Anne Toner provides an original account of the history of ellipsis marks – dots, dashes and asterisks – in English literary writing. Highlighting ever-renewing interest in these forms of non-completion in literature, Toner demonstrates how writers have striven to get closer to the hesitancies and interruptions of spoken language, the indeterminacies of thought, and the successive or fragmented nature of experience by means of these textual symbols. While such punctuation marks may seem routine today, this book describes their emergence in early modern drama and examines the relationship between authors, printers and grammarians in advancing or obstructing the standardization of the marks. Their development is explored through close study of the works of major English writers, including Jonson, Shakespeare, Richardson, Sterne, Meredith and Woolf, along with visual illustrations of their usage. In particular, Toner traces the evolution of ellipsis marks in the novel, a form highly receptive to elliptical punctuation.

Anne Toner is a Fellow and Director of Studies in English at Trinity College, Cambridge.
ELLIPSIS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Signs of Omission

ANNE TONER
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Illustrations

In my quotations, it has often only been possible to approximate the punctuation of the original texts, for example, in recording the variable lengths of dashes. In the following instances, illustrations have been provided.


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19 [Charlotte Dacre], Rosa Matilda, The Passions (London: for T. Cadell, and W. Davies, 1811), vol. iii, p. 47. With permission of The British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection 1153.h.42. 113
23 George Meredith, The Tragic Comedians, original autograph manuscript (1880), MS Vault Meredith, 2021110, p. 82. With thanks to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Copyright permission kindly granted by Mrs P. M. Sedgwick. 148
24 George Meredith, The Tragic Comedians, original autograph manuscript (1880), MS Vault Meredith, 2021110, p. 168. With thanks to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Copyright permission kindly granted by Mrs P. M. Sedgwick. 149
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