Editorial "Completeness" and the Challenges of Editing Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Prose Fiction

Josephine M. Guy, Rebekah Scott, Kathy Conklin, Gareth Carrol
University of Nottingham

While much modern editorial effort has been focused on literary recovery projects, and on bringing into print forgotten or unpublished writing,[1] some of the most ambitious new editions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers involve familiar canonical names. Henry James, Oscar Wilde, Joseph Conrad, and Virginia Woolf are all subjects of on-going multi-volume editions, with newly commissioned editions of Evelyn Waugh and Percy Wyndham Lewis in the early stages and a collected edition of the works of Walter Pater currently in planning.[2] Given that much of the fiction and some of the critical writing of James, Pater, Wilde, Conrad, Woolf, and Waugh (but less by Wyndham Lewis) is readily available in a variety of popular and more scholarly formats,[3] it is worth asking what has prompted these commissions and what they hope to achieve, not least because some are proving to be controversial. More particularly, a series of exchanges in the pages of *ELT* relating to the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Virginia Woolf*,[4] has raised questions about the editing of prose writing of this period, as well as about the relevance to literary critical judgements of the kinds of data that modern editorial scholarship can provide.

The usual rationale for a new edition of a well-known author is some claim to completeness, with the least controversial understanding of that notion residing in coverage of an oeuvre. New projects typically aim to encompass a wider range of works than earlier ones, collecting together both major and minor (or occasional) publications as well as those which were unpublished or incomplete in an author's life-time. Thus the *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* is advertised as the "first ever" in the sense of being the only project to date to encompass "all Waugh's extant writings and graphic art."[5] The value of this kind of comprehensiveness to the literary critic is that it can facilitate new assessments of a writer's creativity. The juxtaposition of familiar works with those which are less well-known, or which were discarded or unpublished in an author's life-time, can change perceptions of a writer's craft. A concrete example of such a reconceptualization can be seen in the recent 2 vol. publication in the Oxford English Texts edition of *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* of Wilde's journalism.

The sheer extent of Wilde's output in this genre, revealed here for the first time, together with what the editors, John Stokes and Mark W. Turner, term the "ubiquitous" nature of Wilde's presence in periodicals and newspapers, indicate a level of productivity and day-to-day professionalism belied by some of the more sensationalist biographies. More to the point, the materials collected in these volumes, which include newly attributed pieces, suggest an origin for the distinctive Wildean voice. The catholic erudition that has impressed readers of *Intentions* and *Dorian Gray* appears to have been gleaned, at least in part, from the eclectic range of books that came Wilde's way—it is unclear whether he selected them himself—as a reviewer for publications such as the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Woman's World*, and *Speaker*. Likewise, the apparent spontaneity of his insouciant performative style developed, Stokes and Turner explain, from the "easy confidence" and "implicit self-mockery" of those occasional pieces which centered on the "complicity between a great entertainer and his audience of willing journalist victims." Perhaps the most revelatory aspect of Stokes and Turners' scholarship is the light it sheds on the vexed question of Wilde's originality, as exhibited in the varying degrees of respect he afforded to what they tactfully term "verbal accuracy" and the use of quotation marks when reviewing other authors' works. At a time when print culture was "cannibalistic" and competitive, the individual voice was, of

necessity, "opportunistic and parasitic;" at stake, Stokes and Turner suggest, was neither plagiarism nor originality per se, but a "professional version of sibling rivalry" where reference to a contemporary's work could be "generous and appreciative" but also, through a strategic manipulation of the conventions of referencing, "devious and internecine."[6] When the general editors of the *Complete Waugh* promise to "revolutionise" Waugh studies,[7] they are presumably anticipating that the range of materials which this project will bring together will likewise facilitate fresh insights into Waugh's craftsmanship.

A further and equally common ambition of a new editorial project, but one which gives rise to a more contentious understanding of comprehensiveness, is to provide a thorough overview of the textual condition of the works that make up an oeuvre. There are several aspects to this task, each of which is hedged around with controversy. But first and foremost, is the initial selection of documents to take account of in an edition: a decision about what is held to constitute a work's textual condition. The nature of print culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries poses challenges, both practical and theoretical, for editors tracing the processes of textual transmission. Most obviously, the diversification of print media and inventiveness of publishers' marketing strategies at this time mean that individual works were typically brought out in a variety of formats, each of which may have permitted new opportunities for revision or for the introduction, by other hands, of various sorts of textual changes, the authority of which can be difficult to establish. The work of publishing historians such as Allan C. Dooley and James G. Nelson has alerted modern editors to the importance of investigating the claims made for different sorts of publications, including the relationships between editions and impressions, which may not necessarily be exactly as advertised. The invention of the typewriter, the appearance of semi-professional typewriting agencies, and the consequent use by increasing numbers of authors of carbon copies means that alongside extant manuscripts and proofs many more pre-publication drafts of a work (sometimes differently corrected and difficult to date) may survive. The advent of a series of international copyright agreements, and most importantly the Chace Act, further obliges editors to include in a history of textual transmission publications which might hitherto have been disregarded as possessing insufficient authority. British and American editions of the same work can pose special problems due to distinctions between British and American English and house-styling, as well as the unreliability of transatlantic communication. The latter meant that authors did not always have the same control over the production of their texts in each country, and may have revised different versions of the same work for different publishers at different times.

In other words, as the range of documents and number and kinds of variants which fall into the purview of the modern editor expands, so it becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain what constitutes an author's "definitive" thoughts about a given work (definitive for which context or audience?); and under what circumstances textual variants can be considered fully authoritative. Even if an author formally authorized an American (or, for that matter, a German or French) edition of a novel, how much involvement in, or oversight of, the ensuing new text might he or she have had? Can (and should) an editor distinguish between a lack of control due to mere circumstance (such as delayed correspondence or a tight publishing schedule) and when it seems to be a result of deliberate highhandedness or active censorship (as has been claimed in the case of the *Lippincott* text of *Dorian Gray*).[8] But even when the authority of a variant can be securely established, there are yet further questions to address about the semantic load of what can, in a long novel, be several thousands of small-scale changes in punctuation, such as those introduced through the imposition of house-styling, relative to that of changes in lexis. To what extent and in what ways is meaning affected by alterations in capitalization or italicization, the substitution of colons for periods or em-dashes, double for single quotation marks, or changes in the use of

contractions ("do not" rather than "don't")—whether or not they have authorial sanction? Although these dilemmas are by no means unique to the editing of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fiction, the nature of print culture at this time, and the sheer quantities of evidence which typically need to be reviewed, make them particularly pressing. As the *ELT* exchanges over the *Cambridge Woolf* illustrate, it is disputes over these very numerous, if apparently "minor" sorts of textual changes which are proving divisive, calling into question the purpose of, and audience for, variorum editing. Moreover, this is despite (or perhaps because of) advances in digital collation tools.[9] The fact that lists of variants can now be generated electronically arguably complicates (rather than simplifies) an editor's work, in that increasing the quantity of data available makes problems of evaluation—of deciding which of those minor variants "matter"—less rather than more manageable.

In his 2012 review of two volumes of the *Cambridge Woolf—The Waves*, eds. Michael Herbert and Susan Sellers and *Between the Acts*, ed. Mark Hussey—J. H. Stape took issue with the editorial principles underwriting this project. He objected to what he termed the general editors' (Jane Goldman and Susan Sellers) "a priori" decision to take the first British editions of Woolf's fiction as copy-text as well as to the criteria underlying the textual apparatus, which he described as "a medley of compositorial changes, casual and obvious setting errors, and the Americanization of spellings."[10] "Medley" is a provocative term, chosen it would appear to signal Stape's exasperation at what he saw as a failure of editorial judgment; or more precisely, a failure to understand the purpose of a "critical edition." In Stape's view, the editor's role is to use his/her knowledge of publishing culture and of an author's writing practices to sort the multifarious variants into those which are worthy of attention, which have a bearing on literary-critical appreciation or an understanding of a writer's craft, and those which are "trivial" and can be explained to the reader in "summary form." Herein, for Stape, lies what is understood by editorial expertise and the basis of editorial scholarship: namely, the critical division of textual variants into substantives and accidentals based on a concept of authorial control; and the use of that information to establish for the reader the most "authentic" text[11] of a given work. For Stape, the practice in the *Cambridge Woolf* of "lumping" all kinds of variants together in a single list "as if they were of equal weight and interest is singularly unhappy." It smacks of a kind of variant "fetishism" which results, he suggests (in an echo, perhaps, of T. S. Eliot), in a "mere bloating of the apparatus on the principle that everything be put upon the table with no variant too trivial to report."[12] By the same token, the decision always to take the first British edition as copy-text is based on a mere "*assumption*" (Stape's italics), one which, he argues, ignores the fact that rival claims might be made for, say, the authority of corrected American proofs. In his reply to Goldman and Sellers' rejoinder to his review Stape raises a further, pragmatic objection to their editorial policy: that for authors more prolific than Woolf (such as Conrad or James), "the dotting of every 'i' and crossing of every 't'" in the name of editorial "definitiveness" is simply unworkable:

> To pretend that each instance of American compositorial house-styling is the Holy Grail is . . . mere smoke and mirrors. It is good to know of such things in summary form, and it is precisely an editor's business to be concerned with these, his or her job being to work for the reader who has less time, less inclination, and fewer research grants to deal with the very hard work of compiling and accessing variants and researching textual history. The reader concerned with every instance of compositorial alteration would be a rare bird indeed; and for authors whose textual situations are considerably more complex than Woolf's, the principle . . . announced here simply falls apart. In, for example, the case of the thirteen extant versions of Conrad's Victory . . . the punctuation variants can be counted in the several thousands

> and even possibly tens of thousands. Add to these house-styling, the Americanizations of spelling, and obvious misprints. To enshrine every instance of these variants in a print volume would be impractical; and even to offer them in a more malleable digital form would not be a paying procedure.[13]

The difficulties encountered by editors of the *Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James* may seem initially to support Stape's comments. For example, a single work in that edition, James's little-known novel *Confidence* (1879), involved a 35,000-word, 120-page document listing around 2,000 sets of variants, or more than 7,000 individual variants collated from four texts (including a manuscript) of what is, by James's standards, a slender novel. Significantly, this list included only some punctuation variants; had details been given of every "compositorial alteration" or "Americanization of spelling" for the entire novel, then the document would have been considerably longer.[14] Although not all of James's fiction survives in multiple formats, many of his longer novels, written late in his career and the subject of extensive revision, do. As a result, one can hypothesize (based on this case) that variants over the entire 30-volume set of the *Cambridge James* are likely (as with the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad*) to run into the tens if not hundreds of thousands, a figure which, as noted, nonetheless excludes many small-scale changes to punctuation or typography. Faced with this plethora of data, it is perhaps understandable that the editorial approach to *Confidence* was to record in the list of "selected textual variants," which scrupulously included all lexical or syntactical alterations, only those non-lexical changes that were judged to be "significant:" that is, those which had arisen due to obvious compositorial errors (and which were emended in the copy-text); those resulting from deliberate or accidental compositorial interventions (not emended in the copy-text because not errors, per se); and those where there was concrete evidence that James had reverted to punctuation he had used in an earlier, often manuscript, version of the work, or else decided to revise by recourse to that system of lighter punctuation which he adopted later in his career. However, as evidence for these last sorts of changes was (and typically is) rare, in practice this volume of the *Cambridge James* still ended up including only a small fraction of the thousands of punctuation variants painstakingly compiled in the original survey; moreover, their provenance or authority is not signaled to the reader, in that they are listed alongside other types of variants. That said, the "complete" list of variants (lexis, syntax, and all punctuation changes) has been preserved with the aim of making this information available in a prospective online supplement to the codex volumes. When (or even whether) this online version will come to fruition remains to be seen; a sceptic like Stape may question whether all editors will have the energy and resources to subject James's longer novels to the same meticulous treatment as *Confidence*.[15]

At first glance, the policy of the editors of *Confidence* may seem eminently sensible and dovetails with that of the *Cambridge Conrad* which also records in its textual apparatus only what is described as "basic textual evidence" with separate textual notes dealing in more detail with what are judged to be textual "cruxes."[16] However, the task of assessing when a variant is "significant"—and most particularly, a punctuation variant—and therefore when it is worth drawing to a reader's attention, is not always straightforward. In the case of *Confidence*, and as noted by an earlier editor, William T. Stafford (of the 1983 Library of America Edition), the published texts of this novel—specifically, the *Scribner's Monthly* serialization,1879 Chatto and Windus first British edition and 1880 Houghton, Osgood & Co. first American edition—differ "widely" in both punctuation and wording, the number and range of variants making it, Stafford suggests, "unlikely they are compositorial."[17] With regard to punctuation, comparison with an extant manuscript shows that James was particularly attentive to the use of italics (for foreign words or phrases) and capitalization (for

terms such as "Law"). His punctuation in the MS was also distinctive, being both lighter than in any of the published versions (in containing fewer commas), and having more contractions (although various crossings out suggest that James hesitated over this device). None of these features are consistently preserved in the various published texts: while *Scribner's Monthly* retains many (but not all) of the contractions, these are mostly omitted from the 1879 text and sometimes from the 1880; by contrast the 1879 text is most faithful to the capitalizations. To complicate matters further, it is not possible to trace a simple line of transmission through these texts, for James worked simultaneously on the British and American published versions of *Confidence* while the *Scribner's* serialization was being set up, having recourse at the time to the tear sheets provided by Scribner as well as an uncorrected set of *Scribner*'s proofs and (possibly) an earlier manuscript draft used to prepare the extant manuscript fair-copy for *Scribner's*. As a result, where the same sentence or phrase is punctuated in slightly different ways in each version, it is not easy to establish which is the most "authoritative;" nor, necessarily, what constitutes a "departure from authorial practice" (to use Stape's term). In the following example, which is not recorded in the *Cambridge James* edition of *Confidence*, it is impossible to ascertain why James's manuscript punctuation (a colon) was altered, or indeed who altered it (James or an editor or compositor), and whether the alteration was made by accident or by design.

1879	than for the button on her glove; by which I mean
MS	than for the button on her glove: by which I mean
SM	than for the button on her glove, by which I mean
1880	than for the button on her glove – by which I mean

Faced with such uncertainty, an editor has an apparently stark choice: to record every punctuation variant no matter how trivial (as the *Cambridge Woolf* aims to do);[18] or to exercise judgement and record only those variants which—as the editors of *Confidence* put it—"alter meaning." The danger of the former position is that in "putting everything upon the table" it may become impossible, in the mass of detail, to tell the wood from the trees. Too much data can be just as misleading as too little, in that the very fact of placing such details on record may impute to them a significance that may not be fully warranted, over-playing the creative value of textual features which might indeed have been relatively unimportant to James (or whomever) most of the time. But the latter decision also has drawbacks in that "editorial judgement" is by no means infallible or consistent, either in relation to establishing the authority of a minor variant or in determining its meaningfulness. At what level, for example, are judgements about the meaning of minor variants to be made? The significance of contractions, changes in the use of dashes, hyphens, capitalization of titles and place-names, and in the use of italics for emphasis may depend upon whether such a feature is viewed in isolation, for its effect on the interpretation of a particular sentence or clause, as opposed to when it is considered as part of a pattern of similar changes which may, cumulatively, establish a certain tone or style. For example, the effect on a given sentence of a single contraction, or omitted comma, may seem minor; but a cumulative pattern of such changes over several paragraphs or chapters (or over an entire novel) may serve to alter the narrative tone to one which is more informal or conversational. Then there is also the vexed relationship between these levels of interpretation: that is, in ascertaining when a punctuation variant has global as opposed to local significance (as well as what counts as "global"). These may seem like nit-picking points, but a further example taken this time from the editing of Wilde (whose *oeuvre* is more slender than that of either James or Conrad), may give a better sense of the complexities involved.

In his 2011 "uncensored" edition of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* for Harvard University Press Nicholas Frankel printed as copy-text a version of the unpublished typescript of Wilde's novel. In explaining its importance in his editorial introduction he drew attention to the typescript variants in punctuation arguing that "some of the changes Stoddart [Wilde's editor] oversaw to Wilde's punctuation, spelling, and capitalization transform the reading experience and alter meaning . . . pervasively."[19] Frankel's attempt to substantiate this claim rests on two forms of editorial judgement, both of which are open to question. There is the attribution of authorship to such changes, a matter which, as Frankel readily acknowledges, is complicated by the fact that the typescript is marked-up in several hands and it is not easy to distinguish which hand is at work when examining minor emendations. Then there is the interpretive context or semantic field in relation to which such changes are judged to affect meaning. Thus one kind of variant to which Frankel draws attention is Wilde's use in the typescript of capitalization for emphasis, and the practice of Stoddart and his associates of changing this usage to lower-case. In noting in the typescript what he terms the "unusual capitalization of names of various precious stones and ecclesiastical vestments" (e.g. "Selenite," "Morse," "Corporals"—all of which are in lower case in the published texts of the novel), Frankel argues that this usage "suggests what Wilde in the same chapter calls the 'mystic offices' of these things.'" Frankel goes on: "That is to say, in employing capitalization here, Wilde wishes to transform, at least on the page, common or material objects into spiritual, mystic, or symbolic entities possessed of a power that belies everyday experience."[20] What is not explained by Frankel, however, is the significance in the same passage of various "common or material objects" which are *not* capitalized, such as "cope" and "orphreys." If capitalization was intended to signify this transformative process why, for Wilde, would a "cope" or "orphrey" be less mystical than "Selenite"? Was it the case that Wilde simply forgot to capitalize these latter terms (in which case, should the modern editor emend them in the copy-text)? Or (and this is just as plausible) was Wilde uncertain or relatively careless about using capitalization in such a way. In which case how confident can we be that he would necessarily have objected to a (later) editorial standardization (to lower-case) of his apparently inconsistent usage? And given this latter possibility, how credible is it to impute to this feature a "pervasive" alteration in meaning?

Evidence from other Wilde manuscripts—and notably from an unpublished set of galley proofs of "The Fisherman and his Soul"— tends to support the proposition that he did habitually use capitalization for emphasis in early drafts of his work.[21] But that such usage, as with other matters of punctuation, often seems inconsistent—"seems" because it is not always easy to distinguish lower- from uppercase, or periods from commas, in Wilde's handwriting, generally because he was writing quickly to meet deadlines. So a similar sort of problem can be found in variants to "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" where it is impossible to tell whether inconsistencies in the use of "Individualism" as opposed to "individualism," within both the extant manuscript and *Fortnightly Review* text, as well as between both versions, are a result of design, of simple carelessness on Wilde's part, or of unclear hand writing which typesetters struggled to interpret. Frustratingly, this confusion is no trivial matter, since a major objective of the essay is to challenge competing definitions of this term, including that offered by a contemporary political pressure group commonly referred to in the press as the "Individualists."[22] Ascertaining when Wilde is referring to the specific ideology of the Individualists (i.e. "Individualism") as opposed to a more generalized "individualism" is central to his argument. So what editorial policy towards "minor" variants sheds most light on the issue? Here we have an example of a punctuation variant which has the *potential* to alter meaning "pervasively," but no secure means of establishing when (or indeed whether) such an effect was intended, as there is no simple way of distinguishing between compositorial error, house-styling, and authorial intention.

Intriguingly, this dilemma is also apparent in the treatment of punctuation variants in *Dorian Gray*. Frankel's editorial practice turns out, like that of the *Cambridge James* and *Cambridge Conrad*, to be "selective," in that the list of "accidental changes" supplied in an appendix to his edition provides only those variants to punctuation that can be attributed "with certainty" to Stoddart and his associates: the "numerous other accidental changes, including the insertion of commas, dashes, and exclamation marks, as well as the transposition of quotation marks . . . whose authorship is difficult to determine clearly" are silently incorporated into the copy-text "as if they are Wilde's own."[23] Frankel then refers the reader for "a complete record" of accidentals to Joseph Bristow's edition of the novel in the OET *Wilde Complete Works* where, in the textual apparatus to the 1890 text of *Dorian Gray*, the reader will indeed find a faithful record of all the emendations to the typescript, together with indications of attribution where "a definitive judgement can be made." However, a reader of the OET volume will notice that when explaining the significance of what he terms "smaller details" of correction and deletion, "notably punctuation, use of lower- and upper-case letters, and spelling," Bristow gives a different interpretation of their meaningfulness. He stresses Stoddart's "attentive work" in the face of "inept typing" on the one hand, and Wilde's "inconsistencies," "intermittent" misspellings, and "shaky handling of French and German terms," on the other. In short, a reader may come away from Bristow's edition with a sense that Stoddart, far from exercising a censoring hand over an important aspect of Wilde's style (as Frankel implies), did a thorough and necessary job of "clearing" the typescript of errors and inconsistencies prior to typesetting.[24]

These two approaches to the treatment of punctuation variants in *Dorian Gray* provide subtly different views of Wilde's creativity: Frankel's (selective) method suggests an element of craftsmanship in Wilde's use of punctuation; whereas having sight of a complete list of variants, as provided by Bristow, leads to some doubts about Wilde's attentiveness to this aspect of his writing. Deciding when a punctuation variant is "meaningful" and worth recording can therefore be anything but straightforward. Yet such decisions matter, because they can have deep implications for how we understand a writer's craft: the careless and the censored writer are hardly commensurate concepts. In the case of Wilde and *Dorian Gray*, in the (rival) editions of Bristow and Frankel at least the reader has two different treatments of variants available (and two different copy-texts), so comparisons can be made. But for writers like Conrad and James, where comprehensiveness in the recording of variants, as Stape points out, is rendered impractical to all intents and purposes,[25] decisions must be made. So is there any better means of determining the "meaningfulness" of minor variants—a method of categorizing their *relative* semantic load—than a reliance on "editorial judgement" alone? Returning to the dispute over the *Cambridge Woolf* enables us to see both why that alternative is required, as well as where it might be found.

Stape associates the comprehensive approach of the *Cambridge Woolf*, sometimes referred to as editorial "completism," with what he refers to as "fashionable posturing about textual indeterminacy."[26] In fact, there are multiple forces behind the dissatisfaction with the "Greg-Bowers-Tanselle tradition" which Stape invokes, and understanding these pressures points the way towards a different approach to the treatment of punctuation variants. Chief among them, ironically given the *ELT* dispute, is a desire to avoid controversy. That said, the focus of Goldman and Sellers' concern is readers rather than other editors. Refusing to exercise the kind of editorial selectivity that Stape advocates is undertaken in the name of what is presented, rhetorically at least, as a form of readerly empowerment, rather than a theoretical commitment to textual indeterminacy in the manner postulated by theorists of deconstruction.[27] That is, it is not the *principle* of identifying a work with a single "best" text of it—the traditional aim of copy-text editing—which Goldman and Sellers are wary of, but *who* should undertake that task. In their view, it is more appropriately delegated to readers,

rather than being left in the hands of allegedly "expert" (which might mean "biased") editors. In this respect the rationale for the *Cambridge Woolf* draws explicitly upon a democratizing ambition which has been most forcefully articulated (although in relation to digital editions) by Peter Shillingsburg.[28] Shillingsburg radically reconceives the role of the editor, transforming her from "expert" judge into a responsible compiler of data, who aims to record as much information and in as transparent a form as possible so as to enable readers to make their own evaluations of it. Likewise Goldman and Sellers explain that: "The work of the editor is to engage the reader in a process of informed exploration and interpretation that continues beyond the edition. We understand our readers, then, to be accomplices in a process that can impose no finite interpretation on Woolf's writings. It is our hope that our work enables and enriches the continuing process of readerly collaboration." [29]

In their rejoinder to Stape's *ELT* review, Goldman and Sellers repeatedly invoke this language of transparency and accountability (rather than indeterminacy), defending their editorial practice as "unintrusive," "clear" and "open," and characterizing Stape's editing as "bizarre" and "obscurantist," and his notion of editorial expertise as "unhelpful . . . intervention" and an "imposition" on the reader.[30] In their view, the aim of a variorum edition should be to provide readers with sufficient information in a textual apparatus to enable them to re-construct their own best text on whatever principles they choose—whether first publication (British or American), last publication overseen by the author, social text (that with most significant cultural impact) or eclectic text (which is reconstructed by the editor from a variety of textual witnesses). Importantly, this ambition does not prevent the editor from prioritizing one text of a work over others, but it does change the claims made for that choice. A copy-text still needs to be chosen, Goldman and Sellers concede, but only in order to provide a starting-point from which to "map out" all other versions. No particular claim need be made for its authority or definitiveness. [31]

Although Goldman, Sellers and Stape cast their dispute as centering on a disagreement about textuality, and more specifically, on judgements about the authority (and therefore meaningfulness) of minor variants, it is perhaps more fruitfully understood as hinging on competing conceptions of "the reader," and how he or she is best served by the editor. That is, both parties justify their editorial policies on the basis of what they confidently claim readers want; it is just that they conceive their readers' needs rather differently. Goldman and Sellers' reader (explicitly referred to as "our reader") is someone who is in "need of access to a transparent record of the textual process" and who is interested in a "conscientious engagement" with Woolf's prose: in short, a reader who wants to do the work for herself and in dialogue with others. Stape, by contrast, envisages the reader as someone who wants the decisions taken for her, and who looks to the editor to do the hard work. Strikingly absent from both these rationales is any evidence of how "actual" as opposed to hypothetical readers engage with literary texts; and of how, in "real" reading situations, local and global judgements are made about the significance of minor variants. (For example, whether or not they are authorized, do readers even register what editors see as "unusual" capitalization?) In fact it is rare for *any* debates about editorial practice to be informed by evidence of what readers—other than those involved in the editing of specific works (all editors necessarily being themselves readers)—do, even though such information might be thought to provide the most useful guide to what might (and might not) make editing a "paying procedure."[32]

At issue here is not just a question of readerly expertise. Most editors concede that the information variorum editions provide will not be of equal interest to every reader: for those who are concerned with the minutiae recorded in a textual apparatus, there will likely be many more who consult a variorum edition solely to be provided with an authoritative text. The problem is rather that there is no secure means by which to establish how textual variants

per se (and most particularly those "minor" changes to punctuation) affect the process of literary critical evaluation for *any* kind of reader. Both "completist" and "selective" editors certainly have views on this matter, but they are invariably based on assumptions, not evidence.

One reason for this state of affairs may be to do with the influence on text-editors (and notably on Frankel) of a powerful theoretical tradition, associated with the pioneering work of figures such as Donald F. McKenzie and Jerome J. McGann as well as Gérard Genette's influential *Paratexts*, which refocused critical attention onto thinking of texts as physical or "made" objects rather than linguistic artefacts.[33] The most important consequence of drawing attention to the materiality or "embodied" nature of textuality has been to expand significantly the range of features which, it is asserted, contribute to literary appreciation. This includes consideration of the semantic value of what hitherto have been judged as "minor" textual features; that is, precisely the meaningfulness of changes in typography or fine details of punctuation (like the use of capitalization) which is at issue in editorial treatments of textual variants. This body of work has also simultaneously revised concepts of authorship and of what constitutes authorial control. Viewing the process of publication as essentially collaborative, textual materialists (certainly those who follow Genette) are often less concerned with determining "who" authorized a variant, than in establishing its potential to affect interpretation. As a result, a greatly increased range of textual features has been brought to the attention of the literary critic, but without any mechanism being provided (in the absence of an argument about authorial control) for determining their *relative* significance for literary-critical appreciation. The proposition that texts change over time through the processes of textual transmission (and it is in this sense that the text of a given work can be understood as fluid or un-fixed), certainly makes a case for putting comprehensive lists of variants before readers: but it does not explain *how* those variants should be interpreted, nor when they are of relevance for understanding *the work*, especially when their authority cannot be determined.[34] By side-stepping this question—simply leaving it to "readers" (whoever they may be) to resolve for themselves—"completist" editing, however laudable and conscientious, is in danger of producing databanks of information rendered largely useless by the absence of analytical tools with which it might be interrogated.

How might this dilemma be addressed? One possible answer is suggested by a relatively new but growing area of interdisciplinary research into what is termed "the science of literature." Of course, the coupling of "science" and "literature" will immediately raise the hackles of some literary critics. This is partly because of a skepticism about the amenability of "literariness," as a value-laden concept, to any kind of scientific inquiry;[35] and partly because of the powerful critique of the "scientific method" offered by literary-critical theorists in the 1980s and 1990s.[36] Certainly, empirical studies of literature tend to centre on a linguistic (rather than material) understanding of literariness; they also tend to support some kind of formalism, with early research findings claiming to have established that literariness resides (at least in part) in surface linguistic and textual features, rather than simply in reading conventions.[37] Other research claims to establish that both novice and experienced readers are sensitive to these features, suggesting in turn that the categorization of such texts as literary, and the initial stages of reading, are dependent (again at least in part) on general linguistic competence rather than on literary training or experience.[38] When attempting to rate sensitivity to, or examining the processing of, literary works, whether discretely or in the context of genre-recognition, these studies also tend to investigate very obvious candidates for influencing literary-critical appreciation. So they focus on textual features (usually phonetic but also sometimes graphic) which are strongly associated with what literary linguists refer to as "foregrounding," such as rhyme schemes and enjambment, usually taking their examples from poetry.[39] In this respect, it may initially seem that these sorts of studies

have little relevance to the editorial challenges described above: challenges which are posed by textual features which are *not* strongly associated with literary foregrounding (punctuation) and which are problematic precisely because they are found in long works of prose fiction, and may have local as well as (possibly different) global effects.

However, it is not the specific findings of these studies that are of interest; nor necessarily the propositions (which are inevitably contentious) about the extent to which "literariness" can indeed be understood to inhere in the properties of a text (rather than in the values and competencies which readers bring to it). What text-editors can potentially profit from is the general psycholinguistic methods used to investigate how specific formal and technical textual features are processed, and therefore how they may affect cognitive and aesthetic responses to texts. It is these methods, especially the "eye-mind equivalence" of eye-tracking,[40] which can provide a novel means of assessing the *relative* significance to literary critical interpretation of different sorts of textual variants. And this in turn holds out the prospect of ascertaining, at least in some circumstances[41] or reading situations, whether (and how) small-scale or "minor" variants may be meaningful.

Eye-tracking is a complex technology which is used in different ways to understand a variety of mental processes, only some of which relate to linguistic competence. The particular application which has relevance here is the ability of the technology to give a rich moment-to-moment record of looking behaviour, one which allows a researcher to ascertain how many times, how long, and when a word or region (in a passage being read) is "fixated." These "fixations" in turn are a measure of processing time, with a well-established finding being that longer, less frequent or otherwise difficult words require longer to process than shorter, more frequent or more predictable ones.[42] In this way, eye-tracking can be used to test whether readers do actually register minor alterations to literary extracts, by tracking their eye movements while they read variants of a stretch of text. Those readers can then be asked to report any differences that they did observe, enabling a comparison to be made between on-line, real-time processing and the more controlled, strategic task of identifying and articulating a change. A small-scale experiment[43] which we conducted along these lines, and using, as examples, variants to works by Charles Dickens and Henry James, produced some intriguing (if preliminary) results.

It suggested that readers (even non-expert ones) do pay a certain amount of attention to minor textual features such as the presence or absence of a comma, or the change from a semi-colon to a colon: when asked to read variants of a stretch of text with changes to both punctuation and lexis, there was no evidence to suggest that changes to punctuation were less noticeable than changes to lexical items or word order.[44] This may come as some reassurance to completist editors. However, a second finding from this experiment was that for substantive changes (that is, changes to lexis) the noticing of a change also translated into greater overall reading times for the whole sentence. This suggests that lexical changes perhaps induce a more careful reading of the sentence as whole, whereas changes to punctuation show no such pattern. So this finding may be an indicator that readers do implicitly ascribe more “semantic load” to lexical changes, causing them to reconsider the rest of the sentence as well as the change itself. In comparison, spotting changes to punctuation does not seem to cause readers to also reconsider the broader sentence, suggesting that such features are indeed considered more as minor variations with limited interpretative significance—that is, not such as might indicate (to recall Frankel's term) a "pervasive" alteration in meaning. Hence, perhaps Stape's intuition is correct after all: enshrining "every instance" of a minor variant may well be pointless if readers do little interpretatively with them.

It needs to be stressed that the experiment we conducted was small-scale, designed to test whether this kind of methodology has the potential to shed light on what are proving to

be quite vituperative (and highly personalized) disputes. Moreover, no claim can be made from these particular findings which might settle the disagreement between Stape and Goldman and Sellers. It will clearly require many further studies before we will be in a position to judge whether a more "scientific" editorial practice can be developed, one that will deal more satisfactorily with writers as prolific and attentive to their craft as James, Wilde, Conrad, and Woolf.

Notes

1. Examples include the Early Irish Fiction project which produces annotated scholarly editions of Irish fiction c.1680-1810; or, closer to the period of interest to *ELT* readers, *George Moore Short Stories*, eds. Anne Heliman and Mark Llewelyn, 5 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007).
2. See e.g., the on-going *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Virginia Woolf*, *Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James,* and *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad* published by Cambridge University Press, as well as the more recently commissioned *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* and *Complete Works of Wyndham Lewis* by Oxford University Press, and on-going Oxford English Texts Edition of *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*.
3. To take just one example: readers of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can choose from scholarly editions by Donald Lawler, Joseph Bristow, and Nicholas Frankel, as well as a range of more popular editions brought out by Broadview Press, Oxford World's Classics, Penguin, and Methuen.
4. J. H. Stape's review of two volumes of the *Cambridge Woolf* led to a rejoinder by the general editors (Jane Goldman and Susan Sellers) followed by a reply by Stape. See *ELT*, 55.3 (2012), 409-16; *ELT*, 55.4 (2012), 533-35; and *ELT*, 56. 2(2013), 269-71.
5. Martin Stannard and David Bradshaw, *The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*, Project website, http://www2.le.ac.uk/research/current-research/evelyn-waugh (Sept 2015).
6. *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde. Vol VI. Journalism. Part I,* eds. John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xvi, xliii-iv.
7. *The Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh*, Project website.
8. This case has been made most forcefully by Nicholas Frankel in relation to his choice of the extant typescript (rather than either published text) as copy-text in his 2011 edition of the novel; see *The Picture of Dorian Gray. An Annotated, Uncensored Edition,* ed. Nicholas Frankel (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011).
9. The most familiar are CASE and JUXTA. It is worth reiterating that the accuracy of such tools depend upon using "perfect" texts; thus many common print features, such as anomalies in spacing (especially prevalent in word contractions) can produce disjointed or meaningless apparatus entries. By the same token, these tools are of little help when dealing with pre-publication texts, such as manuscripts, typescripts, and marked-up proof copies.
10. Stape, *ELT*, 55. 3 (2012), 410.
11. It is just this principle that Stephen E. Tabachnick draws attention to in his review of Stape's contribution to the *Cambridge Conrad*; Tabachnick, "Cambridge UP Conrad Editions," *ELT*, 58. 1 (2015), 127.
12. Stape, 411. Stape's reference to "bloating" (as of a corpse) and putting things "upon the table" recalls Eliot's discussion in "The Function of Criticism" of the expert critic's recourse to "comparison" and "analysis," for which he needs "only the cadavers [i.e. the texts] on the table." Several of the Oxford and Cambridge editions seem to have as their philosophical basis something like an Eliotic rationale: that is, the selection and analysis of textual "facts" are what constitutes an ideal scholarship (or ideal criticism) and not the exercise of

interpretation or judgment. That said, it is worth noting that Eliot also commented, in the same essay: “We must ourselves decide what is useful to us and what is not; and it is quite likely that we are not competent to decide.” See “The Function of Criticism” in *T.S. Eliot: Selected Essays* (1923; London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 32-3, 25, 32.
13. Stape, *ELT*, 56. 2 (2013), 270-1.
14. In practice, every variant was compiled for a sample chapter; subsequently only "significant" variants were recorded.
15. One contributor to the edition has already provided his own on-line supplement (though the principle itself is still being debated by the editorial team): see e.g., *The Cambridge Edition of the Complete Fiction of Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady*, ed. Michael Anesko; camhttp://portraitofalady.psu.edu/Portrait_of_a_Lady_Homepage.html. For other examples of this hybrid approach, see e.g., the on-line *Draft Variants from the Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts*, ed. Michael J. Neth (http://www.rc.umd.edu/reference/laon_cythna) which is designed as a supplement to vol. 3 of *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Neth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012) and the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Johnson On-line*, designed to complement the 2012, 7-vol. print edition.
16. "General Editors' Preface" in Joseph Conrad, *Last Essays*, eds. Harold Ray Stevens and J. H. Stape (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xiv.
17. William T. Stafford, "Note on the Texts" in *Henry James. Novels: 1871-1880*, ed. William T. Stafford (New York: Library of America, 1983), 1274.
18. As Goldman and Sellers explain in the general editorial preface of the *Cambridge Woolf*: "no emendation of spelling, syntax, punctuation, hyphenation, paragraphing or spacing should occur silently." They draw particular attention to the ways previous editors have dealt with the American and British editions of Woolf's works (for which she corrected separate sets of proofs), explaining that: "In attempting to gain access to an unpolluted record of textual variance and genesis, readers must . . . negotiate the sometimes unhelpful biases of editorial argument and often idiosyncratic and silent textual impositions, derived from a less-than-intact legacy of evidence of the processes of composition and publication."
Jane Goldman and Susan Sellers, "General Editor's Preface" in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Virginia Woolf. The Waves*, eds. Michael Herbert and Susan Sellers with research by Ian Blythe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xiv-xv.
19. *Dorian Gray*, ed. Frankel, 50.
20. Ibid., 53.
21. The galley proofs show Wilde attentively checking (and where necessary correcting) the capitalization of "Devil" and "Fisherman." We are grateful to Ian Small for drawing our attention to this detail during his current editing of Wilde's short fiction for the OET *Wilde Complete Works*.
22. For a more detailed discussion of this issue and the pitfalls involved in attaching too much significance to the use of "individualism" versus "Individualism," see *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde. Vol. IV. Criticism*, ed. Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 553-4.
23. *Dorian Gray*, ed. Frankel, 261.
24. *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde. Vol III. The Picture of Dorian* Gray, ed. Joseph Bristow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), lxiv-lxv. This care relates only to Stoddart's treatment of accidentals; Bristow (like Frankel) acknowledges a censoring hand at work in the emendations to lexis.
25. But it is a moot point as to whether Bristow's approach will be feasible for Wilde's entire oeuvre, especially his society comedies, where there are many drafts to consider.
26. Stape, *ELT*, 55. 3 (2012), 416.

27. The practice of some modern editors of identifying the potential offered by digital editions with the concept of the "mobile" or "fluid" text, often in the name of "post-modernist editing," does nonetheless encourage this association (see e.g. George Bornstein "Introduction" in *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the Humanities*, eds. Borstein and Ralph G. Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 1-6). In this respect, "completist" editions which aim to be comprehensive in the recording of textual variants (whether in a digital or codex form) need to be distinguished from those which actively set out to *realize* a "mobile text" electronically, as proposed, for example, by genetic criticism. Genetic critics typically oppose the concept of textual fixity on theoretical grounds, postulating that creativity is better understood as a fluid process, one which is visible in the various possibilities which an author entertains rather than in the specific choices embodied in a single (and especially a published) text. To date, there continue to be challenges in producing genetic editions which fully exhibit this idea of textual "genesis," and these have been most fruitfully explored in relation to the compositional habits of modernist authors, notably Joyce.
28. See Peter Shillingsburg, *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). Given their apparent concern to be "open-ended" it may seem surprising that Goldman and Sellers reject the argument that digitization would have provided a better method for recording the complexity of the textual variants produced by Woolf's writing and publishing practices. As they explain: "Debate rages on how a more democratic and transparent methodology might work. A parallel edition of the British and American editions of *To the Lighthouse* has been suggested, for example, and the digital age certainly makes such hybrids possible in electronic form. But such solutions sacrifice important material elements of signification in Woolf's texts. It is vital that attention is given to her quite specifically designed and designated spacing and typography. It is also important not to lose sight, in the inevitably compromised pursuit of 'authenticity' and 'authority', of the historical, material text as it was first published" (Goldman and Sellers, "General Editor's Preface," xiv).
29. Goldman and Sellers, xvii.
30. Goldman and Sellers, "Rejoinder: To Review by J. H. Stape," *ELT*, 55.4 (2012), 533-5.They also imply that Stape's comments are motivated by a professional rivalry (his involvement in the Shakespeare Head edition of Woolf) which prevents him from acknowledging a set of "editorial principles and priorities" which happen to be different from his own.
31. As they explain: "Our decision to take as copy text the first British edition is . . . according to our clearly stated principle of mapping out from this all other extant versions in a standard and straightforward textual apparatus." Goldman and Sellers, "Rejoinder: To Review by J. H, Stape," 534. A counter to this explanation, as Stape points out, might be that the simple existence of a copy-text (no matter the claim made for it) automatically biases the reader towards viewing it as authoritative, because it represents a fixed point against which variants are judged.
32. In fact this tends to be true about debates over interpretation in literary studies in general; so even reader-response theories (whether by Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss or Stanley Fish, or those informed by Richard Rorty's concept of intersubjective communities) are apt to work with hypothetical or implied readers.
33. McGann explains this in terms of an attempt to counter poststructuralist views of textuality. Thus he distinguishes between the kind of textual indeterminacy produced by the processes of textual transmission (which can be objectively documented) and the indeterminacy which is held to follow from the ways in which language works as a system of différance (see *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991)).

34. It is generally assumed by editors that changes which have authorial sanction matter more to readers than changes which do not. However, it is not self-evidently the case that knowledge of the authority of a variant will necessarily determine its interpretative significance. This is especially so with minor variants. Returning to the example discussed above of the capitalizations in *Dorian Gray*, it is a moot point whether the significance which Frankel attributes to "Selenite" rather than "selenite" would diminish if it could be shown that "Selenite" was the result of a compositorial error, introduced through a mis-reading of Wilde's hand.
35. For example, a familiar objection to linguistic investigations of literariness—including and especially those developed by corpus linguists—is that their object of analysis is the text of a work already "labelled" as literary, when what needs to be explained is that process of labelling itself (which is typically seen by literary historians as culturally determined and as attaching to one text of a work, rather than another).
36. And which often took its cue from the 1975 translation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*.
37. See e.g., D. Hanauer,"Integration of phonetic and graphic features in poetic text categorization judgments," *Poetics*, 2. 5 (1996), 363–380 and "What we know about reading poetry. Theoretical positions and empirical research," in *The Psychology and Sociology of Literature*, eds. D. Schram and G. Steen (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins, 2001), 107-128; and P. Hoffstaedter, "Poetic text processing and its empirical investigation," *Poetics* 16. 1 (1987), 75–91.
38. See e.g., D. Miall and D. Kuiken, "Foregrounding, defamiliarization, and affect: Response to literary stories," *Poetics*, 22. 5 (1994), 389-407 and "The form of reading: Empirical studies of literariness," *Poetics*, 25. 6 (1998), 327-341.
39. See e.g., M. Carminati, J. Stabler, A. Roberts, and M. Mischer, "Readers' responses to sub-genre and rhyme scheme in poetry," *Poetics*, 34. 3 (2006), 204-218 and R. van't Jagt Koops, J. Hoeks, G. Dorleijn and P. Hendriks, "Look before you leap: How enjambment affects the processing of poetry," *Scientific Study of Literature*, 4. 1 (2004), 3-24.
40. I.e., the idea that eye movements are linked to the mental processes involved in interpreting a text; see e.g., K. Rayner, "Eye Movements in Reading and Information Processing: 20 Years of Research," *Psychological Bulletin*, 124. 3 (1998), 372-42 and M. J. Pickering, S. Frisson, B. McElree, and M. Traxler, "Eye movements and semantic composition," in *On-line Study of Sentence Comprehension: Eyetracking, ERPs and Beyond*, eds. M. Carreriras and C. Clifton (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2004), 33-50.
41. Psycholinguists are interested in understanding how the mind processes linguistic phenomena, such as idioms like "kick the bucket." However, because these may only occur rarely and not in great enough numbers for them to be measured in "natural" language, researchers design "rigorous" experiments where one variable is manipulated (i.e. frequency of words/phrases) and all others are held constant (i.e. length of words/phrases), then any difference in performance can be attributed solely to the manipulated variable. Studies using "natural" stimuli are rarer, but are found increasingly in the literature.
42. See e.g., A. Staub and K. Rayner, "Eye movements and on-line comprehension processes" in *The Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics*, ed. M. G. Gaskell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 327-42.Other factors such as repetition can also lead to shorter fixations, reflecting facilitated processing; see e.g., G. Raney and K. Rayner, "Word frequency effects and eye movements during two readings of a text,"*Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology/Revue canadienne de psychologie expérimentale*, 49. 2 (1995), 151-172.
43. The study was conducted using an Eyelink 1000+ system from SR Research and involved 21 participants (all native English speaking students from the school of English at the

University of Nottingham). They were presented with extracts from two versions of the same passages in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (from the 1846 and 1867 texts) and Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (from the 1881 and 1908 texts). The participants were not told anything about the source of the texts, nor were they given any indication about the authority of the variants, but following the experiment were told what texts they had read if they asked. Most passages were one sentence long, but some extended over several sentences. We were concerned with the time taken to process specific regions of interest (ROIs)—that is, those parts of the passages that differ from the first presentation to the second, including where there were differences in punctuation.

44. This experiment did not distinguish variants that were authorized from those that were not. However, it would be possible to conduct a further study which did test whether an attribution of authority changed this pattern. A further limitation that needs to be noted is that participants were asked to make judgements about relatively short prose extracts; thus the experiment tested only for the effect of local (and not global) changes to punctuation. Using eye-tracking to investigate the cumulative effect of a sequence of changes to punctuation is a much more challenging task.