

Punctuation

Dorothy Richardson, the long modernist novel,
and the literary draft

Scott McCracken

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/chlel.xxxv.26mcc>

 Available under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

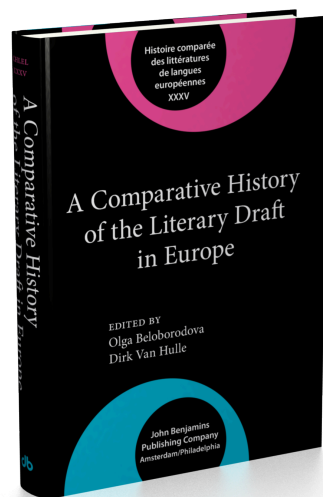
Pages 378–389 of

A Comparative History of the Literary Draft in Europe

Edited by Olga Beloborodova and Dirk Van Hulle

[Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages,
XXXV]

2024. xiv, 550 pp.



© John Benjamins B.V. / Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material, beyond the permissions granted by the Open Access license, written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights

1.5.4 Punctuation

Dorothy Richardson, the long modernist novel, and the literary draft

Scott McCracken

All literary drafts manifest the signs of their provisionality. For experimental writers, such as the pioneering modernist writer, Dorothy Richardson, who resist the illusion of the artwork as complete, the improvisatory nature of the draft is a strength, a quality the writer carries over to the published version. This chapter reads the manuscript of *Pointed Roofs*, the first “chapter-volume” of Richardson’s long modernist novel *Pilgrimage*, in order to examine three aspects of Richardson’s compositional method: first, its experimental nature, which includes a degree of improvisation; second, her innovative use of punctuation, ellipses, and compression; and third, the relationship between the Richardsonian sentence and the emergence of modernist prose at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Keywords: literary draft, Dorothy Richardson, modernism, experiment, punctuation

She could only ~~conclude~~^{think} that ~~she was~~ somehow she must be “different;” ~~she came to the conclusion that a large and~~ that a sprinkling at any rate, of the girls collected in that school were ~~exceptional~~^{different} too. ~~had been ready for that little group of teachers – that without knowing it she had lived in an atmosphere world of “new” things.~~ ^{The School she decided was new – modern – Ruskin.} Most of the girls ^{perhaps} had not been affected by it. But some had. She had ^{This realisation} ~~It stirred her to an intensity of longing for some sort of return.~~ The thought stirred her ~~strangely.~~ She had. It was mysterious. ~~& disquieting.~~ Was it the school or herself? ~~Which~~ Herself to begin with. (Richardson 1913)

This passage, from the manuscript of *Pointed Roofs*, the first “chapter-volume” of Dorothy Richardson’s long modernist novel, *Pilgrimage*, bears all the hallmarks of a work in progress. All literary drafts exhibit the signs of their provisionality. These manifest themselves as deletions, insertions, rewritten passages, placeholders, and absences.¹ The defining characteristic of the draft is that it is unfinished. It awaits completion. Yet the protean, uncertain quality of the draft also carries a deeper, psychic anxiety. In the absence of the comfort of printer’s ink, cover, dust jacket, and paratexts, all of which seem to guarantee an audience but do not, the unfinished draft still seeks a reader, whom, as Roland Barthes points out, it may never find: “Does writing in pleasure guarantee – guarantee me, the writer – my reader’s pleasure? Not at all. I must seek out this reader (must ‘cruise’ him) *without knowing where he is*” (1995: 4). Barthes’s metaphor of cruising suggests that mutual pleasure only ensues if the completed draft finds its destination. The literary draft manifests both the pleasure and the pain of writing: the eroticism

1. I am grateful to Adam Guy for his comments on a draft of this chapter.

Barthes locates at the “seam” “between culture and its destruction”; and the painful anxiety of not knowing if that pleasure will be shared (1995: 7). Lacking a destination, the literary draft is fragile, unstable.

Yet not everyone who seeks seeks to find. For experimental writers, such as Dorothy Richardson, who resist the illusion of the artwork as finished, the improvisatory nature of the draft is a strength, a quality the writer tries to carry over to the published version. In the first published edition of *Pointed Roofs*, the passage becomes:

She could only think that somehow she must be “different”; that a sprinkling of the girls collected in that school were different, too. The school she decided was new – modern – Ruskin. Most of the girls perhaps had not been affected by it. But some had. She had. The thought stirred her. She had. It was mysterious. Was it the school or herself? Herself to begin with.
(Richardson 1915: 123)

As one would expect, the deletions are removed. Richardson chooses to excise any reflections on Miriam’s situation that might be read as retrospective commentary. Instead, the passage is edited down to Miriam’s impressions as they occur. The repetition of the second “She had”, after the sentence “The thought stirred her”, which we might expect to be deleted, is kept to reinforce Miriam’s developing sense of self as the conviction grows on her that she has had an unusual education. Though the punctuation is orthodox, the short sentences represent Miriam’s developing thought process (including the ungrammatical “a sprinkling ...were”), which like a literary draft, is incomplete. If the manifest ambivalence of the draft disappears, the ambivalence in Miriam’s mind is preserved.

Relatively little evidence of Richardson’s creative process survives outside its published forms. The extant autograph manuscripts and typescripts are late versions destined for the typist or her publisher. In this chapter, I focus on *Pointed Roofs*, the first “chapter-volume” of Richardson’s long modernist novel, *Pilgrimage*, for which a full autograph manuscript is preserved in the Beinecke Library in Yale. It consists of a draft covered with small, dense, but readable handwriting, into which has been inserted revisions written on different notepaper, which substitute for deleted passages. The revisions are written in larger, loopy, more spaced-out handwriting. Where Richardson seems to have been writing more quickly the pen-strokes that commonly join words increase to create an unbroken flow of words. Apart from the deletions and insertions, the manuscript is remarkably clean, but it is not identical with the published text. In the autograph manuscript, names still refer to real people who were part of Richardson’s life: Fräulein Pfaff is still Fräulein Pabst, the name of the headteacher at the school in Meterstrasse in Hanover, where Richardson taught aged seventeen; and less of the German is translated than in the published version. In what follows I use the manuscript of *Pointed Roofs* to examine three aspects of Richardson’s compositional method: first, its experimental nature, which includes a degree of improvisation; second, her innovative use of punctuation, ellipses, and compression; and third, the relationship between the Richardsonian sentence and the emergence of modernist prose at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Richardson began writing *Pilgrimage* in 1912 and *Pointed Roofs* was published three years later, in 1915. Her narrative eventually stretched to thirteen volumes and remained unfinished at her death in 1957. The final volume, *March Moonlight*, was discovered in her papers as a typescript and some handwritten notes, a version was included in the 1967 Dent edition. But even if Richardson had left a finished draft of *March Moonlight*, *Pilgrimage* could not be said to have reached an end. She seems to have envisaged at least another volume to be added to the four volumes of the collected edition published by Dent in 1938. Unfinished, and unfinishable, *Pilgrimage* remains a draft in the sense that, at every stage of its production, up until the point when Richardson became too ill to write, it was always a work in the making. All its versions are to a greater or lesser extent provisional, including the manuscripts and typescripts, the extracts published in little magazines such as *Little Review*, *Outlook*, *Signatures*, and *Life and Letters Today*, and the first editions. Even the 1938 collected edition, for which she revised everything she had written so far, should be regarded as an alternative draft, to be read alongside rather than instead of the earlier single volumes (see Guy and McCracken 2020). If anything, the inclusion of *March Moonlight* in the posthumous 1967 edition underlines the unfinished, unfinishable nature of the project, its “inevitably interminable” status, as Stephen Heath memorably puts it (1983: 128). In its incomplete state, *Pilgrimage* is still seeking a joyful meeting with its “final”, ideal reader, a reader who will never be found and whom perhaps the text does not want to find.

It is not that Richardson herself didn’t want readers. In her letters, she bemoans the obstacles put in their way by her publishers, her critics, and even herself. Chief among these was the attenuated publication of the series, so that by the 1930s she felt that the latest volume was being encountered by readers who had no knowledge of its predecessors (Letter to S.S. Kotliansky, 11 December 1933, 1995: 254). Yet, we should distinguish between Richardson’s understandable desire that the versions so far should be available to her readers and the requirement, impressed upon her by her publishers, to finish, which she resisted. She railed against Dent, who wanted to market the 1938 edition as complete. Stephen Heath’s joke conceals the truth that as a document of lived experience, an inevitable interminability is built into *Pilgrimage*’s narrative structure. If *Pilgrimage*’s ideal audience was always deferred, its actual readers had to (and still must) reconcile themselves to deferring the satisfaction of resolution.

If the definition of a draft is an unfinished work, then its metonym is the unfinished sentence. The sentence fragment calls urgently for completion so that it can successfully reach a reader. *Pilgrimage* deliberately, obtusely, defies easy sense. Richardson withheld information that would allow the reader to fill out the context for the subjective impressions of her heroine, Miriam Henderson. In a letter to E. B. C. Jones, Richardson remarks on how hard she found it not to comment on the physical appearances of Miriam’s sisters (Letter to E.B.C. Jones, 1995: 49–50). This withholding is visible in the many unfinished sentences, sentence fragments, and orphaned phrases in the manuscript of *Pointed Roofs*, often linked by dashes and ellipses. In the following passage, the teenage Miriam is contemplating her imminent departure for a job in Germany:

Why did he say Play Abide with me if he didn't care-? & be so quiet & never say anything – He would forget. “Play Abide, with me Play Abide with me” – so quietly. The others were nothing – just excitements to be proud of – deliberately hooked – nothing – Why didn't he say Don't go, or When are you coming back. ~~Just~~ A word of certainty – ... Eve saying he looked perfectly miserable – “What do you mean? Miserable? I don't understand.” ~~I was~~ twelve & ~~he was~~ fifteen year old. ... it's always ~~been~~ ^{the same} ~~me~~ that time when I hurt my foot Abide with me. & then putting on his overcoat & going away down the steps....

Governessing & old age to save up for.

Perhaps Miss Gilkes was right.... Get rid of men & muddles & have things clear & simple & be happy. Make up your mind to be happy. “You can be perfectly happy without anyone to think about.” ... Wearing that large cameo brooch, – white long flat-fingered hands and that little quiet laugh....

The organ beneath the windows had reached its last tune. (Richardson 1913)

In the published version, the passage becomes:

Why did he say, “Play ‘Abide with me,’” “Play ‘Abide with me’”² yesterday, if he didn't care? What was the good of being so quiet and saying nothing? Why didn't he say “Don't go” or “When are you coming back?” Eve said he looked perfectly miserable.

There was nothing to look forward to now but governessing and old age. Perhaps Miss Gilkes was right.... Get rid of men and muddles and have things just ordinary and be happy. “Make up your mind to be happy. You can be *perfectly* happy without anyone to think about....” Wearing that large cameo brooch—long, white, flat-fingered hands and that quiet little laugh.... The piano-organ had reached its last tune. (Richardson 1915: 4)

The manuscript attempts to recreate the immediacy and openness of Miriam's present as an alternative to marriage as destination. In the published version the punctuation is conventional but the questions in the first paragraph and ellipses in the second convey the teenage Miriam's ambivalence. As her father's finances collapse, she imagines her imminent departure to a job as an English teacher in Germany. In her fantasy, she projects that absence, rather than the family crisis, as the main event, structured around herself as the object of desire. The unnamed Ted Burton acts as the projected desiring subject. His request that Miriam play the hymn, “Abide with me”, figures a proleptic homesickness, in which Miriam's desire to be wanted is stronger than her anticipated desire to come home. There are traces here of Barthes's writer, cruising for a reader, but Richardson reverses Barthes's roles. Miriam positions herself as the one who is sought rather than the one who seeks, and she is ambivalent about being found. Union with Ted represents not Barthes's fleeting, joyful encounter but the dismal finality of a tennis-club, suburban husband. At one level, the passage represents the experience of a seventeen-year-old trying to work out the relationship between desire and being desired; but on a structural level,

2. “Evening”, better known as “Abide with me”, is a hymn by Henry Francis Lyte (1793–1847), written in 1847 as he was dying of tuberculosis (Barnard et al. 2014: 1, 10). The lyrics derive from Luke 24.29: “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent”. It was set to the tune “Eventide” by William Henry Monk (1823–1889) in 1861.

Pilgrimage's narrative form resists the heteronormative, novelistic closure of the three-decker novel, with marriage as its final scene.

Being open to a full, queer present creates a deliberate risk. If the conventional draft seeks readers, the experimental text deliberately risks losing them. Miriam's evasion of Ted's advances risks a monstrous future, the author's evasion of her readers risks a monstrous text. Just as the figure of the "O.M." (old maid) haunts the young Miriam's imagination, here embodied in Miss Gilkes, with her "long, white, flat-fingered" hands, the experimental text risks becoming a kind of literary old maid, viewed by society as incomprehensible, incomplete, or badly put together.³ For Richardson, it is a risk worth taking so long as it directs attention away from the text as a "scene of reading", as "something we *interpret*", to the text as a "scene of making" (McGann 1991: 4). Richardson was aiming for an open text that would fashion a "collaboration" between writer and reader.

This collaboration requires an unfinished narrative and an open sentence. In Richardson's prose, punctuation becomes the means to establish an open meaning. She makes frequent use of ellipses, often extending the number of dots in the manuscript of *Pointed Roofs* beyond the conventional three to extend the reader's consciousness of a gap. Though these long ellipses were removed in the published version, she was bolder (or perhaps permitted by her copy-editor to be bolder) in later chapter-volumes. As *Pilgrimage* develops, it becomes clear that the unfinished sentence is the micro-structure that figures the aesthetic of the longer narrative. Richardson experiments with meaningful gaps at every level. Section breaks are separated by numbers or asterisks or, in the manuscript, instructions to the compositor in the manuscript to leave two-line, three-line, or four-line spaces. In the later single volumes, such as *Clear Horizon*, she drops chapter divisions altogether so that all the sections become equal. In the 1938 edition, the chapter divisions are reintroduced, and all section breaks are standardised as blank. As we shall see, her inconsistency has been criticised, but it can be defended as an experimental approach that sought to try again and again to achieve her aims by different means.

Not all these techniques were conscious at first. Richardson came to recognise that at the drafting stage the author is not necessarily fully conscious about their use of punctuation. The relative absence of commas in the sentences of *Pointed Roofs* was pointed out to her after its publication (Richardson 2020: 352). Once brought to her attention, the strategic absence of commas became a conscious part of her technique. Theodor Adorno posits that modernist artistic experiments are impelled (*gedrängt*) by the inability of existing methods and forms to represent modern experience adequately. In response, the artist reaches for "constructive methods", the outcome of which they do not yet know (Adorno 2013: 33). This certainly seems to have been the case for Richardson, who rejected the dominant form of the novel in the early twentieth century, because she felt it was not capable of representing women's experience. Richardson resisted critical definitions of what she was doing, preferring negative formulations. She held that *Pilgrimage* was not a novel and, despite the parallels between the life of its author and that

3. In the next volume, *Backwater*, Miriam's own large fingers will become associated with autonomous pleasure. See Winning 2000: 78–81.

of its protagonist, not autobiography.⁴ Her resistance to literary taxonomies speaks to a desire to carry the provisional quality of the draft into the published text. She wanted a fungible art form that kept the future open.

If ellipses fragment the sentence, the absence of commas in *Pilgrimage* is a technique to keep the sentence open. Malcolm Park's 1992 history of punctuation documents the introduction of punctuation as a guide for reading aloud (Parkes 2016). Commas were introduced to indicate pauses that would give the text a clear meaning. In her short essay, "About Punctuation" (written seventy years before Park's history) Richardson makes a similar observation, writing of the "patient" reading demanded by almost unpunctuated "ancient manuscripts" that move "along unbroken, save for the occasional full-stop" (Richardson 1924: 990). She comments on how the presence or absence of a comma shapes the reader's reception, either by mandating a particular reading or by leaving that meaning open. The comma, we might say, is akin to Barthes's writer/cruiser: it seeks out a particular kind of reader, attempting to nail down the text's reception. But for Richardson the patience demanded by an unpunctuated text gains an advantage for the reader. She writes:

He is winning familiarity with the writer's style, and is able to punctuate unconsciously as he goes... It is at this point that he begins to be aware of the charm that has been sacrificed by the systematic separation of phrases. He finds himself listening. (Richardson 1924: 990)

But what is the reader listening to? Not to a single interpretation of the text and not to its meaning as the writer intended. The absence of a comma leaves meaning unfinished, open to multiple readings. Richardson's use of an ellipsis after the words "he goes..." is no accident. It marks the point at which the reader intervenes to collaborate in the text's meanings. Richardson contrasts the unpunctuated text with most modern texts, which require too little from the reader:

the machinery of punctuation and type, while lifting burdens from reader and writer alike and perfectly serving the purposes of current exchange, have also, on the whole, devitalized the act of reading; have tended to make it less organic, more mechanical.

(Richardson 1924: 991)

She strains against the finality of the published text, which, even as it settles the contract between reader and writer, closes down meaning. Though a gendered critique informs Richardson's preference for the organic over the mechanical, the examples she cites of free and innovative uses of punctuation are carnivalesque, male writers such as Rabelais and Lawrence Sterne (1912: 372). Even when she argues in the 1938 Foreword to *Pilgrimage* that feminine prose "should properly be unpunctuated", she draws on Dickens and Joyce (2020: 352). She devotes most space in "About Punctuation" to Henry James. What Richardson values in the Jamesian sentence is not his vision, which elsewhere she describes as the narrow world seen from a

4. Richardson later modified her claim that *Pilgrimage* was not a novel in the light of the novel's development in the twentieth century. See her letter to Lita Hornick, 20 December 1948, Kulchur Archive, Columbia University.

middle-class drawing room, but its aural, quasi-corporeal qualities, so that its rhythms act as a “pace-maker for the reader’s creative consciousness” (1924: 992). Richardson’s greatest tribute to the Jamesian sentence is her acknowledgement of its musical quality:

So rich and splendid is the fabric of sound he weaves upon the appointed loom, that his prose, chanted to his punctuation, in an unknown tongue, would serve as well as a mass – in D minor.
(Richardson 1924: 993)

Music is a potent analogy for the aural qualities of punctuated prose, the resonances of which are felt in the body. Richardson was a talented and knowledgeable musician. *Pilgrimage* is packed with references to popular songs, church music, and classical composers. Here, she is probably referring to Mozart’s Requiem Mass in D minor, left incomplete when he died, and later finished by his contemporary Franz Süssmayr. It is no accident that Richardson chooses to compare James’s prose with a work first left a fragment and then completed by a collaborator. She argues his novels demand sustained attention to the point where they risk losing their readers; but she suggests that any difficulty they might encounter is less the fault of the writer than of a mechanised, well-policed modernity which no more has the time or stamina for the Jamesian sentence than the playful, unorthodox, comic prose styles of Rabelais and Sterne. James takes his readers through a series of “aesthetic” exercises: “Gently, painlessly, without shock or weariness, as he carries us unhasting, unresting, over his vast tracts of statement, we learn to stretch attention to the utmost” (Richardson 1924: 993). Richardson gently mocks James’s “tracts” as a “spiritual Swedish Drill”, yet her choice of words is as admiring as it is ironic. “About Punctuation” is permeated with religious language, contrasting punctuation “orthodoxy” with punctuation dissent. Richardson’s own sentences, with their paucity of commas, are “spiritual” in the sense that they move the reader out of a fixed temporality into a temporality that has to be negotiated with the text. As with her attitude to the “rules” of punctuation, Richardson was always reluctant to plump for a particular denomination. She understands the role of the sentence is to manage the co-existence of such different worldviews with their different temporalities.

Richardson found she could only do this at length; but both long and short examples of modernist prose, from *À la recherche du temps perdu* to Kafka’s short parables rely on rebalancing the sentence, a micro-structure that condenses or elongates time. Punctuation, or its absence, is one of the tools that enables the temporal configurations of a modernist text. For example, the famous final sentence of the first section of “Combray” builds over a quarter of a page:

Et comme dans ce jeu où les Japonais s’amusent à tremper dans un bol de porcelaine rempli d’eau de petits morceaux de papier jusque-là indistincts qui, à peine y sont-ils plongés s’étirent, se contournent, se colorent, se différencient, deviennent des fleurs, des maisons, des personnages consistants et reconnaissables, de même maintenant toutes les fleurs de notre jardin et celles du parc de M. Swann, et les nymphéas de la Vivonne, et les bonnes gens du village et leurs petits logis et l’église et tout Combray et ses environs, tout cela qui prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé. (Proust 1954: 58)

[And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and the little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.] (Proust 1955: 62)

The sentence unfurls at length. The first comma only appears after “qui” [which], pausing the sentence to emphasise the metamorphosis of the little Japanese pieces of paper. Thereafter, commas mark the stages of the little pieces’ evolution, from the image of the bowl to the narrator’s childhood garden, Swann’s park, the village, and beyond. In the final clauses, this expansion is brought into focus, slowed down and made concrete in the staccato plosives of “*solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé*”. The last two commas in the sentence slow the pace until the staccato rhythm of the final five words does its own work.

Walter Benjamin describes Proust’s form as convoluted: only by folding the past into the present is he able to “attempt to charge a whole lifetime with the utmost mental awareness” (Benjamin 1999: 244). But the convoluted sentence is just one among the different strategies used by the writers of modernist prose. Famously, in the “Penelope” episode of *Ulysses* the sentence runs on and on spilling over grammatical and temporal boundaries to the point where it feels like it could be endless.

A complete contrast is offered by a sentence describing the strange creature, Odradek, in Franz Kafka’s “Cares of the Father of the House” (“Sorge des Hausvaters”, usually translated as “Cares of a Family Man”). Franz Kafka characteristically works not with length but with brevity:

Es sieht zunächst aus wie eine flache sternartige Zwirnspule, und tatsächlich scheint es auch mit Zwirn bezogen; allerdings dürften es nur abgerissene, alte, aneinander geknotete, aber auch ineinander verfitzte Zwirnstücke von verschiedenster Art und Farbe sein. (Kafka 1995: 139)

[It looks at first like a flat star-shaped spool of thread, and in fact it seems to be wound with thread as well; anyway they could only be old, torn-off bits of thread, knotted together, but also intertwined and snarled, of various kinds and colours.]⁵ (Kafka 1999: 459)

Kafka’s sentences seem at first to be a meticulous description of “Odradek”, but the detail only serves to obscure a creature who eludes linguistic or physical definitions. The two halves of the sentence reproduce the (only slightly longer) structure of the brief narrative. Before the semi-colon, there is an attempt to fix Odradek in time and place by securing the boundaries that might define it/him (in the German both *es* [it] and *er* [he] are used); after the semi-colon the narrator admits defeat: the practical *tatsächlich* [in fact] cedes to the vaguer *allerdings* (a word

5. I have modified the translation.

derived from “aller Dinge”, or all things, meaning “however”, “although”, “admittedly”, “mind you”), and the present tense, “it looks”, “it seems”, changes to the subjunctive “could be” or “might be” (“*dürften sein*”). The attempt to delineate Odradek’s limits blurs into a knotted snarl of broken-off coloured threads.

Though their sentences are very different, Proust and Kafka articulate an indeterminate relationship between two temporalities that, because of its indeterminacy, produces the possibility of multiple temporalities. The famous passage in *À la recherche du temps perdu* mediates between the impoverished everyday of the narrator’s present and the luxury of remembrance, accessed via the taste of a madeleine dipped in tea. In “Cares of a Family Man”, Odradek’s otherworldliness escapes the law of the father, unsettling the narrator’s fixed sense of self, which is secured by his authority over his family. The story ends: “Er schadet ja offenbar niemandem; aber die Vorstellung, daß er mich auch noch überleben sollte, ist mir eine fast schmerzliche” [Obviously, he harms no one; but the idea that he should outlive me I find an almost painful one] (Kafka 1995: 140; 1999: 460).⁶ All these sentences are carefully crafted, revealing little or nothing of the work-of-making evident in the literary draft. The imagined reader, one feels, has already been positioned to be ready for the performance the sentence executes. But this sense may be illusory. The positioning or – to put it another way – the balance of the sentence, is designed to disturb and expand the subject’s sense of self, rendering it incomplete and taking it beyond realism into another realm.

The modernist sentence may be formally complete, but it is always semantically open (incomplete). It works at the edge of things. Richardson too was interested in working at the edge of things. She wanted to conduct an “investigation of reality” that explored its limits to what lay beneath or beyond. Richardson’s sentences in the “stream of consciousness” passages of *Pointed Roofs* are more fragmented than those of James, Proust, James Joyce or Kafka. The following passage is drafted twice in the manuscript. The first draft runs as follows:

Miriam could not remember hearing Fraulein Pfaff go away when she woke in the darkness feeling unendurably oppressed. She flung her sheet aside & turned her pillow over & pushed her frilled sleeve to her elbows. How energetic I am she thought & lay tranquil. There was not a sound. I shall never be able to sleep down here its too awful she murmured, & puffed & shifted her head on the pillow [The ~~sum-mer~~^{win ter} ~~has~~^{may} ~~gone~~^{pass} ... [x], The Academy^{The Winter may pass} ~~bother~~ The Academy Eve^{The Winter may} pass ... a picture in very bright colours ... ~~common vulgar colours like the illustrations in alphabet books, & yet a~~^{xxxx} ~~strange~~^{of} a woman sitting ^{by the roadside} with a shawl round her shoulders & a red skirt & red cheeks & ^{bright} green country.... ^{behind her...} someone just behind the Academy & people moving about on the shiny floor ~~had said~~^{saying} that is ~~plein air~~ they are the ~~plein~~ ~~airistes, that was the~~^{like like the} housekeeper ^{sitting at tea}.]

A brilliant light flashed into the room. ~~right across that~~ was lightning – how strange the room looked – the screens had been moved. The wall & corners & little beds had looked like daylight.

(Richardson 1913)

6. Translation modified.

The section in square brackets is in a balloon and inserted in the margin next to its string is:

Insert see next

hard bright picture in the Academy

A page of the different paper Richardson used for revisions comes next in the manuscript with:

The Win – ter – may – pass

The Winter ... may pass. The winter may pass. The Academy a picture in very bright colours ... a woman sitting by the roadside with a shawl round her shoulders & a red skirt & red cheeks & bright green country behind her ... people moving about on the shiny floor, someone just behind saying “that is plein-air, those are the plein-airistes

the woman in the picture was like the housekeeper ...

A brilliant ~~flash~~ light flashed etc:

(Richardson 1913)

And the published first edition has:

The Win-ter may-pass.... The win-ter ... may pass. The winter may ... pass. The Academy ... a picture in very bright colours ... a woman sitting by the roadside with a shawl round her shoulders and a red skirt and red cheeks and bright green country behind her ... people moving about on the shiny floor, someone just behind saying, “that is plein-air, these are the plein-airistes”–the woman in the picture was like the housekeeper....

A brilliant light flashed into the room ... lightning–how strange the room looked–the screens had been moved–the walls and corners and little beds had looked like daylight.

(Richardson 1915: 238)

The first version of the passage is a rough attempt to capture the immediacy of Miriam’s experience. Her wakeful night-time consciousness during a hot summer night contains scraps of the lyrics from Edvard Grieg’s “Solveig’s Song” and memories of John Everett Millais’s “The Blind Girl” displayed at the Royal Academy, including fragments of the conversation exchanged between the public. Misremembered lyrics are corrected in the draft, and the corrections are carried over into the published version; but the fragmentary, partial nature of memory is preserved. Whereas the draft attempts to capture the *immediacy* of Miriam’s experience, the published version is more concerned with representing the *experience* of immediacy, while the revised version lies somewhere between the two. The published version is complete only in the paradoxical sense that it offers a finished representation of the unfinished nature of lived experience, in which a song remains unsung. The reference to Millais and the plein-airistes gestures to Richardson’s own technique of trying to arrest Miriam’s life in media res.

One consequence is that Richardson’s method, because it risks failure, does not achieve a finished work but a representation of life in process. What she calls “compression”, a term she may have borrowed from a review by May Sinclair, performs a key role in her representation of unfinished and interrupted experience. The removal of contextual description distils lived experience down to Miriam’s subjective point of view. Compression is another way of inserting absence into the text. It is visible in the deletions in the manuscript of *Pointed Roofs*. Richard-

son's combinations of complete and incomplete sentences attempt to hold in play the experiences of being and becoming. The manuscript version works at the seam that binds together immediate experience remembered and its re-presentation. The published text was designed in such a way that the experience of immediacy is still communicated to the contemplative, collaborative reader the draft seeks. Richardson's text bears the visible marks of its composition, inviting the reader to consider the work as process rather than complete.

Some of Richardson's critics have been less sympathetic to the unfinished nature of her texts. George H. Thomson accuses her of being a poor proofreader. John Mepham concludes that the inconsistent punctuation in the serialisation of *Interim* in the *Little Review* was a sign that the project had lost its way (Thomson 2001:n.p.; Mepham 2000: 449–64). However, a recently rediscovered memorandum she sent to the printer of the *Little Review* suggests otherwise:

Please leave all dialogue as it is in the typescript i.e. sometimes as part of the text, sometimes between "dashes" & occasionally spaced out <or> with (or without) inverted commas.

Please adhere most carefully to the punctuation, particularly safeguarding the sometimes unconventional presence, & absence of the comma. (Richardson 1919)

That inconsistency was a method rather than a failing of the text should alter how we think of Richardson's published works, confirming that she carries over the imperfections and unachieved aims of the draft into the work. Regrettably, her commitment to textual provisionality never brought her satisfaction. Instead, Richardson experienced the frustration of her unachieved aims throughout her life. She was unhappy with her early attempts to draft a literary work because they read "as if written by a man" albeit "with something added, intruding, bulging" (Richardson 1937). In a letter written on 9 May 1944 to Bryher, she described how she would inscribe the letters TMD, standing for "too much description" and IR, "imperfectly realised", in the margins of her manuscripts (Richardson 1995: 496). She annotated copies of the published volumes for friends, changing the punctuation, particularly the use of commas. No version could ever be final.

It might be argued that Richardson's dissatisfaction represents modernist form *par excellence*, but that would be to give too much weight to the aesthetic. The reason Richardson's drafts tell us so much is because they highlight the unstable seam between art and life that cuts through the long modernist novel's impossible wager: that it can capture both the detail and the whole of life. The draft modernist sentence, above all, emphasises the labour that goes into the construction of a form that is both complete and incomplete. Richardson's work exhibits both relentless experimentation and an enduring disappointment with the results. The text is always provisional, never finished. Like Barthes, Richardson seeks a reader, but there is no certain destination and no blissful encounter. Instead, reader and text cruise one another endlessly. Yet if her texts deny instant satisfaction, they offer multiple lingering pleasures. Richardson developed a form that enables her readers room to play with a text that, even if it left her unsatisfied, confirms at least the anticipation of joy, fleetingly perceived.

References

- Adorno, Theodor W. 2013. *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor. London: Bloomsbury.
- Barnard, John, Gordon Giles, Anne Harrison, Stephen Rogers, Tim Ruffer, and Christine Smith (eds). 2014. *Ancient & Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship*. Organ Edition. 2 vols. London: Hymns Ancient & Modern.
- Barthes, Roland. 1995. *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1999. "On the Image of Proust." In *Selected Writings 1927–34*, ed. by Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, and Gary Smith, trans. by Rodney Livingstone et al., vol. 2, 237–247. Cambridge MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
-  Guy, Adam, and Scott McCracken. 2020. "Editing Experiment: The New Modernist Editing and Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage." *Modernist Cultures* 15 (1): 110–131.
- Heath, Stephen. 1983. "Writing for Silence: Dorothy Richardson and the Novel." In *Teaching the Text*, ed. by Susanne Kappeler, and Norman Bryson, 126–147. London: Routledge Kegan Paul.
- Kafka, Franz. 1995. "Die Sorge des Hausvaters." In *Sämtliche Erzählungen*, ed. by Paul Raabe, 139–140. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag.
- Kafka, Franz. 1999. "The Cares of a Family Man." In *The Complete Short Stories of Franz Kafka*, ed. by Nahum Norbert Glatzer, 458–460. London: Vintage.
- McGann, Jerome J. 1991. *The Textual Condition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mephram, John. 2000. "Dorothy Richardson's 'Unreadability': Graphic Style and Narrative Strategy in a Modernist Novel." *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 43: 449–464.
-  Parkes, Malcolm B. 2016. *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West*. London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Proust, Marcel. 1954. *Du Coté du Chez Swann, A la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 1. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, Gallimard.
- Proust, Marcel. 1955. *Swann's Way*, trans. by Scott C. K. Moncrieff, vol. 1, part 1, *Remembrance of Things Past*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Richardson, Dorothy. n.d. [c.1913]. Autograph Manuscript of *Pointed Roofs*. Dorothy Richardson Papers, Box 9, Folder 197–200, Beinecke Library, Yale, <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/16495654>
- Richardson, Dorothy. 1912. Letter to the editor of *The Freewoman* (26 September 1912). *The Freewoman* 2 (45): 372.
- Richardson, Dorothy. 1915. *Pointed Roofs*. London: Duckworth.
- Richardson, Dorothy. 1919. "Memorandum for Printer's Reader." Little Review Records, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- Richardson, Dorothy. 1924. "About Punctuation." *Adelphi* 1 (11): 990–996.
- Richardson, Dorothy. n.d., c.1937. "Literary Essays: Autograph MS draft of an essay on her development as a writer," 2p. Richardson Papers, Box 8, Folder 159, Beinecke Library, Yale University.
- Richardson, Dorothy. 1948. *Letter to Lita Hornick, 20 December 1948*. Kulchur Archive, Columbia University.
- Richardson, Dorothy. 1995. *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson*, ed. by Gloria Glikin Fromm. Athens GA: University of Georgia Press.
-  Richardson, Dorothy. 2020. "Foreword to the 1938 Edition of Pilgrimage." In *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume IV: Pilgrimage 1 & 2: Pointed Roofs and Backwater*, ed. by Scott McCracken, 347–353. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
-  Thomson, George H., and Dorothy Thomson. 2001. "Introduction." In *The Editions of Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage: A Comparison of Texts*, n.p. Greensboro, NC: ELT Press (ebook).
- Winning, Joanne. 2000. *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.