

Samuel Alexander

“THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SENTENCE OF THE FEMININE GENDER”:
WOOLF, RICHARDSON, AND FEMININE FORM

In 1919, Virginia Woolf read the essay in the *Little Review* on “The Fiction of Dorothy Richardson” in which May Sinclair first applied the expression “stream of consciousness” to literary technique. Sinclair uses the first part of this well-known review to dismiss the “philosophic cant” that opposes “realism” and “idealism,” “objective” and “subjective” art (v). Referring to a review of Richardson’s *Pointed Roofs* by J.D. Beresford, she writes, “Reality is thick and deep, too thick and deep and at the same too fluid to be cut with any convenient carving knife. The novelist who would be close to reality must ... as Mr. Beresford says, simply ‘plunge in’” (vii). In transcribing this last sentence in her reading notebook, Woolf emphasizes it with an exclamation point that looks forward to the ecstatic “What a lark! What a plunge!” that opens *Mrs. Dalloway*.¹

Clarissa Dalloway’s plunge, of course, takes her into the depths of memory, into the air of Bourton through a set of French windows that have been recalled by the sound of squeaking hinges (3). By contrast, Richardson—according Sinclair—plunges into a reality that is not remote and remembered, but temporally and spatially immediate. Going “deep,” here, is synonymous with getting “close” to the reality at hand: the subjective accuracy of Richardson’s art lies precisely in its adherence to objective or external reality.

So strong is this adherence to reality in *Pilgrimage* that Richardson sacrifices plot and even “form” to very minute description—as a number of early reviewers, including Sinclair herself, were quick to point out. Perhaps the ultimate embodiment of this “formlessness” is Richardson’s practice of including long, list-like passages: catalogues which create the sense of what Roland Barthes, in his essay on the “reality effect,” calls “the vertigo of notation” (Sinclair ix, Barthes 258). In this essay, I will consider this stylistic tendency in terms of its consequences not only for plot, but also for genre, suggesting that Richardson replaces narrative progression—progression through the stages of the conventional

¹ *Reading Notebooks*, p. 156. A facsimile of this page of the notebook is also reproduced on the first page of this edition.

bildungsroman—with description. Sinclair begins to sketch this dialectic when she notes as one of the fundamental paradoxes of *Pilgrimage* its alternation between “extraordinary compression” and “an extenuation more extraordinary still” (xiii). The word choice here is evocative, since “extenuation” indicates both a *stretching out*, a literal extension of the text, and a *thinning*, a reduction in a metaphorical density that refers not to the proportion of mass to volume, but of story to discourse, tale to telling. Sinclair continues: “On one page Miss Richardson seems to be accounting for every minute of Miriam’s time. On another she passes over events that might be considered decisive” (xiii).

The most decisive event in the female bildungsroman, the one which signals completion and maturity, is marriage, and Richardson’s strategy of “extenuation” accompanies a very explicit resistance to the marriage plot on the part of her heroine. Miriam Henderson preserves her individuality by seeking out relationships with women that exclude male interference, and by establishing her London room as a kind of sanctuary of solitude. In resisting assimilation to marriage, I argue, Miriam prefigures Clarissa Dalloway, who preserves her individuality in similar (if less extreme) ways. In Woolf’s writings on Richardson, and in the changes in her own prose between *Jacob’s Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, there appears a stylistic corollary of this resistance to genre: the development of a dilatory or “extenuating” style that Woolf identifies as a specifically feminine form.

Woolf originally registered Richardson’s lists through parody. Her 1919 review of *The Tunnel*, resembles a review of the same volume by Katherine Mansfield, with whom Woolf discussed Richardson, according to her diary, “with the greatest freedom and animation” (257). In her largely negative review of *The Tunnel*, Mansfield complains that Richardson is insufficiently selective in assembling her impressions:

There is no plot, no beginning, middle or end. Things just ‘happen’ one after another with incredible rapidity and at break-neck speed. There is Miss Richardson, holding out her mind, as it were, and there is Life hurling objects into it as fast as she can throw. And at the appointed time Miss Richardson dives into its recesses and reproduces a certain number of these treasures—a pair of button boots, a night in spring, some cycling knickers, some large, round biscuits—as many as she can fit into a book.” (6)

Woolf’s review is less negative than Mansfield’s. She presents Richardson as a noble if failed experimenter, concluding that “*The Tunnel* is better in its failure than most books in their success” (12). But like Mansfield, Woolf criticizes the lack of “some unity, significance, or design” in the “helter-skelter of flying fragments” in Miriam’s consciousness (11). Also like Mansfield, she conveys the

disconnectedness of these fragments through a parodic list (11). She writes that Richardson invites the reader to “embed himself in Miriam Henderson’s consciousness, to register one after another, and one on top of another, words, cries, shouts, notes of a violin, fragments of lectures, to follow these impressions as they flicker through Miriam Henderson’s consciousness” (11). The lists of Mansfield and Woolf mimic the sense of endless series that both critics disparage in Richardson: things happen “one after another,” says Mansfield, as Woolf writes that impressions pile “one after another and one on top of another.”

Mansfield and Woolf exaggerate the randomness of Richardson’s lists, but not their length. In a representative passage from about halfway through *The Tunnel*, Miriam casts her gaze on the series of foreign artifacts that line the walls of her employer’s office:

[S]he browsed rapidly, her eyes roaming from thing to thing ... the shields and assegais grouped upon the raised dull gold papering of the high opposite wall, the bright beautiful coloured bead skirts spread out amongst curious carved tusks and weapons, the large cool placid gold Buddha reclining below them with his chin on his hand and his elbow on a red velvet cushion [...] the Japanese cupboard fixed above Mrs Orly’s writing table, the fine firm carved ivory on its panels; [...] the gallery with its upper mystery, the happy clock fastened against its lower edge, always at something after four (66)

I have condensed this list, which actually goes on for about three times as long in the original text, but even this selection gives a sense of the temporal effect such a passage has on the surrounding story—an effect captured by the stalled clock at its end. It almost feels as though Mr. Orly’s imperialist decorations are allowed to import a non-progressive, colonial temporality like the one Jed Esty sees behind the “anti-developmental” narrative of Rachel Vinrace in Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* (72).

Miriam does not come of age in South America like Rachel, but in late-Victorian England, and aside from the chapter in which this passage appears, the novel confines its focus to London and its environs. Miriam’s story is anti-developmental at an individual level, however, in that she resists the progression toward marriage typical of the traditional bildungsroman. To forestall this endpoint, Richardson does not kill off her heroine, as Woolf does in *The Voyage Out*; instead, she continually postpones the culmination of Miriam’s *Bildung*. Miriam’s story is told serially, spread out over eleven volumes published between 1915 and 1935, and the catalogues I have been discussing contribute to a marked disproportion between story and discourse. To focus on our example, *The Tunnel* takes nearly three hundred pages to narrate the year-and-a-half long period

between April 4, 1896 and mid-August 1897— and in some ways, it is an uneventful year and a half.

In this important volume of *Pilgrimage*, the uneventfulness is especially marked because Richardson deliberately gestures toward the signposts that mark the hero's progress in the traditional bildungsroman. The title itself, *The Tunnel* (which does not appear at any point in the text that I can find) may refer to the passage between adolescence and adulthood that we are led to expect by such signals.² At the novel's opening, Miriam moves from the countryside to the city, where she takes an apartment in Bloomsbury. Soon after, she meets a mentor figure modeled on H.G. Wells, who helps her realize her artistic vocation. At different points, she appears on the verge of the two love affairs—one “debasement” and one “exalting”—that J.H. Buckley says the hero should have in his classic outline of the bildungsroman plot (Buckley 17). Finally, like Wilhelm Meister, she sees and is deeply affected by a performance of *Hamlet* halfway through the novel—although for Miriam this performance initiates a series of visits to the theatre that really culminates when she identifies with Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. It is also at this point that Richardson glances at Joyce's male *Bildungsheld*, Stephen Dedalus, as Miriam thinks, “Wit. Woman's wit. Men at least bowed down to that; though they did not know what it was. ‘Wit’ used to mean knowledge—‘inwit,’ conscience” (188).

None of these threads is picked up and carried to any kind of completion, however, and Miriam definitely does *not* pass through the final stage mentioned by Buckley, in which the hero chooses “the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, [leaves] his adolescence behind and [enters] upon his maturity” (17). Nor does she reach an anti-accommodation, as does Stephen Dedalus at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The end of the novel finds Miriam exactly where she was at the beginning: sitting in the Bloomsbury house describing a room that has just been opened for the first time, “her eye running over the length of the faded, patterned, deep-fringed table cover, the large cracked pink bowl in the centre, holding an aspidistra . . . brown cracked leaves sticking out; the faded upholstery of the arm-chair opposite her the rows of dining room chairs” (286; ellipses are Richardson's).

Miriam certainly has not married by the end of the novel, as do Wilhelm, most nineteenth-century heroines, and even Shakespeare's Portia; in fact, marriage, in this part of *Pilgrimage*, is something to be feared and avoided. Miriam tells her

² Although all answers must remain speculative, it is worth asking the question of whether this title influenced Woolf's famous journal entry about her “tunneling process” (October 15, 1923), which was written five months after her positive review of a later volume of *Pilgrimage* in May of 1923.

“new women” friends, Mag and Jan, and that she looks forward to reaching age thirty, when her family will no longer expect her to find a husband since “no one cares what you do when you’re thirty” (150). Anonymous men materialize unexpectedly in the novel to serve as haunting reminders of the seeming inevitability of marriage. Seeing one of these on the walk home from the feminine space of Mag and Jan’s apartment, for example, Miriam “wanted him out of the way and wanted him to know how angry she was at the interruption” (96). This sense of male intrusion into an ideal moment of feminine communion recalls, for the student of Woolf, Peter Walsh’s interruption of the young Clarissa Dalloway and Sally Seton in *Mrs. Dalloway*, a scene I will discuss in greater detail below.

In the last part of the novel, Miriam meets a nurse named Miss Dear and they enter into a quasi-erotic friendship that in many ways prefigures the one between Clarissa and Sally at a time when they too are, as Mrs. Dalloway thinks, “just grown up” (34). Reading to Miss Dear, Miriam feels “that in some way she was like a man reading to a woman, but the reading did not separate them like a man’s reading did” (201). Miriam’s mother is absent and virtually unmentioned in *The Tunnel*—like Clarissa’s in *Mrs. Dalloway*—and taking care of Miss Dear during her illness allows her to reinstitute a mother-daughter relationship, even if the roles are reversed. Consenting to help arrange an engagement for Miss Dear, Miriam exclaims, “So I’m to be your mamma. What a *lark*” (271). It is not only the specific echo here that makes us think of *Mrs. Dalloway*. As Elizabeth Abel has pointed out, Sally and Clarissa’s relationship also seems to represent a kind of pre-Oedipal mother-daughter relation in the green world of Bourton, which is ruptured when Peter Walsh interrupts their kiss with the demands of heterosexual partnership (30). Miss Dear’s role as a focus of female desire is somewhat limited, since she appears only within the last fifty pages of the text, but the young Sally Seton’s role as a symbol of homoeroticism untrammelled femininity is also anticipated by Mag and Jan. The first time Miriam enters their apartment and asks if she can take off her things, she receives the answer, “Of course, child . . . take them all off; you know I admire you most draped in a towel” (80). And as Sally runs “along the passage naked” to the dismay of Ellen Atkins, Jan tells Miriam, “We went out—last night—after dark—and rode—round Russell Square—twice—in our knickers—” (Woolf 34, Richardson 148).

In a sense, Clarissa’s story is the inverse of Miriam’s. Miriam’s bildungsroman is expansive and it postpones indefinitely the rituals of heterosexual development, ending with the story of Miriam’s flirtation with Miss Dear. By contrast, the narrative of Clarissa’s coming of age is, in Abel’s words, “radically foreshortened” and capped by a very conventional marriage that she values even more at the end of the novel than at the beginning (36). The novel has been read in part as a development narrative in which Clarissa moves out of the male-exclusive space of Bourton into marriage, and into a more perfect embrace of marriage at the

end of the novel. As Gregory Castle argues in a recent book on the modernist bildungsroman, however, Woolf participates in the modernist attempt to reclaim the spiritual aspect of *Bildung* in part by preserving for her heroine an individual identity that is prior and unassimilable to the social institution of marriage. “She constitutes herself in a provisional union with others,” Castle writes, “on the condition that her selfhood be inviolable” (234). There is a part of Clarissa that—like Miriam—continues to resist the marriage plot, and her choice to marry Richard Dalloway (instead of to Peter Walsh) is as much a decision to maintain her privacy as to fulfill a normative pattern of development. As Richard exits her room in the middle of the day, Clarissa thinks, “there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect ... for one would not part with it oneself” (120).

The moments alone in her room to which Castle points in locating Mrs. Dalloway’s communion with her “inviolable self” are also those which most clearly recall Richardson. The word “room” occurs frequently in *The Tunnel*, and Miriam’s attic room in Bloomsbury may be the only unifying image in the text. Miriam’s explorations of interior space provide some of the most memorable passages in the novel. At one point, Richardson writes:

Going at last to her room she found its gleaming freshness warm and firelit. Warm fresh drops of softly coloured room, that were complete before she came in with her candle. She stood a moment imagining the emptiness. (127)

Clarissa Dalloway does not need to take cheap quarters in a rooming house, but she too needs an attic, and her withdrawal to it early in the novel is described in language similar to Richardson’s:

[S]he went upstairs, paused at the window, came to the bathroom. There was the green linoleum and a tap dripping. There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room. (31)

Woolf was clearly impressed by the use of the attic to imagine empty space (a technique that she would later perfect in the “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse*). These passages share not only the explicit emphasis on emptiness, but also the image of the drop—figurative in Richardson, literal in Woolf—which emphasizes the stillness and seclusion of contemplative space. Woolf also recalls her own parody of Richardson’s catalogues—“words, cries, shouts, notes of a violin”—in the meditation which ensues. Describing Clarissa’s desire for women, she writes, “[W]hether it was pity, or their beauty, or that she was older, or some

accident—like a faint scent, or a violin next door (so strange is the power of sounds at certain moments), she undoubtedly then felt what men felt” (32).

The echo here is faint, of course, and may not be intended; however, it is in keeping with Woolf’s embrace of the additive syntax and list form that she began by parodying in Richardson—features of style that often appear in passages where women enjoy independence and communion with their environment; thus Clarissa Dalloway’s ecstatic indulgence, at the novel’s opening, in “the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs ... life; London; this moment of June” (4). Maisie Johnson, a minor character introduced during the Regent’s Park sequence in the early pages of the novel, is at the same point in her compressed *Bildung* plot as Miriam Henderson in *The Tunnel*. Like Miriam, she has come to London on the brink of adulthood (“she was only nineteen”) to work in an office, and is so overwhelmed by the urban landscape she finds—“the stone basins, the prim flowers, the old men and women, invalids most of them ... squirrels perching and preening, sparrow fountains fluttering for crumbs...”—that she is led to cry, “Oh!” (26).

The repeated use of the present participle in Maisie’s list (*perching*, *preening*, *fluttering*) is another prominent feature of Richardson’s style that Woolf adapts and brings under tighter control in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the opening pages of *The Tunnel*, the part of the book that seems to have had the greatest impact on Woolf, Miriam absorbs the atmosphere of her new lodgings (the attic room) and recalls an outing to the Whittenham Clumps with her sister:

Her luggage was *lying* about, quite near. She thought of *washing* in the morning in the bright light on the other side of the room ... leaves *crowding* all round the lattice and here and there a pink rose ... the lovely air *chilling* the water ... the basin quite up against the lattice ... the dew *splashing* off the rose bushes in the little garden almost dark with trellises and trees, *crowding* with Harriet through the little damp stiff gate, the sudden liny smell of Harriet’s pinafore and the thought of Harriet *sitting* in it, *feeling* the same, sudden bright sunshine, two shouts, great cornfields *going* up and up with a little track between them ... up over Blewburton ... Whittenham Clumps. Before I saw Whittenham Clumps I had always known them. (21, emphasis added; ellipses are Richardson’s)

Through the repetition of the participle, Richardson narrates past actions in a list form resembling that of the catalogues used to record static objects. Like the list, this device is closely linked to Richardson’s experimentation with interior monologue, which emerges in the abrupt shift to the first person in the final sentence of the “Whittenham Clumps” paragraph. The uniformity and repetition of the discourse (*washing*, *crowding*, *chilling*, *splashing*) seem to effect a kind of hypnosis, transporting Miriam into the intensified state in which her “stream of consciousness” can usurp the narrative voice.

In her diary entry of September 7, 1924, Woolf claims, “I write . . . using nothing but present participles. I find them very useful in my last lap of Mrs. D” (*AWD*, 65). In fact, this device appears most conspicuously not in the “last lap” of *Mrs. Dalloway*—although it does resurface there, as we will see—but at the very beginning of the novel:

How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, ‘Musing among the vegetables?’—was that it? (3)

Clarissa transports herself in memory back to the age of eighteen, to the cusp of adulthood and the stage of her foreshortened *Bildung* story that coincides roughly with that of Maisie Johnson (“only nineteen”) and Richardson’s Miriam, who is twenty-one when she reports her “Whittenham Clumps” memory in similarly participle-packed prose.³ Just as Miriam recalls an outing with her sister, Clarissa begins by recalling a time of female communion prior to the intervention of Peter Walsh at the end of the passage. Woolf does not make this explicit, but Peter’s question (“Musing among the vegetables?”) is echoed in the later passage in which Clarissa recalls his interruption of “the most exquisite moment of her whole life,” when he comes upon her and Sally kissing: ““Star-gazing?” said Peter. It was like running one’s face against a granite wall in the darkness!” (36). Woolf foreshadows this later scene at the opening of the book by creating a similar sense of rupture. The present participle indicates the continuous aspect in English, and Woolf uses it to describe the ongoing communion of Clarissa (who first appears *feeling*) and the natural world (*smoke winding, rooks rising*), indicating the reciprocity of this relationship by the similarity of last three participles attached to each of its members: we see Clarissa *feeling, standing, and looking* and the rooks *falling, standing, and looking*. She emphasizes the abruptness of Peter Walsh’s question through contrast: it is the only action in the passage expressed through a finite verb (“said Peter Walsh”). Like the list, this stylistic feature has a temporal corollary; it figures the cyclical, time-sense of nature and postpones

³ Richardson gives Miriam’s age just a few pages before she reports this memory, using the same “room of consciousness” topos hinted at in the “attic room” passages discussed above: “Twenty-one and only one room to hold the richly renewed consciousness, and a living to earn...” (16).

(unsuccessfully, in Woolf) the point of “maturity” toward which the more linear plot of the bildungsroman usually bends.

In her 1923 review of Richardson’s *Revolving Lights*, Woolf herself suggests a connection between her embrace of these features of Richardson’s style and her exploration of a uniquely feminine kind of thought. She writes,

[Miss Richardson] has invented, or, if she has not invented, developed and applied to her own uses, a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender. It is of a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes. (12)

This description of the feminine sentence, with its emphasis on “suspending,” seems as descriptive of Proust and his multiple embedded clauses as of Richardson, and this may explain Woolf’s hesitation about crediting Richardson with its invention; however, I think it is possible to distinguish these two styles. Woolf goes on to claim, “[W]e feel that the trophies that Miss Richardson brings to the surface, however we may dispute their size, are undoubtedly genuine.” The “trophies” that Richardson’s feminine sentences stretches to include, I think, are the “treasures” that Mansfield ironically credits Richardson with turning up in Miriam’s memory (“a pair of button boots, a night in spring, some cycling knickers, some large, round biscuits”): items whose triviality Woolf acknowledges (by quibbling about their “size”) but does not criticize. In Woolf’s modernist aesthetic, the triviality of the items seems paradoxically to guarantee their importance.⁴

In a chapter of *The Tunnel* from which Woolf cites in her review, Miriam is told by her mentor that it is more important for her to write than to worry about *what* she writes—advice that Dorothy Richardson herself may well have received at some point, and that may help explain the seeming triviality of many of her descriptive passages. “[Write] pieces of short prose,” Hypo Wilson tells Miriam: “anything; a description of an old woman sitting in an omnibus ... anything.” (129). Later in the novel, Richardson takes Wilson/Wells up on his offer, describing an aging woman sitting opposite Miriam in a bus, “in a rusty bonnet and a shawl and dust-defaced black skirt, looking about with eyes that did not see what they looked at, all the London consciousness in her” (145). If these passages

⁴ Woolf often uses associates terms denoting a reduction in scale with the recording of unpatterned reality which resists the shape-giving attempts of novelistic form, as in the famous passage from “Modern Novels”: “Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall ... however disconnected and incoherent in appearance” (33-34).

anticipate Woolf's famous description in "Character in Fiction" that "all novels begin with an old lady in the corner opposite," they also look forward to the end of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the triumphal moment in which Clarissa again goes alone into a "little room" and—like Woolf and Miriam—embraces life through description, fully absorbing the image of an old woman through her window ("Character," 425, *Mrs. Dalloway* 186).⁵ At this point, Woolf launches into the kind of expansive prose characteristic of Richardson, eschewing finite verbs in order to add one participle onto another:

It was fascinating to watch her, *moving* about, that old lady, *crossing* the room, *coming* to the window. Could she see her? It was fascinating, with people still *laughing* and *shouting* in the drawing-room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, *going* to bed. She pulled the blind now. The clock began *striking*. (186, emphasis added).

The sound of the clock striking the hour here might be taken as an illustrative contrast to Richardson's stalled clock. Unlike Richardson, Woolf does not defer marriage and adult life forever, and the old woman must be read as an emblem of maturity with which Mrs. Dalloway identifies—a maturity that seems infinitely distant from Miriam Henderson at the end of *The Tunnel*. And yet, she is also an image of independence and singleness. Both in the style and in the story of her novel, Woolf manages to combine these two visions.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf, in a sense, "unparodies" her own imitation of Richardson in the 1919 review. I borrow this term from Claude Rawson, who uses it to designate the "unwitting upward reformulation" found in some of the abundant parodies of the eighteenth century; Rawson writes:

⁵ These are only two examples of what is clearly an image that recurs throughout Woolf's work, and one which may indeed have developed in dialogue with Richardson. Louise Poresky suggests that the very similar narrative situation in "An Unwritten Novel" resembles a passage in *Interim* (the next volume of *Pilgrimage*, which was published in *The Little Review* alongside Joyce's *Ulysses*) in which Miriam rides on a train alone and pulls herself out of a depression by observing the old woman opposite and imagining her circumstances (5). Poresky also points out the appearance of the old woman motif in *Revolving Lights* (which Woolf reviewed), where it takes the form of a disfigured old beggar woman singing; this image, in turn, shows up in *The Years*, when Martin catches sight of a woman who "had no nose" (6). Poresky does not note that the singing beggar woman motif has already appeared in *Jacob's Room*, the first novel Woolf wrote after reviewing Richardson.

Parody is an act of interpretation rather than of impersonation, and usually through its disposition or need to signal derision, breaches impersonation by that fact. But the readiness with which one collapses into the other brings home the fact that parody involves an exercise in imaginative sympathy which at some point to be stopped in its tracks ... [W]hat I have called unparodying may be part of an instinctive resistance to this process, a kind of affirmation of the impersonating process, the impulse to imaginative sympathy, which is both contained and denied in the parodic act. (342)

I have argued here that Woolf, who faced many of the same problems as Richardson a woman writer at the vanguard of modernism, engages in just this kind of “imaginative sympathy” in adopting some elements of Richardson’s style in *Mrs. Dalloway*. For Woolf, in any case, unparodying Richardson means embedding within the normative narrative of Clarissa Dalloway a story of independence like the one lived by Miriam Henderson, and embedding within her own prose the dilatory style that accompanies Miriam’s resistance to the marriage plot.

The study of “influence” for its own sake is out of fashion within literary studies, and with good reason; Woolf herself seems to have been aware of the sterility of intellectual work, like Charles Tansley’s dissertation, which aspires only to establish “the influence of something upon somebody” (22). But this investigation of Woolf’s relationship to Richardson seems to me to have broader implications for our understanding of literary history. “Form and the market,” Franco Moretti argues in “The Slaughterhouse of Literature,” account for the fact that of all the books published in the Victorian era, only 0.5 percent continues to be read (214). New forms arise, like evolutionary variations arise, “by chance” in the work of authors who do not fully understand them, and these forms are subsequently either accepted or rejected by the readers (not the academics) who construct the canon (215).

It is not coincidental that in formulating this account of literary history Moretti has focused on the nineteenth-, rather than the twentieth-century canon. In part, this theory will not fit because comparatively few writers participated in the development of modernist form. In some ways, *Pilgrimage* anticipates both *Mrs. Dalloway* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*, yet it would be difficult to conceive of Richardson as an evolutionary “rival” of Joyce and Woolf—one among many competing for a larger readership. A different vocabulary is needed to explain the highly self-conscious evolution of modernist fiction, and Rawson’s term, “unparodying,” might find a place in it. In any case, the similarity between parody and impersonation which this word designates certainly helps to describe the way in which Woolf ends by embracing the feminine form that she had discovered in mockery.

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