EDITORIAL

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Dorothy Richardson was always new and in many respects she was ahead of her time. Yet because the workings of time and memory fascinated her, her writing also clings to the past, attempting to preserve people, objects, and moments of consciousness that are slipping from emotional or intellectual grasp. Articles in this, the fourth issue of *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies* demonstrate her prescience as both a theorist of identity and as a cultural critic, but they also focus on the countless, if productive dilemmas her work throws up for readers and critics. What, for example, do we think today of her advanced, avant-garde representations of gender identity and same-sex desire? How perceptive in retrospect was she as an early film critic? How do we respond to the often shocking attitudes to Jewishness and 'race' in *Pilgrimage*?

The first four articles in this issue tackle these questions head-on. In 'Dorothy Richardson, Queer Theorist', Jennifer Cooke asks whether we might reread Richardson not just as a pioneering writer on sexuality, but as a queer theorist. It has now become almost commonplace in feminist criticism to include *Pilgrimage* as an example of Sapphic Modernism.[1] While Cooke stops short of describing Richardson as a queer theorist in her own time, she argues that she might still appear as one in ours. Contemporary critical theory finds in modernist writers such as Richardson attempts to grapple with the emergence of the same kinds of concepts, experiences, and desires that contemporary theorists are working with today.

If Richardson's views on sexuality were at once resolutely contemporary and at the same time future-orientated, her writing on film has proved to be a rich resource for film critics and

[1] See Laura Doan and Jane Garrity, *Sapphic Modernities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

historians of film alike. Focusing on 'intertitles', or what Richardson in her essay on the subject in the avant-garde film journal *Close Up* called 'Captions', Harriet Wragg's article, "'Like a greeting in a valentine": Silent Film Intertitles in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage' shows how the aesthetic of short titles peculiar to a brief moment of cinema history was incorporated into the aesthetic of *Pilgrimage*, particularly in *Dawn's Left Hand*. Wragg offers a welcome new perspective on *Pilgrimage*'s exploration of the visual imagination.

If Cooke and Wragg highlight Richardson's orientation towards the future, the next two articles pinpoint a more reactionary strand in her work. In her article, 'Why Won't Miriam Henderson Marry Michael Shatov?', Eva Tucker, a longstanding champion of Richardson's work, writes about *Pilgrimage* from the perspective of a working novelist who has been inspired by her fiction and yet has struggled with some aspects of her vision. Here Tucker records her sense of frustration with Miriam Henderson's apparently unreflective anti-semitism, particularly towards her lover, Michael Shatov. Yet even this feels mild compared to Miriam's violent response to the 'Negro', whom she and Michael observe in a teashop in *Deadlock*. The 'contamination' Miriam feels reads like a return to the language of Victorian pseudo-science from which Miriam is at pains to free herself when it comes to definitions of sex and gender. As Tucker makes clear, the encounter is a moment in Miriam's longer journey, but this does not mean that critics should pass over it. We are left with the problem of how to read Miriam's response. Is it purely subjective? Of the moment? And therefore not to be generalised? Is it peculiar to her? Or is the text complicit with the recuperation and resurgence of racialised discourses in the early twentieth century?

These are difficult questions to unpick. So much of Richardson's work is concerned to represent the moment through Miriam's developing consciousness, where progressive and regressive tendencies meet and mix - at the instant, but also through memory - that relating her responses to a wider cultural judgement is never straightforward. Lauren Curtright's article, 'Scattered Vision and Silent Masks: Dorothy Richardson's Critical Perceptions on Race',

is helpful in this respect, as it approaches the problem from a different angle – in relation to contemporary writings on culture and 'race' in transatlantic, modernist, cinematic criticism. Acknowledging the bigotry the passages exemplifies, Curtright discerns a transgressive element in Richardson's critical writings on cinema, where Richardson seems to be testing and questioning the limits of the dominant discourses of the black body in the period. Curtright points out that Miriam's reactions in *Deadlock* are qualified in the sense that they are caught in a temporality Miriam seems to want to escape. Even in her most regressive moments, Richardson seems to question the relationship between the nature of consciousness and the time in which it emerges.

There are aspects of Richardson's own time about which we still know very little. No one since Gloria Fromm's 1977 biography has done as much as George Thomson to research Richardson's life. In this issue, he illuminates a period about which until now we have had little evidence, the months she spent teaching in a school in North London, which are represented in *Backwater*, tracing the 'Perne sisters' back to the Ayre family, who ran the school.

Another neglected issue in Richardson studies has been *Pilgrimage*'s many intertexts. The work of Henry James was an important point of reference as well as of repudiation for Richardson. In her article, 'Of Language, of Meaning, of Mr. Henry James', Mhairi Pooler tackles the accusation of unreadability levelled at both James and Richardson. She argues that while not equivalent, both authors shared a conception of 'style and truth', which informed their fiction and allowed each to write against nineteenth-century realism.

The final article in this issue offers a long overdue analysis of Richardson's short fiction. In her monograph, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf*, reviewed in this issue, Claire Drewery has given us one of the few critical works that takes the short fiction of a range of women modernists seriously. In her article for this issue, "'The failure of this now so independently assertive reality": Mysticism, Idealism and the

Reality Aesthetic in Dorothy Richardson's Short Fiction', Drewery focuses directly on the question of temporality in Richardson work, arguing that her shorter works offer another medium for the exploration of narrative and time. Here, perhaps even more than in *Pilgrimage*, we find the importance of transcendent insights, transitional interludes, revelatory moments, and the value of memory. Far from being moments of resolution, however, the short fiction of Richardson along with that of her contemporary and critic, May Sinclair, shows the irreconcilable tensions at the core of fictional representations of the modernist subject.

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