DOROTHY RICHARDSON, GEORGE ANTHEIL, AND THE JAZZ AGE

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In an article about the American avant-garde composer George Antheil, Dorothy Richardson describes walking along the Tottenham Court Road engrossed in her thoughts, when she is suddenly interrupted 'by a fragment of sound, not melody, new-fangled or otherwise, an abrupt angular little phrase flung from a music-machine into the rain-darkened street as I passed the open door of a *Wonderland—Entrance Free*'.[1] Years later, Richardson cannot remember the thoughts from which she was roused yet she still recalls the:

> profane little phrase, a capering elf. It was sudden light, leaving me shocked and delighted in a new world.[2]

How might we situate this welcome interruption to Richardson's walk? George Antheil is best known as the composer of *Ballet Mécanique* (1924). While published in *Vanity Fair* in 1925, Richardson's article, 'Antheil of New Jersey' is about a concert before the composition of his most famous piece, at Wigmore Hall in London in June 1922; and the interruption by the 'profane little phrase' occurs a couple of decades earlier in a time and a place that should be familiar to readers of *Pilgrimage*. If Euston Road is the northern boundary of Miriam Henderson's London, Tottenham Court Road is the long thoroughfare that runs from the Euston Road to Oxford Street, marking the half-way point between her lodgings in Bloomsbury and her workplace in Wimpole Street. After work Miriam often heads south to the West End, Soho, or the Strand to one of her favourite ABC cafés. If, as seems likely, this memory corresponds to the period when Richardson was living in Bloomsbury between 1896 and 1907, and working in a dental practice in Harley Street (which runs parallel to Wimpole Street), she may well have been returning from just such a trip at the end of her working day.

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[1] Dorothy Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', *Vanity Fair*, November 1925, 136.
[2] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.

What then is *Wonderland—Entrance Free*, with its magical, almost utopian name and invitation to enter? It was likely a Victorian penny arcade, its mechanical games emitting a jangling music that spills out into the street. And why did the intruding 'angular', 'profane little phrase' shock and delight Richardson so much? To answer that question invites a wider consideration of the role of interruption in Richardson's aesthetic. We first need to consider *Pilgrimage* as itself a literary interruption in fiction as it was commonly understood in the early years of the twentieth century; second, to examine the frequent aural interruptions—from music, interior sounds, and city noise—in the text; and finally, to position Richardson's writing in relation to musical developments in the early twentieth century, including the ubiquity of jazz in the 1920s, and the musical avant-garde, to which George Antheil in 1922 did not quite yet belong, but of which he would become a prominent, indeed notorious, member.

Pilgrimage *as Interruption*

Richardson's writing provoked controversy from the start. Most reviewers were confused by the project, which did not fit into—and thus interrupted—the familiar genres of romance, the tri-decker novel, new woman fiction, and decadent fiction. Critics held the early volumes of *Pilgrimage* against conventions Richardson's aesthetic was pushing against. Her fellow modernists whose well-heeled circles she seldom frequented were, with the exception of May Sinclair, critical or equivocal. Katherine Mansfield is perhaps the most damning, reviewing *Interim*, Richardson's fifth and most experimental volume first published in *The Little Review*, she observes it 'leaves us feeling, as before, that everything being of equal importance to her, it is impossible that everything should not be of equal unimportance'.[3]

Mansfield's review suggests that *Pilgrimage* with its constant interruptions 'darting through life' like a dragonfly, instils a mood of indifference in its readers. More sympathetic critics saw not superficiality but immersion. J. D. Beresford writes that she was 'the first novelist who has taken the final plunge; who has neither floated nor waded, but gone head under and become a very part of the human element she has described'.[4] May Sinclair

[3] Katherine Mansfield, 'Dragonflies', *The Athenaeum*, 9 January 1920, 48.
[4] J. D. Beresford, 'Introduction to Pointed Roofs', in *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume IV: Pilgrimage 1 & 2: Pointed Roofs and Backwater*, ed. Scott McCracken (Oxford University Press, 2020), 346.

riffs off Beresford's metaphor: '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'.[5] Many readers however were confused, reporting getting lost or being overwhelmed, 'not waving but drowning'.[6]

Recognising the sharpness of Mansfield's attack, Richardson commented approvingly to Edward Garnett: 'K. M. is as clever as old nick. But a woman has a right to be, & I like her'.[7] Yet, those who adopt Mansfield's view that Richardson's self-interrupting prose becomes more of the same, soon become aware of *Pilgrimage*'s inconsistencies. Textual critics such as George H. Thomson and John Mepham conclude that she was poor proof-reader.[8] Their prime example is her most innovative chapter-volume *Interim*, which begins as an experiment in compressed prose, with few commas and speech marks, and only the occasional Joycean-French dash, then reverts in its final third to conventional or near-conventional punctuation. The editors of the Oxford Richardson edition take a different approach. They found their editorial practice on comparisons between the different versions of *Pilgrimage,* Richardson's correspondence, and the Richardson archive, including recently discovered instructions from Richardson to the printer of the *Little Review* that confirm that the inconsistent punctuation in *Interim* was deliberate.[9] They adopt a distinction made by Richardson's husband in a letter to the novelist Claude Houghton between planning and design:

> The designer creates first, and constructs afterwards; the planner constructs first, – and never creates.[10]

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[5] May Sinclair, 'The Novels of Dorothy Richardson', *Egoist* 5, no. 4 (1918): 57.
[6] Stevie Smith's poem of 'Not Waving but Drowning' was not published until 1957 but she was an early admirer, copying out passages from *Pilgrimage* in her reading notebook in the 1920s and adopting a distinctly Richardsonian style for her novel trilogy: *The Novel on Yellow Paper* (1936), *Over the Frontier* (1938), and *The Holiday* (1949).
[7] Dorothy Richardson, 'Letter to Edward Garnett', June 1920, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas.
[8] George H. Thomson and Dorothy Thomson, 'Introduction', in *The Editions of Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage: A Comparison of Texts* (ELT Press ebook, 2001); John Mepham, 'Dorothy Richardson's "Unreadability": Graphic Style and Narrative Strategy in a Modernist Novel', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 43 (2000): 449–64.
[9] Adam Guy and Scott McCracken, 'Editing Experiment: The New Modernist Editing and Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', *Modernist Cultures* 15, no. 1 (2020): 110–31.
[10] Alan Odle, 'Alan Odle to Claude Houghton', 24 March 1943, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas.

As this letter, written in Odle's decorous, laborious script, is interrupted by Richardson's explanatory annotations (for Houghton's benefit), it is fair to say that, even if these definitions are not Richardson's own, she did not disagree. *Pilgrimage* is designed not planned and its design allows for inconsistency, for interruption, and an acknowledgement of failure. Richardson was always willing to start again, even as her designs left her permanently dissatisfied with the outcome, wishing ever to return and correct, thinking of it as unfinished when it was perhaps unfinishable, 'inevitably interminable' in Stephen Heath's satirical phrase.[11]

Her commitment to experiment in her writing created a problem for Richardson's critics, who lacked a vocabulary to describe her prose; but this problem extended to her own attempts to represent the new. Writing about her reception of mediated sound, Adam Guy writes that its representation 'poses a literary problem for Richardson […] resulting in a productive search for a language and form that accounts for it'.[12] As Guy points out, Richardson felt her encounter with Antheil's music in 1922 also called for a new language.[13] Antheil was on a brief stopover while travelling from his native United States to Europe. In Paris and Berlin, he would meet key figures in the European avant garde, including James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and Ferdinand Léger. Richardson's audience with him in 1922 over 'milk and many buns' precedes these meetings, suggesting she was one of the first European modernists to engage with his work.[14] By 1925 when her article was published in *Vanity Fair*, not only was Antheil much better known, indeed notorious, but she had had time to develop a vocabulary that allowed her to write about him. His notoriety (a term also used about Richardson) is probably what encouraged her to propose the article to *Vanity Fair*, one of six she contributed to the magazine 1923 and 1929, initially at the invitation of the New York editor Frank Crowninshield, who had asked to meet her in London on one of his European tours in 1922.[15]

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[11] Stephen Heath, 'Writing for Silence: Dorothy Richardson and the Novel', in *Teaching the Text*, ed. Susanne Kappeler and Norman Bryson (Routledge Kegan Paul, 1983).
[12] Adam Guy, 'The Noise of Mediation: Dorothy Richardson's Sonic Modernity', *Modernism/Modernity* 27, no. 1 (2020): 83.
[13] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136; Guy, 'The Noise of Mediation', 85.
[14] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.
[15] Guy, 'The Noise of Mediation', 84; Alfred Knopf, 'Alfred Knopf to William Heinemann', 17 February 1920, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center; the articles may not have been her first contributions to the magazine. Her husband Alan Odle had been contributing humorous illustrations since 1920 and his biographer Martin Steenson

To illustrate the obstacles that lie in the way of the new, Richardson begins the article on Antheil with her grandfather's irritated reaction to Chopin: 'very fine, my dear, but Mendelssohn will outlive these new-fangled torturings of melody'.[16] As Chopin was born only a year after Mendelssohn, this is an example of the new being in the eye of the beholder. Her next gambit is the 'angular phrase' that jumped out at her from *Wonderland* on a dark night. To describe it, she reaches for an anachronism, 'Jazz', as when she encounters the phrase, jazz is not known to her. To express this, she writes a sentence that validates a retrospective explanation of the new by shifting tenses from the past to the present: 'The "Jazz" was as yet undiscovered that has so admirably expressed the sunny dancing quality of this new music'. Once introduced, 'jazz' enables a description of Antheil's 'inconclusiveness' that in 'its way of belonging nowhere and of refusing, as life refuses, plain statements, complete with beginning and end' could be a description of Richardson's own work.[17] As Anna Snaith has shown, jazz, whether live or mediated through sound technologies was often represented as a noisy intrusion, equal to interruptions caused by mechanical noise.[18] At a time when noise was becoming a political issue, with mechanical sounds a particular target for organisations such as the Noise Abatement League, Antheil's music was an affront to those who campaigned against loud noise as detrimental to human health.[19] For Richardson, however, Antheil's compositions present an 'aesthetic novelty'. As Guy notes, this novelty 'can emerge from an encounter with a "mere fragment of sound" as much as […] from a traditional aesthetic object'; it therefore 'sits ambiguously at the interface of the object and the perceiving subject'.[20]

Pilgrimage, like Antheil's compositions, embraces noisy interruption, both musical and non-musical, creating its own 'aesthetic novelty'. The first chapter-volume of *Pointed Roofs* alone contains a chorus of musical references including an Irish Rebel song, Wagner, Gilbert and Sullivan, Handel, Mozart, 'Abide with Me', Chopin, Beethoven, nursery rhymes, Schubert, Schumann, 'The Men of Harlech', Greig, revivalist and Church

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suspects Richardson was responsible for the captions: Martin Steenson, *The Life and Work of Alan Odle* (Books & Things, 2012).

[16] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.

[17] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.

[18] Anna Snaith, *Writing Noise in Interwar Britain: Literature and the Politics of Sound* (Oxford University Press, 2025), 254–55.

[19] Snaith, *Writing Noise in Interwar Britain*, 136–37.

[20] Guy, 'The Noise of Mediation', 85.

of England hymns.[21] Music and musical references make up an immersive soundscape that is part of the very atmosphere Miriam breathes. Yet music in *Pilgrimage* can also be dissonant and intruding, interrupting Miriam's thoughts, which flit like Mansfield's dragonfly from sound to sound. Other non-musical sounds also interrupt the narrative. While Richardson embraces interruption in her *Vanity Fair* article, in *Pilgrimage* the young Miriam Henderson does not. She hates loud noises, requesting that her escort, the dull Mr Green, walk away from the noise of the Crystal Palace fireworks in *Backwater*. Nonetheless, Miriam's city life means that loud interruptions are ever present.[22] As critics such as Tim Armstrong and Sam Halliday have shown modernity is characterised by its layered soundscapes, which surround the listener, who has no control over and often no knowledge of where they come from.[23]

The first piece of music Miriam hears comes on the second page of *Pointed Roofs*, an Irish rebel song, 'The Wearin' o' the Green', played on a street piano-organ that interrupts the peace and quiet of the family home.[24] Street music and barrel organs in particular had long been viewed as an unwanted intrusion into the middle-class home.[25] As Snaith records, the 1860s 'saw a vociferous campaign against street musicians as rowdy intruders disturbing the peace and health of London's "brain workers"'.[26] In *Pointed Roofs* the organ's interruption gestures to a wider world, beyond the confines of middle-class life.[27] Green is the national colour of Ireland and 'The Wearin' o'the Green' is an Irish ballad about the failed rebellion of 1798. Its lyrics include the line 'For they're hanging

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[21] Scott McCracken, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume IV: Pilgrimage 1 & 2: Pointed Roofs and Backwater*, by Dorothy Richardson (Oxford University Press, 2020), xcii–xciii.

[22] For a detailed account of Pilgrimage's soundscapes see: Sam Halliday, *Sonic Modernity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[23] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Halliday, *Sonic Modernity*.

[24] Scott McCracken, ed., 'Pointed Roofs', in *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume IV: Pilgrimage 1 & 2: Pointed Roofs and Backwater*, by Dorothy Richardson (Oxford University Press, 2020), 3.

[25] Annemarie McAllister, 'Xenophobia on the Streets of London: Punch's Campaign against Italian Organ Grinders, 1854-1864', in *Fear, Loathing, and Victorian Xenophobia*, ed. Marlene Tromp et al. (Ohio State University Press, 2013).

[26] Snaith, *Writing Noise in Interwar Britain*, 112–16.

[27] Street organs act as a motif in Pointed Roofs marking moments of departure. The street organ at the beginning of the chapter-volume heralds Miriam's leaving for Germany. Miriam hears a street organ again just after Fräulein Pfaff has told her that she is no longer required at the School in Hanover where she goes to teach.

men and women there, for the wearing of the green'. Most English listeners, including Miriam, who hears only the music not the lyrics, would not have associated the jaunty tune with such serious political content. Richardson's decision to make the ballad the first musical interruption of her multi-volume novel contrasts the seventeen-year-old Miriam's inexperience at its outset with the socially aware, politicised woman she will become. Miriam's political awareness expands within a few chapters. Ireland and India were the two main centres of resistance to British imperial rule in the 1890s. Miriam is 'troubled' by thoughts of both.[28] In *Backwater*, she starts to read newspapers and to think about Irish Home Rule as 'one of those new important things'.

Shortly afterwards, Miriam meets a new assistant teacher from Dublin, Julia Doyle. Julia brings her own musical tastes, telling Miriam of her ambition to learn to play 'Funeral March' by Chopin (Richardson's grandfather's *bête noire*). Julia fulfils her ambition at Miriam's leaving party, in a tragi-comic moment that makes Julia seem to Miriam 'alone with life and death':

> Julia was the last player. She sidled swiftly out of the room; even her habitual easy halting lounge seemed to have deserted her; and almost at once, slow and tragic and resignedly weeping came the opening notes of Chopin's Funeral March. Sitting in the front row of the little batch of children from the lower school who faced the room from the window bay, Miriam saw, in fancy, Julia's face as she sat at the drawing-room piano—the face she had when she talked of the woods and the sea. The whole of the long march, including the major passage, was the voice of Julia's strange desolation. She played painfully, very slowly and carefully, with tender respectful attention, almost without emphasis. She was not in the least panic-stricken; anyone could feel that; but she had none of the musical assurance that would have filled the girls with uneasy admiration and disgust. They were pleased and amused. And far away, Julia was alone with life and death. She made two worlds plain, the scornful world of the girls and her own shadow-filled life.[29]

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[28] *Pointed Roofs*, 57.
[29] Dorothy Richardson, *Backwater: The Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume IV*, ed. Scott McCracken (Oxford University Press, 2020), 279.

Julia's recital is one of many examples of how music or a musical performance is used to interrupt *Pilgrimage*'s flow, invoking a fragmented chain of associations that thickens the reader's sense of Miriam's milieu, resonating beyond her immediate situation. Music can draw Miriam in, distract her, or send her away from the moment. In this respect, *Pilgrimage* is a study in modes of attention. At one moment, Miriam will be distracted by the sound of a street organ; another, she is sucked into a domestic musical performance and then drifts away. When Meg Wedderburn plays Beethoven in *Backwater*:

> [Miriam] seemed to grow larger and stronger and easier as the thoughtful chords came musing out into the night and hovered amongst the dark trees. She found herself drawing easy breaths and relaxing completely against the support of the hard friendly sofa. How quietly everyone was listening. . . .
>
> After a while, everything was dissolved, past and future and present, and she was nothing but an ear, intent on the meditative harmony which stole out into the garden.[30]

In the first edition of *Backwater*, this passage is the whole of a numbered section, section two of Chapter 2, emphasising the uniqueness of Miriam's listening experience and also, in the ellipsis at the end of the first paragraph in the impossibility of bringing it fully to representation.

Music is just one aspect of *Pilgrimage*'s distinctive and contrasting soundscapes. In *Pointed Roofs* the sounds of interior spaces predominate: voices, footsteps, crockery, and the constant sound of the pupils playing the piano. In Chapter 1 of *Backwater* the noise from North London's streets, the voices of passers-by, and the sound of traffic, filters into the rooms of Wordsworth House, the school where Miriam lives and teaches. Anna Snaith describes how urban sounds are 'invariably acousmatic', that is 'split from their source':

> inhabitants of early twentieth-century London would have experienced a rapidly shifting, surround-soundscape as car ownership and air travel increased, the urban train network expanded, electric sirens replaced bells on emergency vehicles, and the loudspeaker became available for public address or as part of

[30] Richardson, *Backwater*, 162.

> wireless or gramophone usage. These developments combined to radically transform the auditory contours of public space.[31]

In the first chapter of *Backwater*, Miriam is disturbed by urban noise, which she struggles to connect to its points of origin. Detached sounds draw Miriam away from her youthful life of interiors, which feels increasingly like a form of imprisonment, towards the city's outside spaces. At the interview for her job as a teacher at Wordsworth House:

> The trams seemed very near and noisy. When they passed by the window, the speakers had to raise their voices […] the trams were disturbing. They came busily by, with their strange jingle-jingle, plock-plock, and made her inattentive. Why were there so many people coming by in trams? Where were they going? Why were all the trams painted that hard, dingy blue?[32]

An interrupting note about London public transport in the late nineteenth century is necessary here. By the 1890s, London had a developed network of horse-drawn trams and buses. North London was served by the blue trams of the North Metropolitan Tramways Company and the London Omnibus Company, still bearing the name of the Favorite Company, which had been taken over by London Omnibus in 1856. The noise of different modes of London transport dominates the next six sections of the chapter. Miriam's mother has attended the interview, interrupting Miriam's self-deprecating answers to praise her with interjections such as she 'is a *born* teacher', or she 'speaks French like a Parisienne'.[33] Walking back to catch an omnibus with her mother, Miriam's teenage embarrassment boils over: 'Mother, why *did* you pile it on?'.[34] But Miriam's protests have to compete with the noise of the transport hub at the corner of Banbury (Finsbury) Park: 'Through the jingling of the trams, the dop-dop of the hoofs of the tram-horses and the noise of a screaming train thundering over the bridge, Miriam made her voice heard'.[35] Making Miriam's voice heard, even if it has to interrupt everything around her, is the whole point of *Pilgrimage*.

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[31] Snaith, *Writing Noise in Interwar Britain*, 4–5.
[32] Richardson, *Backwater*, 147.
[33] Richardson, *Backwater*, 148.
[34] Richardson, *Backwater*, 149.
[35] Richardson, *Backwater*, 149.

Boarding the double-decker, open top, horse-drawn omnibus, Miriam wants, as any young person does, to sit upstairs, 'on the front seat on the left hand side' to get the best view.[36] As the bus travels down Seven Sisters, then Holloway Road, then South towards the Euston Road, the beginning of what Miriam, as a genteel south London girl, considers acceptable London, the soundscape gives way to the visual as Miriam, making the most of her vantage point, takes in her surroundings. Then as they approach the Euston Road, the noise of the bus travelling over cobbled streets starts to predominate. This regular rhythm combines with the din from the goods yard behind King's Cross station. Miriam joins in with the orchestra, humming softly to show her mother that she is no longer angry. Passing the goods yard, she has to deepen 'her humming, accentuating her phrases so that the sound might reach her companion through the reverberations of the clangour of shunting trains':[37]

> The high brick walls were drawing away. The end of the long roadway was in sight. Its widening mouth offered no sign of escape from the disquieting strangeness. The open stretch of thoroughfare into which they emerged was fed by innumerable lanes of traffic. From the islands dotted over its surface towered huge lamp standards branching out thin arms. As they rattled noisily over the stone setts they jolted across several lines of tramway and wove their way through currents of traffic crossing each other in all directions.
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> "I wonder where we're going—I wonder if this is a Piccadilly bus," Miriam thought of saying. Impossible to shout through the din.[38]

Miriam is specific about the source of the percussion, 'stone setts', that is square paving slabs, which are being struck repeatedly by the horses' shoes and the iron-rimmed wheels of the omnibus. As they approach the Euston Road, the pace and the volume increase (crescendo), the 'driver gathered up his horses and they clattered deafeningly over the last open stretch'; and then the noise lessens (diminuendo) as they turn into the 'smooth wide prospect' of the Euston Road. Once again Miriam registers the instrument that has changed the tone: 'Oh bliss, wood-paving'.[39] Euston Road is paved with tarred wooden blocks that replace the rattle of the

[36] Richardson, *Backwater*, 150.
[37] Richardson, *Backwater*, 153.
[38] Richardson, *Backwater*, 153.
[39] Richardson, *Backwater*, 153.

cobbles with a softer, more harmonious rumble. The whole jarring, disturbing interruption that is North London is over, and the bus can continue a smoother passage towards the West End.[40]

Richardson's writing of noise in Chapter 1 of *Backwater* might be considered as an example of what Josh Epstein calls 'orchestrating modernity'.[41] She uses a range of techniques from onomatopoeia ('plock-plock), to aural nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, to changes in volume. In short, Richardson succeeds both in writing a phenomenology of Miriam's aural reception and orchestrating what Miriam hears into a new literary soundscape.

Jazz

If *Backwater* had been written ten years later, Richardson might well have used invoked jazz to describe the 'music' of London's streets. Anna Snaith records how noise in the interwar period was defined variously as sound that was 'nonperiodic', 'out of place', 'irregular', or 'unwanted'.[42] She describes how negative and often racist responses to jazz too were frequently associated with the intrusions of machines, traffic, and urban noise.[43] More positively, Jazz's syncopated, disjunctive rhythms were read as a musical response to urban modernity. Richardson however was no more aware of jazz when she was writing *Backwater* in 1915 than she was in the 1890s when the chapter-volume is set. The word does not appear in her letters until 1923.

Jazz emerges from a variety of African American folk styles, crystallising into a distinct musical form in the United States around 1900. In England the jazz scene commenced with visits to London by African American musicians before the First World War. From 1913, African American

[40] As Adam Guy notes in his forthcoming edition of *Interim*, Richardson remains preoccupied with the paving on the Euston Road and its auditory effects. In *Interim*, directly outside Euston station, she observes: 'The archway had little side pathways for passengers roofed by small arching extensions of the central arch . . . . *indiarubber* . . . . pavement to muffle'. *The Oxford Edition of the Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume VI: Pilgrimage 5 & 6: Interim and Deadlock*, ed. Adam Guy (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[41] Josh Epstein, *Sublime Noise: Musical Culture and the Modernist Writer*, Hopkins Studies in Modernism (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 1–45.

[42] Snaith, *Writing Noise in Interwar Britain*, 16.

[43] See Snaith's chapter '"No Needless Noise": The Biopolitics of Interwar Noise Abatement' *Writing Noise in Interwar Britain*, 103–69.

string bands had become popular in London's West End. A significant moment in the British reception of jazz was Charles Cochran's wildly successful revue *Dover Street to Dixie* first staged in 1923, which featured the black jazz singer, Florence Mills, who despite racist opposition, quickly became a star on the London stage. *Dover Street to Dixie* had begun as a cabaret in New York, *Dixie to Broadway*. When it transferred to London, the first half was performed by an English cast and the second by African American performers.[44]

Richardson refers to *Dover Street to Dixie* in an exchange of letters about jazz with her new friend and patron Bryher in October 1923. Discussing accommodation for her upcoming trip to Switzerland in the winter of 1923–24 (paid for by Bryher), she asks for 'not a place big enough to attract people who want jazz evenings'.[45] Bryher's reply has not survived but she seems to have queried Richardson's preference, eliciting an admission in her reply that 'Jazz I have only smelt, hints & suggestions that have made me dead drunk on the instant […] I did not dare to go to "Dover St" I know what it was'.[46] Richardson's knowledge of *Dover Street to Dixie* was probably derived from newspapers reviews, some of which were openly hostile to the presence of African American performers in Britain.[47] It seems that as late as 1923, she had only a faint idea of what jazz was. Her trip to Switzerland marked a turning point in her musical education. By January 1924, jazz is the accompanying music of her winter stay, 'The hotel orchestras jazz from tea-time onwards'. By the following autumn London's street organs are no longer playing Irish folk ballads but 'all the Jazz dance tunes'.[48]

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[44] Len Platt and David Linton, 'Dover Street to Dixie and the Politics of Cultural Transfer and Exchange', in *Popular Musical Theatre in London and Berlin*, ed. Tobias Becker et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[45] Dorothy Richardson, 'Dorothy Richardson to Bryher', October 1923, Bryher Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

[46] Dorothy Richardson, 'Dorothy Richardson to Bryher', October 1923, Bryher Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University. In her reply Richardson also suggests immersion is her chosen mode of working. She says of the imagined hotel jazz orchestra, 'I could work nearby it if I could have my table in the midst of an orchestra. But in the distance, no. I can't yet write dancing all over the room.'

[47] Platt and Linton, 'Dover Street to Dixie and the Politics of Cultural Transfer and Exchange'.

[48] Dorothy Richardson, 'Dorothy Richardson to Ruth Pollard,' January 1924, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Dorothy Richardson, 'Dorothy Richardson to Bryher', October 1924, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

We can conclude then that when she attended the George Antheil concert in June 1922, Richardson had very little knowledge of jazz and the term was still synonymous for her with the new. music. Yet by the time she writes about the concert for *Vanity Fair* in 1925, jazz has become part of her vocabulary. She uses the word three times in her article. The first is proleptic, the 'profane', 'angular little phrase' emanating from *Wonderland* will later be made sense of by 'Jazz'. The second is anticipatory, George Antheil is 'said to be the foremost exponent of the very latest jazz'. Here, given Richardson's lack of knowledge of jazz at the time, we can conjecture that jazz is being used as a synonym for all new music. The third offers an opinion that Antheil is 'as far from classical jazz as he is from the clever musical novelties that are […] so easy to manufacture'. In the three years between the concert in 1922 and publication of the article in 1925, jazz has gone from something new to a new classicism, which pales against Antheil's experiments.

George Antheil

Though he drew on jazz in works such as *Jazz Symphony* (1925), George Antheil's best-known work was the avant-garde sensation *Ballet Mécanique* (1924). Influenced by Italian Futurism, *Ballet Mécanique* was conceived in 1923 and written between 1923 and 1924 for multiple pianolas as an accompaniment to an avant-garde film by the artist Fernand Léger. Antheil subsequently orchestrated it for eight pianos, pianola, eight xylophones, two electric doorbells, and an aeroplane propeller, which, when they could all be got to work, brought a rhythmical cacophony of interrupting sounds into the concert hall, just as Richardson brought such sounds into literature.[49] The concert Richardson attended in 1922 precedes the composition of *Ballet Mécanique* but included some of Antheil's compositions that anticipated its introduction of mechanical sounds into the concert hall. Richardson describes his music as 'a considerable amount of very cleverly experimental sound' and she finds in it the delight she found in the profane 'angular phrase' from Wonderland, a delight on which she elaborates in a further example of the 'joy' of dissonance:

[49] For a history of the piece's composition and performance see: Linda Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil, 1900-1959*, Studies in Musicology 70 (UMI Research Press, 1983), 21–41.

> a joy with which I had never found, and have yet to find, a single sympathiser—joy in singing deliberately sharp or flat and joy in any kind of musical 'ferment'; the tuning of orchestras and that parlour game known as a Dutch concert, the simultaneous lusty singing by all present of a different tone, an entertainment invariably spoiled by the failure, the ear-stopping stage despair of 'really musical people.'[50]

Another interrupting note is necessary here to acknowledge that the adjective 'Dutch' when used in English culture has usually very little to do with the low countries and, in compounds such as a Dutch auction, Dutch Uncle, Dutch cure, or Dutch courage, everything to do with a perception of England's near neighbours as bizarre, comic, nonsensical. In Richardson's use, however, the epithet 'Dutch' is not pejorative but positive. The sound of a Dutch concert is designed, not planned, and can only be spoiled by those who cannot work outside the harmonic conventions of the Western twelve-tone scale: 'really musical people'.[51]

Richardson was no musicologist. *Vanity Fair*'s editor, perhaps at her request, inserts a disclaimer at the beginning of her article:

> The writer is neither a professional musician nor a critic of music; consequently these brief notes are addressed to the general public rather than to the specialists in music, for it is, in the opinion of the author, to the public at large that all new genius, particularly of this kind belongs.[52]

Yet if no expert, by most people's standards she would count as a 'really musical' person. She was an accomplished pianist and *Pointed Roofs* alone testifies to the breadth of her musical knowledge. In the 1920s, however, a limited income and winters spent in Cornwall meant she had to endure periods without music. The Antheil concert in June 1922 came at the end of such break as she was in Cornwall from October 1921 until May 1922, and was a pleasure all the better because it was unexpected, interrupting an unreceptive mood:

> And just two years ago, when, having been long away from centres where music abounds, I was begged to go and hear George Antheil,

[50] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.
[51] Richardson also mentions the Dutch concert and the delights of an orchestra tuning up in the sixth chapter-volume of Pilgrimage, *Deadlock* (Duckworth, 1921), 160–61.
[52] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.

> then performing in London and said to be the foremost exponent of the very latest jazz and really a big lark, I thought I had met my opportunity of discovering something about the new movement in music. At the moment, I did not want the opportunity of discovering anything at all and I went in negative mood—to see arrive upon the platform what at first sight seemed to be negation embodied, a short square-built childlike youth as devoid of expression as a ventriloquist's dummy. A soothing presence. Here was no professional musician and most certainly no showman. An instrument, one felt, rather than a performer.

If we can establish with certainty that Richardson could not have heard the as yet unwritten *Ballet Mécanique* in 1922, it is less easy to establish what she actually did hear at the Wigmore Hall. The programme from the concert has survived but not all the compositions it lists. The works on the programme are:

> Fireworks and the Profane Waltzers
> Negroes
> The Golden Bird: Chinoiserie
> Sonata II. (Street Sonata)
> Doloroso
> Lugubre
> Prestissimo
> Dolorosoamente
> Sonata III. (Steel-Roads-Airplanes)[53]

'Negroes' may have been a jazz influenced piece, but we will never know. According to Antheil's biographer Linda Whitesitt, only three of pieces on the programme have survived, 'Fireworks and the Profane Waltzers', 'The Golden Bird', and the 'Airplane Sonata', and these may not be in the form they took in 1922. Though 'Airplane Sonata' is usually seen as a precursor of *Ballet Mécanique*, Whitesitt warns that 'it is not certain whether the Airplane Sonata was originally a part of 'Sonata III'.[54] Apart from an unsympathetic review in *The Times*, we are left with Richardson's description of the concert and the audience's reaction:[55]

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[53] Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil, 1900-1959*, 8.
[54] *The Life and Music of George Antheil, 1900-1959*, 275 n. 35.
[55] '"Modern" Piano Pieces.', *The Times* (London), 23 June 1922, 7.

> There was presently a considerable amount of very cleverly experimental sound. It got neither across nor away. What did get away was a portion of the audience, a bevy of seasoned concert-hearers, indignant. After that we heard Antheil's own compositions. Three sonatas. I cannot remember any interval. The performance remains in my mind as the continuous getting across of a strange new force. There were no more departures. There was interest, puzzlement, patience more than willing, an intense quietude and, at the end of the third sonata—all one movement *allegro mecanico*—as near a scene of wild enthusiasm as an English concert audience can get. For me there had been my moment in the Tottenham Court Road elaborated and intensified. One seemed now and again to be caught up and dancing not upon earth but in space, coming back to earth refreshed.[56]

As Richardson records, Antheil's subsequent performances in Europe would provoke 'riots', so the actions of those members of the London audience who left were relatively restrained.[57] For Richardson who stayed Antheil's music recalls the interruptive quality of 'the angular phrase' in the Tottenham Road. It has the dissonant impact Chopin made on Richardson's grandfather: it intrudes, jars, and breaks with the old, clearing the auditorium of just those 'really musical people' who would spoil a Dutch concert by introducing harmony. The final piece, the 'third sonata' and possible version of Antheil's 'Airplane Sonata', supposed to be played 'as fast as possible', elicits 'a scene of wild enthusiasm' from the surviving members of the audience.[58] Its *allegro mecanico* anticipates the *Ballet mécanique*, but already for Richardson these early pieces are 'the furthest word', an interesting compliment from a writer to a composer. She quotes the German critic and composer, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt:

> [Antheil's] style is a vital polyrhythmical homophony. He puts together stark blocks of rhythms one behind another and smelts the whole into a marvellously clear and crystalline form.[59]

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[56] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.
[57] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136; At least one of these 'riots' was orchestrated by James Joyce, Pablo Picasso, and Man Ray for Marcel L'Herbier's 1924 film L'Inhumaine': Epstein, *Sublime Noise*, 111.
[58] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.
[59] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 138.

It is not clear where Richardson read Stuckenschmidt's review, which was published in the journal *Das Kunstblatt* in Berlin in 1923.[60] She mentions that Bryher has sent her an 'Antheil package' in 1924 and it seems likely that it contained the review which Richardson then translated and quoted.[61] She was no doubt attracted by Stuckenschmidt's description of Antheil's music as 'polyrhythmical homophony', which, just as Richardson's finds something of her own style in Antheil's compositions, works as a good concept for thinking about Richardson's own soundscapes in *Pilgrimage*.

Six years before she encountered Antheil and seven before she encountered jazz, Richardson was developing her own 'polyrhythmical homophony', a single composition in which multiple rhythms are of equal importance or, if we accept Katherine Mansfield's frosty judgement, of equal unimportance. Her encounter with Antheil and jazz gave Richardson a musical vocabulary that made sense of her own interruptive aesthetic. She captures some of this in her description of Antheil as an instrument rather than a performer:

> Not setting out to be original, wise only after the event of his own discoveries, he is an innocent and helpless innovator. In other words a very disturbing person. It is too late to say that he is dangerous.[62]

Richardson also liked to think of herself as an instrument and perhaps a dangerous and 'disturbing person', working in collaboration with her reader rather than performing for them. Her motivation for writing *Pilgrimage* had been negative. She was dissatisfied with the realist novel's representation of experience, particularly the experience of modern women. In response she decided to make Miriam her sounding board. The saturation of *Pilgrimage* with musical references and performances means that the chapter-volumes are almost musical texts in themselves. But just as Antheil's compositions seem to reach beyond the concert hall, music in *Pilgrimage* is part of a much larger soundscape, which expands outwards from the interiors of *Pointed Roofs* and *Backwater* with their domestic musical performances into the streets of *Pilgrimage*'s most important

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[60] 'Umschau: Ausblick in die Musik', VII, 221-22: Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil, 1900-1959*, 275 n.58.
[61] Dorothy Richardson, 'Dorothy Richardson to Bryher', May 1924, Bryher Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.
[62] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 138.

milieu, London, where all sounds interior and exterior, musical and unmusical, are part of the noise of the city.[63]

This means that her interruptive aesthetic takes its cue, as in the description of omnibus ride in *Backwater*, from the dissonance of city life. In *Backwater*, the sound of the streets is what distinguishes 'trammy', 'dingy' North London, the drab backdrop to Miriam's depression in the *Backwater*, from the domestic interiors of Miriam's home in leafy Barnes (in South West London), the German school in *Pointed Roofs*, and the (only slightly) quieter squares of Bloomsbury in the later chapter-volumes. The noise of the city reaching a deafening crescendo in the firework display at Crystal Palace in Chapter 9, before the diminuendo of Julia's halting performance of Chopin's 'Funeral March' at Miriam's leaving party. In the context of these noisier soundscapes, music becomes just one dimension of sound as an immersive experience, an omnipresent background that interrupts at key moments, pushing its way to the forefront of Miriam's consciousness. No wonder then that Richardson begins her discussion of Antheil's music with noise on a city street.

Pilgrimage's interruptions introduce the random and the unexpected into the text, creating jarring notes, a kind of syncopated rhythm, that interrupt its flow, but Richardson embraced this. In opposition to the realist novel's rounded edges, she took risks by being deliberately inconsistent, often changing direction suddenly and unexpectedly. Above all she refused endings, welcoming Antheil's own urbane inconclusiveness, just as two decades earlier she had welcomed the 'inconclusiveness' of the 'profane', 'angular phrase' that tumbled into the street out of *Wonderland*. If when she heard the phrase the "'Jazz" was as yet undiscovered that has so admirably expressed' the music of the streets, Richardson would eventually encounter a music that would express her sense of 'belonging nowhere and of refusing, as life refuses, plain statements, complete with beginning and end'.[64]

In 1922 jazz and Antheil's music seem to occupy the same space in Richardson's mind. By 1925, she has learned to distinguish them. Yet in a

[63] In this respect, Richardson's work has some similarities with the city symphonies discussed by Laura Marcus in "'A Hymn to Movement": The "City Symphony" of the 1920s and 1930s', *Modernist Cultures* 5, no. 1 (2010): 30–46, https://doi.org/10.3366/mod.2010.0004.
[64] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 136.

way they remain connected because as aesthetic experiments they represent and make more visible a set of notions about artistic modernity that she had been working with for some time. If the relationships between *Pilgrimage*, jazz, and avant-garde music are far from harmonious––interrupting one another to cacophonous effect—the noise they make when they clash confirms Richardson's status as one of the 'foremost exponents' of the new. She can say of herself what she says of Antheil, 'We can banish him to the wilderness but we cannot destroy the bridge he has built'.[65]*

[65] Richardson, 'Antheil of New Jersey', 138.

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