert Hewison and S. T. Walmsley arguing with C. H. Sisson and Janet Adam Smith who were marshalled in her defence. The chairman of Faber, Matthew Evans, was forced to intervene, noting that Valerie was then occupied with an edition of her husband's *Letters*: "If anybody has any further questions of matters to discuss about the Faber/Eliot archive, perhaps they would be kind enough – in the interests of us all – to direct themselves to me."[22] If Evans were alive today, there would be a queue stretching from Russell Square to Kensington Court Gardens.

It would be easy consider a growing interest in Eliot's literary remains in recent years as a symptom of the broader archival turn in literary scholarship. In his contribution to Douglas Mao's New Modernist Studies (2021), Mark Wollaeger argues "what has been distinctive about the historicist slant of the new modernist studies is not the new historicism pioneered in early modern studies circa 1980 but an older-school historicism that values archival work over 'pop-up history.'"[23] Although no archive seems to be safe, perhaps the greatest beneficiary of this upsurge in interest is Samuel Beckett, who follows Joyce in having each of his texts published

successively in comprehensive digital editions, a platform being harnessed increasingly by libraries to showcase their holdings.[24] But Eliot is more of a complex case, and, despite his willingness to give drafts of poems to various collections, the "limbo" of his archive has historically come in the form of access. For many key modernist figures, Virginia Woolf perhaps being the most obvious, facsimile publication and editions of correspondence and diaries were tasks largely completed in the 1970s by figures who knew the author. It took only twenty years after E. E. Cummings's death to produce Etcetera: The Unpublished Poems (1982), and the limited edition of E. M. Forster's revelatory Commonplace Book appeared in 1978, within a decade of Forster's death. In the case of Pound, whose letters still only exist fragmented in editions according to correspondent, the eleven-volume Poetry and Prose: Contributions to Periodicals appeared in 1991. For Eliot, however, the process has a curious belatedness. While it is true that Valerie Eliot produced her own Waste Land: A Facsimile (1971) and saw the first volumes of Letters through publication, little was authorised in nearly fifty years of executorship, a period marked by acknowledgments either of grateful thanks for her help or, more commonly, resentment for refusing permission to quote from her husband's work.[25] After the eventual publication of the second volume of Letters in 2009 – almost fifteen years after it was first advertised in Faber's Autumn 1995 catalogue – John Sutherland complained about the efficiency of the project: "At this rate, the job will be complete in about 400 years' time," and invoked its resultant stifling of critical enquiry: "scholars seeking access to the Faber-Eliot archive have customarily seen their requests unanswered or turned down. This has generated a vacuum around Britain's greatest modern poet."[26]

As John Haffenden explains in his invaluable essay on Valerie Eliot's editing of the Letters, the vacuum can be largely attributed to her fierce sense of personal responsibility: "she saw little reason why other scholars thought they had a right to carve out for their own purposes parts of the research she was frantically engaged upon."[27] When it became obvious that the

research – no matter how frantically undertaken – would not be completed by the time of her own death in 2012, she gave permission allowing others to open Eliot's bureau drawer, leading to an explosion of primary material in the following decade. In 2015 appeared Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue's Poems of T. S. Eliot, which made a bid to replace the ironically named Complete Poems and Plays (1969). More than tripling the number of poems published in its predecessor, Ricks and McCue's volumes came complete with the same extensive accompanying commentary that had earnt a mixed response in reviews of Inventions of the March Hare.[28] In 2019, Ronald Schuchard finished editing the eight-volume Complete Prose, and by initially foregoing material publication and having the volumes accessible only through an online platform, the Prose seemed to admit to buckling under its own weight. With Eliot's prose formerly available only in single-text volumes, smaller collections, and, eventually, Frank Kermode's (very) Selected Prose (1975), the ratio of material collected before and after Valerie Eliot's death is stark. With the promise of a Complete Drama in the coming years, the scales threaten to tilt even further.

But these kinds of projects hit a critical snag with Eliot. Indeed, the collection of his entire corpus in single places erases a meticulous publication strategy designed to construct a specific portrait for posterity. It was Eliot's intention that pieces which weren't collected should "disappear"; when he first asked John Hayward to act as his Executor in 1938, he conceived of the role primarily as being "to suppress everything suppressable [sic]": "you could take it in general that what I have not published in books by the time of my death I don't consider worth publishing. F. & F. might be tempted, and your job would be to say no."[29] Previously, when such editorial acts as these 'complete works' have gone so brazenly against an author's "testamentary acts" – for Wordsworth's Prelude or Auden's poems – the acknowledgment has been made and studies explore the consequences of the decision. But in Eliot's case, the surge of new material has not yet allowed room to examine his archival behaviour before it is

flattened under the weight of such compendia. It is not only timely, then, given the current period of profound editorial expansion, but also provocative for its relevance to Eliot's philosophy of history, to investigate his response to the prospect of beholding "your whole past rising up before you" in the form of his archive.

Eliot is the great poet of "limbo." Before "Goldfish" we think first of The Hollow Men, of the moment "Between the conception / And the creation" (V, 11-12), and we think of "Burnt Norton," of the "place of disaffection," where "Men and bits of paper" are "whirled by the cold wind / That blows before and after time" (III, 15-16). In the latter, the liminal state of *via negativa* on which the speaker meditates is difficult to access in the language they have available: "I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where. / And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time" (II, 22-23). "Words," as the poem itself enacts, "strain, / Crack and sometimes break, under the burden, / Under the tension" (V, 13-15) of describing this tangle of tenses and moods. Just when we think we are rooted somewhere stable, "Footfalls echo in the memory," we find this is not "memory" as we usually think of it; the speaker proceeds paradoxically by remembering in the conditional perfect of "La Figlia che Piange": "Down the passage which we did not take" (I, 11-12). When we try to place this "passage" "in time," it flees amidst tangled permutations: "Or say that the end precedes the beginning, / And the end and the beginning were always there / Before the beginning and after the end. / And all is always now" (V, 10-13). It is here where the poem seems to rest; the eternal present of this "limbo" is the only place where the paradoxical memories of hypothetical futures can possibly exist.

The "mass" of objects inventoried in "Goldfish," the "unpaid bills / Photographs, tennis shoes, and more," belongs to this interstellar space, too. Indeed, among those "bits of paper" that find themselves in "the limbo of a bureau drawer" are the pages of "Goldfish" itself.

Copied into Eliot's Gloucester notebook, the unpublished series should never have seen the light of day, if Eliot's instructions had been obeyed. When he sold the notebook to John Quinn in 1922 in return for his help securing American publication for The Waste Land, Eliot implored him: "in putting [these verses] in your hands, I beg you fervently to keep them to yourself and see that they never are printed."[30] When Valerie Eliot commissioned Christopher Ricks to publish his edition of the notebook in 1996, the limbo was broken, and the contents of the "Goldfish" drawer were finally placed "in time."

But what motivated the fervency of Eliot's plea to Quinn? Naturally, we assume a case of simple embarrassment, of the up-and-coming poet worried how the standard of his juvenile effusions might affect a reputation built "on writing very little but very good."[31] Yet this conclusion doesn't quite fit with a general trend in behaviour towards his drafts. For a poet supposedly anxious that they shouldn't be seen, Eliot was curiously complacent about the fate of many of his manuscripts. When Quinn didn't update him on receipt of the March Hare and The Waste Land drafts, Eliot wasn't worried for the documents themselves, but for the transactional "toll" in which they were involved: "If it has gone astray, my only but very deep regret will be that it was my only means of expressing my gratitude for all that you have done for me."[32] Indeed, an attempt by John D. Gordon, Curator of the Berg Collection, to contact Eliot when the drafts resurfaced in 1958 went ignored.[33] Eliot's Letters are laden with regrets that the only copies of various poems have gone missing, or with hopes that they would. Enclosing "Suppressed Complex" to Ezra Pound in 1915, Eliot wrote: "I know it is not good, but everything else I have done is worse. Besides, I am constipated and have a cold on the chest. Burn it."[34] It was a habit that extended to light verse, too: "I hope Christina received the poem I sent her, care of Harcourt, Brace, about the goats," Eliot writes to Frank Morley in 1936, "I did not keep a copy."[35] The editors of the Letters struggle to conceal their frustration when informing us that the poem is "now lost." And it was even the case that Eliot treated

copies of his criticism just as dismissively. He couldn't provide Edmund Wilson with an article he composed for La Nouvelle Revue Française for republication because it had "disappeared; that is to say, I find that I have sent the only copy of the English text to my mother."[36]

If it wasn't just for the sake of reputation, then, what lay behind such a habit? In an interview with the Paris Review in 1959, Eliot told Donald Hall that he preferred not to retain drafts of unpublished work; if there was "something good" in an "unfinished thing," he explained, "it's better […] to leave it at the back of my mind than on paper in a drawer. If I leave it in a drawer it remains the same thing but if it's in the memory it becomes transformed into something else."[37] In private, Eliot confirmed the "rule"; he was anxious to "get rid of" "East Coker," confessing to Emily Hale how "I never feel that a poem is done with and can be put behind me until it is published or destroyed."[38] After finishing "The Dry Salvages," he deliberated with Hale over whether to work on some prose criticism or to start "Little Gidding" immediately: "I have never written one poem so soon after another before, and it may be that I shall have to let it mature at the back of my mind."[39] With "Goldfish," this strategy seems to have borne fruit. Some of the images that appear in the "Bacarolle" preserved in his memory for nearly a decade find their way into The Waste Land; "while you give the wheel a twist / I gladly leave the rest to fate / And contemplate / The aged sybil in your eyes" (IV, 25-28), might be compared with the epigraph from Petronius, and with "Death by Water": "O you who turn the wheel and look to windward, / Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you" (320-21). Recent work has been conducted on Eliot's harnessing of memory as a compositional tool. In 2007 when John Haffenden discovered lines concerning "Fresca" similar to those in the drafts of The Waste Land among the papers of Vivien Eliot at the Bodleian, he declared them "a prior state of the typescript of 'The Fire Sermon.'"[40] More recently, however, Jim McCue argued the opposite, that Eliot had in fact "reconstruct[ed] them from memory" and given them to Vivien for use in one of her stories.[41] When Eliot did retain a copy of something for a protracted

period of composition, it stunted, rather than fostered, creativity. His work on Sweeney Agonistes was long and complex. While initially claiming that it was "written in two nights between ten o'clock and five in the morning, 'with the aid of youthful enthusiasm and a bottle of gin,'" he kept the idea of completing it alive for a decade, eventually resigning himself to its status as a fragment.[42]

In prizing memory over material text for the purpose of composition, we remember, of course, Eliot's definition of "the poet's mind" in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) as "a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together."[43] But how might Eliot's theory correlate with the practice of preserving his papers? The epigraph to "Tradition and the Individual Talent," surprisingly, has not received much comment from scholars, but it forms a crucial part of Eliot's thinking. Extracted from Aristotle's *De Anima*, Eliot quotes: "ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἴσως θειότερόν τι καὶ ἀπαθές ἐστιν," usually rendered as "yet the mind is, no doubt, something more divine and impassible."[44] However, most Greek scholars will agree that "mind" does not accurately encompass the meanings of Aristotle's "νοῦς," or "Nous." For R. D. Hicks, who Eliot read while a graduate student in philosophy, it was the "constituent of the universe, which alone is pure and unmixed and has nothing in common with anything else," which sounds almost identical to Eliot's "catalyst": "The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum" which "is itself unaffected" in the reaction of oxygen and sulphur dioxide.[45] Hicks continues:

> The part it played was to communicate the first impulse to that rotary motion which ultimately evolved from the chaos in which all things were mixed the present order and regularity of the universe. Nous is in all living beings, great and small, in varying degrees. It governs and orders and knows.[46]

If "Nous" is both the "order" of the universe and also composes the individual soul, it follows that Eliot's "mind of the poet" is modelled on his awareness of the concept. So too does it appear to govern his formulation of the literary canon: "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them."[47] Tied to coalescing "limbo" of "Burnt Norton," where "Time past and time future / What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present," both Eliot's "rule" of composition and his philosophy of history demand that the poet's mind be facilitated in its distinctly immaterial contact with the past.

Eliot's theory of the "mind of the poet" is famous, but what has not yet been fully examined in the criticism is how his commitment to this "presentist view of history," as Hannah Sullivan has called it, one where "facts and fragments from the past have eternally to be reorganized inside the present, which is the only place where they exist," might have affected his approach to preserving his writings.[48] Sullivan herself has explored how Eliot's presentism informed his method of composition: "Eliot saw history as a method of epistemic organization rather than a line connecting the past to the present […] As he produced new drafts, he gathered together different kinds of material (self-authored and stolen) into synthetic arrangements."[49] However, it is possible to extend her comparison to the preservation of papers of different kinds. If it is in the poet's mind where the eternal present can be best harnessed for composition, then offloading drafts to various libraries and patrons helps put this strategy into action. But Eliot was not entirely consistent in his approach, and while discarding unfinished poems was one tactic, he was conversely retentive of other forms of writing, as recent developments at the Emily Hale archive at Princeton demonstrate. In order to examine how his philosophy of

history may have affected his approach to preserving non-creative work, then, we must turn to an archive whose "supervention of novelty" has captivated the critical consciousness.

When it comes to the fate of Eliot's personal papers, the "limbo" is of a very different kind to that which he hoped would "transform" his unfinished poems. From early on, Eliot expressed his conviction that no biography should be written. While thanking Alfred Kreymborg for sending him his Autobiography (1925) he asserted: "my own aim is to suppress my own biography."[50] By the end of his life, his decision hadn't changed, writing in 1960: "I cannot conceive of writing my autobiography. It seems that those who can do so are those who have led purely public and exterior lives, or those who can successfully conceal from themselves what they prefer not to know.2[51] Of course, an essential prerequisite for biography is correspondence, and while it is true that Eliot did not go as far as Auden, who used his will to instruct all recipients of his letters to destroy them, he knew it would be difficult to undertake such a project without the aid of his executrix and her copyright.

In reality, Eliot's letters were being collected perhaps before he even knew. Henry was quietly amassing correspondence for his Collection from its inception, and tip-toed around his brother's much-coveted privacy, asking Gallup not to circulate the most recent letters.[52] Gallup relates how, after Henry's death, his widow asked Eliot what should be done with the letters in her possession that hadn't yet made the Collection: "At 84 Prescott Street, she brought them to him, and together they fed them to the flames in the living-room fireplace."[53] This wasn't the first Jamesian fire into which Eliot had fed his letters, nor would it be the last; upon the deaths of his mother (in 1929) and Henry (in 1947), Eliot is said to have reclaimed and burnt their correspondence with him.[54] But some letters appeared to have slipped through the net, and Valerie Eliot indicated that many letters to and from these important correspondents survived. Indeed, in doing so she summons two important non-institutional archives. Although it is

difficult to know what material the closed Faber Archive and the Eliot Estate – with its own private archivist – have in their possession, it is clear from the Letters that there is a substantial hoard. Some twenty-seven letters in the first volume alone are explicitly sourced from Valerie's collection; in truth, however, the true number is much greater, as it states in the editorial notes: "Where no other source is shown" – as is the case for a considerable proportion – "it may be assumed that the original or carbon copy is in the Valerie Eliot collection or at the Faber Archive," which also contains important surviving letters from Emily Hale published in John Haffenden's online edition. Nevertheless, Valerie Eliot indicated that the material for the first volume that was already in her possession "filled a single folder in TSE's desk," and it seems likely that this folder was reserved for letters that warranted retaining; among the letters sourced from Valerie include those from Leonard Woolf offering the Hogarth Press for *Poems* (1920) and important letters from Pound.[55] Husband and wife must have spent time looking through some of this folder, too, as Eliot added a comment to a letter from 1921 in 1959: "This is lively at least and surprisingly tolerant of Shaw."[56] There are further indications that it may have been Eliot's practice to retain important letters as mementoes or as evidence; Eliot was fond of sending letters from others as enclosures to Emily Hale and Mary Trevelyan, and letters from Vivien betraying her deteriorating mental state are also cited as residing in Valerie's collection.[57]

But the mystery of the archive of the Eliot Estate, for all the invaluable information it has offered to the scholarship, has infuriated others. When Valerie publicly informed Anthony Julius that his attribution of an anti-Semitic article in the Criterion to Eliot was incorrect, she cited "the financial files of the magazine."[58] Julius offered to correct the misattribution in subsequent printings of T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form (1995), but offered a parting shot: "is it satisfactory that thirty years after Eliot's death, the resolution of such issues should still await the whim of his executrix?"[59] In Monopolizing the Master (2012), Michael

Anesko conducted an enquiry into the territorial disputes over the letters of Henry James, uncovering the lengths Leon Edel went to in the name of countering "a growing race of privacy-invaders, sensation-mongers, Xerox collectors and voyeurs, as well as curious amateurs who never intend to write serious work."[60] But Edel came in a long line of figures who attempted to "police" the archive, and none more so than James himself, whose pyres at Lamb House were designed to control posthumous critical reception. Withholding personal records is a strategy of rather a different tone, however, allowing Valerie to intervene at just the right moment as if to contradict the whole of Julius's argument.[61] Aside from the prospect of correcting posthumous challengers of Eliot's intentions, though, there are other motivations for not consigning all of his letters to the flames, motivations which may be linked to Eliot's own philosophy of history.

James's archival practices became inextricably tied to Eliot's when The Aspern Papers appeared as the analogy of choice in his "Statement on the Opening of the Emily Hale Letters at Princeton," published by Harvard at the same moment that the archival lock was released from the letters in January 2020. As one of the most publicised literary events of modern times, the opening of the archive that had remained closed for sixty years marked the end of a prolonged limbo for Eliot scholars. For decades commentators speculated as to what they contained; while John Haffenden initially admitted to suspecting "a few love letters, chatty things," Lyndall Gordon anticipated – with eery accuracy and relevance for this study – how Eliot "froze Emily Hale into art so that he could possess her in memory."[62] Eliot's comparison of Hale's decision to deposit his letters at Princeton with James's tale has been known for some time, since Valerie Eliot's introduction to the first volume of Letters in 1988. However, the publication of the "Statement" in full allowed us to appreciate the context from which she extricated: "It seemed to him 'that her disposing of the letters in that way at that time threw some light upon the kind of interest which she took, or had come to take, in these letters. The

Aspern Papers in reverse.'"[63] Valerie implied a betrayal casting Hale as the opportunistic seeker of celebrity, and it is an implication that originates in the "Statement" itself; "It may be too harsh," Eliot writes, "to think that what she liked was my reputation rather than my work. She may have loved me according to her capacity for love; yet I think that her uncle's opinions (her uncle by marriage, a dear old man, but wooly-minded) meant more to her than mine."[64] But Eliot wasn't always of that opinion, and Valerie quotes another portion of the "Statement" where we learn that "TSE liked to think that his letters to her would be preserved and made public fifty years after they were dead. He was, however, 'disagreeably surprised' when she informed him that in 1956 she was giving the letters to Princeton University Library during their lifetime."[65]

Having been subject to successive delays – true to Eliot's own archival philosophy – from an initial plan to publish them in volumes in the Summer of 2021, the Eliot-Hale Letters were published in January 2023 on the website of the T. S. Eliot Foundation. Following the closure of the archive owing to Covid-19 restrictions, for a long time those interested in the letters had to rely on re-reading Frances Dickey's archival blog, where she noted her findings during her stint in the Library from January 2020 until it was forced to close two months later. But the blog was not operated without controversy. An anonymous comment appeared beneath one report, stating rather bluntly: "The Estate of T S Eliot and Faber & Faber have undertaken to publish the letters within a few months. No one will have to wait very long. I have waited for fifty years."[66] Similarly, in a podcast interview for the Spectator, the editor of the authorised Letters, John Haffenden, alluded to individuals who were "rather scandalously in my view, and unnecessary, blogging about [the letters]."[67] It is an "amateur gambit," claimed Haffenden, in a tone matching that of the anonymous comment, "to release things which are held in copyright until 2035. It's a simple legal matter, but also there's the moral right to hold these letters, to disseminate the information." In an article co-authored with John Whittier-Ferguson, Dickey

outlined the implications of writing about the archive before it had been published: "In a long-held legal distinction originating with a suit brought by Alexander Pope, the words of a letter belong to the writer, but the paper is owned by the recipient, who has the power to sell or destroy it, but not to publish the contents."[68] Eliot must have been aware of the distinction, as Hale consulted him on it after their correspondence had ended.[69] In fact, it is through his conscious exploitation of the differences between epistolary text and object that we are able to trace a correlation with his presentist philosophy of history.

Firstly, the letters do have a role to play in Eliot's theories of preservation as they relate to his compositional "rule" about "paper in a drawer." Much work will soon be done, no doubt, on how the letters functioned, as Frances Dickey informs us, as "a testing ground for words, phrases, and ideas that later appear in letters to other people and his published words."[70] That Eliot did not make copies of the vast majority of letters he sent to Hale meant that the words of his letters could "transform into something else," just as he intended for his poems. But there is another consequence even more pressing that concerns his retention of the letters which Hale had sent to him. The distinction between paper and words is one that Eliot exploits in his courtship of Hale, but it is hardly unique to him. It is important, too, to Keats – whose letters to Fanny Brawne Eliot seemed to have had mixed opinions. In his Lecture on "English Poets as Letter-Writers" (1933), Eliot is reported to have called them the "finest letters in existence of English poets, for Keats could express great truth and yet be frivolous."[71] Yet, to Hale, to whom he recommended Keats's letters as bedtime reading – and perhaps as homework – they were "not interesting," "very tepid stuff," and he conjectured that "[Keats] would have written better letters than that if she had been a superior woman."[72] References to the materiality of Fanny's letters were crucial to Keats, particularly in his final days: "I am afraid to write to her – to receive a letter from her – to see her handwriting would break my heart – even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear."[73] The letters are

connected with other gifts of Fanny's that Keats had hoarded: "Every thing I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head." Eliot's thrusting of the responsibility of preservation onto Hale taps into Keats's fetishizing of Fanny's letters in the months before his death. By sending her the only copies, Eliot was hoping she would have the same response to the letters she sent him; he would often keep her letters in his pocket, as he could not "bear to be separated" from them, "for the touch of the paper and the sight of the writing."[74] However, in the early years of their correspondence at least, it can be inferred that Eliot was sending far more letters than Hale was, and the "Narrative" which Hale deposited at Princeton betrays the sheer number of letters perhaps as an inconvenience: "I was the confidante by letters of all which was pent up in this gifted, emotional, groping personality."[75]

The materiality of correspondence was similarly important to Henry James. He wrote to Howard Sturgis in 1903: "I applaud, dearest Howard, your expression of attachment to him who holds this pen (and passes it at this moment over very dirty paper:)."[76] But it was also the survival of that "dirty paper" which gave its adjective a new meaning. The gossip that rose out of Percy Lubbock's edition of The Letters of Henry James (1920), and especially the letters to his "beloved creature," Sturgis, threatened the reputation James had striven to create. Having read Lubbock's edition, Eliot was alive to the repercussions of personal letters made public, and we might notice similarities between what Lubbock describes as the "high pride in [James's] complete lack of tenderness towards the evidence of past labour – the notes, manuscripts, memoranda that a man of letters usually accumulates" and Eliot's willingness to offload his drafts.[77] But his letters from Hale were different, and Eliot persistently mentions the Bodleian as their permanent home, while they waited in limbo in a "tin box" at his office.[78]

That Eliot had read Lubbock's edition of James's letters is proved in his "Lecture Notes for English 26," a class he taught at Harvard in the Spring of 1933. In those notes Eliot also speaks

of The Aspern Papers, listing parts of the tale to which he presumably referred in his classes: "p. 70 after wondering all the time whether there really are any Aspern Papers."[79] The simultaneous presence and absence of papers in the tale corresponds with the "limbo" of "Goldfish"; until Juliana's secretary is open and the contents revealed, it contains both everything and nothing, James's equivalent of Erwin Schrödinger's Cat. It is this notion that we might offer as appealing to Eliot's philosophy of history. When James's narrator-critic finally breaks into Juliana's private quarters in search of documents, we are faced with a mountain of clutter, as her niece confesses: "She likes it this way; we can't move things. There are old bandboxes she has had most of her life."[80] The narrator ponders "what stores of memories had she laid away for the monotonous future?" We learnt in "Burnt Norton" how a memory could be used as a vehicle for an alternative future, and Juliana appears to be relying on this possibility. As long as the letters are in the secretary, full of its subjunctive possibilities, her romance with Aspern still exists.

In this configuration, it is not Hale who is cast in the role of Juliana, as Eliot's "Statement" implies, but Eliot himself. By giving Hale his letters to preserve, he implores her to keep "stores of memories" locked up, where they are able to retain the conditional perfect powers of "limbo." The letters are bursting with mentions of "permanent moments," a set of "Snap Shots" of their meetings which Eliot repeats with a masturbatory impulse: "So with each evening, beginning on that summer star-evening under the yew-tree, and then my birthday evening when we were very shy and you suggested that I should give you a birthday kiss, and then your birthday, and then the evenings ending in the last evening – how it developed and blossomed."[81] But the repetition of these episodes in the letters seems designed not to fix them in time, but rather to allow them to develop, like the "ideal order" of "monuments" in "Tradition and the Individual Talent":

> One of the joys of recalling all the past moments together, is the gradual seeing of greater and greater depths of meaning in them, and meaning more realised in the present than in the moment. Each was external and complete, yet each goes on growing inside; and memory of the moment is needed to develop consciousness of the moment. Each, combined with each other, and with the memory of it, becomes more beautiful, and each needs the other.[82]

Read alongside "Goldfish" and "Burnt Norton," the letters to Hale become performative utterances designed with the intention of bringing into existence an alternative past, one in which Eliot had chosen to marry Hale instead of Vivien. His original plan to unite their letters at the Bodleian with a fifty-year embargo thereby has some relation to the implementation of this narrative, not having them placed "in time" until long after both correspondents were dead. In Archive Fever, Jacques Derrida illuminates this notion with reference to the historical archive, theorising that it "is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of the past which would exist in any case," but it "also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event."[83] Eliot seems to be in touch with this idea of Derrida's in his approach to preserving the letters to Hale, and it is also, in the end, what troubles him about it.

Eliot's decision not to marry Hale in 1947 drastically changed the nature of their correspondence. Hannah Sullivan has noted the "literary overtones" of the letter in which he explains (or at least attempts to explain) why he can't marry her after Vivien's death: "what has surged up in me is the suffering of the past, the bad conscience, and the horror, with an intense dislike of sex in any form."[84] Sullivan links that curious phrase "suffering of the past" to "Tradition and the Individual Talent," to the notion of the "pastness of the past," and it is a

provocative comparison. That Eliot was particularly alive to a theoretical reading of his cache of letters is demonstrated in other areas of his "Statement." Writing with the hindsight of the relationship having come to an end, Eliot claims: "I came to see that my love for Emily was the love of a ghost for a ghost, and that the letters I had been writing to her were the letters of an hallucinated man, a man vainly trying to pretend to himself that he was the same man that he had been in 1914."[85] In a postscript to the "Statement," Eliot indicates that the page on which this sentence appears was "slightly altered, and re-typed, on the 30th September 1963." Between the first typing of the "Statement" on 25th November 1960 and this revision three years later, Eliot had been at work on a different project, a project whose pervasive influence on his archival philosophy can be uncovered in the important word "hallucinated."

After being approached in January 1962 by Dr Anne Bolgan who wanted to research his 1916 doctoral thesis on the philosophy of F. H. Bradley, Eliot was persuaded by Valerie to publish the text almost five decades after it was completed. He spent the greater part of 1962 revising successive proofs of the thesis, writing a preface, and liaising with Faber for its publication. Though he proclaims in the preface that "Forty-six years after my academic philosophising came to an end, I find myself unable to think in the terminology of this essay," the thesis offers an important lens through which to read his "Statement on the Opening of the Emily Hale Letters," where similar terminology appears.[86] The fifth chapter of Eliot's thesis deals with "unreal objects," with a section dedicated to an exploration of "hallucination." Eliot writes that "An hallucination, we are constantly tempted to forget, is not an object, but a sphere of reality; its existence is internal as well as external […] The hallucination is a whole world of feeling, and the object is simply that world so far as objectified."[87] When Eliot writes how his letters to Hale were those of "an hallucinated man," then, it can be read through the language of his thesis as an attempt to create an alternate sphere of reality of a life with Hale. The Ph.D.

proceeds by exploring how a hallucination can generate a false memory, like that in "Burnt Norton," but here it is not the idealised "garden," but a "disease":

> To recall feeling, we are often told, is merely to live it over; it cannot be known or remembered, but only felt. And to this objection we can retort that hallucination is not the satisfaction and consummation of memory, but its disease. And so far as the feeling is merely felt, so far as the situation is merely lived over again, it is not a case of memory at all.[88]

This could be a commentary on those lines from "Burnt Norton": "Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose garden" (I, 12-14) that Eliot sent to Hale. "Hallucination" allows that conditional perfect past to exist in the present moment, and Eliot now claims in 1963 that it was in such a state that he wrote his letters to Hale.

One of the primary areas of investigation in Eliot's thesis is the capacity for the past to be accurately reproduced in the present. For the thesis, those same attributes of the poet's memory that he isolated in his Paris Review interview as being beneficial to the process of composition are here seen as limitations. Eliot wrestles with the unsuitability of remembered information as a substitute for the original: "the past in the sense in which it is supposed to be recalled, in popular psychology, simply never existed; the past lived over is not memory, and the past remembered was never lived."[89] This notion, of course, refers us to the presentism of "Tradition and the Individual Talent": "what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it." But the notion that the remembered past "is not the same past as you once lived" also sheds light on the question of the personal archive. The claims in his "Statement" can now be seen to conform with this

philosophy of history; his remark that "I had been in love only with a memory, with the memory of the experience of having been in love with [Hale] in my youth" summons the passage from his Ph.D.: "it is not altogether untrue to say that the object of a memory is the memory itself."[90] Eliot's resentment about Hale's depositing of his letters "during their lifetime" is couched in the terminology of his revision of his Ph.D.; by removing the letters from the "limbo" of her suitcase and depositing them at Princeton "during their lifetime," she threatened to place their correspondence "in time," and burst the bubble of their subjunctive history for all to see.

Examining Eliot's handling of this distinctly personal archive can tempt us into thinking that the philosophy which motivated it must be a correspondingly personal one, too. However, the way in which he approached matters of preservation through the lens of his Ph.D. offers a connection to another twentieth-century thinker and disciple of Bradley whose ideas about the treatment of historical artefacts illuminates Eliot's practice. Initially one of Eliot's lecturers during his year at Oxford, R. G. Collingwood was similarly interested in the difficulties of reproducing a past feeling for examination in the present. In his posthumously published Idea of History (1946), Collingwood resolves the work of Michael Oakeshott into a simple "dilemma" that echoes – in syntax and in content – Eliot's Ph.D.: "the past is either a dead past or not past at all but simply present."[91] As both an archaeologist and philosopher, the problem of how to use objects from the past for practical history given this "dilemma" preoccupied Collingwood in the final years of his life, as he sought to explore how "relics of past events" may be properly "scrutinized by the historian to serve as evidence." The methodology at which Collingwood arrived has significant bearing not only on Eliot's treatment of his personal archive, but also on his rumination on the preservation of the past in Four Quartets.

In seeking to advance his theory beyond Oakeshott, in The Idea of History Collingwood develops what he calls a "third alternative" to viewing history as either a "dead" past or "not

past at all but simply present," and gives it the name "re-enactment" – a word in which Eliot takes a particular interest. Collingwood claims that the past is able to avoid the Oakeshottian binary by becoming a "living past" which "can be re-enacted and in that re-enactment known as past."[92] Using the example of "re-enacting" one of Plato's thoughts, Collingwood writes:

> if I not only read his argument but understand it, follow it in my own mind re-enacting it with and for myself, the process of argument which I go through is not a process resembling Plato's, it is actually Plato's so far as I understand him correctly.[93]

To suggest that "past thoughts can be rethought," as Gary Browning interprets Collingwood's theory, is not only to imply a "continuity between past and present," but also hinges fundamentally on the notion that the "thought" does not simply "resemble" Plato's, but "it is actually Plato's."[94] The mind of the historian is, for Collingwood, the lynchpin reconciling the past and the present, just as it was the "mind of the poet" in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Initially, what might strike us about Collingwood's description of his process is the terminology that he shares with Eliot's essay. Indeed, we might argue that the repetition of "reawaken[ing]" and "bridg[ing]," and the chiasmus of "the power of present thought to think of the past" and "the power of past thought to reawaken itself in the present" consciously echoes Eliot, revealing, as Alan Donagan suspected, that "Tradition" influenced Collingwood.[95] By theorising how an historian is able to use documents in order to "re-enact" the past, though, Collingwood's writing offers a suggestion as to why Eliot may have retained Hale's letters to him in his own "tin-box" and others in a "folder" in his drawer for so long, to keep the possibility of that alternative history alive.

When Eliot writes in his "Statement" of his realisation that he had been writing his letters to Hale as an "hallucinated man," he also recounts how his copies of Hale's letters "have been

destroyed by a colleague at my request."[96] No longer entertaining the idea of a subjunctive past with her, Eliot had no need of her letters for his equivalent of a process of Collingwoodian re-enactment. Emily Hale herself implied this relationship between Eliot's philosophy of history and his approach to preserving her letters to him; Lyndall Gordon writes: "By November [1963], she began to think that something had changed his mind about keeping her letters. […] Another possibility was that 'he as of old – can't disturb the present, to stir up past memories and plans.'"[97] Henry Eliot's hope for his brother to see "your whole past rising up before you" in the form of personal archival documents was not a happy prospect for Eliot, then, and we are not surprised to find Eliot employing the same metaphor in his rejection of Hale: "it is the experience of the distant past, coming back upon me in a wave, since January 22 [1947], that makes me passionately sure that the first thing is to be quite honest with myself."[98] But the "Statement" is not the only place where an "hallucination" is accompanied by a suggestion that the past can be reproduced, and in "Little Gidding" Eliot explores the painful potential of re-living thoughts.

When the speaker encounters the "compound ghost" in the final of Eliot's Four Quartets, the pair find themselves in a limbo reminiscent of that inhabited by The Hollow Men and the objects in "Goldfish": "In the uncertain hour before the morning / Near the ending of interminable night / At the recurrent end of the unending" (II, 25-27). Sarah Kennedy reads the meeting as a "re-enactment of the nekuia," the scene in the Odyssey in which Odysseus journeys to the underworld in order to summon the prophetic soul of Tiresias for advice.[99] Yeats, Joyce, and Woolf had all died within nearly two years of each other between 1939 and 1941, and Eliot's writings on the subject explore how successful any kind of resurrection could be. In his obituary for Woolf, Eliot refers to "something that cannot be preserved or conveyed" in the "critical study, the full-length biography, or the anecdotal reminiscences."[100] After death, it seems, these writers are stuck in a limbo of their own, with scholars going to lengths to

resurrect the author from their personal remains. The least we can do, Eliot writes, is to "set down some symbols which will serve to remind us in future that there is something lost, if we cannot remember what; and to remind a later generation that there is something they do not know, in spite of all their documents, even if we cannot tell them what." "[I]n spite of all their documents"; Eliot is demonstrating an awareness of the archive's inability to capture a person for those who didn't know them, the only recourse being a form of objective correlative, "some symbols," that ultimately points to absence. Woolf is not often considered part of the conglomerate that makes up the "compound ghost" of "Little Gidding," but the ideas which her death brings to Eliot's mind are closely linked to their speech in the poem. Addressing the speaker, the ghost "disclose[s] the gifts reserved for age / To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort":

> First, the cold friction of expiring sense
> Without enchantment, offering no promise
> But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
> As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
> Second, the conscious impotence of rage
> At human folly, and the laceration
> Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
> And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
> Of all that you have done, and been; the shame
> Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
> Of things ill done and done to others' harm
> Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
>
> (II: 76-89)

The first point to notice here is that the ghost employs the word that Collingwood selected for his process of retrieving a "living past": "re-enactment." Although unlikely that Eliot was explicitly invoking Collingwood's process, he nevertheless interrogates the same notion: the possibility of recovering thought and action. But here the "re-enactment" occasioned by old age is not peaceful, like the "garden" of "Burnt Norton," but "rending"; it reminds us of Eliot's letter to Hale, "what has surged up in me is the suffering of the past, the bad conscience." Similar lines appear in Auden's "Hands": "Lines on a face betoken a mounting care / For the ifs and buts of Time, a growing grief / At lost opportunity."[101] But, for Eliot, the emphasis is not on the "ifs and buts of Time" (the "road not taken"), but the decisions which *were* made: "all that you have done, and been." The escapism of writing to Hale is haunted by its relationship to the real: "To live always in the thought of what might be," Eliot wrote to her in February 1936, "is a fearful exasperation for our nerves."[102]

The compositional history of the line "And last, the rending pain of re-enactment" as documented in Helen Gardner's Composition of "Four Quartets" (1978) grants an insight into how Eliot developed the connection between the retrieval of real past and the tone of self-flagellation.[103] Originally written: "At last, the doubt of self in retrospect," this initial draft is significant given its ambiguity; we are unsure whether the doubt is experienced by the self during the act of retrospection, or whether it is the retrospective self which is the object being doubted. In the second draft of the line, Eliot maintains the tension, writing: "At last, the pain of memory's re-enactment." As "doubt" becomes "pain," and "memory" is introduced as the plane upon which "re-enactment" takes place, Eliot externalises the process, as if "memory" performs it without permission. As "memory" is deleted in the final version to become "rending," Eliot concludes the "gifts reserved for age" with an image of self-destruction. Forwarding the final version of the section to John Hayward, Eliot linked the much-revised

line with "the cold friction of expiring sense / Without enchantment": "I am still unsatisfied: 'enchantment' and 're-enactment' in the same passage are unpleasing."[104] Eliot's dissatisfaction is structural, the clashing of two nouns so similar in morphology. He tried one final time to rectify the problem, to no avail: "I cannot find any alternative for either 'enchantment' or 're-enactment' which does not either lose or alter meaning." The crucial part of this note, though, comes in Eliot's elaboration on the "meaning" he seeks not to lose: "'Re-enacting' is weak as a substantive; and I want to preserve the association of 'enact' – to take the part of oneself on a stage for oneself as the audience."[105] "Self-division is what Eliot wanted from the word," claims Anne Stillman, focusing on the apparent separation of "oneself" into a stage "part" and an "audience."[106] With the Collingwoodian context in mind, Stillman's gloss takes on greater significance; the prospect of re-enacting past thoughts in order to choose a different path is an appealing activity, but Eliot shows an awareness of its misleading tendencies, a reason he will later give in claiming he was "an hallucinated man" when corresponding with Hale.

When Valerie Eliot commissioned Helen Gardner to complete her magisterial Composition of "Four Quartets," she allowed rare access to the Hayward Bequest at King's College at a time when it was still restricted. Since her study, the identity of the "compound ghost" has been well-known: Eliot "began with Yeats in mind and worked towards a greater generality."[107] In his essay on "Yeats" (1940), Eliot stresses how he first came into contact with the poet: "the poetry of the young Yeats hardly existed for me until after my enthusiasm had been won by the poetry of the older Yeats"; he continues: "Hence, I find myself regarding him, from one point of view, as a contemporary and not a predecessor; and from another point of view, I can share the feelings of younger men."[108] Eliot associated Yeats with experiencing history backwards, the beginning after the end, which makes him not only the perfect figure for Four

Quartets, but for Eliot's problem of the archive as "behold[ing] your whole past rising up before you." Indeed, in his memorial lecture for "Yeats" Eliot dredges up his own past:

> I have, in early essays, extolled what I called impersonality in art, and it may seem that, in giving as a reason for the superiority of Yeats's later work the greater expression of personality in it, I am contradicting myself. It may be that I expressed myself badly, or that I had only an adolescent grasp of that idea – as I can never bear to re-read my own prose writings, I am willing to leave the point unsettled – but I think now, at least, that the truth of the matter is as follows.[109]

Eliot's refusal "to re-read my own prose writings" is a handy way of wriggling out of a charge of contradiction, but it also reveals something intriguing about his archival habits. Time and again Eliot indicates that he hasn't revisited past works. We remember his confession to Gallup: "I never even want to read anything I have written six months after publication," but perhaps the most famous instance is his swift disavowal of The Waste Land. He wrote to Gilbert Seldes on 12 November 1922, not even a fortnight after the appearance of the poem in The Dial, "I find this poem as far behind me as 'Prufrock' now: my present ideas are very different."[110] But this is a broader pattern of behaviour. In one of his last major essays, "To Criticize the Critic" (1961), he wrote: "it was so long since I had read many of my essays that I approached them with apprehension rather than with hopeful expectations."[111] He finds, upon surveying them, "statements with which I no longer agree," "statements the meaning of which I no longer understand," "areas in which my knowledge has evaporated," and finally "some matters in which I have simply lost interest, so that, if asked whether I still hold the same belief, I could only say 'I don't know' or 'I don't care.'"

The refusal to re-enact the past of his published work does not just leave him liable to contradiction, though; it also poses practical problems. Eliot was an awful proofreader of his own work. There are the famous instances of the "coloured dolphin" and the crowd flowing "under London bridge" in the Hogarth Press edition of The Waste Land that saw Eliot venture into bookshops to correct them by hand.[112] But there are other instances that have received less attention. During the revision of his doctoral thesis in 1962, Eliot refused to read successive proofs when it became apparent that his first attempt hadn't caught many errors, writing "NO" in the margins of letters from editors. Eliot was even willing to pay for the luxury of avoiding re-reading; Peter du Sautoy wrote how "terribly distressed" Eliot was about his "careless proofreading." that he offered to give up his royalties to cover costs for Faber.[113]

In this respect, Eliot couldn't be more different to Yeats, who spent the best part of two years re-reading proofs for the Macmillan edition de luxe of his collected works that would never be printed. According to Peter MacDonald, however, Yeats had been a "compound ghost" since the moment of his death. In his account of the compiling of the comprehensive Cornell Yeats volumes while his widow's completion of a "canonical body of poems, plays, and prose" was still underway, MacDonald writes how "two poets emerged; one, the author of (basically) an augmented version of the Collected Poems of 1933, and the other a copious generator of texts that mirror closely the complexities, and sometimes the near-chaos, of his life and circumstances."[114] While Yeats found himself split in two almost immediately, the poet who gave his first memorial lecture successfully resisted becoming "the compound Eliot" until Valerie's death. As his own editor at Faber, Eliot had possibly the greatest means and opportunity to engage in a project of post-publication revision of any poet who has ever lived. Yet his reticence to revisit past works meant that the only instrument he had to express disfavour with a published text was to forbid reprinting in its entirety, as was the case with After Strange

Gods (which he "cannot bring myself to read"), or "Eeldrop and Appleplex," which he would only allow to be re-printed "literally over my Dead body."[115]

In Eliot's last major creative work, The Elder Statesman (1959), Lord Claverton shows his daughter his "engagement book":

> Every day, year after year, over my breakfast,
> I have looked at this book – or one just like it –
> You know I keep the old ones on a shelf together;
> I could look in the right book, and find out what I was doing
> Twenty years ago, to-day, at this hour of the afternoon.[116]

The swirling time-frames, "Every day," "year after year," "Twenty years ago," "to-day," "at this hour of the afternoon," imply the totality of the records; these "engagement book[s]," Claverton asserts, contain his entire history. The subsequent action of the play, however, reveals Claverton's failure to reduce the past to material pages. The appearances of Gomez and Mrs Carghill bring with them information erased from his public record: "the night you ran over the old man in the road," and the time he spent as Maisie Montjoy's "faithless lover."[117] Like his obituary for Woolf, Eliot focuses on what's missing from the "critical study, the full-length biography, or the anecdotal reminiscences." Throughout the history of Eliot scholarship, there have been complaints about what is missing, about the "limbo" of embargoes and denials of permission, but it has also – indirectly – been a fertile marketing strategy for maintaining interest in his work. Megan Quigley's article on the revelations of the Hale archive focuses on the question of "what if"; what if Eliot had accepted Woolf's invitation on the weekend that she ultimately committed suicide? What if he had married Hale when Vivien died?[118] Eliot's poetry is troubled by the question too, "'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'" famously tolls Prufrock.

For years that question hung over the contents of the archive itself. What if Eliot's letters to Hale contain details of infidelity? What if Eliot discloses facts about his poems? What if – as Eliot wondered in his class notes on The Aspern Papers – there aren't any letters at all? The subjunctive possibilities of sequestered archives, it has been argued here, are a fundamental part of Eliot's philosophy, and a direct link to his notion of history and the "mind of the poet" in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." But Emily Hale knew this already. Upon learning of Eliot's death on 4th January 1965, she wrote to her friend Margaret Thorpe about the "limbo" of her archive and its complex relationship with time: "we four are so very intimately concerned with what is now a future as well as a past – mystery and remarkable personal story."[119] Perhaps Hale had been thinking of the lines Eliot claimed to have written for her: "Time past and time future / What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present" (I, 44-46).

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[1] All references to Eliot's poetry are from The Poems of T. S. Eliot, ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue, 2 vols (London: Faber & Faber, 2016), and cite line numbers following quotation.

[2] Jayme Stayer, Becoming T. S. Eliot: The Rhetoric of Voice and Audience in "Inventions of the March Hare" (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021), 127-28.

[3] T. S. Eliot, Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917, ed. Christopher Ricks (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), 158.

[4] Donald Gallup, "The Eliots, and the T. S. Eliot Collection at Harvard," Harvard Library Bulletin 36.3 (1988), 241.

[5] Gallup, 235.

[6] Henry Eliot, "To T. S. Eliot, 15 June 1938," not collected in Letters of T. S. Eliot and published online at tseliot.com <tseliot.com/letters/volumes/letters_volume_8_unpublished/by-person/lv8-1444>.

[7] Gallup, 237.

[8] "To Emily Hale, 19 February 1937"; "To Emily Hale, 31 March 1937," in The Eliot-Hale Letters, ed. John Haffenden (Online: T. S. Eliot Estate, 2023), <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l541>; <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l546>.

[9] "To Emily Hale, 13 July 1942," Eliot-Hale Letters, <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l831>.

[10] See "To Henry Eliot, 30 December 1936," Letters, VIII, 420; "To Henry Eliot, 9 March 1937," Letters, VIII, 525-26; "To Henry Eliot, 17 March 1937," Letters, VIII, 541.

[11] "From Henry Eliot, 5 March 1939," Letters, IX, 83; "To Emily Hale, 14th June 1943," Eliot-Hale Letters, <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l870>.

[12] He had previously written to the Master of University College, Oxford: "I should feel greatly honoured by having some manuscript of mine preserved in the Bodleian," Letters, IV, 714-15.

[13] See "To Emily Hale, 8 December 1930"; "To Emily Hale, 29 July 1932"; "To Emily Hale, 30 April 1933," Eliot-Hale Letters, <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l7>; <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l158>; <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l239>.

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[18] "To John Hayward, 25 February 1936," Letters, VIII, 81.

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[31] "To Henry Eliot, 6 April 1919," Letters, I, 334.

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[34] "To Ezra Pound, 2 February 1915," Letters, I, 94.

[35] "To Frank Morley, 19 February 1936," Letters, VIII, 72.

[36] "To Edmund Wilson, 3 August 1927," Letters, III, 602.

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[39] "To Emily Hale, 9 February 1941," Eliot-Hale Letters, <tseliot.com/the-eliot-hale-letters/letters/l774>.

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[53] Gallup, 246-47.

[54] See Letters, I, xvii.

[55] Valerie Eliot, Letters, I, xvii.

[56] "To St John Hutchinson, 13 October 1921," Letters, I, 591.

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