

MODERNISM, EXISTENTIALISM,
POSTCRITICISM:
GABRIEL MARCEL READS *PILGRIMAGE*

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To this day, few traces exist of Dorothy Richardson's French readership and reception. The facts of translation might imply that this readership and reception were minimal: *Pointed Roofs* was first translated into French in 1965, eight years after Richardson's death, and many volumes of *Pilgrimage* remain untranslated.¹ Of those French readers who did read Richardson in English and in Richardson's lifetime, perhaps the most prominent was Simone de Beauvoir. In *La Force de l'âge* (1960), her memoir of the period from the late 1920s through to the liberation of Paris in 1944, de Beauvoir describes her reading interests:

Besides the books that I read with Sartre, I took in Whitman, Blake, Yeats, Synge, Sean O'Casey, all of Virginia Woolf, tons of Henry James, George Moore, Swinburne, Swinnerton, Rebecca West, Sinclair Lewis, Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, all the published translations in the 'Feux croisés' series, and even, in English, the interminable novel by Dorothy Richardson, that managed across the course of ten or twelve volumes to say absolutely nothing.²

Whether or not this judgement on Richardson is to be taken negatively or as an existentialist-tinged note of praise, de Beauvoir's comment is particularly revealing of the context in

¹ See Dorothy Richardson, *Toits pointus*, trans. Marcelle Sibon (Paris: Mercure de France, 1965).

² Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l'âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.56 (my translation) ['Outre les livres que je lus avec Sartre, j'absorbai Whitman, Blake, Yeats, Synge, Sean O'Casey, tous les Virginia Woolf, des tonnes d'Henry James, George Moore, Swinburne, Swinnerton, Rebecca West, Sinclair Lewis, Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, toutes les traductions publiées dans la collection des «Feux croisés», et même, en anglais, l'interminable roman de Dorothy Richardson qui réussit pendant dix ou douze volumes à ne raconter strictement rien'].

which Richardson was read in France in the first half of the twentieth century, giving an insight into the French perception of the time of the Anglophone literary field.

More specifically, de Beauvoir's evocation of the 'Feux croisés' (Crossfire) series suggests one determining factor for such an image of contemporary English-language literary production. 'Feux croisés' was established in 1926 by the publishing house Plon in order to issue contemporary literature in translation: among the Anglophone writers included on its list were Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, Rosamond Lehmann, Sinclair Lewis, Hope Mirrlees, and Sylvia Townsend Warner. The editor of 'Feux croisés' was Gabriel Marcel, who, in the interwar period, also expressed his enthusiasm for contemporary Anglophone literature in numerous essays and reviews for the *Nouvelle Revue française* (NRf). Among Marcel's subjects in these writings were Huxley, Lehmann, and Katherine Mansfield, as well as – most frequently – Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. Unlike de Beauvoir, therefore, Marcel was not just an avid reader but also a key mediator of Anglophone literature in France in the interwar years.

Marcel is not best known for this role: his life's work was predominantly in philosophy and theatre. Marcel was born in Paris in 1889 and brought up in an environment of 'invincible agnosticism' by his lapsed Catholic father, and his aunt, a Jewish Protestant convert.³ After leaving the Sorbonne with the agrégation in philosophy, Marcel worked as a schoolteacher for a number of years, in the middle of which he was assigned to Paris during the First World War. He left teaching in 1923 to establish himself as a writer – a career-change that would have led to his employment with Plon. His full conversion to Catholicism in 1929 gave rise to the philosophical works for which he is best known, such as *Être et avoir* (1935) and the two-volume *Le Mystère de l'être* (1951); he also wrote fifteen plays.⁴ After the Second World War, he undertook extensive international lecture tours, including giving

³ Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans. Manya Harari (London: Harvill, 1948), p.81.

⁴ On Marcel's conversion, see *Awakenings*, trans. Peter S. Rogers (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), pp.122-6.

the William James lectures at Harvard University in 1961, later published as *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (1963). He was highly decorated at home and abroad: in 1969 alone, he was awarded the Erasmus Prize and the status of *Grand Officier* in the *Ordre nationale du Mérite*.

Marcel is usually classified as an existentialist philosopher. In perhaps the most famous definition of existentialism – given by Jean-Paul Sartre as part of his 1945 lecture, ‘L’Existentialisme est un humanisme’ – Marcel is included alongside Karl Jaspers as typifying Christian existentialism by way of contrast to ‘the existential atheists, amongst whom we must place [Martin] Heidegger as well as the French existentialists and myself’. For Sartre, the two sides held in common ‘the fact that they believe that *existence* comes before *essence* – or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective’.⁵ As in Sartre’s definition, the label of ‘existentialist’ persists to this day with Marcel because it names the fact that he emerged as part of a definable tendency in French and German philosophy of the first half of the twentieth century that sought, through phenomenological means, to pose non-essentialist questions of Being. In private, however, the term was more contentious. Recalling her chagrin at the fact that, from 1945 onwards, the label ‘Existentialist novel’ was ‘affixed automatically to any work by Sartre or myself’, Simone de Beauvoir remembered a public discussion organised by the Cerf publishing house in 1945 where ‘Sartre had refused to allow Gabriel Marcel to apply this adjective to him: “My philosophy is a philosophy of existence; I don’t even know what Existentialism is”’. Ultimately, though, de Beauvoir reports, ‘our protests were in vain’, so ‘we took the epithet that everyone used for us and used it for our own purposes’.⁶ Later in life, even Marcel took it upon himself to ‘criticize rather directly the very unclear image of those who look upon me simply as an “existentialist philosopher”’; he also strongly rejected the ‘even more absurd’ image of ‘a Christian opponent of Sartre who would emerge, after him, during the years that

⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Methuen, 1948), pp.25-6.

⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Deutsch / Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), p.38.

immediately followed World War II.⁷ By this point, though, the term had a life beyond the figures it purported to name.

Existentialist philosopher and modernist reader: in this article, I suggest that these two roles are reconciled for Marcel in a detailed collection of unpublished notes that he took while reading Dorothy Richardson. Marcel certainly attempted such a reconciliation at the start of his philosophical career in his *NR* pieces, albeit while taking different Anglophone authors as his subject. Writing on Woolf's *The Waves* in 1932, Marcel is sceptical of Woolf's 'admirers' who celebrate her for having been 'compelled to break the too rigid borders of the classical novel'; for Marcel, Lehmann's *Dusty Answer* (1927) displays the same achievements in terms of literary presentation 'without resorting to any kind of unusual procedure'.⁸ Similarly, reviewing a translation of *Mrs Dalloway* in 1929, Marcel is clear that what he calls the 'interior monologue' or the 'reproduction of the interior soliloquy' is no more than 'an expedient destined to procure, at the lowest price, the illusion of a directly signified spiritual reality'.⁹ But if in such instances Marcel seems to be working against the critical discourse that emerged around modernism, then he seems equally intent on developing his own account – one that accords with his own philosophical leanings. The review of *Mrs Dalloway* is most significant in this respect, giving a phenomenological reading of Woolf's novel, where 'we are given not only the character of Clarissa in that which is accessible to the heart alone, but also the world which is that character's, which together expresses and penetrates it'. For Marcel, though Woolf's novel is 'devoid of any philosophical pretension' the 'very fine and complex emotion

⁷ Marcel, *Awakenings*, p.39.

⁸ Gabriel Marcel, 'Les Vagues, par Virginia Woolf (The Hogarth Press)', *Nouvelle Revue française*, February 1932, pp.303-8 (p.304) (my translation) ['Les admirateurs de Mme Virginia Woolf [...] elle s'est vue contrainte de briser les cadres trop rigides du roman classique. [...] sans avoir recours à aucun procédé inhabituel.'].]

⁹ Gabriel Marcel, 'Mrs Dalloway, par Virginia Woolf, traduction de S. David (Stock)', *Nouvelle Revue française*, July 1929, pp.129-31 (p.129) (my translation) ['le monologue intérieur [...] la reproduction du soliloque intérieur [...] un expédient destiné à procurer, au moindre prix de revient, l'illusion d'une réalité spirituelle directement signifiée.'].]

which emerges from the book is linked to the presence, if not of an intuition, at least of a feeling of a metaphysical nature'. Consequently, the 'infinitely mysterious relation' that *Mrs Dalloway* shows to exist 'between the individual and their universe' is one that 'the philosopher will never sufficiently concretize' and that must remain instead 'undoubtedly the most beautiful novelistic theme'.¹⁰

As Marcel's philosophical voice matured, it would become clear that such a 'theme' was actually something that an entirely reconfigured form of philosophy *could* body forth. Much later in life, Marcel described his initial philosophical 'adventure' as guided by a commitment to philosophy as 'research' with 'no question of converting it into a body of propositions capable of being set up for all time and recognized as true, except as regards the mental processes by which these propositions were arrived at' – a phenomenological *credo* that aligns with Sartre's belief that '*existence* comes before *essence* – or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective'.¹¹ Consequently, one notable feature of Marcel's early philosophy was its experimental form: Marcel's first full-length book, *Journal métaphysique* (1927), is presented as a personal journal, setting out his phenomenological method at both the level of content and form. Viewed alongside the *Journal métaphysique*, Marcel's reviews in the 1920s–30s of modernist novels by writers like Woolf can be seen as representing another means for him to develop his existentialism outside the strictures of academic philosophy. But as in the *Journal métaphysique*, in the reviews, the line between content and form, between the subject and object of Marcel's analysis is pointedly blurred. By framing literary works like *Mrs Dalloway* as existentialism *avant la lettre*, Marcel's readings of

¹⁰ Marcel, 'Mrs Dalloway', p.130 (my translation) ['nous est donné, non seulement, le personnage de Clarissa en ce qu'il a d'accessible au coeur seul, mais le monde qui est le sien, qui tout ensemble l'exprime et la pénètre.' / 'dépourvu de toute prétention philosophique [...] l'émotion si fine et si complexe qui se dégage du livre est liée à la présence sinon d'une intuition, au moins d'un sentiment de nature au fond métaphysique' / 'Cette relation infiniment mystérieuse [...] entre l'individu et son univers [...] le philosophe n'approfondira jamais assez concrètement [...] le plus beau thème romanesque'].

¹¹ Gabriel Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.4.

modernism both enact and describe what Carole Bourne-Taylor and Ariane Mildenberg have more recently noted – that ‘modernism and phenomenology steadfastly crystallize the same preoccupations concerning subjectivity: dislodging it from the hegemony of rationalism, realism and objectivity, they bespeak a crisis of values and scientific foundations that lead to a reappraisal of the self.’¹²

It is my wager, however, that Marcel’s reading of Richardson reveals even more about the confluence between modernism and existentialism. At the centre of this article is a reading of Richardson conducted, as it were, over Marcel’s shoulder – a reading that traces Marcel’s path through *Pilgrimage* and takes prompts for understanding Richardson’s novel-sequence in so doing. In following the path through *Pilgrimage* that is set out by Marcel’s notes on Richardson, what emerges in particular is a self-reflective tendency within Richardson’s writing that limns the connection between experience and its expression in language. By then reading this self-reflective tendency alongside Marcel’s existentialist philosophy, I find not only a productive definition of the discourse of *Pilgrimage*, but also a powerful and thoroughgoing expression of the entanglement between modernism and existentialism in the first half of the twentieth century.

This article views its material from two perspectives. First, I read *Pilgrimage* closely, by way of Marcel. Second, I consider the implications of such a reading in broader view. As already suggested, Marcel’s encounter with Richardson’s writing is indicative and illustrative of the interrelations – both historical and conceptual – of existentialism and modernism; indeed, throughout this article, I draw on recent scholarship that makes the same point using neighbouring literary and philosophical examples. But my argument here goes further. To view the particular figure of Marcel, and the particular form of his reading of Richardson solely from the vantage point of historical retrospect is to elide a further

¹² Carole Bourne-Taylor and Ariane Mildenberg, ‘Introduction: Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond’ in Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg (eds), *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond* (Oxford: Lang, 2010), p.5.

perspective: Marcel's 'Notes sur Dorothy Richardson' participate in a longer and still-unfolding intellectual history.

The notes on *Pilgrimage* that make up the majority of Marcel's writing on Richardson have broader implications in the present day for 'postcritical' modes of reading. Much of the recent postcritical turn in literary studies has been situated explicitly in relation to the work of Paul Ricoeur, and in particular his designation of a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' against which postcriticism must be defined. Gabriel Marcel was perhaps Ricoeur's major early influence – a teacher, a mentor, and a friend. A lineage can be seen in outline here: from Marcel's notes on Richardson and the way they can – via Marcel's philosophy – aid an understanding of *Pilgrimage*; through the ways in which Ricoeur's philosophy built on Marcel's; to contemporary literary scholarship and its debts to Ricoeur as it seeks to break the impasses of critique. My concluding aim, therefore, is to consider how this lineage might provide new insights into modernism, existentialism, and postcriticism, and in particular how it might highlight the inseparability of these terms.

'Isn't it funny that speaking French banishes the inside of everything; makes you see only things?'

Among the Harry Ransom Center's holdings of Marcel's papers is a notebook titled 'Notes sur Dorothy Richardson'.¹³ Unlike his readings of novels by Richardson's contemporaries such as Woolf, Marcel's reading of *Pilgrimage* did not result in any published writings. The notes stand as a private document and bear none of the marks of formal synthesis; they are not brought together, worked through, or summed up in a public text. Marcel's notes on Richardson amount to thirty-four pages, including loose leaves. They consist mostly of transcribed phrases and passages from *Pilgrimage* – often in English, occasionally translated into French –

¹³ 'Notes sur Dorothy Richardson', Box 4 Folder 6, Subseries C: Other Literary Materials, 1921–1930 [sic], Gabriel Marcel Collection, 1889–1973, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin. The notes are quoted with permission from the Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, and the literary estate of Gabriel Marcel.

as well as *aides-memoire* regarding characters and scenes in the novel-sequence. Also included are Marcel's notes regarding secondary works on Richardson, including extensive transcriptions from John Cowper Powys's 1931 study of Richardson, as well as shorter sections of notes on Richardson's 1933 'Autobiographical Sketch' from Stanley Kunitz's *Authors Today and Yesterday*, and Horace Gregory's 1939 article on Richardson for *Life and Letters To-day*.¹⁴

Rough dates for the notes can be ascertained. Firstly, it is clear from the pagination listed throughout the notes that Marcel read the first collected edition of *Pilgrimage*, published in November 1938 by J. M. Dent and Sons in association with the Cresset Press. Secondly, two incidental – and perhaps not wholly conclusive – markers suggest that Marcel began reading the four volumes of this edition not long after it was first published. Among the pages of notes is a loose sheet containing jottings regarding the first volume of *Pilgrimage*. These notes are written on a piece of paper evidently ripped from another book, as the bottom left-hand corner of the page includes a legend marking the date of 1938 and the name L. Bellenand et fils – a Parisian periodical printing house that also printed books for major publishers such as Denoël.¹⁵ One of the other loose sheets is a concert ticket for the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris, dated 12 February 1939. Although the notes are not clear enough to show whether Marcel read all the way through *Pilgrimage*, they nevertheless contain references to novels from each of the four volumes of the 1938 edition. When Marcel ceased to read Richardson – either in his own historical

¹⁴ See John Cowper Powys, *Dorothy M. Richardson* (London: Joiner and Steele, 1931); Dorothy Richardson, 'Autobiographical Sketch' in *Authors Today and Yesterday*, ed. Stanley J. Kunitz (New York: Wilson, 1934), pp.562–4; Horace Gregory, 'Dorothy Richardson Reviewed', *Life and Letters To-Day*, March 1939, pp.36-45.

¹⁵ See 'L'Archive de la quinzaine n° 181: L'Imprimerie de la route de Bièvres' (May–June 2011), Archives municipales, Fontenay-aux-Roses, <https://media.fontenay-aux-roses.fr/fileadmin/fontenay/MEDIA/decouvrir_la_ville/histoire/Publications/Quinzaine/181- L_imprimerie_de_la_route_de_Bievres_vers_1910_.pdf> [accessed 21 July 2017].

chronology or in the chronology of *Pilgrimage* – is not evidenced by the notes.

In what follows, my reading of *Pilgrimage* via Marcel dwells mainly on what might be called the ‘London novels’ at the centre of Richardson’s novel-sequence – that is, *The Tunnel*, which sees Miriam Henderson’s arrival in Bloomsbury, through *Interim*, *Deadlock*, *Revolving Lights*, and *The Trap*, the end of which precipitates Miriam’s departure to Switzerland (in *Oberland*, in which I also take a brief detour). I do so not only because of the constraints of space, but also because these chapter-volumes take up the bulk of Marcel’s notes on *Pilgrimage*.

As with any good note-taker, the one constant in Marcel’s notes is a diligent use of page references. Beyond this, a number of distinctions abide in the presentation of the notes; though not all of these distinctions can be placed within a hierarchy of importance, their differences can at least be registered. First, there is a clear distinction in Marcel’s notes between *aides memoire* and direct quotations. The former also tend not to distinguish between *Pilgrimage*’s plot points and its more discursive passages. For example, the final scene between Miriam and her mother at the end of *Honeycomb* – before the section break that marks Mrs Henderson’s suicide – is noted by Marcel as ‘la mort de la mere. Les Evangiles, St Paul’ (‘the death of the mother. The Gospels, St Paul’). Hence, reflecting on one of *Pilgrimage*’s most transformative events, Marcel’s notes put equal emphasis on a particular detail in the scene – Miriam reading the bible to her mother, and reflecting on the differing qualities of the Gospels and St Paul’s epistles.¹⁶

Direct quotations too have their own subdivisions in Marcel’s notes. Although nearly all of the quotations that Marcel transcribes are short and selectively truncated, some are in English and some are translated into French. Though the reasons for this distinction are obscure, certain conclusions can be drawn about the way the two languages function for Marcel. The ease of Marcel’s mother-

¹⁶ See Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: Virago, 2002), pp.486-7. Quotations from *Pilgrimage* are hereafter cited in the text.

tongue clearly mediates and frames his reading of Richardson in English. In one of his notes on *The Tunnel*, for example, Marcel writes ‘perhaps there is happiness only et surtout [and above all] life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die’. In *The Tunnel*, the two phrases quoted in English here are separated by four and a half sentences – seven lines of text in the edition Marcel used. Hence, Marcel transcribes what are for him the two most important parts of a longer passage; framing this selection, a French metalanguage (‘et surtout’) points to Marcel’s sense of the relation between these two parts. Here, in amongst an English transcription from *Pilgrimage*, Marcel uses French to set out the hierarchies and emphases that he sees in Richardson’s writing. Further, the tempi and intensities of attention involved in Marcel’s reading are also implied: the sweeping summary of a long, involved paragraph through short, incomplete quotations linked by a reflex mother-tongue connective suggests the desire to note the strong impression made by a particular passage without losing the thread of attention that has enabled such a registration to take place.

As the interplay between French and English in Marcel’s notes registers one type of reading, so Marcel’s translations from Richardson suggest another. In the note from *The Tunnel* considered above, the use of French stands for rapidity, for the ease of paraphrase and gloss. But when French is used to translate the prose of *Pilgrimage*, a slower, more resistant kind of reading seems to be taking place. When he notes down, ‘Isn’t it funny that speaking French banishes the inside of everything; makes you see only things?’ (III 299) – a comment that Miriam makes to Michael Shatov in *Revolving Lights* – it is as if Marcel is noting a mirror of his own processes, accessing the thing-itself of Richardson’s meaning by translating it into the familiarity of his mother tongue. But at the same time, for Marcel, translation appears to represent an internal searching for correspondence, a slower kind of reading where the competing merits of accuracy and potency are weighed up as a linguistic equivalent is sought to mediate understanding. It is not just the word-choices involved in Marcel’s translations from Richardson that are significant, but the very fact of translation too. As discussed below, the choice to translate initiates a particular relation for Marcel to certain parts of *Pilgrimage*.

Of the three passages from *Pilgrimage* noted by Marcel that are quoted above, two have an added purchase. Marcel double-underlines the page reference for the quotation from *The Tunnel*, and puts an X next to the quotation from *Revolving Lights*. These examples are representative of Marcel's notation for emphasis in his notes on Richardson. In total, this range of notation consists of: single- and double-underlinings; single- and double-Xs (large and small) next to quotations; and single, double, and triple vertical lines in the margins bracketing quotations. On the one hand, this repertoire of emphasis could suggest a practice immanent within Marcel's initial reading, ascribing degrees and kinds of importance to passages as they are encountered. But on the other, there is evidence within the notes that such marks also register a kind of secondary practice, where Marcel's later recollection provides a delayed revelation of significance within his earlier encounter with *Pilgrimage*. The quotation above from *The Tunnel* is not only underlined, but is also followed by a cross-reference to a page from *Oberland*; as such, the notes suggest that Marcel went back over and reconsidered his notes after their initial inscription.

Overall, then, I am attentive not only to the path through *Pilgrimage* suggested by the selectiveness of Marcel's notes, but also to the internal dynamics of this selection. I recognize that Marcel's direct quotation, French paraphrase, and French translation, as well as his emphatic mark-making each have their own particular valence as the traces of a particular reading and a particular set of reading practices. Each passage singled out by Marcel – as well as the manner of this singling-out – raises a set of interpretative questions, demanding a particular re-reading of Richardson's writing and drawing attention towards a broader network of reference both internal and external to *Pilgrimage*. Taken as a whole, the subtle, ever-shifting texture of reading suggested by Marcel's notes offers a unique account of *Pilgrimage's* own literary and philosophical texture.

'Life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die'

The passage in full that prompts Marcel's note of 'perhaps there is happiness only et surtout [and above all] life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die', reads thus:

perhaps there is happiness only in the things one does deliberately, without a visible reason; drifting off to Germany, because it called; coming here to-day . . . in freedom. If you are free, you are alive . . . nothing that happens in the part of your life that is not free, the part you do and are paid for, is alive. To-day, because I am free I am the same person as I was when I was there, but much stronger and happier because I know it. As long as I can sometimes feel like this nothing has mattered. Life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die. (II 215)

In extracting the more abstract content from Richardson's prose, Marcel's selection emphasises the conceptual centre of gravity of the surrounding passage. The passage itself comes from a much longer paragraph that follows Miriam's memories from their earliest point in Babington, through to the present. Marcel joins this paragraph at its conclusion, at the point at which it shifts more generally to the kind of abstract rhetorical mode that he selects for his notes. In its references to Miriam's 'drifting off to Germany', this particular long paragraph is also representative of the development in *The Tunnel* of one of *Pilgrimage's* signature styles, in which Richardson increasingly folds in Miriam's retrospect regarding the earlier material of the novel itself (rather than material preceding its narrative chronology).

At this point in *The Tunnel*, therefore, Marcel's attention is focused on a crucial moment of textual self-reflection in *Pilgrimage*, as well as, in addition, the development of a vocabulary around the notion of freedom – something that could be seen as particularly relevant for an existentialist philosopher. But the actual words that Marcel notes down point in a slightly different direction. By noting down 'Life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die', Marcel chooses an awkward and ill-fitting indicator of *Pilgrimage's* typicality or representativeness in relation to its literary and philosophical

context. In describing *Pilgrimage* as ‘just life going on and on. It is Miriam Henderson’s stream of consciousness going on and on’ May Sinclair’s famous *Egoist* essay initiated perhaps the central metaphor for describing the modernist novel’s representation of interiority.¹⁷ But in the passage in question from *The Tunnel*, Richardson partly violates this cornerstone of Sinclair’s analysis before the fact. As Suzanne Raitt notes, in using the term ‘stream of consciousness’, Sinclair ‘invokes a range of scientific and popular contexts’, deploying a term already in wide circulation.¹⁸ In William James’s early and prominent articulation of the term – an articulation sometimes wrongly understood to be Sinclair’s source – the notion of the stream is inscribed precisely to redress the inadequacy of other metaphors for consciousness:

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as ‘chain’ or ‘train’ do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A ‘river’ or a ‘stream’ are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.*¹⁹

Richardson publically resisted the attachment of the metaphor of the ‘stream of consciousness’ to her writing, suggesting in the 1930s that consciousness rather ‘sits stiller than a tree’, and later, in the 1950s, stating her preference for the metaphors of ‘a pool, a sea, an ocean’ with their depths and currents.²⁰ As such, Marcel’s particular emphasis (‘et surtout’) on Richardson’s ‘Life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die’ pulls in two opposing directions. On the one hand, it highlights the fact that in *Pilgrimage*, Richardson develops a descriptive language for experience and

¹⁷ May Sinclair, ‘The Novels of Dorothy Richardson’, *Egoist*, 5.4 (1918): 57-9 (p.58).

¹⁸ Suzanne Raitt, *May Sinclair: A Modern Victorian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p.219.

¹⁹ William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume I* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p.233.

²⁰ Richardson, ‘Autobiographical Sketch’, p.562; Vincent Brome, ‘A Last Meeting with Dorothy Richardson’, *London Magazine*, June 1959, pp.26-32 (p.29). Marcel notes down the very passage from the former article in which Richardson discusses her views on the term ‘stream of consciousness’.

consciousness that resists the terms of her critical reception. Taken more broadly, therefore, Marcel draws attention to a moment where *Pilgrimage* evades being placed within its usual philosophical neighbourhood: not only does Richardson's 'chain' explicitly fall short of the concepts practically implied by troping consciousness as a stream, but it also contradicts a number of contemporaneous philosophical descriptions of consciousness – not only James's, but also, for example, Edmund Husserl's similar notions of protention and retention.²¹ On the other hand, Marcel's notes isolate a consistent strand of writing about consciousness in *Pilgrimage*. In doing this, the notes recuperate this strand of writing, bringing out a different set of terms through which Richardson's portrayal and formulation of consciousness might be understood.

As noted above, next to the quotation from *The Tunnel*, Marcel notes down a page reference from *Oberland*. Within the sequence of *Pilgrimage*, *The Tunnel* is separated from *Oberland* by four other novels; in the edition Marcel used, the two novels are two volumes apart. The page from *Oberland* that Marcel links to the passage in *The Tunnel* is also referred to in a passage transcribed elsewhere in Marcel's notes that reads: 'life ... is eternal because joy is. "Future life" is a contradiction in terms. The deadly trap of the adjective. Pourquoi dater? Even science insists on indestructibility, yet...'. Taken together, these details suggest that Marcel made a link between these two passages on second look, noticing an overarching theme or tendency in *Pilgrimage* as he looked back over his initial notes.

Including the words elided by Marcel after 'life', the passage in question from *Oberland* consists of the majority of a short paragraph that comes just under half-way through the chapter-volume. This passage falls towards the end of a short sub-section, in which Miriam, during her second day at the Swiss hotel, writes six letters 'at top speed'. Though brief, this scene of letter-writing is an important moment in the overall trajectory of *Pilgrimage* as a narrative concerned with coming to writing. In two adjacent

²¹ For more on Richardson and Husserl, see Rebecca Rauve Davis, 'Stream and Destination: Husserl, Subjectivity, and Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 59.2 (2013): 309-42.

sentences preceding the passage transcribed by Marcel, Richardson works to define Miriam's understanding of writing. With her letters written, Miriam 'must now go forth, secretly, as it were behind her own back, into Oberland; into the scene that had seemed full experience and was but its overture'. Here, Richardson inverts the traditional hierarchy that sees writing as a reflection upon experience, which by virtue of this relation cannot be considered within the domain of experience itself. Miriam sees writing and reflection as giving access to authentic experience, with the events traditionally understood to constitute experience a mere anterior 'overture'. Richardson then adds a subtle qualification: the letters that give rise to this revelation, however, 'were disappointing' and Miriam finds that only in one 'had she escaped expressing yesterday's excited achievements and set down instead the living joy of to-day' (I V 59). Miriam only values her writing when it expresses a kind of joyful presence and avoids a sense of coming after the fact. By this token, Richardson rejects the sequential understanding of writing, in which – whether considered authentic experience or not – it must by nature come after something other than itself, and as such forfeit any claims to actual presence.

'The deadly trap of the adjective'

To posit such notions entails a certain acceptance of paradox: does writing serve merely as a trace of the experience of which it constituted for the writer? Or can this experience be renewed in the act of reading? If events and being-in-the-world do not constitute authentic experience, how might they be defined? Marcel's philosophical writing explored very similar notions. In *Être et avoir*, Marcel fixes at one point on the problem of reporting *Erlebnis*, usually translated from German as 'experience', or, more literally, 'living-through'. *Erlebnis* is an affective, subjective experience to be distinguished from the experience of facts or events; for Marcel, it resists being accounted for:

Today we tend to think too little of witness [témoignage] and just to see in it the more or less accurate report of an *Erlebnis*.
But if witness is only that, it is nothing, it is impossible; for

absolutely nothing can guarantee that the *Erlebnis* will be capable of survival or confirmation.

At the same time, however, Marcel refuses to discount failing attempts at witness, as this would entail ‘a root-and-branch devaluation both of memory and of all translation into conceptual terms of this *Erlebnis*, which is in itself inexpressible.’ At this stage in Marcel’s argument in *Être et avoir*, he maintains the distinction – a distinction that Richardson overturns – between experience and its subsequent reflection in writing. But the impasse Marcel reaches in stating that *Erlebnis* is ‘inexpressible’ enables him to shift from a notion of witnessing to a notion of attestation, which brings him closer to Richardson.

For Marcel, ‘the Mysterious and Ontological are identical’; consequently, they can be separated out from the ‘problematic’:

A problem is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety.

Under the sign of this distinction, Marcel asserts that ‘Surely it is of the essence of anything ontological that it can be no more than *attested*?’. Attestation, then, is the verbal corollary of a mystery, a trace of an encounter with an essence that is not fully disclosed. Marcel’s philosophy develops its notion of the mystery in part as a means through which to understand Being. As such, Marcel also brings attestation into the orbit of Being:

attestation must be the thought of itself; it can only be justified in the heart of Being and in reference to Being. In a world where *Erlebnis* is everything, in a world of simple instants, the attestation disappears; but then how can it be attestation if attestation is appearance?

Attestation is a personal thing; it brings the personality into play, but it is at the same time turned

towards Being, and is characterised by this tension between the personal and the ontological factors.²²

The distinction that Marcel makes between mere *Erlebnis* and Being is similar to the distinction Richardson makes in *Oberland* between the ‘overture’ of worldly living and the ‘living joy of today’ that is transmuted and fulfilled in writing; Richardson’s account of writing also maps onto Marcel’s notion of attestation. And though *Erlebnis* as ‘a world of simple instants’ might resonate superficially with Richardson’s ‘life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die’, by linking the latter quotation explicitly with *Oberland*’s ‘life ... is eternal because joy is’, Marcel suggests that something else is at stake. Both quotations emphasise happiness and joy as the primary point of access to a superior form of experience – Being, in Marcel’s terminology.

If both Richardson and Marcel see certain kinds of verbal expression as having a privileged – albeit obscure – relation to this superior form of experience (Being or ‘living joy’), then by extension, one function of Marcel’s notes might be to develop an account of the specific *type* of discourse that Richardson creates in *Pilgrimage*. Many of the quotations that Marcel notes down from *Pilgrimage* consider the relationship between what Richardson terms ‘life’, and its description in language: from *Interim*, translated into French and marked with a double marginal line, ‘If you can speak of a thing, it is past. . . . Speaking makes it glow with a life that is not its own’ (II 317); from *Revolving Lights*, with two marginal lines of emphasis, ‘joy of making statements not drawn from things heard or read, but plumbed directly from the unconscious accumulation of her own experience’ (III 255); and from *The Trap*, ‘every symbol he used called up the image of life as process’ (III 476). Even one of Marcel’s transcriptions from Powys’s book on Richardson considers the same topic: ‘What she has achieved in this modern *Pilgrim’s Progress* is a strange kind of “salvation” only to

²² Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katharine Farrer (London: Dacre, 1949), pp.98-100.

be attained by a *certain peculiar awareness of an apparently purposeless life-flow*.²³

Marcel's notes point to elements within *Pilgrimage* that not only define the relationship of life and writing, but that seem to be self-descriptive, instances of Richardson searching for a language to describe her own process as life-writing. This self-reflexivity can also lead to the generation of another fine distinction regarding Richardson's relation to her philosophical context – additional to the notion that Richardson's use of the metaphor of life as a 'chain of happy moments' contradicts the analysis of consciousness as set down by figures like James and Husserl. In the early twentieth century, and in the neighbourhood of phenomenology and existentialism, perhaps the most prominent philosophical definition of *Erlebnis* was the one articulated by Wilhelm Dilthey. As Laura Marcus notes, for Dilthey the jump from *Erlebnis* to the account of that *Erlebnis* is a given:

Dilthey sets up his concept not just in opposition to empiricism, but also to the 'lifeless' epistemology of Kant. In contrast to Kantian synthesis, experience constitutes itself directly as a unity, in which perception, emotion and judgement are fused. This principle of unity leads directly into notions of interpretation; life interprets itself. Our interpretation of our experiences is continuous with the higher forms of interpretation in literary and historical studies [...].²⁴

Though Richardson and Marcel also see a necessary relation between experience and writing, for both, this transition is far less continuous than with Dilthey. And unlike Dilthey, Richardson and Marcel also make a distinction internal to the concept of experience – on Marcel's terms, *Erlebnis* and Being. Read through Marcel, greater conceptual precision and historical awareness can be brought to the ways in which *Pilgrimage* constitutes life-writing.

²³ Powys, *Dorothy M. Richardson*, p.10 [Marcel's emphasis].

²⁴ Laura Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.137.

Though the sub-section in question from *Oberland* concerns the relationship of writing and Being, the particular passage that Marcel picks out solely concerns the subject of Being. As with his transcription from *The Tunnel*, Marcel elides Richardson's more concrete narrative details, noting down her more discursive content – albeit also leaving out the passage's concluding notes. The whole passage reads as follows:

Life, she told herself as she crossed the hall trying to drown the kitchen sounds by recalling what had flashed across her mind as she wrote to Densley, is eternal because joy is. 'Future life' is a contradiction in terms. The deadly trap of the adjective. *Pourquoi dater?* Even science insists on indestructability – yet marks for destruction the very thing that enables it to recognize indestructability. But it had come nearer and clearer than that. (IV 59-60)

With '*Pourquoi dater?*', Richardson seems to be alluding to Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution: A History* (1837), a book that, in *Deadlock*, Miriam points out on a shelf 'she knew' on the south side of the British Museum Reading Room to an unimpressed Michael Shatov (III 58). The allusion comes from Carlyle's narration of the early stages of the Constituent Assembly, where 'it is admitted' that the activities carried out there are 'very dull. "Dull as this day's Assembly," said some one. "Why date, *Pourquoi dater?*" answered Mirabeau'. The comte de Mirabeau's statement is emblematic of his character as described by Carlyle: '[i]n the Transient he will detect the Perennial; find some firm footing even among Paper-vortexes'.²⁵ Dullness cannot be written off as the particular character of a single day in the Constituent Assembly, Mirabeau argues – the work of democracy is dull by definition, and this essential quality does not detract from democracy's vitality or urgency.

Later on in *Pilgrimage*, Carlyle is once again associated with the notion of the universal as against the particular. In *Dimple Hill*, Hypo Wilson mocks 'your Arnolds and Emersons and Carlyles' for

²⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History. I. The Bastille* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896), p.222.

‘their profundities, going the round uncensored by science’, which are in fact ‘nothing more than complacent, luxurious flatulence, disguised in leisurely, elegant phraseology’ (I V 417). Miriam is most inclined to defend Emerson, remembering her own inattention to the underlying meaning of her father’s sense that ‘Emerson is for the young’:

Because I was trying to imagine what it must be to look back on thirty as youth, his repudiation sank into me without resistance, and I forgot to remind myself that he still, after a lifetime as a physicist, believes in direct intuitive perception. How can’t there be direct perception of ultimate reality? How could we perceive even ourselves, if we did not somehow precede what we are? (IV 419)

This passage echoes the passage from *Oberland* picked out and emphasized by Marcel. In both, Richardson considers science’s limits: for Miriam, science negates its abstract theoretical underpinnings by valorizing its focus on concrete particulars. Equally, Miriam’s ruminations in *Dimple Hill* on the idea that a ‘direct perception of ultimate reality’ underpins self-perception work according to the same principle as her revelation in *Oberland*: in the same way, in the latter, ‘future life’ is seen as a contradiction in terms because life and the joy which transmutes it is rooted in something atemporal.

Overall, Marcel’s notes pick out a thread within *Pilgrimage* that – like his own descriptions of Being – concerns a notion of the universal that is difficult to grasp and even conceptualize, but definitionally impossible to fully foreclose. This reading provides a possible corrective to the account of Richardson’s writing that prevailed among many of its contemporary readers. One of the major recurring elements in *Pilgrimage*’s initial reception was the charge of unselective attention to particulars. Reviewing *Interim*, for example, Katherine Mansfield concluded that Richardson ‘leaves us feeling, as before, that everything being of equal importance to her, it is impossible that everything should not be of equal

unimportance'.²⁶ Virginia Woolf and Havelock Ellis both follow Mansfield's point to its logical end: of *The Tunnel*, Woolf felt that '[w]e find ourselves in the dentist's room, in the street, in the lodging-house bedroom frequently and convincingly; but never, or only for a tantalising second, in the reality which underlies these appearances'; Ellis similarly suggested that Richardson 'set out to present before us Miriam complete, and yet the things that matter are left a blank which the minuteness of the record itself serves to emphasise'.²⁷ Looked at together, Marcel's philosophy and his notes on Richardson reconceptualize *Pilgrimage's* detail-heavy particularity. Mansfield, Woolf, and Ellis all consider this aspect of Richardson's writing within a binary, representing unimportance and triviality at the expense of importance and meaning, surface at the expense of depth. Marcel's notes also conceive of *Pilgrimage* within this binary, but see Richardson's writing as exemplifying the other side. Through Marcel, *Pilgrimage* appears as in fact a literary act of careful and meaningful selection, just on a huge scale, and from a rich and extensive source. *Pilgrimage* is a work of life-writing in the sense that 'life is a chain of happy moments that cannot die' – its every detail attests to and attempts to register the moments within Miriam Henderson's experience that access an 'ultimate reality' of Being.

'Yet it seemed the only thing that came near and meant anything at all'

In perhaps the most extraordinary turn in his notes on Richardson, Marcel translates more than a page's worth of text from the opening of the second chapter of *Interim*; for comparison, Marcel's other translations from Richardson tend to amount only to a line

²⁶ Katherine Mansfield, 'Dragonflies' (1920), in *Novels and Novelists*, ed. by J. Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1930), pp.137-40 (p.140). Although he does not note down anything from within it, this posthumous collection of Mansfield's reviews is included in a list taken by Marcel of books containing material on Richardson.

²⁷ Virginia Woolf, 'The Tunnel' (1919), in *Contemporary Writers* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), pp.120-2 (p.122); Havelock Ellis, *Impressions and Comments: Second Series, 1914-1920* (London: Constable, 1921), p.196.

or so of text.²⁸ The passage in question shows the same characteristics of those considered above, exhibiting an abstract, deeply personal mode – one unconcerned with any narrative or empirical detail, and instead focused on the complex relation between (on Marcel’s terms) Being and attestation. In this instance, Richardson’s presiding term for attestation is song:

Life would be an endless inward singing until the end came. But not too much inward singing, spending one’s strength in song; the song must be kept down and low so that it would last all the time and never fail. Then a song would answer back from outside, in everything. (II 321)

As with the passage from *Oberland* discussed above, here expression itself provides access to Being, but only insofar as it can be accessed when kept in constant tension with daily living. At the same time, the surrounding passage that Marcel translates – as well as the very fact of this translation – exposes certain limits in his encounter with Richardson’s writing.

In the centre of the long passage that Marcel’s translates from *Interim* is the following:

There was no thought in the silence, no past or future, nothing but the strange thing for which there were no words, something that was always there as if by appointment, waiting for one to get through to it away from everything in life. It was the thing that was nothing. Yet it seemed the only thing that came near and meant anything at all. It was happiness and realization. It was being suspended, in nothing. It came out of oneself because it came only when one had been a long time alone. (II 322)

Marcel’s translation operates a clearly-determined reading of the keyword of this section, ‘nothing’. Given the organisation of the sentence, the first instance of the word in this passage – ‘nothing but the strange thing’ – cannot be a noun, and so Marcel translates

²⁸ The passage Marcel translates begins ‘The room was full of clear strength’ and ends ‘sound like music in a dream?’ (P2, pp.321-2).

it as ‘rien’ (‘rien que cette chose étrange’). The third instance of the word ‘nothing’ in the passage is also grammatically clear, meriting Marcel’s translation of the word as a noun: ‘suspended, in nothing’ becomes ‘suspendre dans le néant’. But in Richardson’s original, the middle instance is more ambiguous. ‘It was the thing that was nothing’ is cultivated to achieve maximum abstraction and ambiguity. The ‘It’ at the beginning of the sentence must refer to ‘the strange thing for which there were no words’ of the previous sentence. But as this is the case, then Richardson could be qualifying her previous statement: there are no words for this ‘strange thing’, because it is no-thing, nothingness itself – a meaning that would be clarified in the French term ‘le néant’. By instead using ‘Cette chose l’y était rien’, Marcel relegates this instance of ‘nothing’ to a less weighty and more evasive ‘rien’. Richardson’s second ‘nothing’ holds both possible meanings – ‘rien’ and ‘le néant’ – within it. Admittedly, French does not allow for this ambiguity, but the possibility of Marcel translating otherwise remains. Marcel’s translations of ‘nothing’ in *Interim* speak of more than just the differences between languages. On the one hand, Marcel’s shift from ‘rien’ to ‘le néant’ in the third rather than the second iteration in the passage in question displays the particular contours of his reading, marking out the point where he sees Richardson modulating into a more explicitly conceptual mode. Here it should be noted that the concept of nothing was a particularly potent philosophical term within Marcel’s existentialist milieu. In a review of Sartre’s *L’Être et le néant* (1943), for example, Marcel tries to refine Sartre’s conversion of ‘nothing’ into a verb: ‘*Néantir* does not in any way mean to annihilate or to annul, but, to use a frequent illustration of this author, it means much more to surround the being with a casing of non-being, or, as I personally should be more ready to say, to put it into the parenthesis of non-being.’²⁹ When Richardson evokes ‘being suspended, in nothing’, therefore, Marcel’s translation evokes a rich philosophical context, elevating the significance of this sentence above its surrounding text. But on the other hand, the very fact that Marcel uses translation to set *Pilgrimage* against a particular philosophical

²⁹Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Gollancz, 1951), p.169.

background shows the limits of this practice of reading. Marcel's translation – and the distinctions of the philosophical vocabulary through which it is channelled – foregoes the ambiguity of Richardson's prose. In gaining a philosophical precision for *Pilgrimage's* most complex abstractions, Marcel loses the poetic ambiguity that a more literary account of Richardson's writing might emphasise.

Ironically, the passage in question from *Interim* also reveals a limit to Marcel's reading in the opposite manner, short-changing Richardson's unambiguous precision for a looser generality. There is little at issue in Marcel's translation of one of Miriam's resolutions, 'No more interest in men. They shut off the inside world'. But at the same time, the relation of this resolution to the surrounding content of the passage shows how, in *Pilgrimage*, discourse on identity in the most abstract sense is often placed in close proximity to discourse on gendered identity, as if discussions of the former must always reckon with the latter. Many of the phrases that Marcel transcribes from *Pilgrimage* partially occlude this fact. From *Deadlock*, for example, Marcel marks the following transcription with a marginal XX: 'clever phrases ... impression that is false to life / how extraordinary that there should be anybody'. In the passage this quotation comes from, Miriam is remembering a phrase deployed by a man discussing the high turnover of boarders in the house on Tansley Street:

Clever phrases that make you see things by a deliberate arrangement, leave an impression that is false to life. But men do see life in this way, disposing of things and rushing on with their talk; they think like that, all their thoughts are false to life; everything neatly described in single phrases that are not true. Starting with a false statement, they go on piling up their books. That man never saw how extraordinary it was that there should be *anybody*, waiting for *anything*. But why did their clever phrases keep on coming up in one's mind? (III 14)

For Miriam, however seductive it might be, men's way of speech and writing necessarily misrepresents a given experience, both

because of its abstraction and because of its distorting formal arrangement. A similar elision of the question of gender can be seen in one of Marcel's notes from Powys: after a long, lyrical list that demonstrates the 'revelation' of 'atmosphere' incarnated in Richardson's prose, Powys concludes that 'all these things are part of the very essence of [Richardson's] revelation as to what women, in their subconscious nature, respond to day by day'; Marcel, however, only transcribes the list, ignoring the fact that Powys is specifically defining Richardson's writing on gendered terms.

In this light, when Marcel notes down quotations from *Pilgrimage* that in their original context evoke notions of gendered identity, a certain limit might be posited regarding Marcel's inclinations in reading Richardson. It has been my main contention that the benefit of reading Marcel's notes is that they draw out a consistent thread of abstract, potentially self-reflexive moments in *Pilgrimage* where Richardson's writing can be most effectively parsed as defining itself as a specific type of life-writing, and doing so in a way that resonates with a particular philosophical context that has not always been the first to be attached to Richardson. But for this reason, when Richardson's writing is also exploring other avenues at the same time, Marcel's reading can seem deficient. Take the following phrase that Marcel notes down from *Revolving Lights*: 'all men in explanatory speech about life.' Here, once again, Marcel is alert to moments in *Pilgrimage* where Richardson explores the relation of life to its expression in language. In one sense, in this instance, Richardson adds further clarity to the concerns elucidated above, positing the idea that men, 'in explanatory speech about life, have at once either in the face, or in the unconscious rest of them, a look of shame' because 'they are not living, but calculating': a restatement on gendered terms of Miriam's rejection, in *Oberland*, of the inauthentic expression of 'yesterday's excited achievements' as against the writing of the 'living joy of to-day'. Then, Richardson compounds the centrality of gender to her analysis by counterposing the men 'in explanatory speech about life' with a discussion of 'Women who are not living', who 'should spend all their time cracking jokes' because in a 'rotten society women grow witty; making a heaven while they wait' (III 307). Given Marcel's propensity towards eliding the explicitly gendered

elements of *Pilgrimage* – something only bolstered with reference to Marcel’s philosophical writing, which lacks any account of gender identity – the term ‘men’ in ‘all *men* in explanatory speech about *life*’ can perhaps only be understood on Marcel’s terms in the abstract general sense of ‘mankind’. A central dimension of *Pilgrimage* is lost in reading too closely along Marcel’s lines.

Coda: Postcritical Reading

Perhaps at some point, then, the exercise of reading Richardson over Marcel’s shoulder begins less to reveal new insights into *Pilgrimage* and more to expose the limits of Marcel’s own thought – the shortcomings of the reader overshadow the revelations of their reading. Such a limit-point elicits different types of response: with Marcel’s translation choices of the word ‘nothing’, for example, a comparison of literary and philosophical discourse as forms of thinking would be relevant; or with Marcel’s attention to the words ‘man’/‘men’, a gender critique of the abstractions of Western philosophy would be required – perhaps of the sort conducted in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le Deuxième sexe* (1949).

To add a further limit-point, a fundamental question also hangs over the historical conditions of Marcel’s reading of Richardson. As noted above, it is unclear when Marcel finished reading Richardson. So though it is likely that Marcel *started* reading *Pilgrimage* in early 1939, there is no clue in his notes whether he was still reading Richardson when Germany invaded France the following year. It would not be unreasonable for certain critical speculations to fill this evidential gap, informed by the knowledge that *does* exist about Marcel’s activities during the Second World War. In his incendiary critique of existentialism, *L’Existentialisme n’est pas un humanisme* (1947), Jean Kanapa portrayed Marcel’s philosophy as ‘a bric-a-brac of mysticism, of paternalism and of exhibitionism’, adding that it exuded ‘Petainism’.³⁰ Though Kanapa’s comment should be approached with caution, it is true

³⁰ Quoted in Jonathan Judaken, ‘Sisyphus’s Progeny’ in Judaken and Robert Bernasconi (eds), *Situating Existentialism: Key Texts in Context* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp.89-122 (p.95).

that like many French intellectuals, Marcel had an equivocal war. Marcel was neither a collaborator nor a member of the resistance. His actions against German occupation were symbolic at best – as in the fact, for example, that he ceased to write for the *NRf* once it had become a collaborationist publication. But as Tony Judt notes, following the liberation of Paris, Marcel was still compelled, despite his Jewish heritage, to write in the Catholic journal *Témoignage Chrétien* ‘of the “overweening presumption” of “the Jews” and their urge to “take everything over”’.³¹ Marcel was also a member of the Commission d’épuration (Purgation Commission) of the Comité national des écrivains (National writers’ committee), the body charged following liberation with distinguishing between merely compromised writers and those who should undergo judicial proceedings. Judt adds, however, that Marcel was among a group of moderates who resigned from the commission in 1947, uncomfortable with its capacity for official sanction and believing instead that its findings should have represented nothing more than ‘a guide’ that ‘implied no judgement, nor [...] any standing in law’.³²

The broader questions that lead from here concern the politics of reading. Do certain historical conditions put ethical pressure on the decision to retreat into private and read a novel? Does the type of novel matter? Or its length? At the same time, however, a more fundamental set of questions might be asked of such a response to Marcel’s notes on Richardson. What is at stake in suspecting the reading of a long modernist novel under the conditions of occupation to constitute an act of insular quietism? Or more broadly (and equally relevant to the issues addressed above regarding Marcel’s philosophical and non-gendered account of Richardson): why must an encounter with a reading’s limits necessarily involve the assumption of the reader’s bad faith? In recent years in literary studies, this particular type of question has become a prominent concern, often understood within hermeneutic dyads of the sort discussed by Eve Kosofsky

³¹ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Vintage, 2010), p.805.

³² Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944–1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.67.

Sedgwick, for whom ‘paranoid’ reading is contrasted with its ‘reparative’ opposite, or in the work of Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, where ‘surface reading’ is offered as a counter to ‘symptomatic reading’.³³ Most recently, in *The Limits of Critique* (2015), Rita Felski has challenged the hegemony of critique as the default in literary scholarship, insisting on the need to ‘expand our repertoire of critical moods while embracing a richer array of critical methods’.³⁴ Sedgwick, Best and Marcus, and Felski all invoke, and to a significant extent follow on from Paul Ricoeur’s work on what he termed the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’. As set out in *De l’interprétation: Essai sur Sigmund Freud* (1965), the hermeneutics of suspicion finds its foundation in the writings of ‘[t]hree masters’, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, for whom ‘to seek meaning is no longer to spell out the consciousness of meaning, but to *decipher its expressions*’.³⁵ As such, for Ricoeur, the hermeneutics of suspicion ‘reduces by explaining through causes (psychological, social, etc.), through genesis (individual, historical, etc.), through function (affective, ideological, etc.)’.³⁶ This definition would suitably gloss any reading that finds Marcel’s notes on Richardson questionable given their historical conditions.

Ricoeur’s twenty-first century inheritors have found his approach most productive because he posits an alternative to the hermeneutics of suspicion. On the side of Sedgwick’s ‘reparative’ reading and Best and Marcus’s ‘surface reading’ is Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of recollection and restoration, which Ricoeur isolates initially in the phenomenology of religion as a form of faith – not ‘the first faith of the simple soul’, but the ‘second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone

³³ See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You’, in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp.123–51; Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, ‘Surface Reading: An Introduction’, *Representations*, 108 (2009): 1-21.

³⁴ Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p.13.

³⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), pp.32-3.

³⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p.28.

criticism, postcritical faith'.³⁷ This formulation is echoed more than forty years later by Felski: 'Can we be postcritical – as distinct from uncritical?'.³⁸ If the hermeneutics of recollection and reparation is to be seen as a way forward for literary scholarship in the twenty-first century, it is notable that this hermeneutics is inscribed explicitly within the domain of phenomenological thought. Ricoeur uses Husserlian terminology to define this hermeneutics as an approach that 'describes by disengaging the (noetic) intention and its (noematic) correlate – the *something* intended, the implicit object in ritual, myth, and belief'.³⁹ More significantly for my purposes here, in his notion of the two forms of faith that lead to a hermeneutics of recollection and restoration, Ricoeur reformulates a concept developed by Marcel.

At one point in a series of published conversations between Ricoeur and Marcel, Ricoeur brings up one of Marcel's key philosophical notions, that of 'secondary reflection'. Marcel explains: primary reflection is 'purely analytical' and 'consists, as it were, in dissolving the concrete into its elements'. Meanwhile, secondary reflection is

an inverse movement, a movement of retrieval, which consists in becoming aware of the partial and even suspect character of the purely analytical procedure. This reflective movement tries to reconstruct, but now at the level of thought, that concrete state of affairs which had previously been glimpsed in a fragmented or pulverized condition.⁴⁰

Though it is not discussed in their conversation, Ricoeur clearly draws on Marcel's two forms of reflection in formulating his own two forms of readerly faith: for Marcel's awareness of the 'partial and even suspect character of the purely analytical procedure', see Ricoeur's 'faith that has undergone criticism'; for Marcel's

³⁷ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, pp.28-9.

³⁸ Felski, *Limits*, p.151.

³⁹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, pp.28-9.

⁴⁰ Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond, including Conversations between Paul Ricoeur and Gabriel Marcel*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p.235.

reconstruction ‘at the level of thought’ of a previously glimpsed ‘concrete state of affairs’, see Ricoeur’s disengagement of ‘the (noetic) intention and its (noematic) correlate’. Though the two philosophers articulate these formulations in different registers – although present elsewhere in his thought, here Marcel’s lacks the spiritual register of Ricoeur’s – at root, both express the central mission of phenomenology, which, as Ariane Mildenberg puts it, ‘first and foremost returns us to the pre-reflective and therefore taken-for-granted dimension of experience’.⁴¹

It is in view of this confluence between Marcel’s and Ricoeur’s thought, and in view of Ricoeur’s importance for thinking on postcriticism and the limits of critique, that an unbroken line can be drawn from Marcel’s phenomenological/existentialist thought of the 1930s to the literary scholarship of today. Where do Marcel’s notes on Dorothy Richardson fit in here? At one remove, Marcel’s notion of secondary reflection can be used as a framework through which to understand his notes on *Pilgrimage*. Rather than critique the notes for their elisions, such elisions can instead be seen as prompt for their own restoration. Reinserted into an understanding of Richardson’s work, such elements look different in view of the particular hermeneutic edifice built by Marcel’s notes in all of their partiality. Put a different way: if the notes are to be used not just as a document of one localized reading of *Pilgrimage*, but also as a means for generating new insights into Richardson’s work, then – as I have tried to demonstrate here in every reference beyond Marcel’s notes – at a certain point they only do so by returning the reader to the elements of Richardson’s work that they (the notes) cannot grasp. To repeat Marcel’s own terms about the two forms of reflection, his notes on Richardson usefully ‘[dissolve] the concrete’ object of *Pilgrimage* ‘into its elements’, providing a uniquely ‘fragmented or pulverized’ glimpse of Richardson’s work. From here, ‘an inverse movement, a movement of retrieval’ is required in order to produce a reoriented image of *Pilgrimage*.

⁴¹Ariane Mildenberg, *Modernism and Phenomenology: Literature, Philosophy, Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.3.

Contemporary scholarly interests in postcriticism further mandate such a reading. But as Marcel's relevance to such interests is more than circumstantial, this relation is not just methodological. Marcel's notes on Richardson are a particularly expansive and dense expression of the entanglement between the non-essentialist European philosophy that emerged in the first half of the twentieth century and the literary modernism that was contemporary to it.⁴² The same could be said, for example, of the circulation of William James's ideas in the early twentieth century – not just as evinced diffusely in May Sinclair's important use of the 'stream of consciousness' to describe *Pilgrimage*, but also as shown in James's influence on writers like his brother Henry James, and Gertrude Stein.⁴³ T. S. Eliot's early interest in Henri Bergson is also relevant here, as are the dual literary–philosophical projects of figures like Marcel, de Beauvoir, and Sartre.⁴⁴ Marcel's reading of Richardson is expressive of such a context: he is alert to the discursive typology and representational content that *Pilgrimage* typifies precisely because Richardson's writing resonates so overwhelmingly with the concerns of her philosophical contemporaries.

But in their incompleteness, their partial obscurity, and their status as a private form of response, Marcel's notes on Richardson draw focus not just onto *Pilgrimage* itself, but also onto the ways in which Richardson might be read. Here, the postcritical impulse, to quote Ricoeur again, of 'disengaging the (noetic) intention and its (noematic) correlate', provides the framework. If, through Marcel's notes, *Pilgrimage* can be seen to crystallise the questions of Being and its representation that were of the greatest importance for existentialist philosophers, then the form of the notes also encourages a secondary question of what happens when such questions are returned to the reader anew, transmuted into art. It

⁴² For broader surveys along these lines, see Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg (eds), *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond*, and Mildenberg, *Modernism and Phenomenology*.

⁴³ See, for example, Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁴⁴ For the former, see Paul Douglass, *Bergson, Eliot and American Literature* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986).

might be blandly truistic to state that literary production cannot be fully separated out from reception, the aesthetic object from the perceiving subject, but Marcel's notes on Richardson are a reminder that such insights had added potency at the time of modernism's emergence. As these insights today have a concrete legacy in the postcritical turn in literary studies, from here, modernist form appears to be both postcriticism's *locus classicus* and its conceptual sibling.