

IN PARTS:
BODIES, FEELINGS, MUSIC IN LONG
MODERNIST NOVELS BY D. H. LAWRENCE AND
DOROTHY RICHARDSON

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Introduction

So there you have the ‘serious’ novel, dying in a very long-drawn-out fourteen-volume death-agony, and absorbedly, childishly interested in the phenomenon. ‘Did I feel a twinge in my little toe, or didn’t I?’ asks every character in Mr Joyce or Miss Richardson or Monsieur Proust.¹

Here we have D. H. Lawrence’s assessment of the excesses of the long modernist novel, in an indictment that incorporates what Maud Ellmann notes as an ‘intriguing’ focus on ‘the foot – or more specifically the toe’.² In her compelling essay, ‘More Kicks than Pricks’, Ellmann disposes in passing of Lawrence, since his ‘attention to the body is restricted to the melodrama of the loins’ – ‘more pricks than kicks’, then, to echo Samuel Beckett’s original phrase – and passes over Dorothy Richardson altogether, to argue that Joyce and Proust, alongside Conrad, Woolf and Beckett, elevate the foot to ‘more than just a footnote to modernism; it is pedimental to the movement as a whole’.³ What, then, are we to make of Ellmann’s notion of ‘pedimental’ modernism and its exclusion of Lawrence and Richardson? Though the word ‘pediment’ seems to be rooted in

¹ D. H. Lawrence, ‘The Future of the Novel’, in *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.149–55, p.151.

² Maud Ellmann, ‘Modernist Body-Parts: “More Kicks Than Pricks”’, in *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, edited by Jean-Michel Rabaté (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp.255–280, p.267.

³ Ellmann, p.267, p.257.

the Latin word for foot ('ped'), it has a curious etymology; originating in the 'late 16th century (as *periment*): perhaps an alteration of pyramid' its primary meaning is: 'A triangular feature surmounting a door, window, or other part of a non-classical building' (though it may also double, at ground level, as a geological term denoting an 'expanse of rock debris extending outwards from the foot of a mountain slope').⁴ Ellmann's 'pedimental' modernism thus evokes an elevation of the foot from floor to roof height, which in bodily terms we might construe as raising the foot to parity with the head. For Lawrence, who would have preferred to reverse this move, the result is a form of writing that he excoriates because it renders all body-parts mental or 'self-conscious' rather than privileging 'impulse' or physicality.⁵

Yet closer examination of the rest of Lawrence's 1923 essay 'The Future of the Novel' suggests some common ground with Ellmann's analysis of 'modernist body-parts', particularly in questioning the relation between the part and the whole. As Ellmann asserts: 'A body-part normally implies a whole; it is part *of* the potential unity we call "the" body. The definite article is misleading, however, since it presupposes an integrity that never exists'.⁶ Lawrence's essay, on the other hand, questions the relation between part and whole in relation to the body of an author's work, particularly given the extreme length of the high modernist novel and its focus on small parts: 'Through thousands and thousands of pages Mr Joyce and Miss Richardson tear themselves to pieces, strip their smallest emotions to the finest threads'.⁷

While his modernist contemporaries engaged in what Lawrence called '*post mortem* behaviour', piecing together monumental novels from myriad parts of themselves in a parody of the Osiris myth, Lawrence's solution to 'the dismal, long-drawn-out comedy of the

⁴ *Oxford dictionaries online*.

http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pediment?q=pedimental#pediment__8

⁵ Lawrence, 'Future', pp.152, 154.

⁶ Ellmann, pp.255–256.

⁷ Lawrence, 'Future', p.152.

death-bed of the serious novel' is another form of fragmentation.⁸ His essay – re-titled as 'Surgery for the Novel – Or a Bomb' by the editor of the *Literary Digest International* where it first appeared in 1923 – suggests putting 'a bomb [...] under this whole scheme of things' to explode 'the purely emotional and self-analytical stunts' of the modern novel.⁹ Instead the writer should look back to the 'little early novels by Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke and Saint John, called the Gospels' or to 'Plato's Dialogues', as moral narratives in parts that cohere into a greater whole. In Lawrence's scheme of things there would be nothing left of the modern novel and thus its blowing to bits – a 'cataclysm' which he juxtaposes with a reference to 'the last great war' – parallels the imagery of the war-obliterated 'body-in-bits' that Ellmann distinguishes from the dismembered 'body-in-parts' as representing 'the destruction not just of the whole but of the part' as well.¹⁰

Yet Lawrence's essay also argues for the reintegration of philosophy and fiction – the two parts of narrative that were split by 'Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas and that beastly Kant'.¹¹ Accordingly, in Lawrence's writing, we can discern a nostalgia for lost wholeness, for the joining up of the dismembered parts of the novel, which accompanies his desire to recuperate wholeness of being – mind, body and spirit. Symptomatic of this are the broken bodies that recur throughout his work, from the vulnerable body of the miner in his early plays and stories – like Luther Gascoigne in *The Daughter-in-Law* (1912), who is nothing but 'the orts and slarts' of a man, a phrase which parallels the 'scraps, orts and fragments' that reverberates through Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941) – to the broken body of the eponymous man / son of God / Osiris in the late novella, *The Man who Died* (1929), that is

⁸ Lawrence, 'Future', p.152.

⁹ Lawrence, 'Future', p.154.

¹⁰ Lawrence, 'Future', p.152; Ellmann, p.260. Ellmann also note that writers like Woolf slyly insinuate that 'art and bombing are in league' (p.255); of course this association was also evident in the violent imagery of iconoclastic movements, such as Futurism, with which Lawrence certainly flirted. See Mark Kinkead-Weekes, *D. H. Lawrence: Triumph to Exile 1912–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.122–24.

¹¹ Lawrence, 'Future', p.154.

restored to wholeness by the Priestess of Isis.¹² A prerequisite for joining up the parts of the body is a healing of the split between the emotions and the feelings – a distinction also established by Kant and which, since he perceived a lack of adequate verbal language, Lawrence often represents in musical terms. In his essay ‘The Future of the Novel’, the ‘pulses’ of novels by Joyce, Richardson and Proust – and indeed the ‘throb’ of popular novels – suggest both bodily movements and musical effects.¹³ But the emotional focus of the toe-twinging serious novel is ultimately an ‘abstraction’: an audible ‘death-rattle’ to which the serious novelists are ‘listening [...] with acute interest, trying to discover whether the intervals are minor thirds or major fourths’.¹⁴ The ‘pulse’ of the dying novel contrasts with the ‘new impulse’ (a word repeated four times on one page of the essay) that Lawrence recommends in its place – ‘What feelings do we want to carry through, into the next epoch? What feelings will carry us through? What is the underlying impulse in us that will provide the motive-power for a new state of things?’¹⁵ In other words, we need to liberate our feelings from the abstraction of emotions; a distinction which has dismembered the body, the novel and even music into abstract parts.

As the imagery of shattering intensifies in Lawrence’s work after the First World War, his writing also takes a markedly musical turn. Thus *Aaron’s Rod* (1922), which concerns an itinerant flute-player (and his affair with a singing Marchesa), begins with the smashing into fragments of a glass Christmas tree bauble and culminates with Aaron’s flute – the phallic rod of the title – being blown to bits by an anarchist bomb. The implication is that music, as well as the novel, needs ‘Surgery [...] – Or a bomb’ if it is to fulfil the ‘impulse [...] for a new state of things’. Moreover, in his next novel, *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), Lawrence attempts to bring music

¹² Lawrence, ‘The Daughter-in-Law’, in *D. H. Lawrence: The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd and Other Plays*, ed. Simon Trussler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.148. See also Ellmann for a discussion of the Shakespearian phrase ‘Scraps, orts, and fragments’ in Woolf’s novel, p.255.

¹³ In music ‘pulse’ means ‘A musical beat or other regular rhythm’. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pulse>

¹⁴ Lawrence, ‘Future’, p.151.

¹⁵ Lawrence, ‘Future’, p.151.

and the novel together to create ‘a new state of things’, staged as a revival of the Aztec gods in Mexico, to the accompaniment of ‘timeless, primeval’ drums and ‘hymns’ which are stripped of all Christian associations.¹⁶ Accordingly, in 1925, when Lawrence came to write more fully about ‘The Novel and the Feelings’, he does so in musical terms:

We think we are so civilized, so highly educated and civilized. It is farcical. Because, of course, all our civilisation consists in harping on one string. Or at most, on two or three strings. Harp, harp, harp, twingle-twingle-twang! That’s our civilisation, always on one note.¹⁷

This is the essay in which he asserts that ‘We have no language for the feelings’.¹⁸ Distinct from ‘things we more or less recognize. [...] Our emotions are our domesticated animals [...] of which] Love is our pet favourite’, the feelings are ‘untamed’ by words.¹⁹ Lawrence alludes again to Kant – whom he described in the earlier essay as ‘beastly’ – and to the infamous division between mind and body, whereby ‘feelings are bodily states, emotions are states of consciousness’, a division that also played itself out in the work of Wagner, that most literary and revolutionary of composers, who spawned a widespread movement of literary Wagnerians in the early twentieth century.²⁰ In his recent article ‘Wagner as Dramatist and Allegorist’, Fredric Jameson notes how the ‘Wagner ideal of the so-called endless melody [broke] with the traditional (Italian) practice of the aria’, where the latter aims at the expression of ‘a given named emotion’ and closure, while the ‘Wagnerian orchestra [...] ceaselessly develops its musical language, like an endless

¹⁶ D. H. Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*, ed. L. D. Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.117.

¹⁷ Lawrence, ‘The Novel and the Feelings’, in *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, pp.201–205, p.201.

¹⁸ Lawrence, ‘Feelings’, p.203.

¹⁹ Lawrence, ‘Feelings’, pp.202–203.

²⁰ Fredric Jameson, ‘Wagner as Dramatist and Allegorist’. In *Modernist Cultures* 8.1 (2013): pp.9–41, p.15. For a discussion of Wagner’s influence on a range of writers see Stoddard Martin, *Wagner to the Waste Land: Swinburne, Wilde, Symons, Shaw, Moore, Yeats, Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982).

Proustian or Faulknerian sentence'.²¹ Echoing nascent modernist novels by Flaubert and Baudelaire, which turned for the first time to the body in its sensory rather than allegorical register, Wagnerian music drama renders feelings 'that are multiple and perpetually variable, they shimmer like the orchestra itself in constant mutability'.²² Jameson thereby identifies a 'gap between [...] the macro and the micro: [...] between overall form, the action or plot as a whole, and individual detail, here not merely language but also musical scoring' and, once again, 'no synthesis is possible between them [...] much as [interpretation] would like to posit some ultimate unity, some organic form, in which detail and whole might be at one'.²³ In Jameson's analysis Wagner's work thus exposes a gap between musical parts and a putative orchestral whole that mirrors the gap that Lawrence perceived in verbal language – there is 'no language for the feelings' as opposed to emotions – and which also maps onto a fragmented perception of the 'body-in-parts' that he deplored in the long modernist novel.

For these reasons, perhaps, and because he sought to join up the gaps in and between language, body and art, Lawrence was as unconvinced by Wagner's achievements as by those of the long modernist novel. Though he frequently invokes Wagner in his letters and his fiction, he dismissed Wagner's masterpiece *Tristan und Isolde* as 'long, feeble, a bit hysterical, without grip or force. I was frankly sick of it'²⁴ and, implicitly, the 'Tristan chord' that revolutionized chromaticism but also embodied 'the opposition between affect and the older named emotions'.²⁵ This opposition preoccupied Lawrence long before he developed his own distinction between affect and emotions in 'The Novel and the Feelings' (1923). In another letter from 1912 he concluded that the

²¹ Jameson, p.17.

²² Jameson, p.15.

²³ Jameson, p.10.

²⁴ James T Boulton, ed. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume I 1901–13*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p.140. Hereafter *1L*.

²⁵ David James and Nathan Waddell, 'Editorial Introduction: Musicality and Modernist Form', in *Modernist Cultures* 8, 1 (2013): 3. For a contrary view see Martin who claims that Lawrence's use of 'rhythms and patterns of repetition [...] were chromatic and building, like the music of *Tristan*', *Wagner to the Waste Land*, p.179.

‘impulse’ he would later associate with the feelings was to be found in Italian opera rather than in Wagner’s music, with ‘impulse’ representing, as discussed above, the key to the novel and the music of the future:

I love Italian opera – it’s so reckless. Damn Wagner, and his bellowing at Fate and death. Damn Debussy, and his averted face. I like the Italians who run all on impulse, and don’t care about their immortal souls, and don’t worry about the ultimate. [...] I am just as emotional and impulsive as they, by nature.²⁶

Was Lawrence – who, despite studying music as part of his undergraduate course at the University of Nottingham, was in no sense what we would ordinarily call a musician – simply wrong about Wagner or, at least, inconsistent about the influence of Wagner in his own work? After all, there is an opposition between emotions and feelings in Lawrence’s novels that seems Wagnerian, since despite a desire to assert one thing ‘powerfully and completely and then stop’, like an Italian aria – for example, the feeling rather than the emotion of love in *Women in Love* (1920) as I will discuss later – his works end in ambiguity and their concerns are recycled, like leitmotifs, in subsequent novels. Stoddard Martin accordingly links four novels – *The Trespasser* (1912), *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* – as a Lawrentian *Ring* cycle ‘albeit in jumbled order and with only two of the four pieces consciously linked’ (*The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* were originally conceived as one novel, provisionally titled ‘The Wedding Ring’).²⁷ Lawrence himself identifies a different cycle with *Aaron’s Rod* as ‘the last of my serious English novels – the end of The Rainbow, Women in Love line’, though we might add *Sons and Lovers* as the starting point since Aaron Sisson seems to start where Paul Morel finishes at the end of the earlier novel, separating from his family and old love and striding forward into a new life.²⁸

²⁶ 1L.247.

²⁷ Martin, p.178.

²⁸ James T. Boulton et al., eds. *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence, Volume IV 19–*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.92–93.

The cyclical, rather than linear, development of Lawrence's oeuvre – that has been recognised more generally by critics in terms of his interest in natural or historical cycles – may also owe something to musical techniques and specifically to his borrowing of the Wagnerian leitmotif, with many examples noted by Martin, Walter Blissett, Joyce Carol Oates and, more recently, by Hugh Stevens.²⁹ However, the leitmotif itself may well be the root cause of Lawrence's dissatisfaction with Wagner. As Jameson aptly notes 'what we now identify as the *Ring's* basic *leitmotifs* are little more than the indigestible bones and gristle an affective music has to spit out'.³⁰ But rather than setting in motion the 'impulses' that for Lawrence are imperative for the future of art, in temporal terms, as Jameson explains, the leitmotif is not only a discarded body-part but is 'the scar left by destiny on the musical present'. This scarring by destiny links with Lawrence's central complaint about Wagner: 'his bellowing at Fate and death'.³¹

Richardson, as a life-long Wagner enthusiast, provides an interesting comparison with Lawrence. While her sentences, like those of Proust and Faulkner, sometimes seem to develop as ceaselessly as Jameson's conception of the Wagnerian orchestra, the eleven novel-chapters of her epic *Pilgrimage* published between 1915 and 1935 seem constantly to eschew closure. In its genesis and scale, her magnum opus bears some comparison to Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, composed between 1848 and 1874 and with a performance time of some fifteen hours, usually spread over five days (allowing performers and audience a day-long interval). Richardson, too, may have used Wagnerian leitmotifs to give structure to her seemingly unstructured novel, as Thomas Fahy has argued, but her work also incorporates a broader use of sound and music that lends some continuity to a seemingly discontinuous

²⁹ Walter Blissett, 'D. H. Lawrence, D'Annunzio, Wagner', *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 7.1 (1966), pp.21–46; Joyce Carol Oates, 'Lawrence's *Götterdämmerung*: The Apocalyptic Vision of *Women in Love*', *Critical Inquiry*, Spring 1978; Hugh Stevens, 'From Genesis to the *Ring*: Richard Wagner and D. H. Lawrence's *Rainbow*', in *Textual Practice*, 2014, Vol. 28.4, pp.611–30

³⁰ Jameson, p.19.

³¹ *IL* 247.

work.³² In 1929, when asked by *The Little Review* 'What things do you really like?', Richardson answered characteristically with a multi-part list, repeating items of particular importance for emphasis:

The cinema. Cafes. Any street any garden. Mornings. Sundays. Brown bread and Cornish butter. Soap. The cinema. Onions. Split greengages. Cigars. Berkshire bacon. The cinema. Munich Lager. Conversation. Dry champagne. Planter's punch. Gilbert and Sullivan. Bach. Antheil. Bach. Wagner. Beethoven. Beethoven. Beethoven. Bach. Bach. The cinema. Quaker meetings.³³

Music is well represented here, with Wagner named just once, along with Antheil and Gilbert and Sullivan, while Bach and Beethoven each get three mentions (although cinema, of course, is the outright favourite, representing another important difference from Lawrence, who disliked it). And a far more extensive range of musical sources is presented on the pages – indeed on almost every page – of *Pilgrimage*. Similarly, in Lawrence's work the references to music range from the hymns and piano music of his youth to jazz, Dalcroze eurhythmics and Native American drumming, often within a single piece of writing.³⁴

Structurally, the fragments of music from multiple sources interspersed throughout the prose of Richardson and of Lawrence would seem to work against any overarching temporal unity suggested by the use of Wagnerian leitmotifs. But at the same time these variable expressions of musicality suggest an underlying continuity provided by what Francesca Frigerio has noted in Richardson's writing as 'the cyclical and iterative character of musical forms'.³⁵ To what extent, then, do both writers use parts of music to provide shape to individual novels as well as to a body of

³² Thomas Fahy, 'The Cultivation of Incompatibility: Music as a Leitmotif in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*' in *Women Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 29.2 (Summer 2000), pp.131–47.

³³ Dorothy Richardson, 'Confessions', *Little Review* 12, May 1929, p.70.

³⁴ For details of musical references in Lawrence's work see Elgin W. Mellow, 'Music and Dance in D. H. Lawrence', in *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 21.1 (1997), pp.49–60.

work, and to express experiences of the body that evade verbal expression? The remainder of this essay therefore moves to consider, in two parts, how parts of the body – specifically feet – can function at the level of sound and musical form and then how music can provide (temporary) coherence to the body by releasing its capacity for feelings rather than emotions.

Feet, music and form

So why does Lawrence’s criticism of the long modernist novel single out the ‘toe’ as opposed to any other body-part – and more specifically still the ‘little toe’? If the big toe – subject of a 1903 essay by Georges Bataille – is ‘the most *human* organ of the body’ since it differentiates us from other primates, as well as furnishing an essential aid to balance and movement, then the little toe must be one of the most dispensable and least expressive of body-parts, notable only for its vulnerability to twinge-inducing corns and calluses.³⁶ Lawrence’s focus, then, may be intentionally dismissive of his peers, though he would also have noticed that *Ulysses* is what Ellmann describes as ‘a pedestrian epic’ and that *Pilgrimage* shares a similar concern with walking city streets.³⁷ Indeed, the frequent references to feet in Richardson’s work are often more arresting than the toe twinges remarked by Lawrence in his essay ‘The Future of the Novel’; for example, in *Backwater*, when a circus parades through the streets of Brighton, Miriam Henderson observes that ‘The elephant was close upon them, alone in the road space cleared by its swinging walk. . . . If only everyone would be quiet they could hear the soft padding of its feet’.³⁸ While it is not unusual to remark on an elephant’s feet – they also feature in Lawrence’s poem ‘Elephant’ – it is striking that Miriam singles out the sound of its feet – even though this is inaudible in

³⁵ Francesca Frigerio, ‘Playing the Body/the Playing Body: Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* and the Anatomy of Music’ (2009) at <http://wordmusicstudies.org/forum-2009/forum-2009-frigerio.htm> [last accessed 15 April 2014]

³⁶ Georges Bataille, ‘The Big ‘Toe’, *L’Anthropologie* (1903), pp.733–6. For a discussion of Bataille and feet see Ellmann, pp.264–6.

³⁷ Ellmann, p.257.

³⁸ Dorothy Richardson, *Backwater*, in *Pilgrimage*, Vol.3, (London: Virago, 2002), p.315 (henceforth page numbers in text).

the noise of the street (mentioned twice) and ‘the blare of the band’. Feet, it seems, are particularly expressive for Miriam / Richardson. The tramping of feet during an expedition to see the fireworks at the Crystal Palace substitutes for conversation – ‘No one seemed to be talking, just feet, tramp, tramp on the planking, rather quickly’ (I 323) – while the ‘sounds of her boot soles’ communicate directly with Miriam as she walks back alone from the village to the house where she is governess: ‘She toiled along, feeling dreadfully tired; the sounds of her boot soles on the firm, sand-powdered road mocked her, telling her she must go on’ (I 397).

It is the sound that feet make that engages Richardson and how this sound can substitute for words – something that Lawrence had growing sympathy with during the 1920s. In his essays collected as *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), as well as in his Mexican novel *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), he writes of feet padding down into the earth in the Native American dances, accompanied by wordless singing:

Mindless, dancing heavily and with a curious bird-like sensitiveness of the feet, he began to tread the earth with his bare soles, as if treading himself deep into the earth. [...] And the drum kept the changeless living beat, like a heart, and the song rose and soared and fell, ebbed and ebbed to a sort of extinction, then heaved again.³⁹

Lawrence may not record twinges in the toe, as he accuses Mr Joyce or Miss Richardson or Monsieur Proust of doing in his earlier essay, but note the ‘curious bird-like sensitiveness of the feet’ in this passage – and the drum which resembles another body-part, the heart. There are fewer instances of dancing in Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* than in Lawrence’s oeuvre – though she often employs the metaphor of life as ‘like a sort of dance’ (II 394) – but a striking example occurs towards the end of the penultimate novel-chapter when Michael Shatov is seen (though not heard):

³⁹ Lawrence, *The Plumed Serpent*, p.112.

out on the dewy lawn alone, believing himself unobserved ... *dancing*. A lonely little Jew, jigging about on her lawn, solemnly, clumsily, and yet with an appealing grace, the heavy bulk of his body redeemed by the noble head, face uplifted to the sky, beard-point extended in the alien Sussex air; rejoicing before the Lord, with the tablets of the Law invisibly held within his swaying arms. (IV 531)⁴⁰

In marked contradiction of a prevalent anti-Semitic prejudice associating the alleged flat-footedness of the urban Jewish trader with low moral standing, Richardson liberates her Jewish character 'in the alien Sussex air' and associates him with religious law.⁴¹ However, while liberating Shatov from the stigma of 'plodding' the streets for commercial gain, the passage emphasizes his 'noble head' rather than his feet: indeed, his head 'redeems' his body so that, paradoxically, he becomes cerebral, disembodied during physical action, looking to the sky not the earth. This connection to the earth comes later in the *Pilgrimage* cycle, not through human but through chicken feet, when Miriam feels:

a gentle movement [in the trees] extending incredibly to their very roots perceptibly stirring in the earth beneath me. Dawn roused her, roused us both to bird-song, to the thunder of hoofs scampering in a distant field, presently to multitudinous small thuddings coming up through the earth, discovered, when we were on our feet, to be the pattering of chickens cooped along the floor of the deep valley on whose edge we had lain. (IV 649)

These examples of sound, movement and dance begin to suggest music, but in any case we can also associate feet with poetical metre or rhythm, which we might say is akin to a form of musical

⁴⁰ My thanks to Rebecca Bowler for drawing my attention to this passage when I presented an earlier version of this essay at a conference on *The Long Modernist Novel* at the University of London, Birkbeck, in April 2014. I am also grateful to the other participants for their useful and supportive comments, but most especially to Kate McLoughlin for her generosity in commenting on an early draft of this essay.

⁴¹ Ellmann, pp.271–2.

notation; where we would scan a poem, we would count the beats in a musical bar. Francesca Frigerio observes that *Pilgrimage* 'is a text that urges the reader to tune his/her ear to the rhythm dictating its sentences, to the ellipses and silences fragmenting its pages, and to the material, almost tactile quality of the words'.⁴² A wonderful example of this occurs near the beginning of the opening novel-chapter *Pointed Roofs*, as Miriam contemplates how she will teach grammar to her German pupils:

How was English taught? How did you begin? English grammar ... in German? Her heart beat in her throat. She had never thought of that ... the rules of English grammar? Parsing and analysis. . . . Anglo-Saxon prefixes and suffixes ... gerundial infinitive. . . . It was too late to look anything up. (I 29)

This passage is extracted from two longer paragraphs that consist of short phrases which seem musical in construction, with the rising intonation of questions and pauses of varying lengths. While such passages might seem to create narrative freedom, they do so by applying the discipline of musical composition and with a different effect than the metrical disruption that Ellmann associates with the scattered body-parts in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.⁴³

Lawrence also experimented with musical form in his earliest writing. His published and unpublished poetry written between 1908–10 is often in the form of 'Songs' or verses with musical themes, including an intriguing series of poems called 'A Life History in Harmonies and Discords'.⁴⁴ The latter is an overt experiment with the structure of musical composition, deploying a sequence of five 'Harmony' poems (five generally marking the upper limit for acts in an opera or movements in a symphony), interspersed with four different poems called 'Discord' to describe

⁴² Frigerio, 'Playing the Body/the Playing Body', op. cit.

⁴³ Ellmann, p.257.

⁴⁴ For a longer discussion of the role of music in Lawrence's early work see Susan Reid, "'The insidious mastery of song': D. H. Lawrence, Music and Modernism". In *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2011), 109–30.

the cycle of 'A Life', thus equating life with the harmonies and discords of a piece of music. This final section also shows Lawrence experimenting with 'feet' in a musical context:

LAST HARMONY

Watch each pair of stepping feet trace a strange design
 With broken curves and faltering lines
I trace a pattern, mine or thine
 Patiently, and over-line

Ah the blindly stepping kindly feet
 Watch them tracing their design
The curves waver and meet and intertwine
 Twisting and Tangling mine and thine

With pain did I carefully overline
 What part of my graph was plainly plotted
Where the curves were knotted I must define
 Pains were clotted over mine⁴⁵

Though the language here is also that of mathematical notation ('overline', 'graph', 'curve') the primary concern is with shape or form, and since the feet step 'blindly' they suggest sound rather than vision. In this context, words like 'feet' and 'line' also suggest a musical structure. Moreover, Lawrence's 'broken' and 'wavering' shapes underline the difficulty of bringing the parts of music together as a whole – a reflection of how modern 'chromatic' music strained the limits of tonality that mirrors the pains and difficulties of making 'A Life' cohere.

In *Pilgrimage*, the central consciousness of Miriam Henderson often apprehends music as a shape, for instance when a pianist plays Wagner:

With many wrong notes and stumbling phrases, but self-
forgetfully, in the foreign way. Keeping bravely on, making

⁴⁵ D. H. Lawrence, 'A Life History in Harmonies and Discords', in John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years, 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.400.

the shape come even in the most difficult parts. He was hearing the Queen's Hall orchestra all the time, and he knew that any one who knew it could hear it too [...] He played short fragments, unfamiliar things with strange phrasing, difficult to trace, unmelodious, but haunted by suggested melody; a curious flattened wandering abrupt intimate message in their phrases; perhaps Russian or Brahms. Not Wagner writing down the world in sound nor Beethoven speaking to one person. (II 345-346)

Implicit here is a tension between part and whole: the word 'stumbling' again evokes feet and while the pianist risks being subsumed by the Wagnerian orchestra, the 'unfamiliar' pieces he plays, though 'intimate', are 'fragments' which are 'difficult to trace' (a word also used – twice – in Lawrence's 'Last Harmony') as a coherent shape.

The musicality of Richardson's prose, like Woolf's, has been construed by critics as a way of shaping a female form of modern writing. While Emma Sutton argues that Woolf seems to have 'identified music as a "female" or "feminine" art' and that 'her interest in developing a modern and a "musical" prose was conceived in opposition to [her father's] "masculine" Victorian writing', Richardson also seems to have rejected 'male forms', particularly as a reaction against H. G. Wells; soon after her introduction to the circle of Hypo Wilson, based on Wells, Miriam reflects that 'To write books, knowing all about style, would be to become a man' (II 131).⁴⁶ Later Miriam realises, in response to Hypo's assertion that 'music is a solvent', that music causes 'the shapeless mental faculties that deal with things to abdicate in favour of the faculty that has the sense of form and sees things in relationship' (IV 272). Both Woolf and Richardson may therefore have exploited a perceived gender bias towards music as a 'feminine' art, encapsulated in Lawrence's much-anthologised poem 'Piano' (published in 1918, though first drafted as 'The

⁴⁶ Emma Sutton, '“Within a Space of Tears”: Music, Writing, and the Modern in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', in *Music and Literary Modernism*, edited by Robert p.McParland (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2009), pp.50–65, p.57.

Piano' in 1908–10) in which the poet, sitting at the feet of his mother as she plays and sings, is unmanned by the 'insidious mastery of song'.⁴⁷

The gendered aspects of musicality have led some Richardson critics to argue for a form of *écriture féminine*, which asserts not only a writing of the body but also a listening to the body. Accordingly Jean Radford claims that 'the body can be "heard" in Pilgrimage [...] if one listens "differently", as Irigaray says'.⁴⁸ This 'listening' to the body relates to the performance of music in Richardson's novels, where feet are also deployed – as they may be by the mother in Lawrence's poem 'Piano' – in operating the pedals to modulate the instrument's sound in various ways and also to calibrate the register of bodily functions in music. To quote a well-known example, Miriam

felt for the pedals, lifted her hands a span above the piano, as Clara had done, and came down, true and clean, on to the opening chord. The full rich tones of the piano echoed from all over the room; and some metal object far away from her hummed the dominant. She held the chord for its full term.... Should she play any more? ... She had confessed herself ... just that minor chord ... any one hearing it would know more than she could ever tell them ... her whole being beat out the rhythm as she waited for the end of the phrase to insist on what already had been said. As it came, she found herself sitting back, slackening the muscles of her arms and of her whole body, and ready to swing forward into the rising storm of her page. (I 56-57)

Though Radford has asserted that 'In contrast to Joyce or Lawrence, Richardson is not noted for writing the body', Kristen Bluemel cites this, and other musical passages from *Pointed Roofs*, to show how Richardson relates 'the confessional capacities [of

⁴⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Collected Poems*, eds Vivian de Sola Pinto and Warren Roberts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p.148.

⁴⁸ Jean Radford, *Dorothy Richardson* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p.25. Kristen Bluemel, *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism: Dorothy Richardson's 'Pilgrimage'* (University of Georgia Press, 1997).

music], its intimate revelations', but also how she sexualizes the female body: 'Here it is the female hands, arms and feet that we must come to see as sexual'.⁴⁹ The paragraph begins with the feet, feeling for the pedals, while in the preceding paragraph Miriam recalls her old music-master talking of her 'hands like umbrellas', but also 'walking up and down the long drilling-room', 'marching away as she played' (I 56). The emphasis on feet and hands, the body-parts directly engaged in piano-playing and which are also at the extremities of the body, makes it harder for Miriam to recognize her body as a whole – although she does so at the end of this passage, as she experiences music in her 'whole body'.

Though the emphasis on the body in this passage might seem surprising, Richardson underlines the obvious point that the body is a prerequisite for making music, since instruments are sounded by the use of body-parts – hands, feet, voice – and the body itself is a musical instrument. But body-parts also play a role in musical composition; as Miriam herself notes it is 'No wonder Beethoven worked at his themes washing and re-washing his hands', while Robert Schumann, another composer she often invokes, said that he composed his songs 'As a rule [...] while standing or walking, not at the piano. Vocal music is quite different [from piano music]; it's much more direct and melodious, and does not come first through the fingers'.⁵⁰ Schumann, like Richardson, cultivated a confessional style, particularly in his songs written mostly in the so-called 'liederjahr' of 1840, that function, according to biographer John Daverio, 'as confessions in tone, a substitute for the diary Schumann had suspended in the late fall of 1839'.⁵¹ But to what extent can the musical confessions of a writer like Richardson connect into a coherent body of work rather than a collection of body-parts? And how do her techniques of listening to the body compare with what critics like Ellmann have perceived as Lawrence's 'melodrama of the loins'?⁵² The final part of this essay, then, will compare a passage written by Lawrence with

⁴⁹ Radford, p.125; Bluemel, p.64.

⁵⁰ John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: Herald of a 'New Poetic Age'* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.191.

⁵¹ Daverio, p.191.

⁵² Ellmann, p.267.

another by Richardson to consider the role that music plays in joining up the body and the feelings and the novel itself.

The musical body: two case studies

If, as Jameson posits, one ‘were [...] to construct a system of the Wagnerian emotions, it would no doubt be organised around a fundamental opposition between *Neid* [an intense mixture of jealousy and envy] and “fearlessness”’.⁵³ Were one to attempt a similar summary of the oppositions that abound in Lawrence’s *Women in Love* then they are most likely organised around a fundamental opposition between emotions and feelings, with Rupert Birkin as the very vocal spokesman against the emotions and for the feelings. The infamously sexual ‘Excuse’ chapter provides a study in the distinction between love as emotion and feeling, in the form of a lovers’ quarrel, which though eventually subsiding into mellifluous physicality begins with a display of Wagnerian passion from Ursula Brangwen who ‘stamped her foot madly on the road, and [Birkin] winced, afraid she would strike him’.⁵⁴ Her outburst is a response from what Birkin calls ‘the emotional body’, its separation into recalcitrant body-parts signaled once again by a foot.⁵⁵ The quarrel is about whether Birkin ‘loves’ Ursula in the conventional sense, but Birkin is ‘weary and bored by emotion’: instead he seeks the feelings associated with ‘peace’.⁵⁶ The rest of the chapter describes a descent into ‘peace’, for which the bells of Southwell Minster provide a catalyst:

As they descended, they heard the Minster bells playing a hymn, when the hour had struck six.

“Glory to thee my God this night
For all the blessings of the light — —”

So, to Ursula’s ear, the tune fell out, drop by drop, from the unseen sky on to the dusky town. It was like dim, bygone centuries sounding. [...] What was it all? This was no actual

⁵³ Jameson, p.36.

⁵⁴ D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, eds David Farmer, John Worthen and Lindeth Vasey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.307.

⁵⁵ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p.309.

⁵⁶ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p.310.

world, it was the dream-world of one's childhood – a great circumscribed reminiscence.⁵⁷

As Ursula learns to 'listen', she uses another body-part, her 'ear', rather as Miriam becomes 'nothing but an ear' as she listens to Beethoven's *Romance*: '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' (I 205). Music in 'Excuse', too, has the ability to dissolve time and to transcend words and verbalised emotions: Birkin 'was smiling faintly as if there were no speech in the world' and Ursula re-discovers her sense of touch, 'Unconsciously, with her sensitive finger-tips, she was tracing the back of his thighs, following some mysterious life-flow there'.⁵⁸ In this playing of the body, 'his fingers upon her unrevealed nudity were the fingers of silence upon silence' and the culmination is a 'living body of darkness and silence and subtlety'.⁵⁹

This experience of the body through a culmination of music and body-parts already resonates with Miriam's piano-playing in *Pointed Roofs* discussed above, but Lawrence introduces a dimension of 'silence' (emphasized several times) that parallels another momentous scene in *Deadlock* when Miriam kisses Michael Shatov and falls in love with him:

She would make no more talk. There should be silence between them [...] the quality of their silence would reveal to her what lay behind their unrelaxed capacity for association. [...] His solid motionless form, near and equal in the twilight, grew faint, towered above her, immense and invisible in a swift gathering swirling darkness bringing him nearer than sight or touch [...] The encircling darkness grew still, spread wide about her; the moving flames drew together to a single glowing core. (III 191-2)

⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p.312

⁵⁸ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p.313

⁵⁹ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p.320

Moreover, Miriam's experience here of the 'whole body' estranges her from her body-parts – 'Her limbs were powerless. With an immense effort she stretched forth an enormous arm and, with a hand frightful in its size and clumsiness, tapped him on the shoulder' – and the external world of sound seems 'distant' (III 194).

Though silence might seem antithetical to sound, its role in music is integral to composition and particularly to experiments by those composers after Wagner who sought an alternative to what Lawrence called his 'bellowings' and Richardson an 'orchestral din' (IV 172). Even in Wagner's music, however, as Jameson explains, despite 'the ideal of the endless melody [...] there are to be sure, breaks and silences [...], but these are so extraordinarily momentous as to be part of the musical fabric itself, intense musical events in their own right'.⁶⁰ While the momentous silences at the culmination of 'Excuse' or in the passage from *Deadlock* might be understood in this Wagnerian sense, the gradual fading or freezing into an 'intense silence' at the end of *Women in Love* implies a more persistent concern, as does the centrality of silence within Richardson's work.⁶¹ While Annika Lindskog notes the irony 'that a novel verbose enough to cover over 2000 pages should have silence as one of its central themes', Leo Bersani has warned of the 'novelistic risks' of what he construes as a 'Lawrentian stillness' that strives to 'explode verbal consciousness' but that tends towards 'inertia' and 'death'.⁶²

In musical terms, we might equate such stillness, as Miriam Henderson does, to the music of Bach, which in direct contrast to Wagner, represents 'stillness, dailiness, the quiet, blissful insight whose price is composure' (IV 172). But we should also look to a modernist composer like Debussy, referenced in Lawrence's early

⁶⁰ Jameson, p.17

⁶¹ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, p.480.

⁶² Annika J. Lindskog, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Poetics of Silence', *Pilgrimages; Journal of the Dorothy Richardson Society*, Vol. 5 (2012); Leo Bersani, 'Lawrentian Stillness', in *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), pp.156–86, pp.162, 184, 181.

novels and implicitly in the musical impressionism evoked by Miriam, for instance as Clara plays:

pianissimo [...] a half-indicated theme with a gentle, steady, throbbing undertow. [...] she seemed to have been listening long – that wonderful light was coming again [...] when presently she saw, slowly circling, fading and clearing, first its edge, and then, for a moment the whole thing, dripping, dripping as it circled, a weed-grown mill-wheel. (I 44)

Though Debussy rejected the label of musical impressionism, his well-known piano works including *La Mer* (1903–05) or ‘Clair de Lune’ (1905) evoke a sense of stillness similar to the impressionist paintings of Monet, and his use of silence is a defining feature of his entire body of work. As Robert Orledge notes, ‘Some eighty per cent of [Debussy’s] music is marked *piano* or *pianissimo* and Debussy effectively reduced the dynamic level of music, using many terms which refer to dying away, vagueness and distance’.⁶³

In the novels of Richardson and Lawrence, the experience of stillness allows the body to cohere: a momentary impression that cannot be sustained since, to return to Ellmann’s focus on fragmented body-parts, what ‘we call “the” body [...] presupposes an integrity that never exists’, a unity which may also be impossible for the novel as a form.⁶⁴ Thus while *Women in Love* ends with an unresolved quarrel, throughout *Pilgrimage* Miriam’s experiences of stillness in her body are experienced as if she is a disembodied observer; for instance, when she sees herself through Amabel’s eyes ‘she could feel, almost watch it coming forth in response to the demand, thoughtlessly and effortlessly, feel how it kept her sitting perfectly still and yet vibrant and alight from head to feet, patiently representing, authentic. And a patient sadness filled her’.⁶⁵ What is important here, finally, is the breakthrough to feelings in the whole body ‘from head to feet’ instead of an ‘emotional body’ in parts. But, inevitably, these moments of stillness ‘embody’ only

⁶³ Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.204.

⁶⁴ Ellmann, p.255.

⁶⁵ Richardson, *Dawn’s Left Hand*, p.192.

‘a momentary pang of genuine emotion’ (which we can read here as feeling);⁶⁶ indeed they may even be illusory. As Miriam reflects back on her first kiss with Michael, she wonders: ‘Had the joy and the belief survived for even that one evening?’. Not only does time march on to disrupt the equilibrium of lovers but, as Richardson notes, ‘almost no one seemed to desire the stillness’ though it is always there if one listens: ‘the vast stillness pouring in through the ceaseless roar of London’. (IV 310, 326).

There are moments, then, in these novels when the media of literature and music, which are both temporal arts, combine to suspend time and space. By attending to stillness and by deploying the forms and structures of music, in their different ways, both Richardson and Lawrence find new ways of expressing the body that extend and sometimes exceed the limits of verbal language and the novel. Musicality therefore serves to link up body-parts, but also a body of writing, which is ultimately cyclical rather than linear. Though feet are indeed instrumental in shaping a new form they lend themselves, if not to a ‘pedimental’ modernism in the cases of Lawrence and Richardson, then to a modernist musicality that builds on Wagner as well as on his modernist successors, such as Debussy, who sought to blend artistic media.

Coda

In one of her pieces for the magazine *Close Up*, Richardson describes the heightened effect of combining the media of music and film – at least that is when performed by ‘a pianist who sat in the gloom beyond the barrier and played without notes. His playing was a continuous improvisation varying in tone and tempo according to what was going forward on the screen’.⁶⁷ ‘As long as he remained with us music and picture were one’, she writes, but this unity was destroyed when ‘the musical accompaniment became a miniature orchestra, conspicuous in dress clothes and

⁶⁶ Richardson, *Clear Horizon*, p.281.

⁶⁷ Dorothy Richardson, ‘Continuous Performance II: Musical Accompaniment’, *Close Up* vol. I no. 2, August 1927, reproduced in James Donald, Anne Friedberg and Laura Marcus, eds, *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism* (London: Cassell, 1998), pp.162-163.

with lights and music stands and scores between the audience and the screen, playing set pieces, for each scene a piece'. Worse still, however, was the absence of 'any kind of musical noise', because then 'the pictures moved silently by, lifeless and colourless, to the sound of intermittent talking and the continuous faint hiss and creak of the apparatus' – like 'the ceaseless roar of London' in *Pilgrimage*, this is background noise rather than a potentially unifying stillness. In summary, then, the lack of spoken language in the silent movies is best augmented by a musical language that is attentive to the action / narrative.

While the musical metaphors in Lawrence's essay 'The Future of the Novel' have provided the parameters for the foregoing discussion of the fragmentation of bodies, feelings and music in modernist art, Richardson's account of 'Musical accompaniment' (1927) provides a fitting analogy for literary musicality with which to close. The music of the novels discussed here is played without musical notes (to modify Richardson's description of the pianist) and without grandstanding for conspicuous attention, although it may yet deploy techniques similar to those of a multi-part orchestra and in so doing adds life, colour and sound to the words on the page. Most importantly, however, the musicality in works by Richardson and Lawrence provides unity to their fragments that, like successful musical accompaniment, enables art, feelings and bodies to cohere as more than the sum of their parts, if only for a moment.