

GENETTE, PARATEXTS AND DOROTHY RICHARDSON

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Someone ... is launching, if any publisher will venture, an anthology of my work as a whole, including articles & poems, asking me for suggestions & approval of all she is choosing, besides material for her proposed preface ... Whenever possible, my morning includes the putting together of a few lines of a new vol. (Letter to Bryher, 21 May 1950)¹

In this article I argue that *Pilgrimage* is better understood if read in relation to its marginal paratexts, those surrounding, circumambient texts by Richardson and others, that constitute an informative, reflective and lively discourse on their anchoring text. Gerard Genette's narratological theory of the 'paratext' will be used to analyse the complex mediation between the novel sequence, *Pilgrimage*, the author, Dorothy Richardson, its publisher(s) and readers.² The material processes of production, dissemination and reception are important to the full understanding of any text, but particularly so for a multi-volume text such as *Pilgrimage* that evolved, slowly and unevenly, over a long time span of fifty two years. To conceive of the text as a whole has only really been possible since 1967, when the posthumous *March Moonlight* was included in the four volume Dent edition (first published 1938).³ *Pilgrimage* is usually classified as a modernist text but its expansive form and complex publication history clearly challenge conventional temporal delimitations of literary period.

¹ Dorothy Richardson, in Gloria Fromm (ed.), *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson* (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p.639.

² Gerard Genette, *Paratexts*, trans. J. E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³ There have been two omnibus editions of *Pilgrimage*, the first in 1938 comprising twelve volumes and the second in 1967 comprising thirteen volumes.

Genette provides a detailed framework for understanding how paratexts, those ‘verbal or other productions’ that accompany a text, such as titles, prefaces or illustrations, enable ‘a text to become a book and be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public’.⁴ The paratext is conceptualised as a spatial field, like a ‘threshold’ which the reader can either step into or turn away from, a ‘zone between text and off-text’.⁵ Genette divides paratexts into two spatial categories, using the term ‘peritext’ for those elements within the text, ‘inserted into the interstices’, and ‘epitext’ for those other more ‘distanced’ elements, such as interviews or conversations with the author and private communications, such as letters and diaries located outside the body of the text.⁶ The piecemeal nature of *Pilgrimage*’s publication has resulted in a fascinating range and variety of peritextual and epitextual material. There are, for example, several significant prefaces (one authorial, the others allographic) and many different cover designs (for single volumes as well as omnibus editions). Richardson’s professional and personal correspondence reveals much about the demanding processes of writing, proofreading, engaging with publishers and dealing with critical feedback. My analysis in this article will reveal the charged nature of several peritexts and epitexts and the different ways in which they reveal doubts and uncertainties about *Pilgrimage* during the time leading up to the publication of the first omnibus edition in 1938.

Pilgrimage’s early publishing history reflects the difficulties inherent in a long, complex, multi-volume text. The chapter volumes were published separately over a number of years, (the majority by Duckworth) but in 1938 the first twelve chapter volumes were published by J. M. Dent in a four volume omnibus set, as if complete. An epitextual source, of the ‘private’ and ‘confidential’ type,⁷ a letter to Richardson from Richard Church, the poet, essayist and novelist and Dent’s representative, dated 12 March 1936, uncovers why this happened. *Pilgrimage*’s length and form

⁴ Genette, op. cit, p.1.

⁵ Ibid, p.2.

⁶ Ibid, p.5.

⁷ Ibid, p.372.

posed a complex set of challenges for Church, who believed ‘a rounded whole to work on’ would be easier to publicise:

I have given a lot of thought to the very difficult problem of “Pilgrimage”, its format, its launching, its mode of attack, and the several problems to be mastered if we are to bring the venture to success: the success being the secure establishment of your fame, both for what you have done for the evolution of the English novel, and for the intrinsic quality of the work itself. The recognition of these two aspects of the work depends upon our political handling. You know, from our conversation together how very strongly I feel about the method which is necessary: and how important for us all will be the fact that the great book has been drawn to a conclusion.

Church’s eulogistic descriptions of *Pilgrimage*, ‘the great book’ and its ‘intrinsic quality’, to some extent, mitigate the text-as problem theme, and a desire to soften the main thrust of the letter can also be detected in the postscript : ‘I write this as a fellow-craftsman, and not as a publisher’.⁸ Church seems to be communicating that his thinking about *Pilgrimage*’s publication strategy is personal, rather than, or as well as, professional, and that he is acting in solidarity with Richardson, hence the location of this statement in a postscript, the usual place for afterthoughts of a personal nature. This letter exerts a clear paratextual ‘*function*’ on its addressee in that its message is specific and serious, that a collected edition is conditional on *Pilgrimage*’s completion.⁹ The postscript, however, can be seen to complicate the relationship between the sender and the addressee, established in the main body of the letter, and generate ambiguity. The first person singular pronoun ‘I’ signifies Church’s cognitive processes, ‘I have given a lot of thought’ and ‘I feel’ but the meaning of the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ is more difficult to pin down. It has three possible meanings: either both individuals working together (the inclusive ‘we’), or Richardson and Dent the company, (a different version of the inclusive ‘we’) or just Dent the company. The same ambiguity can

⁸ Fromm, op. cit, pp.306-7.

⁹ Genette, op. cit, p.373.

be seen to underlie the phrase ‘our political handling’, ‘political’ in this context referring to the way in which *Pilgrimage’s* status and influence will be changed through the process of offering it as a new, whole book to the reading public. Church uses the second person possessive determiner ‘*your* fame’ and the second person personal pronoun ‘*you* have done’ to emphasise that it is Richardson’s reputation and work that is at stake and nobody else’s and makes a more intimate appeal to their shared understanding, ‘*you* know from our conversation together’. The phrase ‘for us all’ in the final summative sentence means Richardson, Church and Dent, the alternative being ‘for us both’ if he were just signifying the two of them as individuals. Genette notes that when a private epitext comes into the public domain, as in this example, any new reader learns about the message in an ‘over the shoulder’ way.¹⁰ Richardson, the named addressee, would not, perhaps, have had any trouble decoding these potentially sliding meanings but had to think carefully about her own response to the ‘political’ way in which *Pilgrimage* was being mediated and the pressure on her to complete. Nevertheless, as will be made evident, the communication between Richardson and her publisher continued to be thwarted by conflicting aims and misunderstandings, either genuine or fabricated.

Several authorial epitextual sources from the period 1936-38, letters of a professional and personal nature, express Richardson’s frustration with Dent and reveal, more importantly, that *Pilgrimage*, rather than drawing to a close, was a novel-in-process that Richardson was struggling to write. Genette observes that correspondence of this type varies in the extent to which it bears any relevance to the literary work and activity of the writer but, in Richardson’s case, there is plenty of interesting material.¹¹ A polite letter to Church from Richardson, dated April 14th 1936, reveals that she was initially ‘shocked into silence’ by his letter (quoted above and had delayed responding. She refers to an ‘initial misunderstanding’ about *Pilgrimage’s* state of progress and expresses concern about the consequences of ‘an indefinite postponement’ of the omnibus edition, namely that her work

¹⁰ Ibid, p.371.

¹¹ Ibid, p.373.

should stay in print and be listed in Dent's catalogues. She makes an alternative suggestion for a collected edition, in the form of sets of volumes, published in intervals, 'up to & including Clear Horizon', (the eleventh chapter volume, the twelfth *Dimple Hill*, still a work in progress). Richardson, to reinforce her argument, asserts that a 'number of persons who write to me suggesting or pleading for a compact edition of the scattered chapters must represent a crowd'. This plaintive statement expresses hope that such a strategy might boost sales but is also an implicit recognition of her narrow readership.¹² When signing off, Richardson also betrays that she had been allowing herself to believe in the fantasy of this interim strategy, 'counting upon the sales of these sets' and warns that lack of money may result in the abrupt end of her writing project, 'failing such (financial) help, the possibility of finishing Pilgrimage becomes remote'.¹³

In a personal letter to Bryher, her close friend and patron, dated 15th April 1936, Richardson unburdens herself more freely and emphatically about her writing difficulties and warns her friend, due soon to visit them, that *Pilgrimage* is a taboo topic that she does not wish to discuss with Bryher in front of Alan (Richardson's husband). 'But as you may imagine I don't want Alan to be harassed by all this uncertainty'.¹⁴ Richardson confides that she has been in 'the most various hells', that her work was 'entirely lifeless' and that she put this down to some 'exacting' translation work which interfered with the creative process and made her ill. She tells of burning her script of *Dimple Hill* and making a fresh start, feeling 'a revival of the old interest and stimulus'.¹⁵ This letter has several of the qualities that characterise epitextual 'oral confidences', face to face conversation being often less guarded and more spontaneous than writing.¹⁶

A letter to Kotliansky, her publisher's reader, dated 18th April 1936, provides more detail about the nature of the

¹² Fromm, op. cit, p.310.

¹³ Ibid, p.308.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.310.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.309.

¹⁶ Genette, op. cit, p.385.

misunderstanding between writer and publisher. The style of this letter is less formal than her reply to Church but more formal than her letter to Bryher. Koteliansky has an official role to play for Dent, as their reader, but Richardson addresses him as 'Kot' (in contrast to 'Mr Church') which suggests a more intimate relationship. She refers to some 'blurb' she has received from Richard Church, which 'rejoiced' in *Pilgrimage's* completion, *Clear Horizon* perceived as its resolution, Church attributing to it key qualities marking it as such: 'the narrative coming full circle & the portrait of the heroine rounded off'. Richardson's use of 'rejoiced' is ironic and expresses not a little contempt, but Richardson then explains, in a more formal style, that Church has made an 'erroneous supposition' and that she has written to Church to clarify matters.¹⁷ In a letter to Bryher, dated May 1936, Richardson openly expresses her relief that Dent 'have come round' and are 'issuing [sic] sets of vols, rather than the whole at once' but that publication of the first volume has been postponed until 1938, in the hope of 'awakening public interest'. It is clear that Richardson feels that a compromise has been achieved but she makes a significant confession to Bryher: 'they hope by the time all are out, the book will be complete; though they undertake to go on publishing if it is not. All I can do, is to indicate that this delay will not assist the production of the final volumes'.¹⁸

Two years later, in a letter to Bryher dated June 1938, Richardson describes the strenuous pre-publication pressures of proofreading but this small gripe heralds a much more interesting revelation. 'I cannot say I enjoy having the twelve chapters to date, wich [sic] have landed Miriam in Quakerism from whose insufficiencies I am now engaged in rescuing her, represented as the whole of *Pilgrimage*'.¹⁹ It is clear that the 'misunderstanding' has continued, neither side really willing to compromise. Church now, apparently, considers *Dimple Hill* to be the final volume (rather than *Clear Horizon*) and the fact that Richardson has embarked on *March Moonlight*, chapter volume thirteen, has either been ignored or not known about. Letters to Bryher from Richardson in December

¹⁷ Fromm, op. cit, p.311.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.312.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.347.

1937 and February 1938 refer to *March Moonlight* by name and allude to some details about a particular setting. In the first letter Richardson appears to refer to it for the first time, signalled by the explanatory apposition following its mention: 'I have spent this last week there, in Vaud, in a vignette occurring in March Moonlight, the successor to Dimple Hill. In the second, clearly in response to further enquiries, Richardson offers: 'The Vaud portion in March Moonlight is only an episode: about 5000 words, & entirely English, complete with Bishop and school-marm'.²⁰ Two other letters from Richardson to her friend, the journalist and traveller, P. Beaumont Wadsworth, dated August and December of 1938, reveal a little more about the nature of the communication difficulties with Dent, from Richardson's perspective, and her strong personal feelings of powerlessness and anger about the way in which *Pilgrimage's* imminent publication has been handled.

The endless business of the Dent edition bids fair to come to something like an end, in the autumn, when the set, in four volumes, is to be published, (with Dimple Hill, the new volume, included) presented, to my helpless dismay & disgust, as a complete work. Please, as opportunity arises, correct this hateful misrepresentation!²¹

In the second letter, Richardson's anxiety about *Pilgrimage's* critical reception are expressed with ironic references to 'the friendly critics' and 'the rest' (the unfriendly critics. Here she can communicate to Wadsworth, intimately and confidentially, what is inexpressible in a public epitextual or peritextual document:

You know, I daresay, that *Pilgrimage* is not finished. Dents, with whom the preliminary arrangements were made, by a friend, without my knowledge, presumed that it was, & had all their machinery set, for launching it as such, when the truth came out. Whereupon they wailed aloud, were offered release from their contract, refused it & were allowed to go ahead on the understanding that they should not present the book as finished.

²⁰ Ibid, pp.340, 343.

²¹ Ibid, p.350.

In compromising on implying that it is, they may conceivably have helped their initial sales; I don't know, & shan't until April. But they have queered their pitch in regard to sales-via-reviews. The friendly critics, puzzled, emit pleasing generalities & pass over the new book, a cul de sac rather than a conclusion, in silence. And it is exactly this new book that was to tempt, in Dent's view, buyers. The rest triumphantly yodel their delight. What did we say? This endless chronicle never was getting anywhere & now peters out.

In this letter she also, significantly, shifts the root cause of the misunderstanding from herself or Richard Church to 'a friend'.²² This point is reiterated in a letter to Bryher, dated Summer 1937, although on this occasion, she is more philosophical: 'Kot's assumption that the book, *Pilgrimage* was finished. Nobody's fault'.²³

The launch of the omnibus edition of *Pilgrimage* in 1938 was accompanied by two significant paratexts. The first was a brochure, a publisher's public epitext, announcing the forthcoming launch and comprising an introductory essay written by Richard Church followed by a series of endorsements from other writers. The material form of the 'uniform edition' is detailed with some precision, revealing that the product has been made to a high standard and is boxed, suggesting that it is a collector's item:

Four volumes (size 8 by 5 ¼ inches).
Each volume contains about 500 pages, set in 11 point Monotype Imprint.
Paper: specially made satin-surface antique wove.
Binding: Biscuit -coloured cloth, lettered in gold on a red panel.
Price: Single volumes 8/6 net each.
The set complete (in box) 30 /- net.
Publication, October 1938.²⁴

²² Ibid, p.357.

²³ Ibid, p.337.

²⁴ This description can be found towards the back of the brochure produced jointly by J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd and The Cresset Press Ltd 1938.

As the brochure was not ‘materially appended’ to its anchoring text but circulated in the ‘physical and social space’ outside, to booksellers and the like, it is, according to Genette’s categories, an epitext, rather than a peritext.²⁵ Genette observes that the epitext can be differentiated from the peritext, not just by the category of space but also by discourse. He states that whilst a peritext always has a paratextual function, in that it ‘presents and comments’ on the text to which it is anchored, an epitext, ‘a fringe of a fringe’, lacks precise boundaries and its discourse is more ‘diffuse’. This is true of this particular epitext as later analysis will make clear. Genette is generally dismissive of the publisher’s epitext stating that its function to promote and market the text results in a lack of ‘meaningful’ involvement with the author.²⁶ One of these brochures is now located in the Harry Ransom Center, in Austin, Texas, but, to my knowledge, this more ‘ephemeral’ epitext has not been widely discussed amongst Richardson scholars. The second paratext to accompany the omnibus edition, a Foreword written by Richardson, an authorial peritext, has, however, become a significant point of reference.

A letter dated January 1938 from the poet, Ralph Hodgson, to Richard Church provides an interesting insight into the behind the scenes process resulting in the production of the brochure. The subtext appears to be that Church has asked Hodgson to contribute a quotation, in the way of a positive endorsement. Initially there is some general congratulatory warmth about the launch of the collected edition, ‘it is very good news’, but Hodgson’s ambivalence about Richardson’s work, his judgement that the launch is rather extravagant and his personal discomfort about the endorsement request are clearly evident: ‘The idea of the brochure is spirited and generous but a bit absurd to my mind; I prefer to be left out’. Hodgson then moves on to explain his position, and in so doing, describes what he considers to be a more appropriate set of paratextual features for *Pilgrimage*. ‘Good printing and binding, with particular attention to the quality of the gold-leaf stamping - if any - and the ordinary announcement in

²⁵ Genette, op. cit, p.344.

²⁶ Ibid, p.346.

the Press is the proper homage, it seems to me, that should be offered to such a writer and in keeping with her own qualities'. His parting shot before signing off, 'I dread even a Foreword' seems loaded, suggestive of more potential for embarrassment.²⁷

Two letters to Bryher from Richardson make reference to the brochure. In the first, dated June 1938, Richardson describes its evolution as a 'circular, not quite what was originally planned, [that] has boiled down to a longish article by Richard Church, incorporating tributes. It will, I hope, more or less serve its purpose'.²⁸ This comment from Richardson echoes Genette's characterisation of the usual authorial response to a publisher's public epitext: 'Most often he is satisfied just to close his eyes officially to the value-inflating hyperbole inseparable from the needs of trade'.²⁹ Richardson's words do seem to reflect a certain psychological distance. In the second letter from Bryher, dated September 1938, Richardson ironically refers to the brochure as 'Dent's little fanfare' which she 'has promised to broadcast'.³⁰ It has already been established that Richardson felt pressurised into compliance with Dent and the use of the possessive 'Dent's' and the verb 'promised' signal this. Both Hodgson and Richardson seem to agree, in their separate and perhaps different ways, that the brochure is a rather ridiculous paratext, whose transactional function, to achieve a positive reception for the text, has somehow grown into something extraordinary.

The front page of the brochure is in the form of an announcement and the body of the main text is an essay by Richard Church entitled 'An essay in estimation of Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage'. The abstract noun 'estimation' has a dual meaning of 'judgement of worth' and 'esteem' and has been carefully chosen to signal the essay's primary function to praise Richardson's work. A key function of the brochure is clearly to stimulate sales, by making *Pilgrimage* known 'to a much wider

²⁷ Fromm, op. cit, p.342.

²⁸ Ibid, p.347.

²⁹ Genette, op. cit, p.347.

³⁰ Fromm, op. cit, p.350.

public'.³¹ Church's essay, is a preface by another name, close to Genette's definition of an 'allographic preface', one written by somebody other than the author which signals a 'separation' between the text's sender, the author and the preface writer.³²

Church's essay begins in celebratory mode, as he presents Richardson as a writer whose name has 'become *legendary* amongst the public and *revered* amongst other writers' (my italics).³³ The function of the praise is to recommend her work and draw attention to its value. Borges describes the pitfalls of the allographic preface, in his *Prólogo de prólogos*: 'Most of the time, alas! The preface resembles an after-dinner speech or funeral oration, and it abounds in gratuitous hyperbole'.³⁴ Church's essay certainly contains a significant amount of positive hyperbolic lexis of the type that Borges warns against and Church takes many opportunities to talk up the text. Richardson's creation, Miriam, for example, is likened to 'one of those pilgrims of eternity whose quest symbolizes the needs and striving of every man or woman'.³⁵ Miriam's status as a character is equated to that of a universal type, perhaps in a bid to widen the text's appeal; but as if to check himself, Church then elevates *Pilgrimage's* subject matter, by contrasting it with the popular fiction of the early twentieth century, dealing with the vulgar and the sensational: 'Dorothy Richardson, with the few others of her kind, does not need murders, political crime, and the violence and recoil of sexual passion to flagellate her spirit into action'.³⁶ Richardson's fictional world is also praised as representing 'a civilization whose exquisite sensibility can never be destroyed', a heartfelt, albeit nostalgic, attitude that contrasts starkly with the present time described as 'the reign of brutality and barbarism' in the lead up to the Second World War.³⁷

³¹ Richard Church, 'An Essay in Estimation of Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*' (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd and The Cresset Press Ltd 1938), p.10.

³² Genette, op. cit, p.263.

³³ Church, op. cit, p.3.

³⁴ Borges, in Genette, op, cit. p.270.

³⁵ Church, op. cit, p.4.

³⁶ Ibid, p.5.

³⁷ Ibid, p.4.

Borges's argument that an allographic preface is only successful when it 'is not a type of toast' but 'a lateral form of criticism' is modified by Genette, who believes that these two functions can happily coexist.³⁸ Examples of critical comments are present, usually implicit rather than explicit, Church having called his preface an 'essay' for this purpose, one assumes. When he, for example, describes Richardson's method of 'slow deliberation', the tone is more muted. Richardson's aim, presented as a desire 'to maintain *pari passu* with the current revelations of her own experiences in life', is mentioned without any evaluative comment (such an aim being an impossible task for a writer to set herself, one could be forgiven for thinking). Richardson's relationship with her reader is explored, the lexis reflecting the more difficult, testing nature of the territory, suggesting that there is little room for the reader's negotiation with the text. One good example is the way in which the reader can only access the fictional world 'after *coming to terms with* the artist who has made it' (my italics).³⁹ This 'coming to terms' process involves the reader having to submit to the text. Church uses an unusual phrase 'the aristocracy of mind' to suggest the way in which the life of the mind holds sway in the text and the modal verb 'must' combined with the passive voice is used to reinforce the reader's position of acceptance. Thus the reader is told: 'The aristocracy of mind, *must*, from the beginning, *be taken for granted*. The set of values *must be accentuated*; values that are founded upon a new assessment of the material conditions of life' (my italics).⁴⁰ Church ends his personal input with a rhetorical, poetic flourish in the form of an extended simile: 'Like the seer whom William Blake portrays, she makes a world from a grain of sand, and extends an hour into eternity'.⁴¹

In the second section of the essay, Church uses quotations from other writers to support his introductory presentation. The longest (and first endorsement comes from J. D. Beresford who wrote a preface to Richardson's first chapter volume, *Pointed Roofs* in 1915. Beresford refers to this earlier preface and congratulates himself

³⁸ Genette, op. cit, p.270.

³⁹ Church, op. cit, p.5.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

on his 'perspicuity' at the time, regretting only his caution in understating Richardson's achievement. 'Not often does the writer of Prefaces of this kind have his judgement so fully confirmed by the author's subsequent work'.⁴² Such a comment underlies the fear of making a poor judgement and the possibility of loss of face in so doing. Beresford revisits a metaphor he used in that first allographic preface to describe Richardson's method of having 'gone head under and become a very part of the human element she has described'. Beresford notes the similarity between his own metaphor and that of John Cowper Powys who wrote in a monograph on Richardson sixteen years later: 'She has drawn her inspiration ... from the abyss of the feminine consciousness'. Beresford goes to some length to make the reader understand that the comparison he has drawn between his own 'halting phrases' and those of Cowper Powys is made to salute the latter's superior 'literary acumen'. This attempt, however, smacks of false modesty and echoes his earlier self-congratulatory stance. He concludes: 'All that I can find to say is that I recognized Dorothy Richardson's rare genius before anyone else had the opportunity to do so'. That Beresford is so dependent on what he wrote twenty three years earlier about one chapter volume and, arguably, wastes rather a lot of words comparing his earlier response to Cowper Powys's later one, is a little curious, and either suggests that he has little to say about the other chapter volumes or that he is more than a little egocentric. Beresford identifies May Sinclair (who also wrote an allographic preface for Richardson in 1919) as one of Richardson's 'disciples', but then modifies his argument by suggesting that imitating Richardson's 'personal' and 'individual' writing is an impossibility, comparing Richardson to the modernist greats, Proust and Joyce whose writing is also inimitable.⁴³ As the first key contributor it is also worth noting that Beresford fails to mention *Dimple Hill* by name, the new chapter volume.

There are several shorter endorsements, each one framed by Church. H. G. Wells, for example, is described as 'a prophet on her [Richardson's] behalf'.⁴⁴ It is interesting and ironic that Wells

⁴² Ibid, p.6.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.7.

should be described in this way as someone who interprets and speaks for Richardson. There is a semantic field of religion in Church's discourse and in the discourse of several of the contributors. Rebecca West, for example, describes *Pilgrimage* as 'a miracle of performance'.⁴⁵ Church implicitly likens Richardson to a god with her disciples and prophet, and a message that needs evangelising and interpreting by ardent advocates. Wells commends Richardson's method, 'the new reality and intensity of rendering' and alludes to her 'powerful influence upon a multitude of contemporary writers'. He does not choose to specify what this 'powerful influence' is exactly, the knowing reader understanding that this refers to Richardson's technique of representing the life of the mind. Nor does Wells name any of the 'multitude' of writers she has influenced. He concludes: 'The unfaltering skill and precision with which Miss Richardson makes this uneventful life continually vivid, and an adventure to read, gives her a unique position amongst the novelists of the world'. The morphologically realized negative polarity, in 'unfaltering' and 'uneventful', results in a curiously flat summative sentence.⁴⁶

Given that May Sinclair has already been referred to as Richardson's 'disciple' by Beresford, Church makes much of her endorsement, praising Sinclair's 'generous recognition of a writer of *her own stature*' (my italics). This is a neat, flattering manoeuvre, repositioning Sinclair as Richardson's equal. Sinclair praises Richardson's commitment and ability to represent Miriam's mind 'with its 'first-hand, intimate and intense reality (...) Miss Richardson seizes reality alive'. Sinclair's language has much more positive shading than Wells'.⁴⁷

Church ends the section of endorsements from British writers with a long quotation from Virginia Woolf, written fifteen years earlier in an article on *Revolving Lights* for *The Times Literary Supplement*. The fact, that Church has had to rely on an 'old' response from Woolf, raises a question as to whether a 'new' response was either not asked for or not granted. An authorial

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.8.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.7.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

epitext, a letter from Richardson to Bryher, dated, March 1937, reveals that Richardson declined a request by the *London Mercury* to review *The Years*: 'I told them that V.W., enormously as I admire her work, does not deeply move me & that I felt it would be unfair for me to write about her & better to put the book in the hands of someone to whom she means a great deal'.⁴⁸

The feeling was mutual. Woolf was wary of Richardson and, as early as 1919, there is evidence in Woolf's diary, an intimate authorial epitext, that she also declined an offer to review Richardson's work. Just prior to the extract quoted below, dated the 28 November 1919, Woolf writes of her irritation with Katherine Mansfield who had just reviewed Woolf's *Night and Day*:

Today, bearing K.M. in mind, I refused to do Dorothy Richardson for the Supplement. The truth is that when I looked at it, I felt myself looking for faults; hoping for them. And they would have bent my pen, I know. There must be an instinct of self-preservation at work. If she's good, then I'm not.⁴⁹

In a similar way to Beresford's retrospective glance back at his earlier preface, this revisiting of Woolf's review, albeit influential and interesting, might be interpreted in a negative way as an unfortunate dependence on past evaluations.

Church moves on to introduce endorsements from farther afield, beginning with an anonymous French critic who dares to compare Richardson in a positive way to Proust: 'Dorothy Richardson était proustienne avant Proust. Je ne suis pas sûr qu'un prochain avenir ne la mette au tout premier rang des précurseurs de la littérature des Temps Retrouvés'. This critic uses the subjunctive to express the possibility that, in the future, Richardson might be perceived as *the* significant precursor of the stream of consciousness technique. The question that presents itself is why is this critic anonymous? Was the review unsigned? One possible explanation is that the

⁴⁸ Fromm, op. cit, p.330.

⁴⁹ Michelle Barrett, *Virginia Woolf: Women and Writing* (London: The Women's Press, 1979), p.28.

review was initialled, rather than signed, and that Church might have been unable to identify the critic in question because he was not a regular reader of the publication in which the review was printed. The quotation does seem to carry less weight because of its anonymity and contains an odd grammatical construction. The phrase 'prochain avenir' is not impossible, though 'dans un proche avenir' is more usual and with 'prochain' you would expect the word order to be 'dans un avenir prochain'. Could this quotation have been written in English and then translated unidiomatically into French? Is it conceivable that Church would go to that kind of length to promote Richardson? There is, perhaps, insufficient evidence to argue that the quotation is inauthentic but one thing is certain, Richardson, with her very good command of French, would have noticed the irregularity. A quotation from Philip Luttrell in *The New Republic of New York* brings this section to a close. His comment about the writer - reader relationship echoes earlier points about Richardson's intractable terms: 'Interim was the volume I began with, and I thought the method teasing, but later, reading the books in their order, I found myself liking the method better and better, surrendering to it unconditionally'.⁵⁰

A reflective overview from several British writers is then provided. The female novelist Storm Jameson takes a frank, culturally superior approach, praising Richardson's work and blaming the public for being inadequately trained readers: 'The only thing I can say is that she is without any possible doubt one of the most stimulating and vitally interesting of modern English novelists and has suffered more than any of them from the lack of a critically informed reading public'.⁵¹ The poet, Walter de la Mare, is more indirect, hoping the new collected edition will achieve a 'fuller recognition' for Richardson.⁵² Another poet, Sylvia Lynd, echoes May Sinclair's response to *Pilgrimage's* subject matter, referring to 'the freshness and unexpectedness of actual life'.⁵³ The writer, Aldous Huxley, mirrors Wells' focus on Richardson's writerly skill, preferring to gloss over the subject matter: 'her work is very

⁵⁰ Church, op. cit, p.9.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

interesting and technically significant'.⁵⁴ Church concludes this section with an effusive 'tribute' from the writer and critic, Frank Swinnerton, who begins confidently enough with the relatively safe territory of Richardson's technique, but ends with observations about *Pilgrimage's* style and purpose that seem oddly wide of the mark:

Miss Dorothy Richardson's work is like nothing else in modern literature. It has a precision, and a brilliant, inexorable veracity, to which no other writer attains. It is bound to influence novelists of the future (as it has influenced those of the present); and as it presents no difficulties to the ordinary reader, but only a continuous stream of entertainment, it ought to be very widely read and enjoyed.⁵⁵

Few would agree that *Pilgrimage* is an easy and entertaining read but there is a truth lurking behind the final statement that *Pilgrimage's* readership is limited and an acquired taste.

The brochure draws to a close with Church's hope that the 'uniformity' of *Pilgrimage's* new format' will enable readers to enjoy it 'as a single work of art', a view presupposing that uniformity and unity, in a work of art, are desirable qualities.⁵⁶ Richardson had no issue with 'uniformity', perceiving a compact edition to be a solution to the problem of scattered chapters but was less keen on 'unity' and its associations of things coming together, of completion.⁵⁷ Genette usefully questions the concept of 'unity' in relation to art, describing it as a 'dominant value; a value as impervious as it is unconsidered, almost never subjected to scrutiny'.⁵⁸ Richardson refused to fall in with received opinion on this matter and this is, perhaps, best illustrated in a criticism of her artistic method in *Tunnel* by Woolf in a *Times Literary Supplement* review of 1919: 'The method, if triumphant, should make us feel

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp.9-10.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.10.

⁵⁷ Fromm, op. cit, p.308.

⁵⁸ Genette, op. cit, p.204.

ourselves seated at the centre of another mind, and, according to the artistic gift of the writer, we should perceive in the helter-skelter of flying fragments some unity, significance, or design'.⁵⁹

Such ideas about unity in art would have been well understood by Church who seems intent on imposing unity on *Pilgrimage*, considering it an attractive feature, enhancing its appeal. In his summation, Church explicitly addresses two types of reader, those already familiar with Richardson's work who will now be able to 'review' it, in its supposed complete state, and those for whom 'Miriam and her world are a new experience'. He uses two letters, one from Sir Hugh Walpole and the other from H. M. Tomlinson to provide historical overviews of *Pilgrimage*. Walpole uses the phrase 'her Miriam sequence' which emphasises the text's supposed uniformity and unity. He suggests that Richardson's 'stream of consciousness' technique, innovative at the time and instrumental in that she paved the way 'so that all other writers could understand how it might be used' is now 'a commonplace' and that her novels can now be read differently, less for technique and more for 'character creation (...) sensitiveness and humour'. Tomlinson's quotation is prefigured by a comment from Church who finally makes a critical and explicit allusion to the precarious nature of Richardson's status as a writer, 'the vicissitudes of Dorothy Richardson's reputation and (...) whether it deserves to stand today'. Tomlinson's words are used as a final summation and read like a piece of oratory. He begins by referring to Edward Garnett, the writer and critic, who, as a publisher's reader, had recommended *Pointed Roofs* for publication to Duckworth in 1915. Garnett is a man whose judgement Tomlinson respects, 'who knew what he was talking about' and who introduced Tomlinson to *Pilgrimage*. Tomlinson, in a teasing way, partially allows the reader to share their chummy conversation from the past: 'what he said about her amounted to something so new that I could not accept it, even from Garnett'. The actual words that Garnett used are withheld, but their gist is communicated, reinforcing the idea that Richardson's work is special, precious and challenges norms of what is possible in fiction. Tomlinson continues by proclaiming

⁵⁹ Cited in Barrett, op. cit, p.190.

Richardson's status as the first stream of consciousness novelist and assumes a consensual agreement 'to whom the honour should go, of course'.⁶⁰

What is conspicuous by its absence in the brochure is any direct and specific comment on the new chapter volume, *Dimple Hill*. This is presumably what Richardson is referring to in her letter to P. Beaumont Wadsworth in December 1938 when she writes: 'the friendly critics, puzzled, emit pleasing generalities & pass over the new book, a cul de sac rather than a conclusion in silence'. Silence in this context, one assumes, conceals a negative judgement, something that Richardson was also keenly aware of: 'And it is exactly this new book that was to tempt, in Dent's view, buyers'.⁶¹

The background to Richardson's own peritextual statement, the authorial preface to the omnibus edition, constitutes an odd gap in her correspondence, but her experience of writing the Foreword and the high level of discomfort she felt about it is recorded in various private epitextual sources. A letter to Koteliansky, dated August 1937, expresses anxiety at not having heard back from Richard Church, to whom she had sent a draft copy. The vagueness and powerlessness encoded in her language reflects uncertainty with regard to her fulfilment of the task, her relationship with Church himself and her interpretation of the communication's delay or absence.

When I sent in my brief foreword to R. C., with a little note expressing the hope that it would more or less fulfil the purpose for which it was designed, I thought I might have had a line from him. Since he has not written & a proof has come from Latworth, I am left wondering whether it has been accepted as useful, or cursed &, nevertheless, put through.⁶²

Another letter to Bryher in December 1937 reveals more directly that Richardson found the task of writing the Foreword onerous:

⁶⁰ Church, op. cit, p.11.

⁶¹ Fromm, op. cit, p.337.

⁶² Ibid, op. cit, p.336.

'I struggle to put together some sort of foreword for Pil. The most horrible job I ever attempted'. The use of the simple present tense 'I struggle' suggests that she is currently writing the Foreword, which perhaps implies that Church did ask her to make some changes.⁶³ In another letter to Koteliansky of 2 April 1938, Richardson writes that although she has now received a printed (presumably a generic acknowledgement from Church, she is still extremely worried about Church's personal opinion about what she has written and: 'could not help wondering whether my [foreword], in not being the kind of thing he had in mind for his prospectus, had stricken R.C. into a disgusted silence. I thought you might know & could perhaps set my mind at rest, & should hate him to feel he must put together a letter he doesn't want to write'.⁶⁴

It is clear from another letter to him, dated five days later, that Koteliansky has acted as an intermediary: 'a nice little letter from R.C. indicates that you must have boomed gently & with discretion'. Relief follows the let-up of anxiety and then other more negative feelings follow as Richardson anticipates her friends' response to the Foreword, once published and in the public domain.⁶⁵ In a letter of August 1938 to P. Beaumont Wadsworth, she writes that she had 'put together a preface over which you will probably shriek with laughter!'.⁶⁶ Such references to the preface should make the reader reconsider the Foreword's content, function, tone and status as a text for scholars to unpick.

Richardson's reluctance to write the Foreword has to be factored in to a textual analysis. Genette's identification of the five types of characteristic that constitute the status and illocutionary force of any given paratext, 'spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic and functional' provides a useful analytical model to start with.⁶⁷ In terms of location, temporality and substance, the Foreword was written for the new collected edition of *Pilgrimage* published in

⁶³ Fromm, op. cit, p.331.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.345.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.346.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.350.

⁶⁷ Genette, op. cit, p.4.

1938, comprising the first twelve chapter volumes of *Pilgrimage*, one of which, *Dimple Hill*, was being seen for the first time. Given the serial nature of *Pilgrimage*, this preface appears twenty three years after the first chapter volume was published and coincides with the publication of the twelfth, penultimate chapter volume. According to Genette's classification of temporality, this preface lies somewhere between a 'late' and a 'delayed' paratext, close in publication date to some of the later chapter volumes and much more distant to the earlier ones.⁶⁸ Genette notes that the function of later prefaces (rather than 'original' ones which appear at the same time as the text) can be to express 'afterthoughts' 'at a safe distance' and that such thinking with hindsight can be 'fair and dispassionate (...), the effect of re-reading after *forgetfulness* – that is, after an interval of detachment and separation that transforms the author into an (almost) ordinary and (almost) impartial reader'.⁶⁹

Richardson's preface is something other than this although some Genettian ideas can be applied. There is a strong element of retrospection, as Richardson at the age of sixty five, attempts to put *Pilgrimage*, a work she had embarked on twenty three years earlier, into some kind of literary context. Richardson provides a brief history of realism in prose fiction, outlines the genesis of her writing project and acknowledges her literary inspirations. She refers to the work of Balzac and Bennett whose respective 'sympathetic imagination' and 'complete fidelity [to] the lives and adventures of inconspicuous people' she applauds, unlike their 'immediate successors' whose work she undermines as a learnt 'creed'.⁷⁰ These observations, at the beginning of the Foreword, have a hint of the 'mellow' quality Genette suggests is typical of the delayed preface.⁷¹ Once Richardson begins to describe the initial stages of writing her own prose fiction, the tone shifts and her irritation and frustration with her efforts is palpable. There is a semantic field of struggle and negative emotions: 'dissatisfaction',

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.6.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.253.

⁷⁰ Dorothy Richardson, "Foreword", *Pilgrimage* (London: Dent; New York: A.A. Knopf, 1938), pp.9-12.

⁷¹ Genette, op. cit, p.175.

‘torment’, ‘failure’.⁷² The remembering is painful for the author, and detachment is impossible because Richardson is writing with the knowledge of *Pilgrimage’s* incomplete state and the recent memory of the rejection and ceremonious burning of the first draft of *Dimple Hill*. The Foreword, a public peritext, whose function is to present and comment on *Pilgrimage*, is not the place to divulge all the unpleasant realities of the writing process but some strain can be detected. Richardson’s continuous reference to herself in the preface in the third person, as the ‘present writer’⁷³ or ‘the author of *Pilgrimage*’⁷⁴ has an odd distancing effect, suggestive of ‘detachment’ but of a different kind from the measured and calm state that Genette describes.⁷⁵ There seems to me to be a barely restrained anger accompanying these usages as if she is using the nouns ‘writer’ and ‘author’ to draw attention to her professional role, undermined by Dent’s commercial motivations and her own need to make a living through writing.

The communicative situation or pragmatic status of Richardson’s preface is complex. It is the one element of Genette’s model which he, himself, playfully concedes is in need of development. He lists the following elements that constitute a preface’s pragmatic status: ‘the nature of the sender and addressee, the sender’s degree of authority and responsibility, the illocutionary force of the sender’s message and undoubtedly some other characteristics I have overlooked’.⁷⁶ The (reluctant) sender of the preface is Richardson, whose authority is complicated by the fact that she has been coerced to agree to a communicative event (the publication of the omnibus edition as a finished entity) by her publisher, Dent. The sender’s ‘responsibility’ is mixed. She is the author of *Pilgrimage* and there is therefore an ‘official’ element to the responsibility, but she feels compromised, knowing that the work is not yet finished and that by writing the Foreword she is colluding in pretending that it

⁷² Richardson, op. cit. p.10.

⁷³ Ibid, p.9.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p.12.

⁷⁵ Genette, op. cit, p.253.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.8.

is.⁷⁷ What she writes in the Foreword cannot be disclaimed at a later date although it can be re-evaluated in the light of experience.

With regard to the other side of the communicative situation, there is more than one addressee in this instance. The audience for the Foreword is three-fold; the critics, the readers and the publisher, all of whom are directly addressed. It does read, in places, as if Richardson is having an ironic joke at the critics' expense, whose art is described as 'exacting' and whose activities she likens to dancers, who dance upon her work with their 'reiterated tap-tap'.⁷⁸ Her polite contempt for their phrase 'stream of consciousness' is barely disguised: (a term) 'welcomed by all who could persuade themselves of the possibility of comparing consciousness to a stream'.⁷⁹ This is more than just a 'defence against criticism undergone or anticipated',⁸⁰ it is a veiled attack on critical practices and language and collides with the language of the epitextual brochure which uses the term 'stream of consciousness' without apparently appreciating Richardson's view on this matter. It could be argued that Richardson is using the Foreword to wield some authorial control, although this is done implicitly and slyly. Her 'apology' and 'heart-felt gratitude' to her readership for their persistence in reading *Pilgrimage* sounds rather mocking and hollow as does her thanks to Dent for 'assembling the scattered chapters of 'Pilgrimage' in their proper relationship'.⁸¹

Richardson's preface fulfils a range of functions. Genette suggests that typical prefatory functions include to inform and to make known intentions. Richardson's preface does both of these but it also narrativises *Pilgrimage's* genesis, using the metaphor of a journey. One section, where the writing appears to be particularly candid and the emotional shading positive, is when Richardson describes the thrilling feeling, as a budding writer in 1913, of being on a writing quest, a 'fresh pathway, an adventure so searching and,

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.10.

⁷⁸ Richardson, op. cit, p.12.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.11.

⁸⁰ Genette, op. cit, p.214.

⁸¹ Richardson, op. cit, p.10.

sometimes, so joyous'. Here the act or process of writing is equated with the idea of a pilgrimage. Dates are significant as the Foreword is not just a vehicle for telling the back story of *Pilgrimage*, it is also a way of putting *Pilgrimage* into context and alluding to other writers with similar literary concerns and methods who were on a parallel path at more or less the same time. Richardson's 'fresh pathway' is initially a 'lonely track', a coded expression for being the first person on it, but it becomes a 'populous highway', the second phrase an exaggeration but an acknowledgment that other writers had joined her as fellow travellers. Two prominent characters are described; a woman 'mounted upon a magnificently caparisoned charger and a 'man walking, with eyes devoutly closed, weaving as he went a rich garment of new words wherewith to clothe the antique dark material of his engrossment'.⁸² Neither character is named but the knowing reader would understand these characters to be the writers Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. The new reader, fresh to Richardson's work, might be forgiven for feeling somewhat baffled. Perhaps Richardson is situating her reader as the knowing reader as the Foreword does not seem to be providing direction for a new reader. The narrative then gains momentum, 'news came from France of one Marcel Proust' who is then credited with being 'the earliest adventurer' because he had been published first, in 1913. The final part of this convoluted, subtextual 'who did it first' narrative is a direct reference to Henry James, critically accorded the roles of 'pathfinder' and 'high priest'. His complex prose style is praised for requiring 'upon the first reading, a perfection of sustained concentration akin to that which brought it forth'.⁸³

One important function served by the Foreword is Richardson's attempt to express her experimentation with form, her development of a different type of 'contemporary pattern' leading her towards 'a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism' which, in turn, evolved into a desire to represent 'contemplated reality'.⁸⁴ This section of the Foreword reflects the

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, p.11.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.9.

discourse of other writers and critics who, since the publication of *Pointed Roofs*, the first chapter volume, had seen in *Pilgrimage's* language and expression, something of the feminine. Edward Garnett was the first critic to use this word, describing *Pointed Roofs* as 'feminine impressionism'.⁸⁵ Virginia Woolf's intriguing characterisation of Richardson's feminine style in a review of *Revolving Lights* in 1923 for the *Times Literary Supplement* was, and continues to be, very influential. Both Richardson and Woolf were developing ways of representing the inner life of their female characters and it is, therefore, unsurprising that Woolf should recognise and praise this aspect of her contemporary's work. Initially Woolf appears to be identifying a feminine quality in Richardson's syntax: 'She has invented a sentence we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender. It is of a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of enveloping the vaguest shapes'. It is easy to overlook the modal verb 'might', with its suggestion of possibility or doubt, and be carried away by the enthusiasm conveyed at the end by the comparative and superlative adjectives, 'more elastic' and 'vaguest'. Later in the article, Woolf seems to be qualifying this statement further, by explicitly acknowledging that syntactic elasticity can be found in the work of male as well as female writers. 'Other writers of the opposite sex have used sentences of this description and stretched them to the extreme'. Woolf then moves on to establish another distinction between Richardson's style and that of 'other writers', deriving from her use of syntax *and* subject matter. 'But there is a difference. Miss Richardson has fashioned her sentence consciously, in order that it may descend to the depths and crannies of Miriam Henderson's consciousness. It is a woman's sentence only in the sense that it is used to describe a woman's mind by a writer who is neither proud of nor afraid of anything that she may discover in the psychology of her sex'.⁸⁶ The tone of the article seems to shift from modified assertion to increasingly cautious qualification, but Woolf's proto-narratological description of Richardson's syntax has remained firmly embedded in the critical literature, used as a key way of thinking about the text. It has generated a high level of interest in Richardson's sentencing

⁸⁵ Fromm, op. cit, p.77.

⁸⁶ Barrett, op. cit, p.191.

and style and is still used in the publisher's peritextual information on the back of the most recent Virago edition of *Pilgrimage*.⁸⁷ I think that it can be stated with some confidence that Richardson could not have avoided having Woolf's comments in her head as she wrote this part of the Foreword.

Richardson herself used the term 'feminine' twice in the Foreword as a modifying adjective to describe her writing. The first usage is when she describes her attempt to produce 'a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism'.⁸⁸ Here Richardson is trying to define her work 'in relation to an earlier [generic] norm, a typical feature of authorial prefaces, as well as show her experimentation with form'.⁸⁹ The second, and more playful, usage occurs when Richardson comments ironically on a micro element of her writing, her use of punctuation:

Feminine prose, as Charles Dickens and James Joyce have delightfully shown themselves to be aware, should properly be unpunctuated, moving from point to point without formal obstruction. And the author of 'Pilgrimage' must confess to an early habit of ignoring, while writing, the lesser of the stereotyped system of signs, and, further, when finally sprinkling in what appeared to be necessary, to a small unconscious departure from current usage.⁹⁰

Here Richardson appears to be making a joke at the expense of the male writers mentioned, suggesting that their 'unpunctuated' representations of female speech and thought reflect a rather limited and stereotypical notion of women's language. The apology for her unusual and erratic punctuation practices, described as 'sprinkling in what appeared to be necessary' (like a cook), is also tongue in cheek. That Richardson herself used the term 'feminine' in a preface to describe different aspects of her writing, macro and micro, is, however, likely to be of interest to the critic and scholar,

⁸⁷ See the peritextual reviews on the back page of the Virago Modern Classic editions of *Pilgrimage* (1979 and 2002).

⁸⁸ Richardson, op. cit, p.9.

⁸⁹ Genette, op. cit, p.224.

⁹⁰ Richardson, op. cit, p.12.

although the cultural context of the Foreword's production is significant and the approach adopted by Richardson in this prefatory text, as has already been established, raises some interesting questions of interpretation. Genette suggests that this type of preface is usually 'legitimated' by the author and likely to influence the reception of the text to which it relates.⁹¹ Richardson's preface is, perhaps, the exception that proves the rule, being neither particularly authoritative nor influential. It is hardly a developed manifesto of feminine poetics, being brief and difficult to understand in parts, although it is regarded as a significant reference point for Richardson scholars. George H. Thomson, who has devoted much scholarly energy to Dorothy Richardson, describes the Foreword thus: 'The difficulties of so condensed a treatment are exacerbated by an ironic tone, judgemental stance, and involuted style. It is small wonder that so unforthcoming a document should have invited neglect rather than scrutiny'.

Thomson brings to the fore the defiant nature of the Foreword and the way in which it fights Richardson's strongly held belief that 'all novels were expressive of the author, were in an important way, autobiographical'. He regrets that Richardson missed her opportunity to express her views on the autobiographical subject matter of her work and concludes that what 'should have been the crown of this deeply autobiographical enterprise' became instead 'an act of obfuscation, a reluctant manifesto that managed to obscure even its most important truth, the announcement of *Pilgrimage* as a new kind of feminine fiction'.⁹²

The curious mixing of tone and discourse in the Foreword does, perhaps, signal that Richardson is sending up the authority of the author to make pronouncements about 'her' text in the manner described by Bennett and Royle in their chapter 'the author':

Just because it comes from 'the horse's mouth' does not mean that the horse is telling the truth, or that the horse knows the truth, or indeed that what the horse has to say about the

⁹¹ Genette, *op. cit.*, p.2.

⁹² George H. Thomson, 'Dorothy Richardson's Foreword to *Pilgrimage*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 42, 3 (Fall 1996): 344-59.

‘words on the page’ is any more interesting or illuminating than what anyone else has to say.⁹³

Richardson’s playful stance can be explained in another way, as the result of a desire to distance herself from received ways of thinking about prose fiction. Friedman, for example, identifies Richardson as an ‘anti-canonical’ writer and argues that ‘expression of the feminine requires a disengagement not only from the modes of traditional fiction, as Richardson, Woolf and Cixous have argued, but also a stance of irreverence towards or distance from the central myths of dominant culture’.⁹⁴

The Foreword could also be read as a text which expresses the tensions of authorship, in particular the way in which authorial control is relinquished once a text is in the hands of publishers and critics. The Foreword seems to me to be both playful and serious at the same time. As I consider my global response to this peritext, I am mindful of what Richardson wrote in an article, *Novels*, in 1948 about reading to detect ‘the stamp of the author’s consciousness’.⁹⁵ As I come to the end of this article, I can see that I have practised this way of reading, at first unconsciously and now consciously, ‘empathetically aligning’ or ‘feeling- with’ Richardson.⁹⁶

⁹³ Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* 3rd edn. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), p.21.

⁹⁴ Ellen G. Friedman, ‘Utterly Other Discourse. The Anti-Canon of Experimental Women Writers from Dorothy Richardson to Christine Brook Rose’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 34, 3 (2009): 353-370.

⁹⁵ B. K. Scott (ed.), *The Gender of Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.435.

⁹⁶ Michael Toolan, *Narrative Progression in the Short Story. A Corpus Stylistic Approach* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamin’s Publishing Company, 2009), p.146.