

POINTED ROOFS: INITIATING PILGRIMAGE AS QUEST NARRATIVE

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This article will suggest that *Pointed Roofs* (1915), the first instalment of Dorothy Richardson's *roman fleuve*, represents the germ of its protagonist's journey, the first stage of Miriam's mythical quest. After a general discussion of pilgrimages as manifestations of the archetype of the hero's quest and a revision of some readings of *Pilgrimage* as a quest narrative, the article will analyse *Pointed Roofs* as the initial stage of the mythical hero's quest represented by The Fool of the Tarot.

The term *roman fleuve* has variously been translated into English as 'series', 'sequence' or 'sequel' novel. The French name of the term points to its national origins and has descriptive connotations. *Roman* denotes a lengthy prose narrative, *fleuve* indicates narrative flow and suggests the metaphor of the river of life. For Lynette Felber, the defining features of the *roman-fleuve* are 'its extraordinary length, the spatial and temporal gaps between the volumes, and its problematic closure'.¹ Martin Ausmus defines the *roman fleuve* as a series of three or more separately published novels with a related setting, plot and characters.² In this sense, the novels that form part of a *roman fleuve* enjoy a double status: when they stand on their own they are individual artistic entities, but when they are considered together the separate volumes constitute a greater whole.³ Considered as a simple work of art, the sequence of novels constituted by a *roman fleuve* may be compared to a symphony, a complex artistic artefact with each part contributing its own tone and character to the total effect. In this sense, *Pointed Roofs* can be considered as an individual artistic entity or as the

¹ Lynette Felber, *Gender and Genre in Novels Without End. The British Roman-Fleuve* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995) p.ix.

² Martin Russey Ausmus, *Some Forms of the Sequence Novel in British Fiction*, Diss. The University of Oklahoma (1969), p.3.

³ *Ibid*, p.4.

initial part of *Pilgrimage*, the greater whole where its status as the initiation of the whole work can be perceived.

Dorothy Richardson's choice of the word 'pilgrimage' as the title of her multivolume novel points to *Pilgrimage* as a *Bildungsroman*, that is, a novel of maturation or, more specifically, as a novel of maturation of an artist - or *Künstlerroman* - a characteristically modernist genre, whose underlying structure is the archetype of the hero's quest. Richardson's allegiance to modernism implied that she shared with Joyce, Pound and other modernist writers a metaphysical bias, expressed in the attempt to grant overall unity to their otherwise fragmentary works by having recourse to myth. Richardson's metaphysical or visionary stance is already evident in the novel's title, for 'pilgrimage' is a term full of religious and archetypal connotations conveying both the idea of the outer (or physical) life journey and an inner (or spiritual) development. From its origins, the notion of pilgrimage as a physical and spiritual journey has been immersed in a complex network of mythical and religious references and allusions that endows it with a multiplicity of meanings and implications. The word 'pilgrim' is derived from the Latin term 'peregrinus' and it refers to someone who journeys in alien lands and it can also have the connotation of a search for some high goal, such as truth. This pursuit of some elevated ideal shows the notion of pilgrimage as a religious expression of the quest archetype. In literary works with a religious aim, the pilgrimage motif is constantly used as a source of dramatic and symbolic integrity and unity. Well known examples of this are Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a religious text which presents life as a pilgrimage to the shrine of heaven.

Pilgrimages have elaborate mythological and spiritual implications. The search for a lofty principle or gnosis and the notion of a journey which is both physical and spiritual are defining characteristics of both quests and pilgrimages. A pilgrimage is imbued with mystical ideas of an interior journey that parallels the pilgrim's external journey for, if mysticism is an interior pilgrimage, pilgrimage is exteriorised mysticism. In Victor and Edith Turner's own words: 'Pilgrimage may be thought of as

extroverted mysticism, just as mysticism is introverted pilgrimage. The pilgrim physically traverses a mystical way; the mystic sets forth on an interior spiritual pilgrimage'.⁴

Pilgrimages are archetypes that appear in all cultures, symbolising a source of transformative energy when the need for change arises in human life. Like all archetypal motifs, the pilgrim's call to start the journey is experienced as compelling. Sometimes the reasons to embark on a pilgrimage seem obvious to the pilgrim but do not seem adequate or compelling to the outsider. In Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace B. Clift's view, the human pattern of pilgrimage points to a basic human need to make a connection with something outside ourselves, some holiness or absolute value which helps ground the pilgrim 'in a new lease on life, in something which gives meaning and direction'.⁵ The reward of the pilgrim at the end of his or her quest is self-maturation and integration with the world.

Ideally, a pilgrimage is charismatic in the sense that the decision to undertake it is a response to a charisma, a grace received as a result of the pilgrim's devotions. Like the mythical hero, the pilgrim hears a call to adventure and starts a journey in which he or she will have to undergo all sorts of trials and dangers. Richard R. Niebuhr has defined pilgrims as 'persons in motion -passing through territories not their own- seeking something we might call completion, or perhaps the word clarity will do as well, a goal to which only the spirit's compass points the way'.⁶ This description clearly points to the pilgrim as adaptation of the archetypal hero.

The fact that a pilgrimage means embarking on a quest or adventure signifies that the pilgrim has a liminal or transitional experience; that is, it situates the subject at a threshold. In this sense, pilgrimages have an initiatory quality comparable to the rites

⁴ Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp.33-4.

⁵ Jean Dalby and Wallace B. Clift, *The Archetype of Pilgrimage. Outer Action with Inner Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), p.152.

⁶ Quoted in Dalby Clift and Clift, *The Archetype of Pilgrimage. Outer Action with Inner Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996) p.1.

of passage involved in quests. The hero or heroine, like the pilgrim, hears the call to adventure, the first stage in Joseph Campbell's monomyth,⁷ and leaves the place where he or she lives to enter a new land of wonders where he will have to overcome a series of physical and spiritual trials. In keeping with this, Turner and Turner describe a pilgrim as 'an initiand, entering into a new, deeper level of existence than he has known in his accustomed milieu'.⁸

The threshold the mythical hero has to cross in order to initiate the quest is echoed by the liminal quality of pilgrimages. In the paradigmatic Christian pilgrimage, the pilgrim's development is described as a process of initiation into, not through, a threshold, that is, initiation is conceived of as leading not to a higher status but to a deeper level of religious participation. A pilgrim is one who divests him or herself from the mundane concomitants of religion to confront the basic elements and structures of his or her faith in their unshielded, virgin radiance. As Turner and Turner explain, 'during the intervening liminal phase of the pilgrimage, the ritual subject (the 'passenger' or 'liminar') [...] passes through a realm or dimension that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state', and when this passage is consummated he or she returns to secular or mundane social life.⁹ When the mythical hero returns to his land at the end of his quest, he also has to integrate again in society, so that he can contribute to its improvement and renewal, thus completing the circular structure of the quest, as defined by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.¹⁰

⁷ Joseph Campbell, (1949) *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988).

⁸ op. cit, p.8.

⁹ Ibid, p.2.

¹⁰ Unlike Northrop Frye, who describes the quest as linear ('The Archetypes of Literature', *Kenyon Review* 13: 92–110) the anthropologist Joseph Campbell op. cit. describes the standard path of the mythological hero's adventure as circular. For him, all quests are elaborations on a single nuclear unit that he calls 'the monomyth', which is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation from the world; initiation to a source of power; and life-enhancing return.

Critics like Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Shirley Rose and Janet Fouli have studied *Pilgrimage* from the perspective of Miriam's quest. For DuPlessis, marriage resistance and resistance to narrative scripts are equivalent and *Pilgrimage* is a quest away from cultural scripts of love and plot for hero and author.¹¹ In Shirley Rose's view, for the reader the quest is a tour of the mind of the author and, for the writer, the quest is in finding his own form for expressing his own consciousness.¹² Janet Fouli views Miriam as a pilgrim in the physical sense of being a traveller and interprets her pilgrimage as a metaphor for her acquisition of experience, self-knowledge and vocation.¹³ This type of interpretation ignores the inner side of the quest, precisely the aspect of it that Leon Edel considered to be the most important for modernist fiction, since for Edel, modernist novels are 'voyages through consciousness' conveying the flow of mental experience.¹⁴ Read in mythical terms, what Edel describes as 'the possibility of the artist's creating the *illusion* that we are inside the mind of the character'¹⁵ can be equated with the modernist writer's descent to the underworld as theorised by Evans Lansing Smith.¹⁶ Following Edel's description of modernist works as 'inward turning',¹⁷ critics like Esther Kleinbord Labovitz

¹¹ Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 'Beyond the Hard Visible Horizon?', *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

¹² Shirley Rose, 'Dorothy Richardson's Theory of Literature: The Writer as Pilgrim', *Criticism* 12 (Winter 1970): 20–37.

¹³ Janet Fouli, *Structure and Identity. The Creative Imagination in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage* (Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de la Manouba, 1995), p.25.

¹⁴ Leon Edel, *The Psychological Novel: 1900–1950* (New York, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1955), p.16.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁶ Evans Lansing Smith contends that modernist writers tend to make recurrent use of the particular phase of the mythical hero's quest known as the 'descent to the underworld' - or, in Campbell's terminology, 'the belly of the whale' (op. cit, p.80) - that is, the place of miraculous transformation where the poet as quester can have access to the seed forms of the imagination. As such, this phase is crucial for the modernist purblind hero's transformation into a visionary writer with the god-like capacity to translate the episodic and ephemeral into the everlasting and archetypal (*Rape and Revelation. The Descent to the Underworld in Modernism* [1950] (Boston: University Press of America, 1990), p.136

¹⁷ In 1954 in *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*, Robert Humphrey had studied the formal aspects of this inward turning, analysing the stream-of-

and Caesar Blake have concentrated their analyses exclusively on the spiritual side of Miriam's quest. Thus, for Labovitz, Miriam's journey is a spiritual process of acquisition of mystical insight, revelation and enlightenment, a process of self-development brought about by the heroine's discovery of her literary vocation.¹⁸ Caesar Blake, on his part, studies *Pilgrimage* as a mystical novel and offers a reading within the framework of what he calls the 'Mystic Way'. Accordingly, Miriam is said to be engaged in a quest for transcendental reality involving the establishment of a conscious relation with the Absolute.¹⁹ Following Labovitz and Blake, Sarah Law's thesis "Écriture Spirituelle": Mysticism in the Writing of Evelyn Underhill, May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson', traces the influence of mysticism on a selection of women writers of the early twentieth century and 'the subsequent emphasis upon women's creativity in modern (feminist) theological thought [...], showing that the unconscious and poetic drives of *écriture féminine* are anticipated in the 'mystical writing' of the women writers [surveyed]'.²⁰

These last three interpretations draw the stress on the spiritual side of the quest, forgetting about its physical side, reason why they also appear to be incomplete. Discussing the Quaker religion, Dorothy Richardson herself described the pilgrim's way of illumination in dual terms as 'a life-process; [where] the inner was not in contradiction to the outer'.²¹ The archetype of the quest itself may be defined as a search for knowledge that is invariably carried out in two phases: an outer (or physical) life journey and an inner (or spiritual) development. Usually, the conclusion of the

consciousness techniques employed by modernist writers to convey the 'psychological aspects of character in fiction', including not only conscious but also preconscious states of the mind (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p.1, emphasis in the original).

¹⁸ See Esther Kleinbord Labovitz, *The Myth of the Heroine. The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century: Dorothy Richardson, Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, Christa Wolf* [1986] (New York: Peter Lang, 1988)

¹⁹ Caesar R. Blake, *Dorothy Richardson* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p.61.

²⁰ Sarah Law, "Écriture Spirituelle": Mysticism in the Writing of Evelyn Underhill, May Sinclair and Dorothy Richardson', Diss. Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London (1997): 2.

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quest is the starting point for further adventures, as the hero is once and again transformed and renewed by the quest. As such, the quest constitutes a principle of order and form imposing coherence and significance over the shapelessness of life. As William Righter has said, “[t]rue mythology’ is arrangement’.²²

In the rest of this article, I will attempt to show the correspondence between the stage of development represented by the first arcanum of the Tarot, the Fool, and the protagonist of *Pilgrimage* in *Pointed Roofs*. The Tarot is an ancient system of representation of the archetypal hero’s quest pattern which was often used by visionary writers.²³ The arrangement of the cards in a process of divination symbolises the querent’s physical and spiritual journey through life, with each card representing a significant stage in this process.

As Campbell among others has pointed out, there is an intimate connection between the writings of psychoanalysis and mythology, so that the logic, the heroes and the deeds of myth survive into modern times even though in displaced form.²⁴ Sharman-Burke and Green explain that mythical images can be easily identified with the Tarot cards, as they both describe key human experiences and stages of development which are archetypal, that is, common to all systems of initiation.²⁵ For example, birth and death are archetypal experiences shared by all human beings, which have both a physical and a psychological dimension. Death can be experienced at a psychological level, since human life is an endless process of change. Every time there is an end, a separation, or the

²¹ Dorothy Richardson, *The Quakers. Past and Present* (London: Constable, 1914), p.22. On Richardson and the Quakers see Eva Tucker, ‘Dorothy Richardson and the Quakers’, *Pilgrimages: A Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies* 1 (2008): 124-131; and María F. Llantada ‘The Quest Myth and Quakerism in Dorothy M. Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*’, *New Myth* 1 (2009): 53-75.

²² William Righter, *Myth and Literature* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p.116.

²³ In the twentieth century, it appears in the work of T. S. Eliot, Lawrence Durrell, John Fowles and Jeanette Winterson, among others.

²⁴ Campbell, p.4.

²⁵ See Juliet Sharman-Burke and Liz Greene, *El Tarot Mítico* (Madrid: Edaf. 1988) trans. by Felicitas di Fidio from *The Mythic Tarot* (1986).

conclusion of a stage, there is a kind of death. Adolescence and the entrance into maturity is another archetype which can be repeated every time human beings move from innocence to gnosis. That is why Persephone's myth is so important as an image of the transit to puberty. Forced to abandon the comfortable world of the family, Persephone is abducted to the Underworld, where she uneasily confronts an unknown state of existence. Her plight mirrors the psychological experience of clinging to innocent ways of seeing the world and being forced by experience to discover unknown depths in life and in ourselves.²⁶ The myth as well as psychology teach us that the way to maturation goes through the adaptation of the purblind hero/ine to these changing conditions. The major arcana of the Tarot represent the different stages in this necessary process. As Alfred Douglas has explained, the Tarot cards were probably devised to represent grades in a system of initiation. Its imagery resembles that of the alchemical search for the Philosopher's Stone, which, as Jung has pointed out, was a system of initiation into spiritual enlightenment, much favoured by Renaissance alchemists like Paracelsus. Alfred Douglas refers to it as 'an ordered process of psychic development leading to an increasing wholeness and 'rounding out' of life'.²⁷

After this explanation of the choice of the Tarot as the central frame for the analysis of *Pointed Roofs*, we will argue that the development that Miriam undergoes in *Pointed Roofs* bears a striking correspondence with the stage of the archetypal quest present in the arcanum of The Fool (the unnumbered card). In the first instalment of *Pilgrimage*, Miriam, like the Fool, the quester in the first arcanum of the Tarot, leaves her family and home in order to initiate her pilgrimage. This will mean leaving her parents' house for Hanover in order to become a pupil-teacher. This 'call to adventure' of the hero is for Campbell the first stage of the quest. Miriam's decision to abandon England when she is only seventeen years old in order to accept a job as a teacher in a German school constitutes her invitation to initiate a perilous journey which is both attractive and terrifying. Other more conventional options

²⁶ Sharman-Burke and Greene, pp.14-15.

²⁷ Alfred Douglas, *The Tarot. The Origins, Meaning and Uses of the Cards* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.34.

available to her would be to become a teacher or a governess in London (something she will do later on) or to stay at home and marry a convenient suitor. Instead, she chooses to travel to a foreign land, defying her family's opposition to her plans. As Campbell explains, the call to adventure

signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight.²⁸

For Miriam, Hanover is that unknown and distant land where her call to adventure takes her. It will be the place where she will start her process of maturation, alone for the first time and away from her homeland and her family. Her decision to leave her home is voluntary, and it implies facing risks and difficult situations that she will have to overcome on her own. Miriam's first independent step in looking for a job is described significantly as her 'lonely pilgrimage' (I 27), and, in fact this act is the germ of the longer journey or quest which continues in the following volumes of *Pilgrimage*: 'She thought of her lonely pilgrimage to the West End agency, of her humiliating interview, of her heart-sinking acceptance of the post, the excitements and misgivings she had had' (I 27). Miriam is leaving behind her childhood and adolescence, a sheltered way of life under the protection of her family. In Hanover, Miriam's experience of life is enriched by her contact with a foreign country and foreign ways, so that her independence and responsibility are increased. This change in her life would correspond with the archetypal hero's change from 'the world of common day' to a 'region of supernatural wonder' where he will have to face many difficulties that will contribute to his growth and development.²⁹ At the end of the volume, Miriam

²⁸ Campbell, p.58.

²⁹ Ibid, p.30.

leaves Hanover to return home temporarily. This is just a small pause in her quest, soon to be continued with her resumption of the journey.

The mythical hero, as a member of the community, is characterised by his potentiality. He 'carries within himself the all; therefore it may be sought and discovered within'.³⁰ When Miriam leaves her home, she also carries within herself the seeds of her own development and growth and, in her process of individuation, she will develop this latent power into activity. For instance, she has the ability to become a good teacher despite her doubts and insecurity. When she is travelling to Germany, she thinks:

It was a fool's errand.... To undertake to go to the German school and teach ... to be going there ... with nothing to give. [...] How was English taught? How did you begin? English grammar ... in German? Her heart beat in her throat' (I 29).

Then she starts to think about the German and French classes she has received in order to get some ideas about what to do in her classes like, for instance, reading and she stops worrying: 'She must do that for her German girls. Read English to them and make them happy... But first there must be verbs' (I 29). Finally, her misgivings come back and she thinks: 'It was impudence, an impudent invasion... the dreadful, clever, foreign school.... They would laugh at her.... She began to repeat the English alphabet.... She doubted whether, faced with a class, she could reach the end without a mistake' (I 29). Miriam concludes anticipating that she will have to 'have a conversation with the Fräulein. Perhaps she could tell her that she found that the teaching was beyond her scope and then find a place somewhere as a servant' (I 29-30). However, after teaching her first classes, she realizes that she is managing to do her job better than she had imagined: 'I'm all right, I can do it alright,' She was going to stay on. That was the point. She would stay in this wonderful place' (I 56).

³⁰ Ibid, p.385.

Miriam's house in England is the hero's 'mid-point or navel of the world' (I 334), that is, the central point to which Miriam always returns from her adventures in the wide world. Despite the fact that it is the instability and insecurity of her home that leads to Miriam's departure, she feels nostalgic about life at home continuing without her:

That summer, which still seemed near to her, was going to fade and desert her, leaving nothing behind. Tomorrow it would belong to a world which would go on without her, taking no heed. There would still be blissful days. But she would not be in them. There would be no more silent sunny mornings with all the day ahead and nothing to do and no end anywhere to anything [...] The tennis club would go on, but she would not be there' (I 16).

The endless list of things that she will miss indicates her homesickness and the nostalgia she anticipates even before her departure. As time passes, Miriam will also have other homes to return to, like her rooms in various lodgings, like Mrs Bailey's house, or the Quaker farm.

The first volume describes Miriam's first, significant and independent actions in the world and could be compared to the setting out of the quester or The Fool of the Tarot, who, at this stage, also lacks experience in the ways of the world. As Alfred Douglas explains, 'The Fool's naivety ensures that his mind is not closed to unusual experiences that are denied to ordinary men'. In this sense, 'The Fool is a vagabond existing on the fringe of organised life, going his own way, ignoring the rules and taboos with which men seek to contain them'.³¹ In keeping with this, Miriam defies her whole family, who expect her to marry and live a conventional life and decides to go to Hanover to work as a pupil-teacher. Both The Fool and Miriam are regarded as unconventional by ordinary people. Miriam's sister, Eve confesses her admiration for her because of her independence of mind and strength:

³¹ Douglas, p.43.

‘Yes—you’re so strong’ [...] ‘Oh—well—you arranging all this—I mean answering the advertisement and settling it all’ [...] I was thinking about you having no religion.’ (I 19)

Miriam’s defiance of conventions and her freedom of thought are indispensable requisites for her transformation into a writer.

Miriam and the Fool may be despised by society yet they are the catalysts which will transform that society. The Fool is related to the Green Man, a herald of new life and fresh beginnings.³² Both Miriam and the Fool have memories of what they are leaving behind, memories that will urge them onwards in their search to recover what they are about to lose, their primeval innocence.³³ For Miriam, these memories of what she is leaving behind are represented by her childhood recollection of being by herself in a garden, a place clogged with edenic allusions that is a recurrent motif in the novel. Wordsworth’s well known line, ‘glory in the flower’, from his ode, ‘Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’,³⁴ immediately brings to mind Miriam’s first memory of herself in her childhood garden, contemplating the flowers on a level with her head, an episode which is recalled several times in *Pilgrimage* and is also recreated in Dorothy Richardson’s short story ‘The Garden’.³⁵ Both Wordsworth’s ode and *Pilgrimage* are put together by a sense of the mind that is at its centre, the adult writer looking into the depths of his/her own identity, examining the emotions of the child he/she was. This almost beatific vision of the garden refers to a primeval state, a visionary ecstasy of bliss and bleakness in which

³² According to Kathleen Basford, the Green Man is the most common decorative motif of medieval sculpture. It is a foliate head, a face or mask with leaves sprouting from it and it has a great power of revival and regeneration (*The Green Man* (Kent: D. S. Brewer, 1998) p.7).

³³ *Ibid*, p.44.

³⁴ William Wordsworth, ‘Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’ (1807), in *Poetical Works of Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956) p.462.

³⁵ This is studied in detail in María Francisca Llantada Díaz, ‘Dorothy Richardson’s “The Garden” as an amplification of a recurrent epiphanic moment in *Pilgrimage*’, *ZAA (Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Americanistik A Quarterly of Language, Literature and Culture)*, 57, 2 (2009): 139-152.

nature acts as a mirror. This original state of primeval innocence and purity is forever lost for adults. As Wordsworth explains, ‘in childhood we see a celestial state which explains much that we most value in ourselves’.³⁶ This statement could be considered vital to the interpretation of the repeated appearance of Miriam’s childhood memory in the garden in *Pilgrimage*, which refers to the protagonist’s most intimate experience of self and can be related to the Jungian archetype of the child as the source of energy that takes us further in life and symbolises growth and rebirth. The moment of exalted perception and bliss recalls the essence of romantic poetry: the perception that ‘in catching the fleeting moment of joy it opens the doors to an eternal world’,³⁷ so that the subject can move from discontent to a visionary, sublime state. This idea of finding a point of intersection between time and timelessness, between material reality and the archetypal forms of the imagination, which is the task of the poet-as-shaman, also appears in T. S. Eliot’s ‘Burnt Norton’, where in a moment of sudden illumination, a fragment of time becomes so significant that it gives meaning to the whole pattern of human life: ‘the moment in the rose-garden,/The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,/The moment in the draughty church at smokefall’ (II, ll.45–6). Another similar moment of illumination is depicted in ‘The Dry Salvages’: ‘But to apprehend/The point of intersection of the timeless/with time, is an occupation for the saint’ (V, ll.18–20).³⁸

³⁶ Maurice C. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination* [1950] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.95.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.290.

³⁸ T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909–1962* 2002 (1963) (London: Faber and Faber, 2002). This connection between Dorothy Richardson’s modernist epiphanies and the romantic moment of revelation has been thoroughly studied by Eveline Kilian in *Momente innerweltlicher Transzendenz. Die Augenblickserfahrung in Dorothy Richardsons Romanzyklus Pilgrimage und ihr ideengeschichtlicher Kontext* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997), which traces the history of the concept and identifies it as the key ‘to overcome [...] the experience of relativity, fragmentation and isolation prevalent in Modernist thought’ (p.334). For Kilian, moments of heightened intensity are instants of ‘privileged perception which merge ... into an aesthetic moment’ (p.337) and enable Miriam to transcend time and make her immune to death (p.336).

The opening line of *Pointed Roofs* -'Miriam left the gaslit hall and went slowly upstairs' (I 15)- presents an image which is typical in modernist writings: the staircase, which, mythically, is an image of 'the *axis mundi*, the vertical dimension that connects our world with the others above and below it'.³⁹

For Eliot, Yeats and Joyce the staircase is a frequent image, also recurrent in mystic writings, starting with Jacob's ladder in the Bible. Invariably, in these images, the climbing of a ladder is followed by an ecstatic union with the divine.⁴⁰ The process of self-knowledge was often represented by means of a metaphorical staircase which led to higher levels of consciousness through which one could reach the divine world.⁴¹ Richardson herself uses this metaphor of the staircase in her article 'Towards the Light', with reference to 'the pilgrimage still undertaken by us all one by one': '[a]gain and again the golden stairway has been reached and ascended, and the vision testified'.⁴²

Miriam's solitary mounting of the stairs in order to be alone and meditate on her imminent departure is symbolically connected with the motif of the hero's crossing of threshold, or change of ontological level. As Miriam gets ready to leave her house for the first time, a third-person narrator who focalises reality through her reports the protagonist's thoughts and feelings about the imminent journey to Hanover: 'The sense of all she was leaving stirred uncontrollably as she stood looking down into the well-known garden' (I 15). Miriam's childhood memory of being by herself in a garden will appear for the first time in *Backwater*.

She tried to remember when the strange independent joy had begun, and thought she could trace it back to a morning in the garden at Babington, the first thing she could remember, when she had found herself toddling alone along the garden

³⁹ Northrop Frye, 'The Koine of Myth: Myth as a Universally Intelligible Language', in Robert D. Denham (ed.), *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays, 1974-1988* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1991), p.15.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp.15, 17.

⁴¹ Sharman-Burke and Greene, pp.10-12.

⁴² Dorothy Richardson, 'Towards the Light', *The Open Road* (December 1907): 304-8.

path between beds of flowers almost on a level with her head and blazing in the sunlight. (I 316–17)

In *Deadlock* Miriam's memory of herself in the garden is described as a protective place where she can rest her mind:

When she was alone, she moved, thoughtless, along a pathway that led backwards towards a single memory. Far away in the distance, coming always nearer, was the summer of her infancy, a permanent standing arrested, level with the brilliance of flower-heads motionless in the sunlit air; no movement but the hovering of bees. (III 197)

The 'well-known garden' of the quotation from *Pointed Roofs* mentioned above, whose sight plunges Miriam into a meditative state before leaving her home, could be said to anticipate the motif of the garden memory as a private way of recreation.

Miriam's journey to Hanover accompanied by her father can be identified with Campbell's 'crossing of the first threshold', where the hero encounters the 'threshold guardian' at the entrance to the zone of magnified power.⁴³ For Miriam, the threshold guardian would be her father, a figure who could also be considered 'the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world'.⁴⁴ When her father accompanies her on her journey to Germany, her thoughts reveal her agreement with his sense of 'being a 'person of leisure and cultivation'' and her sympathetic understanding of his want: 'she shared her father's satisfaction in impressing the Dutchman. [...] There could be no doubt that he was playing the role of the English gentleman. Poor dear. It was what he had always wanted to be' (I 27–8). The second chapter of *Pointed Roofs* concentrates on Miriam's meditations on her past life of luxury and on her fears and misgivings about the uncertain life that awaits her in Germany. Like the mythical hero, when she is

⁴³ Campbell, p.77.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.136. Throughout *Pilgrimage*, Miriam will have more threshold guardians who initiate her into 'new worlds'. Thus, for example, Pastor Lahmann introduces her to the world of the German school, Hypo Wilson to the London literary world and Michael Shatov and Mendizabal to the world of foreigners.

beyond the custody of her guardian, Miriam can only see 'darkness, the unknown, and danger'.⁴⁵ Even before she leaves, she has a nightmare in which she anticipates her fear of what she will have to undergo in Germany:

When Miriam woke the next morning she lay still with closed eyes. She had dreamed that she had been standing in a room in the German school and the staff had crowded round her, looking at her. They had dreadful eyes [...] They came and stood and looked at her, and saw her as she was, without courage, without funds or good clothes or beauty, without charm or interest, without even the skill to play a part. They looked at her with loathing. (I 21)

Miriam's feelings of apprehension and her loss of confidence are a precedent of the different phases of trial and testing that she will find in the school in Hanover, and that will constitute her ritual initiation into knowledge. Chapters III to XII (the last chapter of *Pointed Roofs*) are dedicated to Miriam's stay at the German school.

The continuation of Miriam's musical education and her response to music are given remarkable attention in this first volume of *Pilgrimage*, so that piano playing can be considered a key part of her process of maturation. In Germany, Miriam's English ideas about music are transformed by the German way of piano playing. It is in Germany that she feels music for the first time as an 'epiphanic' experience, to use Joycean terms, linked to light and brightness that transforms her perception of the world and fills her with an overwhelming feeling of freedom:

Emma Bergmann was playing. The single notes of the opening *motif* of Chopin's Fifteenth Nocturne fell pensively into the waiting room. Miriam, her fatigue forgotten, slid to a featureless freedom. It seemed to her that the light with which the room was filled grew brighter and clearer. She felt that she was looking at nothing and yet was aware of the whole room like a picture in a dream. Fear left her. The human forms all around her lost their power. They grew suffused and dim....

⁴⁵ Campbell, p.77.

The pensive swing of the music changed to urgency and emphasis.... It came nearer and nearer. It did not come from the candle-lit corner where the piano was.... It came from everywhere. It carried her out of the house, out of the world.

It hastened with her, on and on towards great brightness.... Everything was growing brighter and brighter... (I 42–3, ellipses in the original)

In the same chapter we have the description of another happy moment perceived as luminous and almost epiphanic: ‘that wonderful light was coming again [...]. Her heart filled. [...] for a while [she] saw only a vague radiance in the room’ (I 44). In chapter IV of *Pointed Roofs*, when Miriam plays the piano, she has the same feeling of increasing luminosity: ‘It was all growing clearer and clearer’ (I 56). In *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, Morris Beja says that epiphanies characteristically express a modernist attention to ‘the *trivia* of existence’, so that meaning is sought ‘in the apparently inconsequential objects and events of everyday life’.⁴⁶ These words are perfectly applicable to epiphanies like the one Miriam experiences in the above quotation, linking Richardson to novelists like Joyce, Proust or Woolf.⁴⁷ At the same time, in other modernist novels, the recurrent use of epiphanies on the same motif has a structural function, marking climaxes and granting organic unity to the novel as a whole. In keeping with this, Miriam’s epiphanic reaction to a musical piece and her memories of the times when she had listened to it in Germany is repeated and further nuanced in later volumes of *Pilgrimage*. In *Oberland*, for example Miriam’s experience of music evokes similar situations in earlier moments of her life, creating a pattern of recurrence that links different volumes of *Pilgrimage* together. Thus, for example, listening to someone playing the piano in *Oberland* Miriam is reminded of having heard the same musical theme during her adolescent stay in Hanover and has a feeling of renewal and freedom:

⁴⁶ Morris Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* (London: Peter Owen, 1971), p.20.

⁴⁷ For a detailed account of the similarities between Proust and Dorothy Richardson, see María Francisca Llantada Díaz, ‘Proust’s traces on Dorothy Richardson’, *Etudes britanniques contemporaines* 36 (June 2009): 125-135.

She [...] could have believed that the theme was playing itself only in her mind, that it had come back to her because once again she was within the strange happiness of being abroad. Through all the years she had tried in vain to recall it, and now it came, to welcome her, piling joy on joy, setting its seal upon the days ahead and taking her back to her Germany where life had been lived to music that had flowed over its miseries and made its happiness hardly to be borne.

For an instant she was back in it, passing swiftly from scene to scene of the months in Waldstrasse and coming to rest in a summer's evening: warm light upon the garden, twilight in the saal. (IV 35)

Miriam's ability to play the piano is related to a physical trait she is ashamed of: her big hands. In the mythical quest, the hero is usually characterised by some apparent deficiencies that only later on are revealed as advantages. As a young heroine following a mythical quest, Miriam is marked by outward signs of her inner state that point to her condition as a heroine: her large hands (I 56) and her pince-nez (I 55). The fact that Miriam wears glasses could symbolise, among other things, her spiritual short-sightedness and her incapacity to see and interpret reality from a mature point of view. At this early stage, she has the 'single vision' of material reality instead of the Blakean 'four-fold' vision of the poet/prophet or shaman that she will gain at the end of her quest.⁴⁸ The external narrator who reports Miriam's thoughts also suffers from her visual impairment because it focalises reality through her eyes. A symbolic allusion to this is the episode when Pastor Lahmann flirtatiously removes Miriam's glasses to look at her eyes. Fräulein Pfaff interrupts them, making him embarrassed, and Miriam, who was first 'pleased at the thought of being grouped with him in the eyes of Fräulein Pfaff' (I 129), later realises that 'Fräulein was angry about it for some extraordinary reason' (I 130). Despite Miriam's and the narrator's unawareness of the situation,

⁴⁸ The poet-as-shaman, introvertedly looking inside, imposes the unifying effect of his/her mind on the literary universe he or she creates, interpreting reality in a meaningful way.

seen in the phrase 'for some extraordinary reason', the reader can gather the different clues that appear in the text in order to build a satisfactory explanation that evinces Miriam's naivety and her inability to interpret the previous situation. The narrator's description of Fräulein Pfaff and Pastor Lahmann's embarrassment after she interrupts both of them throws an ironic light on the event and indicates that it is an external description: 'Pastor Lahmann was standing in the middle of the room examining his nails. Fräulein, at the window, was twitching a curtain into place. She turned and drove Miriam from the room with speechless, waiting eyes' (I 130). Fräulein Pfaff and Pastor Lahmann's comic and predictable behaviour is registered by the narrator, but not interpreted as such by Miriam. As Dorrit Cohn says, free indirect style or 'narrated monologues themselves tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony. Precisely because they cast the language of a subjective mind into the grammar of objective narration, they amplify emotional notes, but also throw into ironic relief all false notes struck by a figural mind'.

⁴⁹ This is precisely what happens in the following scene of *Pointed Roofs*, where Miriam's naivety is subtly suggested by the narrator, who registers her innocent happiness and her unawareness of the meaning of Fräulein and the Pastor's confrontation: 'The sunlight was streaming across the hall. It seemed gay and home-like. Pastor Lahmann had made her forget she was a governess. He had treated her as a girl. Fräulein's eyes had spoiled it' (I 130). After this episode, Fräulein Pfaff shows her resentment by instigating Miriam, who does not understand her change of attitude towards her and thinks about leaving the school. However, in the following chapter, Miriam changes her opinion and thinks through the voice of the external narrator: 'Evidently Fräulein approved of her, after all' (I 135). At the end of chapter XI, Miriam again provokes Fräulein Pfaff's anger by looking at Pastor Lahmann: 'Presently her eyes were drawn to meet Fräulein's and she read there a disgust and a loathing such as she had never seen' (I 157). Her fluctuating account of her relationship with Fräulein Pfaff may be interpreted as evidence that Miriam's immaturity is responsible for both her changes of opinion and her incapacity to see reality, and that the

⁴⁹ Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds. Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.117.

external narrator who focalises reality through her eyes is not to be trusted either.

In *Pointed Roofs* the tone of immaturity that is characteristic both of Miriam's adolescent age and of The Fool at the beginning of his quest is symbolised by references to the colour green, with its general connotations of unripeness and incompleteness. In a German poem that Miriam translates for herself in *Pointed Roofs* 'green' is linked with 'youth'. She decides that the memory of greenness and youth should be present throughout her life's journey and not forgotten: 'A leaf from summery days/I took it with me on my way,/So that it might remind me/How loud the nightingale had sung,/How green the wood I had passed through' (I 68). This poem gives Miriam a pang as she thinks that 'it was true that summer ended in dead leaves' (I 68), thus reminding her of the death that awaits at the end of the journey. In a poem by Goethe that Fräulein reads out to her and the other girls in the German school, Miriam links green with a feeling of liberation: 'The poem was telling of someone getting away out of a room, out of 'narrow conversation' to a meadow-covered plain -of a white pathway winding through the green (I 99). For Miriam, this poem means leaving society aside and retreating to solitude in a green garden that will later on be identified with her inner life: 'Deeper down was something cool and fresh - endless garden. In happiness it came up and made everything in the world into a garden. Sorrow blotted it over, but it was always there, waiting and looking on' (I 425).⁵⁰ The recurrence of the garden image throughout *Pilgrimage* represents Miriam's psychological urge and compulsion to self-realisation and it gives her self-assurance. The garden memory is an archetypal place of primeval innocence, a lost paradise whose memory pushes Miriam further in her pilgrimage towards the goal of becoming a writer. In *Archetypal*

⁵⁰ In *Remembrance of Things Past* there is also the idea of the garden as an inner place in which to remain: 'Elstir was unable to look at a flower without first transplanting it to that inner garden in which we are always obliged to remain' (Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past* Vol. II. trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), p.975), and the garden is, of course, an archetypal symbol of Edenic purity and freedom before the Fall.

Patterns in Women's Fiction, Anis Pratt gives an explanation of 'the green-world archetype' which can be identified with Miriam's experience of the colour green. She quotes Simone de Beauvoir, who writes that the adolescent girl 'will devote a special love to Nature: still more than the adolescent boy, she worships it. Unconquered, inhuman Nature subsumes most clearly the totality of what exists'.⁵¹ For Pratt, taking possession of nature, a woman possesses herself. Later, the mature heroine tends to look back to moments of naturistic epiphany as a touchstone in her quest for her lost selfhood, so that she remembers images of the green world (p. 17). Miriam's first memory of being by herself in a garden corresponds to what Pratt calls 'the green world of the woman hero [...] a place from which she sets forth and a memory to which she returns for renewal' (p. 17). Miriam's garden memory represents her descent into her own spiritual labyrinth, to meet the archetypal image of a child who pushes her forward and makes her continue her quest.

Pointed Roofs ends with Miriam leaving the German school and taking a train to return to England. She will briefly stay at her parents' house until she finds another job as a teacher in London. The first phase of her quest has concluded, and Miriam's departure is presented from her point of view in a way that recalls cinematic techniques.⁵² While Miriam remains still in her carriage, the platform and the people who are in it seem to move away: 'The platform was moving, the large bright station moving away. [...] Fräulein's form flowed slowly away with the platform. Groups passed by smiling and waving. [...] The platform had disappeared' (I 185). This ending, where Miriam sees herself as static and everything else as moving, could be attributed to her imperfect

⁵¹ Anis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p.16.

⁵² See Laura Marcus, 'Introduction' to 'Continuous Performance: Dorothy Richardson', in James Donald, Anne Frieberg and Laura Marcus (eds), *Close Up 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp.150-59; Susan Gevirtz, *Narrative's Journey. The Fiction and Film Writing of Dorothy Richardson* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996); and María Francisca Llantada Díaz, 'An Analysis of Poetic and Cinematic Features in Dorothy M. Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature*, 90, 1 (2009): 57-77.

self-awareness of herself as a traveller who is already on a journey.
⁵³ Like The Fool of the Tarot, Miriam is still too ignorant of the ways of the world and so innocent that she cannot see beyond appearances.

The archetype of the hero's quest lies beneath the religious implications of pilgrimages and their inner and outer connotations and this has been the basis for the study of the first stages of the mythical quest that Miriam experiences in *Pointed Roofs*. A rereading of *Pointed Roofs* brings to light the correspondence between the stage of development of the mythical quest represented by the first arcanum of the Tarot, the Fool, and that undergone by the protagonist of *Pilgrimage* in the first instalment. Some of the key moments in Miriam's initial stage of her archetypal journey are analysed later, including her call to adventure and departure to foreign lands to start her process of maturation on her own, her potentiality and naivety, her phases of trial and testing and her doubts and misgivings. Some of these key motifs reappear in the later instalments: Miriam's memories of the garden and its connections with romantic poetry; the image of the staircase and its metaphorical references; and music and its epiphanic implications. If the first stage of Miriam's quest in *Pointed Roofs* runs parallel to that of the Fool of the Tarot at the beginning of his journey, then it makes sense to read *Pointed Roofs* as initiating *Pilgrimage* as a quest narrative.

⁵³ The way reality appears in this passage is accurately described by Richardson in an article on cinema. As she explains, film provides the spectator with a whole picture of reality from which fragmentation is absent: 'in any film of any kind those elements which in life we see only in fragments as we move amongst them, are seen in full in their own moving reality of which the spectator is the motionless, observing centre. [...] In life, we contemplate a landscape from one point, or, walking through it, break it into bits. The film, by setting the landscape in motion and keeping us still, allows it to walk through us' ('Continuous Performance. Narcissus', *Close Up* (September 1931): 185).