THE POLITICS OF POST: EPISTOLARY INTERTEXTUALITY IN *PILGRIMAGE*

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> only the dead don't talk. That's what you think! They are the most talkative, especially if they remain alone. It's rather a question of getting them to shut up.[1]

In a letter to American scholar-critic, Lita Hornick, Dorothy Richardson dismisses the search for influence in literature as a 'parlour-game of formal logic' and claims to 'deplore the search [...] for influence & relationships'.[2] Though reluctant to reduce her work to definitive textual genealogies, Richardson never denied the inevitability of influence. As her letter to Hornick attests, what Richardson objected to was what she saw as the critic's idle pursuit of divining source material in literature and ascribing to those intertexts a governing hermeneutic key. Instead, Richardson understood influence etymologically, casting it in ontological, rather than taxonomic and teleological, terms: 'The influence (inflowing) of one author upon another can operate only if within each is a similarity of spirit, producing the recognition'.[3] Richardson's fluvial figure of influence 'operat[ing]' first as a spiritual connection and second as a seamless corporal transfusion of authorial spirits is echoed in Richardson's thoughts on Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. Although this novel is a clear ur-text for *Pilgrimage*'s first chapter-volume, *Pointed Roofs* (1915), it is never directly quoted; instead it is a text that Richardson knows 'by heart', one that she is '[d]rinking in' with each rereading.[4] Importantly, influence seems to 'operate' for Richardson in distinctly gendered terms as her Brontë is an author possessed of 'a definite depth of experience that is totally lacking in the masterpieces of masculine fiction'.[5]

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[1] Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card : From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 246

[2] Dorothy Richardson, 'Letter to Lita Hornick', 20 December 1948, Kulchur Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

[3] 'Letter to Hornick'.

[4] Letter to Bernice Elliot, 11 March 1943, in Gloria Gilkin Fromm, ed., *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson* (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 459; Richardson to Bryher, 6 August 1948 in Fromm: 587.

[5] Fromm, *Windows on Modernism*, 587. For more on the relationship between *Villette* and *Pilgrimage* see Hilary Newman, 'The Influence of *Villette* on Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs*', *Brontë Studies: The Journal of the Brontë Society* 42, no. 1 (2016): 15-25.

The intersections between influence, language, gender, and power are further reflected through the consciousness of Richardson's fictional counterpart, Miriam Henderson, who, in *Interim* (1919), attends a lecture on Dante and marvels at how the woman sitting next to her 'used the Italian pronunciation without a touch of pedantry' (II 353). By contrast, she imagines that the 'clergyman in the row in front would drawl out the words with an unctuous suggestion of superior knowledge' (354). Miriam's distaste for using knowledge to leverage power is clear as she surveys the audience and concludes that '[m]ost of the men present were […] using their knowledge like a code or weapon' (354) whereas she imagines that the women 'were really interested in' the lecture (354). While the young Miriam can only observe this combative use of knowledge 'to crush someone' (354), Daniela Caselli suggests that Richardson's fluid allusion to Dante here avoids committing the same error of trading on Dante's status amongst fellow modernists as 'the true European, the supranational master, the linguistic experimental exemplum'.[6] Instead, the Dante that Richardson produces is one with whom Miriam can intimately connect so that by the end of the lecture she feels as though she has 'looked into the eyes of Dante across the centuries as into the eyes of a friend' (355). It is this Dante, not a 'master' but rather a vital part of Miriam's everyday consciousness that gives us, as Caselli says: 'simultaneity of thought on the page while rejecting the agon of superior craftsmanship'.[7] Far from the figure of Harold Bloom's vexed latecomer seeking to overthrow his poetic predecessors, Richardson's model of intertextuality is notably less fraught. As this article contends, nowhere can we see Richardson's aesthetic of intertextual 'inflowing', the novel's 'simultaneity of thought' and its concomitant rejection of the weaponisation of words and knowledge, better than in *Pilgrimage*'s representation of the personal letter.

The number of letters featured in *Pilgrimage* perhaps reflects Richardson's own vast epistolary network, which included her mentor, intellectual adversary, and erstwhile lover, H.G. Wells; her patron and fellow writer, Annie Winifred Ellerman (Bryher); Bryher's lover, the poet, H.D.; journalist and critic, P.B. Wadsworth; novelist, John Cowper Powys, as well as many friends and family members. As the amount of Richardson's correspondence attests, letters brought Richardson, otherwise on the geographic and social periphery of modernist networks, into regular

[6] Daniela Caselli, 'Dante's Pilgrimage in Dorothy Richardson', *Comparative Literature* 69, no. 1 (March 2017): 91.
[7] Caselli, 91.

contact with those at its very centre.[8] Correspondence not only kept Richardson in touch with members of Bloomsbury and Parisian coteries but also in possession of the latest journals, books, and broadsheets. As crucially, it was through letters to editors at Duckworth and later Dent Press that Richardson secured the contracts required to keep *Pilgrimage* published for over twenty years despite lacklustre sales. Moreover, letters from characters such as Miriam's lover Amabel, fashioned after Richardson's lover Veronica Leslie-Jones, as well as letters from Miriam's sisters, contain material similar to that which can be found in the Richardson archive.

In *Pilgrimage*, where the stream-of-consciousness technique limits readers' knowledge of the world to Miriam's experience of it, the inclusion of personal letters infuses the narrative with voices of other characters without abandoning Richardson's object: to represent the 'contemplated reality' of an individual female subject.[9] In this, *Pilgrimage*'s incorporation of what Bakhtin calls 'extraliterary genres' such as 'letters, diaries, confessions' further highlights the ways in which the individual subject, much like the narrative itself, is produced not by a single ur-text but by a heteroglossic 'inflowing' of multiple influences. Of course, the text as a nexus of different voices, cultures, traditions, and texts is a commonplace in modernism, with Richardson describing Joycean prose as a 'tapestry' while T.S. Eliot's original title for 'The Waste Land' saw it as a composite of 'different voices'.[10] Yet given that *Pilgrimage*'s reputation still suffers from the mischaracterisation that in denying 'access to any consciousness other than Miriam's, it silently enacts, at the level of form [...] a rejection of democracy and a contempt for the masses', closer inquiry into whether and how *Pilgrimage* might overcome such a reputation is warranted.[11] Epistolary intertextuality is one way in which *Pilgrimage* might parry charges of narratorial myopia as it diffuses the narrative stream of Miriam's consciousness with the voices of diverse others.

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[8] See Joanne Winning, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Politics of Friendship', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, no. 2 (2009): 91–121.

[9] Dorothy Richardson, 'Foreword', in *Pilgrimage*, vol. 1 (London: J. M. Dent, 1938), 10.

[10] Dorothy Richardson, 'Adventure for Readers', in *The Gender of Modernism. A Critical Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 426. A reference to the full working title of *The Waste Land*, 'He do the Police in different voices' is a quotation from Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864).

[11] Anne Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism*, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013), 96.

Although *Pilgrimage* makes many intertextual references to extra-literary sources such as encyclopaedia entries, lectures, and even intratextual references to Richardson's own prolific body of nonfiction,[12] the role of the epistolary genre as a key intertext in *Pilgrimage* has yet to be adequately theorised. This article uses three case studies from *Pilgrimage* to outline how the letter is implicated in what I argue is the novel's democratic intertextual economy. The first is a representation of a letter Miriam receives from her sister Eve in *Pilgrimage*'s first chapter volume, *Pointed Roofs* (1915). The second is the intertextually layered love letter Miriam receives from her prospective lover Amabel in the novel's tenth chapter volume, *Dawn's Left Hand* (1931). The third case study is that of a postcard sent from Olga Feodorova to Miriam in *Pilgrimage*'s final, incomplete, and posthumously published chapter volume, *March Moonlight* (1967). This final communiqué is particularly important in that it has two definitive intertextual counterparts in the Richardson archive: the first, the original postcard sent to Richardson from an Olga Sokoloff on the eve of her suicide, and the second a copy of the postcard's front and a reproduction of its text copied out in Richardson's own hand. In each case, Richardson's epistolary intertextuality resists definitive intertextual genealogies to posit instead the modern(ist) woman's text as something more dynamic and dialogic: an 'adventure' in which readers are centrally important as 'donors' of meaning and 'the author's counterpart', as Richardson termed it.[13]

If the letter becomes an important genre through which Richardson depicts the porous and intersubjective nature of consciousness generally, then perhaps this is because the letter, as Thomas Beebee notes, is a 'Protean form which crystallised social relationships'.[14] Like Bakhtin's dialogic whereby 'the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other', the letter is a powerful symbol of how language is itself subject to a system of dispatch and reception so that its

12 See Elizabeth Pritchett and Scott McCracken, 'Writing Revolution: Dorothy Richardson's Contributions to Early Twentieth-Century Periodicals', in *Women, Periodicals, and Print Culture in Britain, 1890s-1920s: The Modernist Period*, eds. Faith Binckes and Carey Snyder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 195-212.

13 Dorothy Richardson, 'Authors and Readers' (Manuscript, n.d.), Richardson Papers, Box 8, Folder 139, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

14 Thomas O. Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction in Europe, 1500-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14–15.

meaning relies as much upon its receipt as its production.[15] In Jacques Derrida's later work, *The Post Card*, the postcard becomes a figure whose authenticity and originality can neither be fully affirmed nor denied in that 'within every signal ready, every mark or every trait, there is distancing, the post, what there has to be so that it is legible for another'.[16] Given *Pilgrimage*'s hybridity as semi-autobiographical fiction, its 'posts' – its generic, literary, and biographical antecedents – are multiple. Richardson herself described *Pilgrimage* as 'a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism'[17] and, later, not as a novel but rather as 'an investigation into reality'.[18] It is this 'generic ambiguity' that Mhairi Pooler believes is 'part of [*Pilgrimage*'s] appeal as it expands the possible intersections of life and art'.[19] In this same vein, the letter's status as a text in transit serves as a literary figure of Richardson's theory of women's intersubjective minds.

This theory of the 'inclusive' female consciousness intersects with Richardson's views of both written and political forms of authority in her June 1919 column for *The Dental Record*, 'Comments by a Layman'. Disputing the idea that women are unsuited for managerial positions in medical practices because some have failed "'in the world of men'", Richardson reasons:

> Looking closely we find behind his suggestion the assumption that 'the world,' as we know it, where the final authority is that of the sword, or in its more recent definition, of the world-wide league of policemen, is the best of all possible worlds. It is a very general male assumption. It is hardly yet beginning to dawn upon the male mind that 'authority,' is a doomed weapon.[20]

Here Richardson's metaphors for "'authority'" as a 'sword' and 'a doomed weapon', clearly highlight her post-War weariness. Moreover, by setting the words "the world" and "authority" apart in inverted commas, Richardson creates a typographic economy that rejects extant male

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15 M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 293.
16 Derrida, *The Post Card*, 30.
17 Richardson, 'Foreword', 9.
18 Richardson, 'Letter to Lita Hornick', 20 December 1948.
19 Mhairi Pooler, *Writing Life: Early Twentieth-Century Autobiographies of the Artist-Hero* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 144.
20 Richardson, 'Comments from a Layman', *The Dental Record* 39, no. 6 (1 June 1919): 214-16 (215).

taxonomies and epistemologies to call instead for the politicisation of language itself. Given that *Interim*, where Miriam rejects knowledge used as a 'code or weapon', is published this same year, it seems clear that Richardson's faith in the usual political mechanisms of reform has been eroded (also evident in her appellation of the newly formed League of Nations as 'the world-wide league of policemen') to the extent that the only viable means of democratisation seems to be a wholesale re-authoring of "authority" and "the world". As the column concludes, Richardson supplants masculine authority then with the proposal that women would actually make better hospital administrators because they move 'by the power of imaginative sympathy towards other selves'.[21] This phrase recurs in 'Women and the Future' (1924), where Richardson maintains that all women possess a 'gift of imaginative sympathy, [and] capacity for being simultaneously in all the warring camps'.[22] In 'Women in the Arts' (1925), Richardson likewise asserts women's 'living sympathy' and 'inclusive awareness', though here she cites this hyper-intersubjectivity as an impediment unique to female artists who cannot detach themselves as easily as their male counterparts.[23] Early critics also identify a certain inclusive fluidity in their reviews of *Pilgrimage*'s first chapter volumes. In his 1915 introduction to *Pointed Roofs*, J. D. Beresford declares that 'Miriam is one with life',[24] and, in her 1918 review, May Sinclair insists that Richardson's style refuses to position 'methods and forms as definitively objective or definitively subjective'.[25] Richardson herself understood this 'synthetic' state of female consciousness as endemic to her writing practice, a practice she describes as quasi-meditation: a 'returning to solitude and to nowhere, where alone I could be everywhere at once, hearing all the voices in the chorus'.[26]

Rather than gender essentialism then, it is possible to read Richardson's view of female consciousness as an attempt to reconfigure masculinist

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[21] Richardson, 'Comments from a Layman', *The Dental Record* 39, no. 6, 216.
[22] Dorothy Richardson, 'Women and the Future', in *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990), 414.
[23] Dorothy Richardson, 'Women in the Arts', in Scott, *The Gender of Modernism*, 422–23.
[24] J. D. Beresford, 'Introduction', in *Pointed Roofs* (London: Duckworth, 1915), viii.
[25] May Sinclair, 'The Novels of Dorothy Richardson', *Egoist* 5, no. 4 (April 1918), 57. Sinclair's review famously first applied the term 'stream of consciousness' to literature.
[26] Dorothy Richardson, 'Data for Spanish Publisher', ed. Joseph Prescott, *London Magazine* 1, no. 1 (June 1959): 18.

epistemologies and systems of authority that proved both intractable and stultifying. Instead, through a self-conscious disruption of hard-and-fast boundaries between self and other, text and intertext, author and reader, and life and art, Richardson makes her reply to the 'doomed weapons' of male authority. D. H. Lawrence regarded such experimentalism as symptomatic of a 'democratic-industrial-lovey-dovey-darling-take-me-to-mamma state of things' wherein the stream of consciousness could have benefitted from more selective filtering.[27] Though Lawrence is distinctly glib here, what he identifies in Richardson is indeed democratic. For *Pilgrimage* is, by design, no 'authority' on its heroine's consciousness. Instead, personal letters, like all of the novel's intertexts, fragment and diversify the narrative stream, 'creating simultaneity of thought on the page' and a sense that the many *petit récits* of other female voices can co-exist within the novel without Miriam's needing to 'to crush' the others in a bid for ultimate "authority".

The letter as generic and gendered intertext

Despite the dearth of clear epistolary intertexts in the Richardson archive, letters can be viewed as generic intertexts in that '[g]enre, as Patrick Paul Garlinger explains, 'is in many ways implicitly linked to intertextuality' in that it can 'refer to an ever-shifting set of characteristics associated with a body of literary texts that compose, add to, and diverge from that genre'.[28] Moreover, *Pilgrimage*'s incorporation of the epistolary genre into the narrative stream of Miriam's consciousness further allows Richardson to intervene in a tradition that has, as Elizabeth Goldsmith notes, 'the most tenacious of gender-genre connections in the history of literature' and was often linked to female emancipation in so far as it gave form and legibility to female interiority.[29] In her reading of the literary epistolary, Mary Favret further notes how the popularisation of the epistolary novel in the mid-eighteenth century prompted a reassessment of the so-called friendly letter's political potential. In this vein, democratic and working-class societies such as the 'Friends of Liberty' and 'The Revolution Society in London' not only 'threatened to replace – not just reform – representative

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[27] D.H. Lawrence, 'Surgery for the Novel', 520. Lawrence critiques both the novel of consciousness and the popular novel with regard to democracy, complaining that the former is too 'democratically' inclusive of detail while the latter is aimed at too widespread an audience.

[28] Patrick Paul Garlinger, 'Interdictions of Desire: Epistolarity and Intertextuality in Adelaide García Morales's *El Silencio de las Sirenas*', *Revista Hispánia Moderna* 54, no. 2 (Dec 2001): 437-459 (439).

[29] Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, *Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature*, ed. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), viii.

government in England'[30] but also 'rewrote the letter's claim to privacy and individuality'.[31] Resisting a reading of the genre of epistolary novel as one that detaches 'the world of letters from the world of political events', Favret illustrates how female writers of English Romanticism such as Helen Maria Williams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen and Mary Shelley 'confront one fiction of letters, which focuses on and finally silences the woman writer, with another fiction, wherein the letter represents a more democratic (and disruptive) potential'.[32]

The potential for the letter to democratise and disrupt is evident from the first chapter volume of *Pilgrimage*. Toward the end of *Pointed Roofs*, once Miriam has left her familial home to become a student teacher in a German girls' finishing school, she receives a letter from her sister Eve, who conveys news of their youngest sister Harriett's engagement. The first lines of the letter are quoted directly though not set out in letter format on the page. Instead they appear as lines of internal dialogue that Miriam reads:

> Dearest Mim. I have a wonderful piece of news for you. I wonder what you will say? It is about Harriet. She has asked me to tell you as she does not like to write about it herself.' (I 179)

From this point, the text of the letter is broken by dashes as Miriam reads 'the closely-written sheets' (I 179) and reconstructs – for herself and the reader – the story of her sister's courtship:

> The moment he saw her—joined the tennis club—they won the doubles handicap—a beautiful Slazenger racquet—only just over sixteen—for years—of course Mother says it's just a little foolish nonsense—but I am not sure that she really thinks so—Gerald took me into his confidence—made a long solemn call […] (I 180)

Here the letter form brings peripheral voices and narratives – Harriett's, Mrs Henderson's, Gerald's, and Eve's – into the core of Miriam's narrative consciousness. Furthermore, the rendering of this letter into a fragmented textual collage presents Miriam's own act of deconstructive reading as a model for *Pilgrimage*'s readers who must, as Richardson proposes in her manuscript 'Authors and Readers', engage in a 'partnership +

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[30] Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, politics, and the fiction of letters*, 2004 edition (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 29.
[31] Ibid., 30.
[32] Ibid., 37.

collaboration' with the writer.[33] From its very first volume, therefore, the female letter becomes a site of multiplicity, simultaneity, and dialogism. Importantly, by disrupting conventional practices of reading and using Miriam's receipt of Eve's letter to highlight the deconstructive possibilities of reading, Richardson, as Jean Radford maintains, 'uses reading as a metaphor for life' in that *Pilgrimage* is her attempt to create a new way of reading which might enable one to live in a different way, with all the intricacies of language and subjectivity, but without a master theory of either woman or writing.[34]

While the presence of letters in this novel of female consciousness invokes the genre's gendered history, its fragmented presentation disrupts that trajectory, supplanting it with alternative forms of both female narrative and identity. In this, the letter form in *Pilgrimage* is dialogical, a mode that, as Fredric Jameson maintains, 'is essentially an *antagonistic one*'.[35] The syntactical and typographical ruptures within the text of Eve's letter formally enact *Pilgrimage*'s rejection of the female marriage plot even as the textual tapestry models Richardson's achievement of her new and distinctly feminine aesthetic. Additionally, by means of the epistolary form, Richardson offers a riposte to male renderings of the female literary epistle as was found in early novels like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* and Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Julie*.[36] Rather than a genre used to instruct female readers' conduct or to prove the moral virtue of women, Eve's letter is a site of resistance not only to grand narratives of female identity but also resistance to writing genre in accordance to the "authority" of male literary tradition.

The Living Text

Pilgrimage as a text that rejects 'a master theory of woman or writing' accords with the novel's representation of letters as a site of female intersubjectivity and exchange. In Richardson's nonfiction as in *Pilgrimage* this view is often rehearsed in conversation with the figure of the literary 'master', chief among them Richardson's one-time lover and all-time foil, H. G. Wells. 'Women and the Future', for example, imagines a Wells who 'looks forward to the emergence of an army of civilized, docile women, following modestly behind the vanguard of males at work upon the business of reducing chaos to order'.[37] Inverting the militaristic idiom,

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33 Richardson, 'Authors and Readers'.
34 Jean Radford, *Dorothy Richardson* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 138.
35 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 1989), 84.
36 Goldsmith, *Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature*, viii.
37 Richardson, 'Women and the Future', 412–13.

Richardson relocates women's participation in public order on spiritual rather than political grounds, insisting that women have the 'capacity [...] for being simultaneously in all the warring camps'.[38]

Likewise, in *Pilgrimage*, Hypo Wilson's letters all appear as stable and unified bulwarks, whereas letters from female characters are seamlessly diffused into the narrative stream, refusing to reduce textual 'chaos to order'.[39] Upon her return from Oberland, for instance, Miriam receives the following note from Hypo: 'Welcome to your London, my dear. I'm more in love with you than ever.' (IV 141). On the one hand, Hypo's note authoritatively establishes new grounds for their relationship, authority that is registered not only by its tone but also via the direct transcription of it and the way in which it disrupts the stream-of-consciousness narration. On the other hand, Hypo's authority is blunted by the containment of his text within the narrative. Instead it is a physical block of unified and self-sufficient text, a visual antithesis to the more porous posts that *Pilgrimage* favours.

In contrast to Hypo's written profession of love to Miriam, the letter she receives from her lover, the French suffragist, Amabel, attempts to enact her love by overcoming the mediated nature of both post and language. As she reads this letter, Miriam experiences its script materially as a kind of living body, a model of a new kind of text:

> Alive. These written words were alive in a way no others she had met had been alive. Instead of calling her attention to the way the pen was held, to the many expressivenesses of a given handwriting, apart from what it was being used to express, instead of bringing as did the majority of letters, especially those written by men, a picture of the writer seated and thoughtfully using a medium of communication, recognizing its limitations and remaining docile within them so that the letter itself seemed quite as much to express the impossibility as the possibility of exchange by means of the written word, it called her directly to the girl herself, making her, and not the letter, the medium of expression. Each word, each letter, was Amabel, was one of the many poses of her body, upright as a plant is upright, elegant as a decorative plant, supporting its embellishing curves just as the

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[38] Richardson, 414.

[39] Examples of the unified letter from Hypo recur throughout *Pilgrimage*. See, for example: III 396; IV 360; and IV 650.

> clean uprights of the letters supported the curves that belonged to them (IV 215).

Before the reader has a glimpse of the content of Amabel's letter, Richardson presents her with Miriam's reaction to it as a live presence. Crucially, this act of reading overcomes the existential and temporal absences implied by the letter form. But Miriam, the budding writer, also reads Amabel's letter as an instructive case study, noting that unlike 'the majority of letters, especially those written by men' Amabel's writing refuses to 'recogniz[e] its limitations and remain[..] docile within them'. The idea of Amabel's writing not 'remaining docile', of course, echoes Richardson's derisive characterisation of women in a Wellsian future as 'an army of civilized, docile women'. Moreover, given that Amabel is a reformer – a suffragist soon to be imprisoned and on hunger strike at Holloway prison – her letter exemplifies the interrelationship between linguistic and political representation as its 'embellishing curves' resist linear and 'straight' narratives of female identity.[40] Instead, the letter's pointedly 'queer staccato pen strokes' (IV 214) offer Miriam an almost unmediated representation of 'the girl herself' as this letter makes lesbian sexual desire legible for both Miriam and Richardson's readers.

The sense of immediacy and the invisibility of narrative artifice is exactly what Miriam seeks in the books she reads but which she feels are lacking in the work of another literary 'master', Henry James. Discussing *The Ambassadors* with Hypo, Miriam bemoans the fact that 'these men's books, like an L.C.C. tram, [are] unable to make you forget them, the authors, for a moment' (IV 239). Metanarratively, we might read Miriam's critique of 'men's books' as Richardson's own rationale for *Pilgrimage*'s method. This sense of developing a new, more immediate style of the novel was one that *Pilgrimage*'s earliest readers identified. For May Sinclair, Richardson's stream of consciousness provided a new, more subtle realism, whose true art was in rendering the artifice of narrative invisible:

> She has plunged so neatly and quietly that even admirers of her performance might remain unaware of what it is precisely that she has done. She has disappeared while they are still waiting for the splash.[41]

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[40] For excellent accounts of this letter as a central site of lesbian modernism in *Pilgrimage*, see Carol Watts, *Dorothy Richardson* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1995); Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

[41] Sinclair, 'The Novels of Dorothy Richardson', 57.

That the immediacy of the letter's form allows Miriam to forget its artificiality and to read it as itself a living body is reminiscent of Richardson's own model of influence as an 'inflowing' of one author's voice into the next. That Amabel's letter becomes a 'node within a network' of female authors and subjectivities is made clear as Miriam experiences the letter as a 'mysterious interplay of their two beings, the reality she had known for so long alone, brought out into life' (IV 217).[42]

The capacity for the female letter to reanimate absent female voices and to create textual simultaneity extends further as the 'posts' of this letter – its multiple female intertexts – accrue. In Amabel's love letter there are, of course, the previous letters of Richardson and Veronica Leslie-Jones circulating. Within the body of Amabel's letter it is also possible to trace one of Richardson's characteristically elusive allusions: the work of Victorian poet, Christina Rossetti, another female writer concerned with both spiritual and aesthetic pilgrimage. In *Pilgrimage*, there are several references to Christina's celebrated brother, the Pre-Raphaelite 'master', Dante Gabriel.[43] There are none, however, to the poet herself. Yet as with Richardson's citations of male literary authorities, these explicit references often serve to contain their power rather than to aggrandise it. Female texts and letters, conversely, are presented as more generative as one voice proliferates into multiple others. Such is the case with Amabel's letter, whose style is visually akin to *Pilgrimage*'s own, with frequent dashes and fragments representing unfinished thoughts and silences.

> Forgive—I watched you—in your little English clothes—go across the square—oh, my lady—my little—you terrified my heart—I hold it out to you—my terrified heart—in my two hands— (IV 217)

As Joanne Winning observes, this section of Amabel's letter contains a clear 'emphasis on body, and the act of Amabel giving it to Miriam in a passionate act of love'.[44] The emphasis of the text enabling a bodily exchange from one woman to another again recalls Richardson's corporeal

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[42] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 23.
[43] Richardson was a clear admirer of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's work, having made a 'pilgrimage' to his tomb in 1937: Dorothy Richardson, 'Letter to Bryher', 25 September 1937, Bryher Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University. George Thomson cites four references to the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti in *Pilgrimage*: I, 168; I, 414; II, 419; IV, 426.
[44] Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson*, 123.

concept of intertextuality as an 'inflowing' or 'drinking […] in'. As with Amabel's letter, the female speaker of Rossetti's poem 'Twice' holds out her hand, first to a prospective lover who rejects her and, finally, to God who accepts the speaker's gift of love. Like Amabel, Rossetti's speaker addresses her lover, haltingly as the dashes in both texts suggest, and with the emphatic 'O', offering love via the haptic metaphor of heart in hand.

> I took my heart in my hand
> (O my love, O my love),
> I said: Let me fall or stand,
> Let me live or die,
> But this once hear me speak –
> (O my love, O my love) –
> Yet a woman's words are weak;
> You should speak, not I.[45]

While the speaker's desire is clear here, the nature of that desire is less so. On the one hand, and as the parenthetical repetitions suggest, the speaker is longing for her lover. On the other hand, the main body of the text expresses a stronger and more sustained desire to be heard, a desire that the rest of the poem goes on to satisfy so that (despite the speaker's acknowledgement of society's view that 'a woman's words are weak') by the end of the poem, the speaker's words have enabled her to go on: 'I shall not die, but live –'.[46]

Although Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have famously read in Rossetti's work the 'aesthetics of renunciation', in this poem as with many others of Rossetti's we have a more ambiguous figure.[47] Virginia Woolf imagined, for instance, that Rossetti was 'not a pure saint by any means' but was instead someone who 'pulled legs' and 'tweaked noses', whose work was both playful and, at times, disruptive. Even at the end of 'Twice', having consecrated her heart to God, the speaker concludes that she 'shall not question *much*'.[48] As with Richardson's absorption of other intertexts, the absorption of Christina Rossetti's 'Twice' in this moment of textual exchange is so subtle as almost to be missed. As Caselli contends with

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[45] Christina Rossetti, *Selected Poems* (London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1994),100-101.
[46] Rossetti, 101.
[47] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Second Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[48] My emphasis.

regard to Dante's *Divine Comedy* in *Pilgrimage*, Richardson's is 'an aesthetics in which sources, although interwoven into the fabric of the novel, cannot be divined with absolute certainty, a technique that contributes to Richardson's signature oscillation between familiarity and estrangement'.[49]

While possible to read this oscillation in Freudian terms as a kind of uncanny repetitiousness, *Pilgrimage*'s intertextual oscillation between familiarity and estrangement is more playful than pathologic. Further, the sense of movement between texts contributes to the novel's sense of being, like its protagonist, in a continual state of becoming. Finally, by placing Miriam's consciousness in continual conversation with the diverse historical, literary, political, and social texts that inform it, Richardson avoids treating her influences as authorities or masters. As Amabel's letter suggests, the female self *and* the female text are implicated in a continual dislocation and deferral of absolute meaning. Accordingly, *Pilgrimage*'s female letters prompt readers to question how meaning is constructed within narrative in so far as 'they are pieces of correspondence that can never fully be recuperated' and as such 'raise the question of the hermeneutic value of isolated intertextual influences'.[50] Like Amabel's letter to Miriam, the female text is '[a]live' – vital and dynamic – effecting through aesthetic means the very 'disincorporation of power' and re-presenting of historical forces that Claude Lefort argues are the hallmarks of democracy.[51] For Lefort, it is further this 'dissolution of the ultimate markers of certainty' within a political economy that 'inaugurates an adventure [...] in which the foundations of power, the foundations of right and the foundations of knowledge are all called into question'.[52] If the 'adventure' of democracy is founded on epistemological uncertainty, then Richardson's epistolary aesthetic invokes an analogous uncertainty, whereby the voice of the other, whether past author or future reader, is as vital to the text as the author herself.

The Dead Letter

In *The Tunnel* (1919), Miriam reads an encyclopaedia entry for 'Woman' and despairs of its characterisation of menopausal women as 'leaving off

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[49] Caselli, 'Dante's Pilgrimage in Dorothy Richardson', 93.
[50] Garlinger, 'Interdictions of Desire', 446.
[51] Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988),179.
[52] Lefort, 179.

where boys of eighteen began', a description that Miriam feels presents women as an 'undeveloped man' (II 220). In the face of this, Miriam concludes that the only answer is death: 'I *must* die. I can't go on living in it . . . the whole world full of *creatures*; half-human' (220). Later, in *Clear Horizon* (1935), as Miriam comes closer to becoming the writer of her own life, she tries to convey to Hypo how important it is for her to be able to recognise herself in others' expression. In the following case, Miriam describes the 'recognition of identity' she felt at age seven when her paternal grandmother met her for the first time and smiled silently at her: 'It's finding the *same* world in another person that moves you to your roots. The same world in two people, in twenty people, in a nation. It makes you feel that you exist and can *go on*.' (IV 333).

Here the grandmother's single, silent communiqué results Miriam's sustained sense of ontological value. Metanarratively, it is important that Miriam is speaking about the impact of the past generation of women on her present. Like Woolf, who famously contended that 'a woman writing thinks back through her mothers', Miriam highlights here the necessity of communicative precedent (here a smile, but later language) to affirm and legitimise female identity. [53]

This is no more evident than when considering a particular and peculiar artefact lodged within the Richardson Papers at the Beinecke. The artefact is a postcard from 1910: a suicide note, addressed to 'My dearest Dorothy!' and signed 'Olga'. The postcard was sent from Olga Sokoloff, whom Richardson befriended while living in a boarding house in St John's Wood. More peculiar still is the fact that Richardson made a photograph reproduction of the card on the back of which she transcribed Olga's note in her own hand. Richardson additionally rewrites this postcard in her posthumously published *March Moonlight* (1968), where it is received by the forty-year-old Miriam from the fictive Olga Feodorova. As *Pilgrimage*'s only clear epistolic intertext from the Richardson archive, the postcard and the obvious peculiarity of Richardson's copy of it, provides endless (perhaps morbid) fascination. What follows are two attempts to theorise these postcards and their reinscription in *Pilgrimage*. The first reading is perhaps overly optimistic, the second decidedly ambivalent.

[53] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 1957 edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929), 101.

Olga Sokoloff's note is written on the back of a postcard photograph of Auguste Rodin's 'Le Baiser' from the Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, where the statue is housed.

> My dear Dorothy!
> I thought I must write you and kiss you myself. Good by [*sic*], my dear friend, will you wish me good night or good day perhaps? Now I remember your sea lady. I must die. I was so happy, that I cannot be unhappy again. Look at them – are they not happy together. I was like that and now I dont [*sic*] want from the sun in the shadow again and perhaps there are better dreams.
>
> Olga[54]

Sokoloff's final sentence alludes to Wells's novel, *The Sea Lady*, in which a mermaid comes ashore to insist on her utopian message that '[t]here are better dreams!' than humans' 'infinitely small' ones.[55] While Wells's character never equivocates, on the eve of her suicide Sokoloff casts doubt on the mermaid's vision, amending the quotation with the 'perhaps'.

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[54] Olga Sokoloff, 'Postcard to Dorothy Richardson', ALS, n.d., Richardson Papers, Box 6, Folder 105, Beinecke Library, Yale University. Although the postcard is not dated, Richardson did write to Wells in 1910 to tell him that 'your little admirer Olga Sokoloff has died suddenly': Fromm, *Windows on Modernism*, 7.
[55] H.G. Wells, 'The Sea Lady' (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902), 69.

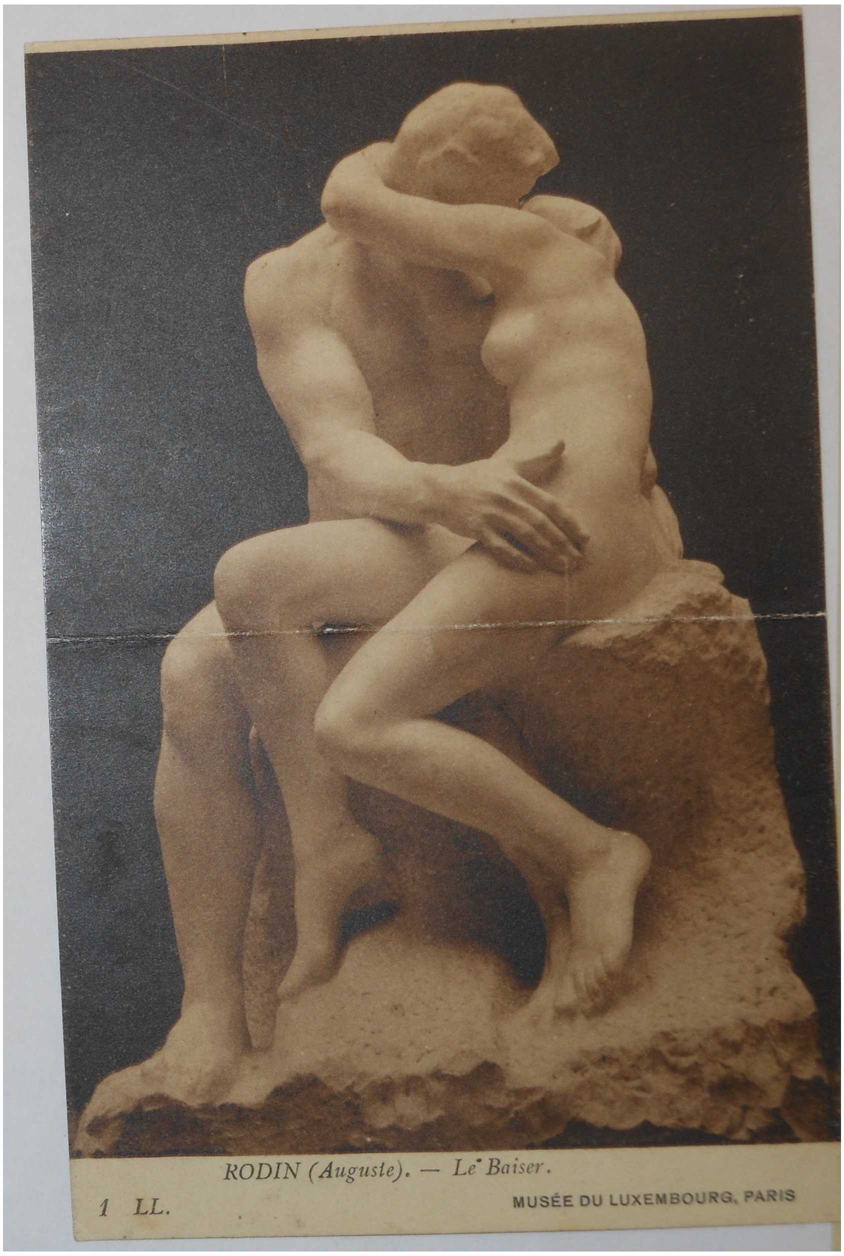
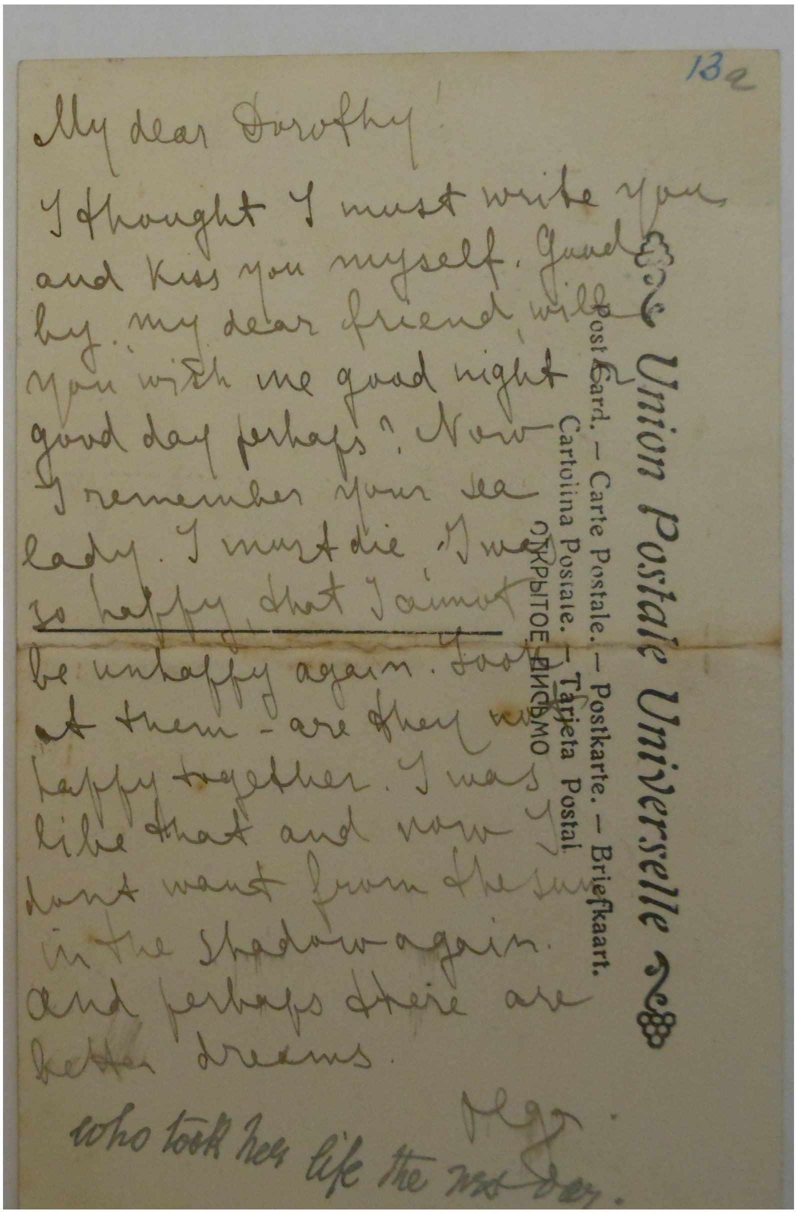


Fig. 1. Postcard from Olga Sokoloff to Dorothy Richardson (Beinecke Library, Yale University)

Fig. 2. Dorothy Richardson's photographic reproduction of postcard from Olga Sokoloff (Beinecke Library, Yale University)



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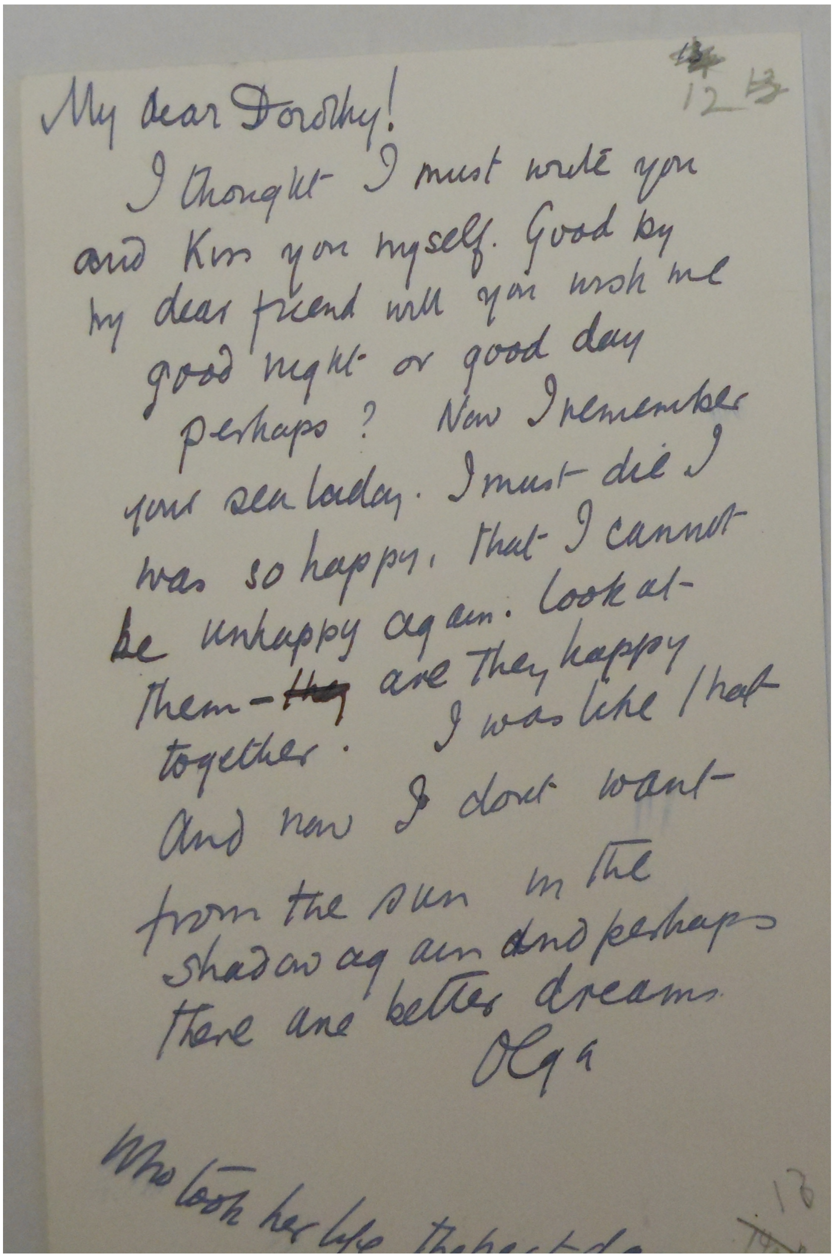
My dear Dorothy!

I thought I must write you and kiss you myself. Good by. my dear friend, will you wish me good night good day perhaps? Now I remember your sea lady. I must die. I was so happy, that I cannot be unhappy again. Look at them - are they not happy together. I was like that and now I dont want from the sun in the shadow again. And perhaps there are better dreams.

Olga.

who took her life the next day.

Fig.3. Postcard from Olga Sokoloff to Dorothy Richardson (Beinecke Library, Yale University).



~~13~~ 12 ~~13~~

My dear Dorothy!
I thought I must write you
and Kiss you myself. Good by
my dear friend will you wish me
good night or good day
perhaps? Now I remember
your sea today. I must die I
was so happy. that I cannot
be unhappy again. look at
them – ~~they~~ are they happy
together. I was like that
And now I dont want
from the sun in the
shadow again and perhaps
there are better dreams.
Olga

Who took her life the next d

13
~~14~~

Fig. 4. Dorothy Richardson's version of Olga Sokoloff's postcard (Beinecke Library, Yale University)

At the bottom of Sokoloff's postcard, the following annotation appears in Richardson's hand: 'Who took her life the next day.' While Sokoloff's letter strikes a lyrical tone of regret and resolution, Richardson's annotation acts as a kind of archival reference. Yet in the letter she writes to H.G. Wells in 1910, Richardson sounds shaken by the 'horrid blow' of Sokoloff's suicide:

> I know you & Jane will be sorry to hear that your little admirer Olga Sokoloff has died suddenly, in Paris. Having written to a few friends & family to tell them of a great happiness & her determination to end her life in the glow of it she took an overdose of veronal and lay down at night thinly clad under an open window. She was found twelve hours later & taken to hospital where she died without recovering consciousness of double pneumonia. I find it a horrid blow though she always prepared me for it—& it is quite impossible to imagine her grown up or grouped in life in any sort of way. A friend was with her day & night in the hospital until the end.[56]

Hardly the tone of a writer looking to convert tragedy to text, instead Richardson sounds grimly resigned. If so, this is surely a reflection of Richardson's having been present for her mother's suicide in 1895. This suicide is recounted in *Honeycomb* (1917), *Pilgrimage*'s third chapter volume, where Richardson re-presents the scene in notably oblique terms as Miriam struggles to integrate the trauma: 'her body seemed outside her, empty, pacing forward in a world of perfect unanswering silence' (I 489). Despite *Pilgrimage*'s near excision of this seminal biographical and narrative event, Joanne Winning notes that 'in occupying the largest absence at the core of the text, Mrs Henderson also represents its greatest presence'.[57] Indeed, this idea of present absence, the spectral nature of the other within *Pilgrimage*'s representation of the lone female's consciousness, also underwrites the novel's intertextual aesthetic as well as the postal principle of a letter itself which, as Jacques Lacan famously observes, is unique 'being by nature symbol only of an absence'.[58] So it is significant that in *Pilgrimage*'s final chapter volume the suicide is articulated more clearly than Mrs Henderson's but similarly by means of a symbolic absence, the letter or postcard.

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[56] Fromm, *Windows on Modernism*, 7.
[57] Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson*, 77.
[58] Jacques Lacan, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"' in *Yale French Studies*, no. 48 (1972): 54.

On Richardson's copy in her hand, she has copied Sokoloff's text almost exactly, including her own annotation:

> My dear Dorothy!
> I thought I must write and kiss you myself. Good by [sic] my dear friend will you wish me good night or good day perhaps? Now I remember your sea lady. I must die. I was so happy, that I cannot be unhappy again. Look at them – ~~they~~ are they happy together. I was like that and now I don't want from the sun in the shadow again and perhaps there are better dreams.
>
> Olga
>
> Who took her life the next day.[59]

Richardson's transcription reveals two variations as it deletes an errant 'they' before 'are they not happy together' and removes the 'not' from this same clause. Thus, Sokoloff's rhetorical question about Rodin's lovers, '— are they not happy together', becomes an actual question, 'are they happy together', so that the reproduced postcard becomes at once a transcription and a rewriting of Sokoloff's original. Richardson's version of the question transforms Sokoloff's rhetorical into an actual question challenging the marble-carved statue's embrace as a material symbol of heterosexual love.

Though we know little of Olga Sokoloff and the specific nature of Richardson's relationship with her, we do know from Richardson's later letter to artist Henry Savage that Sokoloff was a friend of the Prince-cum-Russian revolutionary and anarcho-communist, Peter Kropotkin, and that Sokoloff's life and death left a lasting impression on Richardson.[60] Richardson was still working on *Pilgrimage* in 1951 when she wrote to artist, Henry Savage, explaining that she planned to incorporate Sokoloff's story into the final and posthumously published chapter volume *March Moonlight* (1968). Richardson explains to Savage that an essay she has outlined, 'For & Against H.G.W.', has been held up by 'the imposs. of combining more than servantless housekeeping for two, plus writing a book that never brought in even bread & butter, plus doing translations for pence'.[61] Despite Richardson's despondency, she goes on to discuss her current

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59 Sokoloff, 'Postcard to Dorothy Richardson', n.d.

60 In a letter to Henry Savage, Richardson describes Sokoloff as 'a friend of Kropotkin's who then was living in St. John's Wood'. Fromm, *Windows on Modernism*, 657.

61 Fromm, *Windows on Modernism*, 657.

writing and refers back to *The Sea Lady*, reinstating Sokoloff's original misquotation of Wells.

> His Sea Lady, by the way, said only "Perhaps there are better dreams." A quotation sent to me, on the day she took her life, by young Olga Sokoloff, a friend of Kropotkin's who then was living in St John's Wood, & with whom she had "much talkings". Her whole story is being incorporated, briefly &, in a sense, illustratively, in a vol. of Pilgrimage begun in '39 & to which only recently I have got back in the hope of finishing it during my 79th year soon to be entered upon.[62]

Given the multi-layered intertextual and biographical relationships these postcards represent, they bear clear witness to Richardson's notion of the modern novel as 'adventure' for readers. In this sense, Richardson's transcription of Sokoloff's postcard and her reincorporation of it into fiction enacts the possibility for women's lives and stories to endure – to 'exist and *go on*' as Miriam puts it.

Thus, the first way in which Richardson might use the Sokoloff story 'in a sense, illustratively' is as a refusal to contain women's identities and women's writing in fixed and essentialist positions. In a sense, as the postcard's representations accrete and transform from nonfiction to fiction more female voices are added 'to the choir' of *Pilgrimage*'s polyphonous narrative core. The novel's epistolary intratextuality then not only testifies to the many influences of which the single female consciousness is composed but also to the sustaining power other women's *petit récits*. That is, by re-presenting her experiences and people she has met in writing, Miriam will find fresh optimism in her 'rebirth', 'the power of light' as she experiences it while writing at the end of *Pilgrimage*, to '[b]anish all sense of current misery and call her forward into the unknown lying ahead' (IV 654). Thus, *Pilgrimage*'s little narrative of Miriam Henderson's mind at work proves vital not only to the life of its author but also to the lives of its female readers who, in reading the narrative of one woman's interior life might also feel enabled to '*go on*'.

If this first reading of the Sokoloff postcard is perhaps overly optimistic, a more balanced account can be achieved by scrutinising how Sokoloff's story is 'incorporated […] illustratively' within *March Moonlight*. In *Pilgrimage*, Sokoloff is transposed to Feodorova, and the latter is introduced as a friend to Russian revolutionaries with no particular

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[62] Fromm, Ibid.

political commitments herself. Instead, Miriam imagines that Feodorova's enemy is life itself rather than social injustice (IV 637). Feodorova tells Miriam that she is an ardent admirer of 'your H.G. Vells' and that the 'best I like is this writer's *Sea Lady* . . . (perhaps there are better dreams). Ah. That for me is most-wonderful.' (633). That Sokoloff and Feodorova misquote Wells's original text, adding the equivocal 'perhaps', and that Richardson repeats this misquote in her letter to Savage undercuts the authority of Wells's words, recasting them instead as fluid and dynamic, subject to revision. Feodorova's misquotation in conversation is later reinstated in the novel's rendering of her suicide note to Miriam.

> 'This picture by Rodin shall show you where I have been. In a world so beautiful that I can no more return to the world-life as before. To you alone I say goodebye [*sic*], with the words of your so wonderfoll [*sic*] Mr Wells: "Perhaps there are better dreams".'
>
> The Sea Lady. (IV 644)

Though both nonfiction and fiction postcards contain the same line, 'perhaps there are better dreams', in the fictional recasting the line appears as a quotation from Wells's novel. In the card to Richardson, it is not clear whether Sokoloff is misquoting or simply amending *The Sea Lady*'s line with the 'perhaps'. Thus the speaker's ambiguity stands as does the possibility that Sokoloff is taking poetic license to rewrite Wells as she thinks it should read. The second striking difference is the number of 'I's in Sokoloff's postcard compared to the number in Feodorova's. In the latter, the names of two male artists – Rodin and Wells – take centre stage, as does the misquotation of Wells, and the title of one of his books, underlined rather than attributed to Richardson as Sokoloff does so in her postcard. The subject herself, Olga Feodorova, is missing, a sign that she is already 'post' by the time the postcard arrives to Miriam. That is, Richardson's fictional re-presentation of Sokoloff's postcard excises the subject from it, so that Feodorova's words no longer seem to represent herself but rather enact a kind of misplaced, and ultimately 'doomed', reverence to male aesthetic authority.

Sokoloff's postcard, in contrast to its fictional counterpart, begins and ends with a kiss. In the fictionalised rendering of the suicide note, the intimacy of friendship and potential sexual desire is excised. What replaces it is a palimpsestuous polyphony of real-life and fictional voices that Miriam hears just before she will begin to write what will become *Pilgrimage*. On the one hand, and as I have argued in the case of letters from Eve and Amabel, it is possible to read this melding of voices as evidence of *Pilgrimage*'s democratic intersubjectivity and dialogism. On the other hand, if we accept Freud's definition of suicide as the collapse of the ego then we might read Richardson's rewritings of Sokoloff's postcard as an attempt to recreate that ego, a 'Hail Mary pass' at restoring her friend's subjectivity, if not in life then in and by the letter. Yet, following Freud, we might equally read this form of intertextuality as a compulsion to repeat and thus as evidence of a death drive, if not within Richardson then within *Pilgrimage* itself. After all, the novel's relentlessly inclusive incorporation of others' lives might cynically be read as a form of literary cannibalism – a prioritising of the word over the world whose tax is a history of neglect and mischaracterisation. Though this reading is most certainly hyperbolic, even Richardson seemed to recognise a certain failure in her life's work, not only did it never bring 'in even bread & butter' but the very structure of the novel – a pilgrimage through Miriam's journey of writing *Pilgrimage* – equally implies that the novel cannot end but with its author's death, as was indeed the case for Richardson.

Equally, we might read Richardson's repetitions and alterations of the Sokoloff postcard as themselves 'dead letters': letters removed from circulation because they are undeliverable and bear no return address. As a case in point, Richardson's rewriting of Sokoloff's postcard can only exist in circular transit, within Richardson's own writing. Yet, rather than read Richardson's rewritings of Sokoloff's suicide note as unmitigated evidence of pathology, we would do well to consider that for Derrida, all letters are dead letters in the sense that they are, like 'post cards: neither legible nor illegible, open and radically unintelligible'.[63] In other words, because all textuality is scattered it necessarily exists as 'post': a composite of voices and histories to which it responds but which cannot be known or traced with absolute certainty. Still, if behind Richardson's intertextual transformations of Sokoloff's suicide lies the spectre of the 'dead letter' – the antecedent to which there can be no reply – it is not to say that this is evidence of the novel's disregard for the lives it represents apart from Miriam's. Just as Richardson finds in Brontë's fiction a certain 'similarity in spirit' that allows her to read this author 'by heart', so too is there evidence of genuine affect behind these textual transpositions and transformations. As Derrida notes, even though the written word is always inadequate to recover the depth of human connection and relationship, the effort to write and thereby communicate with the absent other is nonetheless an act of love and hope:

[63] Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card*, 29.

> In the beginning. in principle. was the post. And I will never get over it. But in the end I know it. I become aware of it as our death sentence: it was composed. according to all possible codes and genres and languages. as a declaration of love.[64]

At the same time, there is always a rupture, an inability to wholly assimilate others' stories, a failure that belies Richardson's notion of literary influence as a perfect 'inflowing' of one author's voice into the voice of another. Like the Olga suicides and their concomitant intertextual rewritings, *Pilgrimage* makes clear its own failures to assimilate, to smooth the choppy waters of experimentation. By *Pilgrimage*'s eleventh chapter-volume, *Clear Horizon* (1935), Miriam sends a letter to Hypo marking the end of their affair and the assertion of her aesthetic independence: 'I have no waste paper basket. Yours, I know, is capacious. M.' (IV 363).[65] Whereas Hypo's wastepaper basket is capacious, Miriam's is non-existent; instead what *Pilgrimage*'s only quoted missive from Miriam attests to is her insistence on maintaining the right to a scattered and imperfect identity, as both a writer and a woman. Similarly, Richardson seems to have understood the inherent imperfections of her work, writing 'I.R.' or 'Imperfectly Realised' next to various sections of her manuscript. In a 1941 letter to her friend, Peggy Kirkaldy, Richardson wrote of the threat that the Nazi party posed to democracy: '"Democracy" a state of mind rather than a system (though it is in the process of trying to evolve decent club-rules) is on trial & guiltily aware of its own defect'.[66] Richardson nonetheless maintained that, whatever its flaws, democracy was preferable to its alternatives. As she put it: 'We have always refused Dictators, whether in cassocks or robes, at all costs. The price of resistance is fearful. Prices generally are'.[67]

If we regard *Pilgrimage* as a work of democratic modernism – one that infuses Miriam's stream of consciousness with a diverse, elusive, and allusive dialogue of intertexts – then we must also acknowledge the 'fearful' price the novel pays for democracy: financial failure and sustained neglect relative to other modernist masterpieces, a verisimilitude so keen as to presuppose the novel's incompletion, as well as the ethical problematics of such aesthetic vampirism. Thus, while Miriam makes a virtue of having no wastepaper basket, Richardson might have invested in

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[64] Ibid., 30

[65] See Kara Watts, 'Miriam's Waste Paper Basket: Reading Economies in *Pilgrimage*', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, no. 6 (2014-2013): 46–62.

[66] Fromm, *Windows on Modernism*, 423–24.

[67] Fromm, 424.

at least a small one. In the novel's return to the Olga postcard, for instance, there is a trace of what Derrida calls archive fever: 'a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement'.[68] As with Sokoloff's suicide postcard, the effort is destined to fail, for this postcard is a dead letter: received post-mortem and therefore already an archive upon receipt. Yet in *Pilgrimage*'s insistent and persistent representation and re-presentation of various women's lives and deaths, *Pilgrimage* demands that narratives of women's failures be recognized alongside their triumphs. In this, perhaps Woolf's reading of *Pilgrimage* as 'better in its failure than most books in their success' is most apt.[69] If *Pilgrimage* itself ever ran the risk of itself becoming itself a dead letter, then it is most fortunate that Oxford University Press is soon to release important scholarly editions of this ground-breaking novel as well as Richardson's collected short fiction and, indeed, the author's own vital letters.

[68] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz 1998 edition (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995), 91.
[69] Virginia Woolf, 'The Tunnel', *Times Literary Supplement* (13 February 1919): 81.