

EDITORIAL

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At least one modernist critic has recommended that the phrase ‘unjustly neglected’ should be banned from modernist studies. If not banned from this journal (we would not be so illiberal) tales of the critical neglect of Dorothy Richardson should be treated with caution. In the ninety-three years since the publication of *Pointed Roofs*, the first ‘chapter’ of her long prose work, *Pilgrimage*, her work has attracted a wealth of critical and biographical study. It is only necessary to consult the detailed bibliography on the Dorothy Richardson website to see that interest has been unbroken from the early articles by May Sinclair in 1918 to the present. While *Pilgrimage* was often the object of fierce attack (although always by the most eminent of antagonists - Lawrence and Woolf amongst them), it was nonetheless commonplace in the twenties to group Richardson alongside Joyce and Proust as a pioneer of a new form of writing. Although she had a somewhat less prominent place in the public eye in the 1930s, she was hardly unknown. Appreciations and a re-awakening of interest followed the publication of the first collected edition of *Pilgrimage* in 1938, even although its reception was complicated by confusion about whether the volumes constituted the final work or it was still unfinished.

The 1939-45 war inevitably saw Richardson’s isolation in Cornwall. She was sixty-six when hostilities broke out and neither she nor her husband, Alan Odle, ever returned to London. However, it would be wrong to say she had retired. Her letters from that period show a continuing interest in questions of philosophy and a particular interest in the changing quality of sensation in old age. Her keen eye demonstrates her sense that her perception had been enhanced by age rather than clouded. After the war she started to receive inquiries from doctoral students, to which she responded. She also continued to work on the final chapter of *Pilgrimage*. When her correspondence came to an end in 1952, after a severe

illness, she was beginning to take her place in the academic institutionalisation of early twentieth-century modernism. Her work was, of course, overshadowed by the 'great men' of Anglo-American letters, but again, it would be an overstatement to say it was neglected. There were obituaries and tributes when she died in 1957 and a full-length study in 1960; but throughout the 1950s *Pilgrimage* featured in a series of books, essays and articles. Her work had become a part of the history of the twentieth-century English novel and, for many writers and critics, Graham Greene and Elizabeth Bowen amongst them, knowledge of it was an essential part of a literary education.

The 1960s, as experimental a decade as the 1920s, proved fertile ground for Richardson's continuing influence. It is clear from the publishers' correspondence that the new collected edition, which included the unfinished *March Moonlight*, was never considered a commercial proposition. Publication of the final version of *Pilgrimage* in 1967 by Dent in London and Knopf in New York, was about the cachet attached to its status as a classic. At this point, two young academics, Gloria Glikin (later Gloria Glikin Fromm) and Thomas F. Staley, were at the centre of attempts to put Richardson studies on a firm footing. The correspondence to Fromm, now archived at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin Texas, shows the London of the late sixties to have been a post-modernist hive of activity as scholars such as Fromm, Staley, and Leon Edel moved from New York and Tulsa through London to Cornwall, Trieste, Paris and Rome, on the trail of Henry James, Joyce, Virginia Woolf (Leonard was still available for chats in Bloomsbury) and Richardson herself. The work bore fruit in the 1970s with Fromm's biography, published in 1977, and Staley's monograph of the year before. By then substantial articles were appearing regularly and Richardson studies had been given a new political impetus by second-wave feminism. Gillian Hanscombe brought out a paperback edition of *Pilgrimage* with Virago in 1979 and her monograph, *The Art of Life: Dorothy Richardson and the Development of Feminist Consciousness*, was one of the first to explore fully the implications of Richardson's political aesthetic.

While work on Richardson's biography and letters continued, Hanscombe was followed by a series of engaged monographs that took both the politics and the form of *Pilgrimage* seriously. George H. Thomson's, *Reader's Guide* and *Notes on Pilgrimage: Dorothy Richardson Annotated*, provided the essential scholarly background her work demanded. After the untimely death of Gloria Fromm, Thomson helped finish her edition of the *Selected Letters* and since then he has managed to track down all the remaining Richardson correspondence for what will be the foundation of a future Collected Letters.¹

In the last two decades, Richardson studies have broadened and deepened. Thanks to Laura Marcus's contribution to an anthology from the avant-garde film magazine *Close Up*, we are now much more knowledgeable about her writing on cinema.² The debate about her feminist aesthetic has been developed by Joanne Winning who, in her monograph *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson*, argues that Richardson's long prose work is an example of lesbian modernism. Interestingly, it is clear from Fromm's correspondence that the place of same-sex desire in *Pilgrimage* surfaced as an issue in the aftermath of Richardson's death. It seems clear that Rose Odle, Richardson's sister-in-law, who became her literary executor, was reluctant to make public the correspondence between Richardson and Veronica Leslie-Jones (later Grad) who was the model for Amabel in *Pilgrimage*. Odle may well have destroyed some of the letters. For Richardson's close friend, Pauline Marrian, writing to Fromm in 1967 as she negotiated with Odle, Odle's actions represented an attempt to repress lesbianism as a central theme. Richardson's relationship Veronica represents one of the intriguing mysteries of her life along with her relationship with H.G. Wells, whose letters to her also disappeared under strange circumstances.

¹ See [George H. Thomson, *Dorothy Richardson: A Calendar of Letters* \(ELT Press E-book, 2007\)](#)

² Laura Marcus, "Continuous Performance: Dorothy Richardson." *Close-Up, 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*, in James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus (eds) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Thus we are now at an interesting juncture in the history of Richardson studies. We know more than have ever done about Richardson's life, letters and work even if some of what we have discovered is where the gaps are. Her place in the history of modernist literature is secure. She now appears as standard in introductions to modernism and modernist prose.³ Yet, despite the richness and variety of Richardson criticism, it remains scattered, lacking a focus or organisation. Or at least it did. In March 2007, the Dorothy Richardson Society was set up at a meeting at the Senate House of London University in the heart of Bloomsbury. The meeting reviewed and approved a Dorothy Richardson website which would host an up-to-date detailed Richardson bibliography and a new annual electronic journal: *Pilgrimages: A Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*. An inaugural conference was agreed and, supported by the British Academy, took place the following September. The articles in this, the first issue of *PJDRS*, were all first given as papers at the conference.

Startlingly, this is the first ever essay collection to be devoted solely to Richardson. Only the 1967 issue of the *Adam International Review*, which was devoted to both Richardson and Proust, bears comparison. It represents the quality and the diversity of recent scholarship and includes pieces by the novelist Eva Tucker, who has championed Richardson for many years, by established as well as younger scholars, such as Stacey Fox and Abbie Garrington.

The issue opens with Jesse Matz's article, 'Dorothy Richardson's Singular Modernity'. Matz argues for Richardson's uniqueness amongst her modernist contemporaries. Whereas other modernists maintain their modernism only temporarily, as part of an arc, loop or dialectic, as with Dedalus's flight too close to the sun and then back down to earth, Richardson's modernism attempts to stay true to a moment that is always open, never resolved, finished or

³ She now has sections devoted to her in recent introductory works such as Blackwell's *Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (2006), the *Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel* (2007) and in the Routledge's Critical Thinker series (in Deborah Parsons' *Theorists of the Modernist Novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf* (2006)).

closed. It is this consistent and persistent modernism, Matz contends, that makes her unique.

Movement is also central to Eveline Kilian's article, 'Gliding, as if forever': Speed and Movement in Richardson's *Pilgrimage*. Kilian traces the relationship between being and becoming, so central to her work, back to the turn-of-the-century transformation in the space-time continuum. What characterises Richardson's relationship to modernity is her belief in the importance of a 'vertical orientation' down to the core of one's being. This relationship is gendered, so that for Richardson, women's relationship to being is distinct contrasting with the one-sidedness of modern masculinity. In *Oberland*, Miriam's multi-vectorised relationship to being is captured in image of the skater, moving yet still: 'gliding, as if forever'.

Where Kilian looks at images of embodiment to illustrate concepts of identity in *Pilgrimage*, Laura Marcus looks at states of consciousness in the text, focussing on the dream state. Marcus outlines the intense debates about dreaming in the early twentieth century, arguing that the dream state plays a vital part in *Pilgrimage*. Richardson is not interested in the Freudian interpretation of dreams as the residues of the day, but in a Bergsonian 'profound slumber' or 'perfect sleep'. Yet Richardson's understanding of sleep is closer to Blanchot's 'intimacy with the centre' than Bergson's totality minus concentration. Marcus leaves us with the fascinating possibility that *Pilgrimage* should perhaps be read 'as a dream text *tout court*'.

Stacey Fox's article takes us away from *Pilgrimage* broader themes to a reading of a specific incident: Densley's diagnosis of Miriam's mental health in *Clear Horizon*. She argues that while as a modern 'new' woman, Miriam is hemmed in by medical definitions of her state of mind, in this incident she is able to turn Densley's medico-scientific eye to her own purposes. Through an apparent acceptance of her need for a 'rest-cure', she is able to secure the space she needs to escape from her job in the dental practice and gain the freedom she needs to become a writer.

Abbie Garrington tackles the question of space in a slightly different way, exploring the idea of *Pilgrimage* as a 'haptic' text. Garrington interprets 'haptic' not just as the sense of touch but our apprehension of our spatial environment. In this context, Richardson's literary innovations are not merely analogous to her experience of the cinema rather the haptic defines both filmic and literary techniques.

In '*Oberland* : "A Charming Light Interlude"?', Howard Finn returns to a perennial question in Richardson criticism, first raised by Thomas Staley, about whether the individual chapters can be read as parts complete in themselves or whether they are subparts of a larger whole. *Oberland* is particularly pertinent to this debate in that it seems to signify an important gap or transition in the sequence. After an exploration of the text relationship to representations of the English abroad, Finn concludes that there is a lot to be gained by looking at its specific structure.

The final article, by Eve Tucker looks at the important role Quakerism plays in Richardson's work, tracing it back to her first contact with Society of Friends in 1901. Tucker argues that Richardson's experiences with the Penrose family in Sussex were crucial to her emergence as a writer. Her first published book was a short history of the Quakers and, Tucker suggests, it was from their founder George Fox that Richardson discovered the importance of *being* over *knowing*.

It is surely appropriate that this, the first issue of the journal, is broad in scope. We wish Richardson's studies to be as wide-ranging as possible. In the future we invite articles and reviews on all aspects of her work, but we are planning a series of biennial conferences on *Pilgrimage* itself. The first in the summer of 2009 will be focused on *Pointed Roofs*. The conference will, we hope, attract papers on themes such as Richardson and Bronte and Richardson and Germany, but we also invite wider discussions of Richardson's work that pick up from that text. Thereafter we will work our way through the thirteen chapters at two-yearly intervals. In addition, the Society will continue to work towards the publication of a Richardson Collected Letters, a Richardson

Reader and single chapter editions from *Pilgrimage*, so that Richardson's work becomes even better known and, crucially, is properly represented on university syllabi.

Thus far, the Society's website has attracted regular communications from scholars and students around the world. The conference brought together scholars old and new from Britain, Ireland, the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, and Germany. There is no doubt that the Dorothy Richardson Society fulfils a need. We hope that the first issue of *PJDRS* will highlight, continue and expand the strong existing tradition of Richardson criticism.

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