

DOROTHY RICHARDSON AND THE GRAMMAR OF THE MIND

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When Elizabeth A. Drew suggested in 1926 that ‘the Novel of the Three Dots’ was an appropriate label for early twentieth-century fiction, she made a comment on the close association between modern prose and innovative punctuation.¹ One of the most recognisable characteristics of modernist prose is indeed its experimentation with and deviation from standard punctuation rules. In the modernist novel, ellipses, brackets, commas, and semicolons are not only used to mark syntax: they also add a new level of meaning to the text. Here, punctuation suggests a form of non-verbal content, inviting readers to engage more actively with the literary work.

This is certainly the case with the work of Dorothy Richardson, whose writing is especially associated with those ‘Three Dots’.² Her well-known ellipses have to a large extent come to define the interior monologue as represented in *Pilgrimage*.³ Richardson’s

¹ *The Modern Novel: Some Aspects of Contemporary Fiction* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926), p.37.

² Randall Stevenson suggests that Drew in fact had Richardson and/or Ford Madox Ford in mind when she defined the modern novel with reference to ellipsis; see *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p.37.

³ For discussions of Richardson’s ellipses, see for example Mhairi Catriona Pooler, ‘Of Language, of Meaning, of Mr. Henry James’, *Pilgrimages: A Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, 4 (2011), 95-111; John Mephram, ‘Dorothy Richardson’s “Unreadability”: Graphic Style and Narrative Strategy in a Modernist Novel’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 43, 4 (2000), 449-464; Susan Gevirtz, ‘Into Ellipse: Geographic and Grammatic Disappearance in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*’, *Women’s Studies* 26, 5 (1997), 523-533; and Kristin Bluemel, *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism: Dorothy Richardson’s Pilgrimage* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), pp.140-141. For general discussions of Richardson’s punctuation, see Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp.134-136; M. B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of*

idiosyncratic use, not only of the ellipsis, but also of the comma, the semi-colon, and the dash, suggests that punctuation carries a wider significance in *Pilgrimage* than merely that of separating phrases or coordinating syntax.

To understand how the punctuation in *Pilgrimage* interacts with the words on the page requires a more personal involvement with the literary work. Part of my argument in this article revolves around Richardson's concept of 'creative collaboration', i.e. the reader's cooperation in 'creating' the literary work.⁴ The punctuation instructs the reader how to approach the work, indicating moments for pause and reflection. It also suggests that the typography of the printed page should at times be regarded visually. Ironically, the sometimes unusual punctuation in *Pilgrimage* has been mentioned as part of its author's supposed 'unreadability'.⁵ Here I will argue that Richardson's punctuation is indeed 'unreadable', although in a very different sense from what is usually implied by the word. Together with other typographical elements on the printed page – such as the blank spaces that are sporadically inserted into the text – I suggest that the ellipses and commas function as visual components of the literary work, representing and illustrating thought-processes and states of mind that are essentially non-verbal.

My discussion is largely based on *The Tunnel* and *Interim* (both 1919), the two 'chapter-volumes' in which Richardson experimented most with punctuation and typography, and which she subsequently revised for the first omnibus edition of the *Pilgrimage* sequence in 1938. These two volumes as they were

Punctuation in the West (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), pp.94-95; Bluemel, pp.5, 22-23, 29-30, 110; and Jean Radford, *Dorothy Richardson* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp.69-70.

⁴ Richardson expressed her ideas about 'creative collaboration' on several occasions, for example in 'About Punctuation', *Adelphi* 1 (1924), 990-996; *John Austen and the Inseparables* (London: William Jackson, 1930), pp.12-13; *Authors To-Day and Yesterday*, edited by Stanley Kunitz (New York: Wilson, 1933), p.562; and 'The Artist and the World Today: A Symposium', *The Bookman* 86 (1934).

⁵ For a discussion of early critical responses to *Pilgrimage* and Richardson's alleged 'unreadability', see Mephram.

originally published constitute a highly innovative representation of consciousness, and the ground-breaking nature of this experiment will be highlighted below through a comparison between the first and the revised editions. Before turning to Richardson's use of commas, ellipses, and blank spaces, however, I will explain how her punctuation relates to her ideas about 'creative collaboration'.

In her essay 'About Punctuation' (1924), Richardson defines standard punctuation as part of 'the machinery of book production', which she represents as something impersonal and unengaging – something that has 'devitalized the act of reading'.⁶ Against the machine-text, with standard punctuation, Richardson posits the 'organic' text, which is largely unpunctuated and where punctuation – when it appears – is irregular and acts as a 'pace-maker for the reader's creative consciousness', thus demanding the 'collaboration of the reader' in the creation of the literary work.⁷ Indeed, Richardson suggests that punctuation – or the lack of it – can be used to launch a sort of 'attack' on readers, rousing them to alertness and activity through shock.⁸

The 'organic' prose Richardson advocates is largely unpunctuated, except in those cases when the writer invites the reader to pause and contemplate. To Richardson, punctuation should function as an '[appeal] to reflection' and be used to indicate passages in the text where there is content below the surface of the words, a content that the reader must retrieve through contemplation.⁹ A large part of the function of punctuation in the 'organic' text is thus to guide the reader's approach to the text, similarly to how musical notation works. Richardson's reader can be likened to the piano-player who sits down at a piano with a music score; the text functions like that score, and needs to be 'played' in order to attain its full effect. Punctuation marks like the comma serve the same purpose as 'rubato', instructing the reader to 'play' certain passages in a slower and less regular tempo.¹⁰

⁶ 'About Punctuation', p.991.

⁷ 'About Punctuation', pp.991, 992.

⁸ 'About Punctuation', p.990.

⁹ 'About Punctuation', p.996.

Essential to Richardson's theory of 'creative collaboration' is the idea that the reader must contemplate the text in order for the full content of the work to surface. She touched on the subject on several occasions, for example in her book on the artist John Austen, *John Austen and the Inseparables* (1930), where she emphasises that the writer's 'medium' is one in which 'the reader also is at home', whereas visual art works require that the beholder first learns something of the craft to be able to understand it fully.¹¹ Language is a medium 'stored up within [the writer] in fragments each of which is a living unit complete in form and significance', writes Richardson, and because it is a medium shared with the reader, a literary work 'yields its treasure not directly in a single eyeful, but extendedly in the course of a prolonged collaboration between reader and writer'.¹²

In 'About Punctuation', Richardson discusses the necessity of reading with the 'whole self', and of '[fusing] the faculties of mind and heart' by '*listening*' to the text instead of merely scanning the page.¹³ To listen to a text does not primarily mean that it should be spoken out loud, or that the reader should focus on its aural qualities and rhythms. Instead, it entails grasping what is not directly expressed in the text itself: it is a matter of finding resonances of one's own experiences and/or knowledge between the lines, using these to discern further meaning in the literary work. Intuition thus becomes an essential part of the reading experience, as readers are invited to connect the literary work to their own consciousnesses and their own lives. Jean Radford suggests that the creative collaboration occurs on a different level in the text, noting for example how all traces of the 'authoritative author' have disappeared from *Pilgrimage*, leaving the reader to sort out what is what among the 'mass of detail' and references to 'specific historical events'.¹⁴ My understanding of the term 'creative collaboration' is different, and I see the reader's own life

¹⁰ I am grateful to Katherine Anderson Ahlstedt for suggesting this musical analogy.

¹¹ *John Austen and the Inseparables* (London: William Jackson, 1930), p.12.

¹² *John Austen and the Inseparables*, pp.12-13.

¹³ 'About Punctuation', pp.990-991, emphasis in the original.

¹⁴ Radford, pp.16, 17, 19.

experience as essential to uncovering layers of meaning between and behind the words. Elisabeth Bronfen's suggestion that the reader is '[called] upon [...] to supplement textual allusions with his or her own ideas and to incorporate these into the unspoken' is closer to my own understanding of 'creative collaboration', but I do not see the reader's 'ideas' as essential to the collaboration – 'idea' being a word Miriam uses disdainfully in relation to literature.¹⁵ Instead, I argue, 'creative collaboration' refers to the reader's emotional response to the work in question and how this response changes and adds to an understanding of the text. By evoking the memory of certain emotions and states of mind that relate to scenes in the literary work, readers are not only able to connect personally to the text, but also to experience it through memories of their own sensations.

There are several scenes in *Pilgrimage* that depict collaborative experiences of reading on Miriam's part, and where a clear link between listening and emotion is established. In a passage in *The Tunnel*, for example, the effect of Shakespeare is likened to that of music, which is of course high praise coming from Miriam:

Just the sound. Music. Like Beethoven. [...] It was the *sound* of Shakespeare that made the scenes real—that made *Winter's Tale*, so long ago and so bewildering, remain in beauty. . . .
'Dear Eve, Shakespeare is a sound . . .'¹⁶

Similarly, later in *The Tunnel*, as Miriam is reading Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* aloud to Eleanor Dear, she notes the 'something' that is happening because she and Miss Dear are 'looking and hearing together': 'did she feel anything of the grey . . . grey . . . grey made up of all the colours there are; all the colours, seething into an even grey' (II, 260). While the effects of *Villette* in this scene appear more connected to the eye than to the ear, the

¹⁵ *Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory: Space, Identity, Text*, translated by Victoria Appelbe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.203.

¹⁶ *Pilgrimage*, Vol.2 (London: Virago, 1979), p.180, emphasis in the original. References to the Virago omnibus edition of *Pilgrimage* will henceforth be given directly in the text, by volume and page number. References to the first versions of *The Tunnel* (London: Duckworth, 1919) and *Interim* (London: Duckworth, 1919) will be given directly in the text by title and page number.

colours Miriam ‘feels’ are clearly not perceived on the page, but constitute an inner experience caused by her ‘looking and hearing’ the literary text: this is a reading conducted with the ‘whole self’. Clearly, the effects of these literary works on Miriam have an affinity with Richardson’s ideas about the reader’s involvement. Miriam *hears* the texts; they create a ‘sound’, which enables her to read beyond the mere surface of the words. Through an act of ‘creative collaboration’ her own emotions deepen the experience of reading, making it something much more personal than a mere intellectual comprehension.

Richardson’s own experiments with writing ‘organic’ prose culminated with *The Tunnel* and *Interim*, and it is possible to regard ‘About Punctuation’ as an implicit comment on these two volumes’ unusual punctuation and typography. While earlier instalments of *Pilgrimage* also include unorthodox use of punctuation, Richardson’s experimentation with ‘organic’ prose is more extreme in the two novel-chapters discussed here, and especially so in *Interim*.¹⁷ The differences are vast between the version that was serialised in *The Little Review* between June 1919 and June 1920 – and published by Duckworth in December 1919 – and the revised version published in the Dent omnibus edition of 1938, on which the Virago edition of 1979 is based.

In the first version of *Interim*, Richardson takes her experiment with punctuation to extreme lengths, mixing reported speech with Miriam’s thoughts in long, uninterrupted paragraphs with highly idiosyncratic punctuation. There is no clear indication as to which lines should be read as other characters’ speech and which belong to Miriam’s own interior monologue. Being one of the most radical examples of represented consciousness in the modernist period, *Interim* is hard reading and demands much from its reader. It is not known why Richardson revised the volume for its

¹⁷ Mephram suggests that one reason for Richardson’s experiments in *Interim* could be ‘the fact that she was to appear side by side with installments of Joyce’s *Ulysses*’, which, Mephram suggests, ‘might have encouraged her to experiment with novel forms of unconventionality’ (p.452). Another reason might be that the interest *The Little Review* showed in her work encouraged her to experiment further than she had dared to earlier.

republishing; possibly her editor made demands for standard punctuation, or Richardson herself was disappointed in the critical reaction to her experiment, which was largely unfavourable.¹⁸ By 1924, when her essay was first published, two further instalments of *Pilgrimage* had appeared – *Deadlock* in 1921 and *Revolving Lights* in 1923 – and she was at work on *The Trap* (1925). In none of these three volumes, nor in the subsequent five instalments of the sequence, does Richardson repeat the experimental punctuation she attempted in *The Tunnel* and *Interim*. When she revised the volumes for the Dent edition of *Pilgrimage* in 1938 she added many punctuation marks, and especially commas, making the text conform to what may be described as standard usage. For example, the revised edition of *The Tunnel* includes 1752 added commas, or 6.32 commas per page.¹⁹ In *Interim*, this number is an added 5.53 commas per page.²⁰

Even the simplest descriptions of Miriam's actions and surroundings read differently with the added punctuation, as in this passage from *The Tunnel*, which describes Miriam's brief escape into the warm waiting-room on a cold and tired afternoon at the Wimpole Street dental practice:

¹⁸ The latter is an idea expressed by Mephram, who suggests that Richardson 'abandoned this device, as part of her reaction to the charge of being unreadable'. While criticising Richardson's unorthodox punctuation in *Interim*, he also condemns her for the changes she made to *Interim* in 1938: 'It is as if Joyce, to make things easier for the reader and to boost flagging sales, had gone back over Molly Bloom's interior monologue and inserted conventional punctuation' (p.459). Instead of questioning Richardson's artistic integrity, one might question the publisher's meddling with the very same argument: would any publisher have asked Joyce to change his punctuation in the 'Penelope' episode of *Ulysses* without being condemned by literary critics and historians?

¹⁹ See George Thomson, 'Introduction', in *The Editions of Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage: A Comparison of Texts* (ELT Press, 2001), p.6. <<http://www.eltpress.org/richardson/introduction.pdf>> [accessed 27 June 2013]. Elsewhere, though, Thomson specifies the number of added commas in *The Tunnel* as 1743; 'Chapter II: *Pilgrimage*, volume II: The Collected Editions (CE) and the English First Editions (E) Compared: *The Tunnel*', p.1, in Thomson, *The Editions of Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage*. <<http://www.eltpress.org/richardson/richardsonpdf2/ch2bk4.pdf>> [accessed 27 June 2013].

²⁰ Thomson, 'Introduction', p.6.

The long faded rich crimson rep curtains obscured half the width of each high window and the London light screened by the high opposing houses fell dimly on the dingy books and periodicals scattered about the table. Miriam stood by the mantelpiece her feet deep in the black sheepskin rug and held out her hands towards the fire (*The Tunnel*, 55).

In the revised edition, the same passage reads as follows:

The long faded rich crimson rep curtains obscured half the width of each high window, and the London light, screened by the high opposing houses, fell dimly on the dingy books and periodicals scattered about the table. Miriam stood by the mantelpiece, her feet deep in the black sheepskin rug, and held out her hands towards the fire (II, 61).

The added commas are of the ‘machine’ variety, the kind which does not push readers towards engaging more actively with the text. What is most noticeably lost with the addition of the commas is the sense of immediacy which characterises the first version, and this is especially the case with the second sentence in the passage. Without the commas, the reader will have to slow down and maybe even reread the line before its content becomes quite clear. The commas bring a slightly different structure not only to the sentence, but to the experience it describes. The first version emphasises Miriam’s simultaneous experience of the heat of the fire against her hands and the warmth of the rug around her feet; the absence of punctuation in the passage serves to unify this experience. Her intense presence, both in the moment described and in the subjective nature of the description, is lost in the revised version, where she is depicted as though seen from the outside.

There is a clear connection between the kind of ‘organic’ prose found in the first versions of *The Tunnel* and *Interim* and the notion of stream-of-consciousness writing. In many ways, the flow of the largely unpunctuated text is a representation of the intensity of the lived moment, of the now; as Thomson suggests, the unpunctuated sentence represents the ‘most basic logic of stream

of consciousness narrative'.²¹ The freedom from restrictive punctuation creates a flow in the text which represents the experience of reality through consciousness in the moment: unstructured and unstoppable.

This flow – if not of consciousness, then of experience – is in some ways similar to the perception of sound. When we hear, there are often no clear boundaries between different sounds; they constitute one generalised soundscape where individual sounds intermittently stand out.²² Sound rushes at us and pours into our ears, entering our bodies as sound-waves. The unpunctuated sentence is similarly hard to keep at bay, and for the engaged reader there is a pouring-in of text analogous to listening. The text rushes out from the page – not specifically as words, but as content – and for the reader of *Pilgrimage*, as Miriam says about *Villette*, this creates a 'grey made up of all the colours there are': a generalised text-sound, in the midst of which bits and pieces stand out more than others, like individual sounds in a generalised soundscape. The individual 'sounds' of *Pilgrimage* – represented by passages, lines, or even words that stand out more than others – should be engaged with more profoundly than is required by the generalised 'sound' of the text, and it is here that punctuation serves to introduce pauses in the reading. The pause invites the reader to stop the forward movement and contemplate, marking a place in the text where content can be retrieved below the surface of the words.

An example of a scene that illustrates Richardson's organic prose and its interplay of flow and pause is found early in *Interim*. Visiting the Broom sisters, Miriam wakes up in the middle of the night and experiences a moment of silent attention: 'There was nothing but the cool sense of life pouring from some inner source and the deep fresh spaces of the darkness all round her' (*Interim*,

²¹ Thomson, 'Introduction', p.5.

²² My analogy of the 'generalised soundscape' is based on Melba Cuddy-Keane's discussion of the soundscapes in the works of Virginia Woolf. See 'Modernist Soundscapes and the Intelligent Ear: An Approach to Narrative through Auditory Perception', in James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (eds), *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp.382-398.

17). In this silence, Miriam vaguely hears the strand of a melody coming in from the street, a sound which draws her out ‘into the quiet neighbourhood’ and into ‘the gardens at the backs of the rows of little silent dark houses’ (17). There is something almost unreal about this music and its effect on Miriam, whose body remains in her bed while her ‘heart’ rushes up and out of the window, seemingly present among the buildings in the street (18).

The contrast between sound and silence in this scene is mirrored in Richardson’s use of ‘organic’ commas in what is otherwise a largely unpunctuated passage. The sound of the text is intermittently brought to a halt, as the commas slow down the reading, inserting pauses of silence into the scene. Here, the reader is invited to contemplate what lies unexpressed between the lines. In contrast, the intensity of Miriam’s experience is highlighted by an exclusion of commas in the initial description of the experience, for example in the first mention of the melody she hears: ‘Perhaps she had awakened because of her happiness. . . clear gentle and soft in a melancholy minor key a little thread of melody sounded from far away in the night straight into her heart’ (17). In the revised version, the second part of this line reads as follows: ‘Clear, gentle, and soft in a melancholy minor key, a little thread of melody sounded from far away in the night straight into her heart’ (II, 301). The addition of the commas changes the representation of the experience, so that the intensity captured by the first version is lost together with the flow of the prose.²³

There are other differences between the two versions as well: the ellipsis preceding the word ‘clear’ has three dots in the first and four in the revised version (I will address the difference between these two kinds of ellipsis below). In the second case, ‘clear’ becomes ‘Clear’, as the word now begins a new sentence, thus separating the two clauses on each side of the ellipsis and consequently also their contents. In the first version, the ellipsis emphasises the rush of the experience, linking Miriam’s ‘happiness’ and her experience of her ‘inner source’ with the subsequent perception of the melody. In the second version this

²³ The first version of this passage includes nine commas, and the revised version has eighteen.

link is lost, the two events being presented as distinct: first Miriam ponders her own happiness, and *then* she hears the melody. Possibly Richardson wanted to separate the two clauses, which would explain the change in the second version. At the same time, reading the two sentences as one syntactic entity makes sense, as it clearly connects the melody to Miriam's state of mind, presenting it almost as a dream-state.

In the first version, the commas are used to indicate places where the reader should pause. Two of these 'organic' commas appear, for example, in a line describing Miriam's sentience of the world outside the window: 'She rushed up and out heart foremost, listening, following the claim of the music into the secret happy interior of the life of each sleeping form, flowing swiftly on across a tide of remembered and forgotten incidents in and out amongst the seasons of the years' (*Interim*, 18). Here, the commas ask us to stop at the word 'listening', suggesting the importance of this term to an understanding of the strange events that are described. Interestingly, 'listening' is also related to Richardson's theory of punctuation – her ideas about how the reader should 'listen' to the text – which adds a metatextual dimension to the passage. The word serves to remind us that we should approach this passage with our ears and not our eyes; we should listen for the vague melody behind the words in order to arrive at the 'secret happy interior' of the text. Richardson's text should be read in a manner that resembles the way in which Miriam engages with the melody she hears: we should bring our own half-forgotten 'sleeping forms' – memories of our own 'incidents' – to *Pilgrimage* in an act of creative collaboration, in order to fully understand Miriam's experience at this moment. Likewise, the second comma in this sentence again makes the reader pause to contemplate the relationship between the 'sleeping form' and the swift flow of memories, suggestive of the interplay between pause and flow, silence and sound, in Richardson's unpunctuated prose.

As in this dream-like scene from *Interim*, the flow of the unpunctuated text represents the intensity of the present – life as it is experienced – while the commas, which mark places in the text that invite the reader to pause and reflect, are related to

introspection and interiority. The commas suggest inner experiences, while the flow of the unpunctuated passages describe Miriam's experience of the external world, however surreal or 'strange' (*Interim*, 18). The interplay between pause and flow in the text has parallels in other similar contrasts: between eye and ear, stillness and movement, interiority and the external world, or, to use more Richardsonian terms, between 'being' and 'becoming'. 'Being' would then be associated with the pause and the punctuation mark, while 'becoming' – the rush of experience – is associated with the unpunctuated sentence, with the 'sound' of literature, and with movement.

The comma is not the only punctuation mark that serves to slow down the reading in *Pilgrimage* and to suggest moments of silence and inward movement. For example, Richardson also uses the ellipsis – her signature punctuation mark – to guide the reader towards contemplation and closer engagement with her text. Her use of the ellipsis is more complex and varied than her use of the comma, however, and ellipses have many different functions throughout her work.

Generally, Richardson's ellipses occur in two variants: there are those with three dots and there are those with four. The three-dot ellipsis is the most frequent, and it seems to mark a gap in an ongoing thought process. For example, in the first chapter of *The Tunnel*, where Miriam enters her room in Tansley Street, she stops to consider her surroundings: 'She was surprised now at her familiarity with the detail of the room . . . that idea of visiting places in dreams. It was something more than that . . . all the real part of your life has a real dream in it; some of the real dream part of you coming true' (II, 13). The ellipses suggest that there is something else occurring in Miriam's mind between the individual clauses, and that something links the clauses together without pressing the connection on the reader. The three-dot ellipses do not stop the flow of the prose, and they do not necessarily force the reader to pause and reflect; rather, they visualise the flow and urge the reader onwards, as though they are illustrating the movement of the thoughts themselves.

The four-dot ellipsis is actually also a three-dot ellipsis, but it generally follows a full stop and therefore looks like it consists of four dots. In order to distinguish between the two kinds of ellipses, I will in the following still refer to this second version as a four-dot ellipsis. That the full stop comes before and not after the ellipsis is suggested both by the fact that ellipses sometimes begin paragraphs (II, 13, 128, 141) and by the fact that the three-dot ellipsis is preceded by a blank space ('party . . .') whereas the full stop preceding the four-dot ellipsis follows the word directly: 'tea. . . ?' (II, 26). Placed between sentences, the four-dot ellipsis strongly suggests a something missing in the text – that is, something that is not expressed verbally. These ellipses thus constitute a more forceful kind of break in the text compared with the three-dot ellipses, and clearly belong to the kind of punctuation which marks moments for pause and contemplation; they form a block in the flow of the 'organic' prose.²⁴ But while these ellipses suggest a something missing, they are also something in themselves: they visualise Miriam's state of mind as a form of symbol or image. The four-dot ellipses in *Pilgrimage* are thus part of an aesthetic programme which seeks to literally visualise occurrences in the mind by making the graphics of the printed page form part of the literary work. Mhairi Catriona Pooler suggests that the ellipses 'reflect thought patterns as if they were being enacted before the reader's eyes'.²⁵ Clearly, it is hard to argue that the ellipses represent specific thought-content, as they evade any attempt at specification. It is my contention, however, that it is not only the pattern or structure of Miriam's thought processes that is represented graphically on the page through the ellipses but her actual thoughts, which are silent in the sense that they are non-verbal and therefore unwriteable – just as they are unreadable in the traditional sense.

In the first version of *Interim*, this use of the ellipsis is more pronounced, as Richardson's experimentation with typography led

²⁴It should be noted, however, that Richardson is not entirely consistent in how she uses the three and four-dot ellipses, and that there are exceptions both when it comes to the three-dot and the four-dot ellipses.

²⁵Pooler, p. 109.

her to include not only three and four-dot ellipses in the text, but also ellipses with as many as five and even six dots. In the revised edition of *Interim*, the five and six-dot ellipses are generally replaced by a four-dot ellipsis, and some of them have been removed altogether. The variants in the first version suggest a difference in intensity between the inner experiences that the ellipses represent. The sporadic six-dot ellipsis, for example, is used to indicate an inner experience in Miriam, below the surface of the text, as when she gloomily contemplates Mrs Philps's health while visiting the Brooms:

Mrs. Philps' face had grown dark and old. Miriam glanced restively at her meaning..... Large terrible illnesses, the doctor coming, trouble amongst families, someone sitting paralyzed; poverty, everything being different (*Interim*, 22).

The placement of this ellipsis suggests that it represents whatever 'meaning' Miriam has retrieved from 'glancing' at Mrs Philps, and the sentence following the ellipsis reveals the nature of her thoughts: her foreboding of illness and darker times. If this presentiment sits oddly in this scene, it is because the line might actually refer to something different: Miriam's memories of her mother's illness and suicide, and her own family's misfortune and poverty. The ellipsis then represents the surfacing of dark memories and the trauma of her mother's death.

The line preceding the ellipsis – 'glanced restively at her meaning' – serves to draw the reader's attention to the visuality of the scene and the visuals on the page: specifically, to the ellipsis that follows. Similarly to how the word 'listening' asks readers to use their ears in their reading in the passage discussed above, this line instructs readers to use their eyes. There are similar comments throughout *Interim* in relation to the longer ellipsis. Speaking of her memories of her childhood dolls, for example, Miriam notes that their eyes had an 'expression': 'looking at something, looking at the same thing you looked at yourself—' (*Interim*, 15).²⁶ 'The dolls' eyes,

²⁶ The dash indicates the end of the reported speech, and the ellipsis is followed by a yawn from Mrs Philps and movement from Florrie, indicating restlessness on the part of Miriam's audience. This ellipsis is removed in the revised version,

Miriam's memory, and the reader's contemplation of the six-dot ellipsis are all connected here, through the shared act of 'looking'. Similarly, numerous lines with ellipses in them also draw the reader's attention to the act of looking or to secrets: '. . . . It is my secret companion'; 'Brilliant *brilliant*; [sic] and someone was seeing it'; 'The high housefronts stood out against the grey, eastern-white, frilled below with new-made green, sprouting motionlessly as you looked'; 'Summer. Eternity *showing*' (*Interim*, 200-201).²⁷

Besides punctuation, Richardson experimented with blank spaces in *Pilgrimage* as visual additions to the text. While appearances of blank lines in the middle of a chapter often indicate a break or a pause between different sections in the chapter – that is, a good place to take a break from your reading if you are so inclined – there are plenty of occasions where these blank spaces serve a different function and where they should be considered a non-verbal component of the literary work itself. These blank spaces often appear in scenes describing Miriam's experiences of silence and inward movement, and they have a function similar to that of the four-dot ellipsis. However, their presence constitutes a more pronounced break in the text, owing to the fact that they require more space on the page. As a consequence, the blank spaces suggest more intense inner experiences than the ellipses do, experiences which move beyond any representation other than the pure, blank white of the page. Essentially, these blank spaces are not gaps; they do not indicate an *absence* of anything other than language. On the contrary, they should be understood as presences in their own right – representing experiences which are unrelated to language and which relate only to Miriam's inner self – and as part of the literary work.²⁸

where what follows after the ellipsis now appears in a new paragraph, following Miriam's finished speech about the dolls.

²⁷ The first of these ellipses ('It is my secret companion') has been removed completely from the revised edition. The following two ellipses have been replaced with three-dot ellipses in the revised version, and the last five-dot ellipsis has been changed into a four-dot ellipsis (II, 402-403).

²⁸ Radford acknowledges the blank spaces in *Pilgrimage* precisely as '*printed silences*' that 'register the activities of the unconscious which neither speech nor writing can reach' (pp.69-70, emphasis in the original).

In the first editions of *Pilgrimage*, published by Duckworth, Richardson divided her chapters into sections marked by numbers. In the revised edition, she removed the numbers, instead separating the sections using blank spaces only. The following discussion is not focused on such structural spaces – hereafter referred to as gaps – but on those spaces inserted into the text that do not serve any apparent structural function. Such blank spaces start to appear in the sequence with *The Tunnel*, which indicates that they were part of the bigger formal experiment which Richardson conducted there.

It appears as though Richardson became more aware of the function of the blanks in the text when she revised *Pilgrimage* for the 1938 edition. Whereas her punctuation became more traditional, her use of blank spaces instead grew more experimental. This is noticeable on those occasions in the text where not only the numbers have been removed, but the sizes of the gaps have also been changed, so that they are of varied length. Whereas the gaps separating the numbered sections in the first edition usually cover three lines – but there are some irregularities here too – they are mostly replaced by three blank lines in the revised edition. However, there are noticeable exceptions where the gaps are instead replaced with only two blank lines. These changes are significant, especially in those cases where blank spaces of different lengths are incorporated into the same scene or even onto the same page.

Significant blanks of different lengths can be found in, for example, the first chapter in *The Tunnel*, in a scene describing Miriam's intense experience of silence when she enters her room in Tansley Street as its inhabitant for the first time. In the first edition of *The Tunnel*, the chapter is divided into ten numbered sections, and it includes two blank spaces which are not preceded by numbers. The lengths of the gaps are almost all three lines, but the gap preceding section six is somewhat longer, stretching towards four lines.²⁹ In the revised edition, the nine gaps have been

²⁹ Such variants occur throughout the first versions of *The Tunnel* and *Interim*, and do not necessarily indicate a conscious typographical choice. As the

changed into blank spaces, which means that the chapter includes eleven blanks in total. All the gaps from the first edition except one have been replaced by blank spaces the length of three lines.

The gap preceding section three in the first edition, however, has been replaced with a blank space encompassing two lines in the revised edition. As this blank space appears in a passage which includes a sequence of blanks, its different length is significant, and it also affects the way in which the other blank spaces in the same passage are perceived. The passage includes three blank spaces, comprising what in the first edition are the gaps between sections two and three, one of the two original blank spaces, and the gap between sections three and four. The length of the first of these blank spaces is two lines, that of the second one line, and that of the third three lines. The passage appears in the middle of the chapter, and describes the moment when Miriam steps into her room where she has a strong *déjà-vu* experience, finding that she has previously seen the room in a dream. The liberation of finally being in a room of her own makes her able to connect to a part of herself she thought was lost: 'the self that was with her in the room was the untouched tireless self of her seventeenth year and all the earlier time' (II, 16). This moment of intense self-awareness, marked by a profound awareness of silence, is followed by the sequence of blank spaces, interspersed into a description of Miriam's experience of the light coming through the window.

Elsewhere, I have discussed the importance of silence to understanding Miriam's development and her concept of self in *Pilgrimage*, and especially in relation to her literary pursuits.³⁰ Throughout the novel-sequence, scenes defined by intense, spiritual experiences of silence convey Miriam's exploration of her self and her inmost core: they mark those moments when she reaches her 'centre of being' (IV, 609). As David Stamm has noted, there is often a connection between Miriam's experience of silence and descriptions of light in *Pilgrimage*, where the light functions as

differences in length sometimes amount to millimeters, they could be due to the manual setting of the type.

³⁰ See 'Dorothy Richardson and the Poetics of Silence', *Pilgrimages*, 5 (2012), 7-34.

a 'projected vision of [Miriam's] own illumination'.³¹ The strong emphasis on the interplay of light and darkness in the scene from *The Tunnel* suggests such a moment of revelation for Miriam. In the passage discussed above, the silent, blank spaces on the page become concrete embodiments of Miriam's moment of revelation:

London could come freely in day and night through the unscreened happy little panes; light and darkness and darkness and light.

London, just outside all the time, coming in with the light, coming in with the darkness, always present in the depths of the air in the room.

The gas flared out into a wide bright flame. The dingy ceiling and counterpane turned white. The room was a square of bright light and had a rich brown glow [...]. (II, 16-17)

The blank spaces visualise and illustrate Miriam's epiphanic, ineffable experience, and their difference in length indicates a parallel difference in intensity of the state of mind that they represent. Their appearance in the passage is linked to light, descriptions of which can be found around the edges of the blank spaces. Elsewhere in *Pilgrimage*, Miriam calls for a literature which illustrates what 'floods of sunshine and beauty indoors and out meant to [people] as single individuals, whether they were aware of it or not' (III, 243). Inescapably, Miriam's comment draws the reader's attention to the text of which she herself is the main character. Indeed, *Pilgrimage* often sets out to chart how Miriam is 'made strong by endless floods of sunshine and beauty' (III, 243). The passage from *The Tunnel* discussed above is an example of such an instance. It illustrates the strong effects that the beauty of the everyday can have on the individual: the silence of the private room, the bustle of life just outside of it, the way the sunlight falls on the walls through the window.

³¹ *A Pathway to Reality: Visual and Aural Concepts in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage* (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2000), pp.182-83.

The blank spaces indicate an inclusion in the scene of a different kind of expression than the merely verbal. They invite us, not to read them as we would words, but to consider them as we would a painting. If we briefly halt our reading in the middle of these blank spaces, as Richardson's instructions for reading appear to suggest we should do, we will find there a form of visual representation of Miriam's experience of silence, light, and beauty. Focusing the gaze on the white spaces between the dark text-blocks will make the words on the page no longer appear like printed characters only, but as blocks of darkness interspersed with light: walls of 'a rich brown glow' enfolding the 'square[s] of bright light' that are the blank spaces on the page. These blank spaces, if looked at long enough, appear as tunnels, where the bright light of the blank page shines on the reader, representing Miriam's revelatory moment of silence and light.

The strong links between those passages in the novel where Miriam experiences silence intensely and those where silence is represented visually on the page indicate that silence is not only a theme in Richardson's work, but also a form. *Pilgrimage* is literally shaped by its non-verbal content, and the visual appearance of the text on the page should be considered an important aspect of the work as a whole. Richardson's graphic representation of different states of mind and of Miriam's 'being' engages the reader and demands collaboration, suggesting that *Pilgrimage* must in many ways be understood as a *silent* text: a text which includes non-verbal and unarticulated elements which need to be reflected upon to be understood, and which even then may not yield up their full significance.