

AGAINST COERCION: DOROTHY RICHARDSON'S EXPERIMENTAL EDUCATION

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Richardson and the Steinerites

On two occasions in the early 1940s, Dorothy Richardson found herself being bothered by Steiner school teachers. In September 1942, she wrote to her friend Bryher from her cottage at Trevone, in Cornwall, mostly to complain about Aldous Huxley's essay collection *Ends and Means* (1937), which was little more, she said, than 'dogma', a book full of the author's 'bombinating' and '*pontificating* beyond belief'.¹ At the end of the letter, she squeezed in a brief allusion to an encounter she and her husband had recently had with some peculiar neighbours. 'I must pull in now or I shall be telling you all about our harassing by some Rudolf Steinerites camping here', she told Bryher: 'Fortunately for you, I have no time. They are however, far funnier than Huxley'.²

A year later, in August 1943, she told John Cowper Powys of another incident where she found herself on the receiving end of Rudolf Steiner's followers:

We have just now, staying near by on holiday, two young teachers from the Rudolf Steiner school in Derby. They come along to evening coffee & expound their doctrines. Some of them, we feel, very sound educationally, but the worst of the sound, forgotten-truths-restoring heresies is the way they crystallize into fanatical routine in the hands of the disciples, don't you think?³

Richardson was evidently offended by the forcefulness of these teachers. Whatever the campers said to her in 1942 (and no matter how funny they apparently were), it is clear that Richardson felt they were going too far in

¹ *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson*, ed. Gloria Glikin Fromm (University of Georgia Press, 1995), 449 n. 3, 449.

² Richardson, *Windows on Modernism*, 449.

³ Richardson, *Windows on Modernism*, 475.

their ‘harassing’, and the implication is that they were pressing their views rather too strongly upon her. Richardson’s neologism ‘Steinerite’, with its vaguely derogatory suffix, suggests they had an excessive degree of enthusiasm or commitment to the man and his philosophy. Indeed, when she recounts her second experience with the holidaymakers, Richardson returns to the language of extremist devotion. The teachers flout the Richardsons’ hospitality, choosing, instead of polite, reciprocal conversation, to ‘expound their doctrines’. While some of their ideas appear ‘very sound educationally’, Richardson seems to take issue with the manner in which the teachers seek to promote their educational philosophy. She is reminded by the teachers of how beliefs can become hardened and lifeless as ‘fanatical routine in the hands of the disciples’.

What was it that irked Richardson so on these two occasions that seem, coincidentally, to echo each other a year apart? In this essay, I turn back to earlier moments in Richardson’s life and work with the hope of providing a context to these letters and, more interestingly, I hope, to show that, behind these two strange meetings, there runs a longer history of Richardson’s critical engagement with the subject of education. Through close readings of scenes from the first two parts of *Pilgrimage*, I argue that what we glimpse here in these letters is a late expression of Richardson’s deep and abiding concern with education and specifically her resistance to forms of coercion in systems and experiences of education.

Modernism, Steiner, and Progressive Education

Richardson’s encounters with these Steiner school teachers are just two small, rather unproductive instances of what was a wide-ranging, although relatively underexplored, confluence between modernist culture and progressive education in the first decades of the twentieth century, a history that can be briefly illuminated through a discussion of the man Richardson’s guests idolised, and his reception in Britain: Rudolf Steiner.⁴ Born in Austria in 1861, Steiner lived until 1925, and only started gaining British ‘disciples’ towards the end of his life. The founder of Anthroposophy, a spiritualist philosophy and new age religion that had grown out of the earlier theosophist movement, Steiner sought to help

⁴ For a recent reflection on this confluence, see Peter Howarth, ‘Introduction: Modernism and/as Pedagogy’, *Modernist Cultures* 14, no. 3 (2019): 261–90, <https://doi.org/10.3366/mod.2019.0256>.

humans achieve harmonious development and self-realisation through a variety of practical endeavours, such as architecture and the form of education that would come to bear his name. Steiner's key pedagogical idea, perhaps one that, were we to guess, Richardson herself found 'very sound', was that the creative and spiritual growth of children required just as much nurturing as did their physical, intellectual, and academic development.

The first 'Steiner school' had been established in 1919, in Stuttgart, Germany, as a venture designed to teach the children of workers at a cigarette factory owned by the Waldorf Astoria company. British teachers began to learn about this Waldorf School, where children were taught through music, dance, and long discursive classes, and where corporal punishment was forbidden, when an educational delegation made pilgrimage to Steiner's Swiss headquarters, the Goetheanum, in 1921. Led by pioneering activist and academic Millicent Mackenzie, the teachers who visited Steiner supported the spread of his ideas in Britain by hosting a conference at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1922. Here, at this old dissenting academy and overseen by the education minister (and cousin of Virginia Woolf) H.A.L. Fisher, Steiner lectured, in German, on such subjects as 'The Spiritual Basis of Education' and 'The Teacher as Artist in Education', and attendees saw at Keble College an early demonstration of eurythmy, an expressive form of dance he developed. Reports of the conference circulated in regional news as well as the *Daily Telegraph*, the *New Statesman*, the *Manchester Guardian*. Within months, a decidedly Steinerite organisation—the 'Education Union for the Realisation of Spiritual Values'—announced that Steiner's 'Art of Education' was being integrated into British schools. And in 1925, Britain's first Steiner school proper—the New School—was founded in Streatham, London, under the guidance of Daphne Olivier, child of Fabian socialists, and one of the Neo-Pagans who socialised with Woolf, Rupert Brooke, H.G. Wells, and D.H. Lawrence, amongst others.⁵

Steiner's ascent was contemporary with the development of modernism, in Britain and across Europe. Modernist culture intersected with various

⁵ For an introduction to this history, see John Paull, 'Rudolf Steiner and the Oxford Conference: The Birth of Waldorf Education in Britain', *European Journal of Education Studies* 3, no. 1 (2011): 53–66; For Daphne Olivier and her relationship with Steiner education, see Sarah Watling, *Noble Savages* (Vintage, 2020), 212–17, 234–36.

forms of spiritual and occultist practice, all of which were promising access to higher modes of existence and esoteric areas of knowledge.⁶ For individual modernist writers and artists, ranging from W.B. Yeats and Wassily Kandinsky to May Sinclair and H.D., the ‘interest in spiritualism runs the spectrum from belief to distanced reflection’.⁷ One modernist who found himself drawn to Steiner, as a curious investigator of new age practices, was Franz Kafka, who possessed copies of Steiner’s books (including 1907’s *The Education of the Child in the Light of the Arts*) and attended his lectures in Prague, in the March of 1911. An apparently modest and charming man, Steiner had begun developing something of a ‘personality cult’ by this time, partly because of his peculiar methods of engaging his audience (he would, for example, address his listeners in dim, candle-lit auditoriums, sometimes waiting on stage for extended periods while they settled into perfect silence, and then speaking without notes in order to create the impression of spontaneous communication). As a skilled orator, Steiner also managed his critics’ doubts carefully, using specially prepared examples to bolster his arguments. Watching Steiner at work, Kafka recorded in his diary that the lecture hall resembled ‘a devotional atmosphere’. On a visit Steiner at his hotel, Kafka then asked this ‘guru’ about the relationship between spiritual and aesthetic wisdom but left with the disappointing feeling that Steiner—who spent much of the conversation dabbing at his runny nose with a handkerchief—had not understood what he was getting at.⁸

We can hear echoes of Steiner’s impact on British culture in the work of other modernists, such as D. H. Lawrence. When Hermione Roddice explodes into a ‘rhapsodic interrogation’ of Rupert Birkin in the ‘Class-Room’ chapter of *Women in Love* (1920), she expounds the pedagogical importance of ‘spontaneity’ and ‘instincts’ over the mind, sounding, as Anne Fernihough has noted, like ‘the advocate of a progressive educational approach comparable to that of Rudolf Steiner’.⁹ While Lawrence had likely been reading Steiner during the composition of the

⁶ Leigh Wilson, *Modernism and Magic: Experiments with Spiritualism, Theosophy and the Occult* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 5, 86–88, 91, 95–97, 126.

⁷ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 122.

⁸ Reiner Stach, *Kafka: The Early Years*, trans. Shelley Frisch (Princeton University Press, 2017), 425–33.

⁹ D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford University Press, 2013), 40; Anne Fernihough, *Freewomen and Supermen: Edwardian Radicals and Literary Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 126.

novel, he does not mention him explicitly and it might well be that he is skewering advanced educational beliefs more generally through this character.¹⁰ Indeed, far more than the origin or content of Hermione's madcap ideas, Lawrence—like Richardson—seems concerned to emphasise the fanatical manner of his character; in other words, the form of her speech appears to bother him most. Lawrence's damning portrait of Hermione is comically ironic, partly because her 'queer rhapsody' in favour of educational spontaneity is repetitive, inflexible, and anything but spontaneous. Taking 'no notice' of what Birkin (the school-inspector) has to say, and ignoring entirely Ursula (the actual teacher), Hermione resembles, in her 'rhapsodic' lecture, the Steinerites who would accost Richardson and expound their doctrines so relentlessly some twenty years later.¹¹

Dorothy Richardson, like Lawrence, had worked as a teacher and then become a writer at a time when people were being, as H. G. Wells put it in one of his novels, 'bitten by educational theories'.¹² Steiner, alongside Maria Montessori, John Dewey, A.S. Neill, and others, was one educationalist whose theories were capturing the minds of teachers, intellectuals, and writers in the modernist period. Richardson, unlike some of her contemporaries, seems never to have caught the bug for any particular flavour of educational theory, and nor did she, in contrast most notably to Lawrence, produce polemical essays promoting educational ideas or reforms. Sure enough, Richardson is not, to use T. S. Eliot's term, 'a literary dabbler in education'—one of those writers who, like Eliot himself, made it their business to pronounce upon educational debates or to advocate for new approaches in schooling.¹³ Having said this, it would be a mistake to think that Richardson lacked an interest in education, and it can be argued that her work contains a deep and thoughtful exploration of this theme, even if it has not been discussed extensively to date.

In fact, it might be the apparent subtlety of Richardson's attitude towards education that is significant. Unlike the untactful Steiner school teachers

¹⁰ James Wood writes that Lawrence had been 'exposed' to Steiner's ideas, specifically about the return of the dead, in his review of Mark Kinkaid-Weekes's biography of Lawrence, 'Seeing in the Darkness', *London Review of Books* 19, no. 5 (6 March 1997).

¹¹ Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 40.

¹² H.G. Wells, *The Undying Fire* (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), 39.

¹³ T.S. Eliot, 'The Aims of Education', in *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 61.

taking coffee in her cottage, Richardson is not one to expound her doctrines to the reader. However coincidental and mundane these brushes with the Steinerites might be, her response to the teachers reveals her own educational philosophy—pointing, as it does, to a strong and recurring anxiety about coercion in education as well as towards a more hopeful possibility of an experimental education, founded on curiosity and independence of mind.

More than any specific criticism of Steiner the man or his philosophy, Richardson was troubled by how easily his over-zealous followers assumed the position of the dogmatic preacher, as if part of that devotional atmosphere Kafka had identified in Prague, and much like the unyielding Hermione in Lawrence's novel. While Steiner had been in the air by the time Richardson had her brush with his devotees, it is unclear how much knowledge she had of him, and I do not wish to claim that there was anything particular about his theories or the schools he inspired that repels her—after all, even if she does not go into detail, she claimed to find those educational doctrines 'very sound'. In her letter, Richardson seems to be disturbed by a broader experience of coercion and a lack of tactfulness in the culture as well as her human visitors. One can detect a connection between Richardson's criticism of Huxley's 'bombinating' book and her problem with the Steinerites, whom she also deems to be espousing a kind of dogma. The teachers' 'fanatical routine' is both passionate and repetitive: zealous and yet also banal, automatic, fixed. The process of crystallisation, mentioned by Richardson in the rather clotted last line of the letter to Cowper Powys, also suggests that this way of thinking hardening into a routinized inflexibility might be a larger-scale problem.

My reading of Richardson's experimental education emphasises her anarchist politics. As Rebecca Beasley has recently discussed, Richardson and *Pilgrimage* promoted an anti-dogmatic and anti-coercive politics of individuality that drew inspiration from early twentieth-century simple life and socialist philosophies, which, in turn, had their roots in the anarchism of Russian writers such as Leo Tolstoy. 'Richardson's insistence on the primacy of individual experience corresponds to Tolstoy's teachings about the importance of the individual conscience and his rejection of dogma', Beasley explains, with reference to the reception of these Tolstoyan principles in publications such as Charles Daniel's *The Crank*, to which Richardson contributed reviews. Beasley also observes how this suspicion

of dogmatism is reflected in the form of *Pilgrimage*, which, as many critics and admirers have pointed out, is marked by a loose structure and an aesthetics of unfinishedness, be it at the level of the sentence, which will often trail off into ellipsis, or on the larger narrative scale, where there is little sense of a coherent plot. Richardson regarded a well-ordered and ‘cultivated style’ as ‘a form of coercion, of imposing one’s own ego on the reader’.¹⁴

Building on this reading of *Pilgrimage*, in what follows I read Richardson within the framework of education, arguing that her fear and loathing of coercion expresses itself with particular strength when she is writing about schools and schooling. While Richardson was alert to the possibility that even progressives, like her Steinerites, could succumb to a dogmatic didacticism, her view of education is fundamentally progressive. Many of the anarchist principles discussed by Beasley, such as an insistence on the primacy of individual experience and a rejection of dogma, were shared by progressive educators, sometimes but not always with an explicitly anarchist tinge. Like Beasley, I too want to suggest how Richardson’s attitude to education resonates with the form of *Pilgrimage*. Promoting an experimental education in the content of the book, Richardson also writes an experimental novel of education.

‘A More Vital System’: *Pilgrimage* as a Novel of Education

In August 1916, a review of *Backwater*, the second instalment of Dorothy Richardson’s long work of modernist fiction *Pilgrimage*, appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, with the complaint that there was ‘something uncivil’ about the manner in which the book’s author insisted on ‘hurling’ characters at the reader without explanation, ‘leaving you to struggle on in their company, confusedly searching for identities and relationships, piecing together clues, jotting down on a bit of paper any helpful suggestions, and wondering at the end of the book whether you have really got them sorted out’. But even if the reviewer is not entirely sold on Richardson’s narrative style, they do call it ‘a pleasure to read about Miriam [Henderson]’: ‘all through we get a very vivid and scrappy commentary of a very young but very independent mind’. Aside from the joys and challenges of *Backwater*’s narration, the review is struck by Richardson’s

¹⁴ Rebecca Beasley, *Russomania: Russian Culture and the Creation of British Modernism, 1880–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 131.

representation of Miriam's work as a teacher at a girls' school in North London. While Miriam 'has some genius for teaching', the school where she finds herself is not an inspiring educational setting and she feels at odds with its oppressive atmosphere, a point which prompts the reviewer to reflect on more general problems and possibilities of education in society at large:

There is no room for such as Miriam in the education of the young, which requires lives dedicated to narrowness, stunted and artificially sterilised. Inevitably one is led to meditations upon a more vital system of education, one which would not require the mutilation of the lives of men, and still more of women. Mr. Bertrand Russell suggested in the course of some recent lectures that education would gain prodigiously if many more people taught for only a few hours a week, making their chief occupation either the practising of what they taught or some quite other pursuit. One would like to meet Miriam later in life, married, with children of her own, and teaching for part of her time; or lecturing in a training college; or Minister of Education. One would like to think her joy in life, her romance, her young fire were all going to fertilise her maturity for public and well as private uses.¹⁵

As *Pilgrimage* was to progress over the next three decades, neither Miriam nor Richardson herself would rise to become Minister of Education (unlike a younger novelist Ellen Wilkinson, who did go on to become the education minister in Clement Attlee's post-war Labour government). Nor would Miriam remain teaching, even part-time, as she goes on to take other kinds of work, moves to different countries and communities, and eventually settles down to become a writer.

The review is notable for several reasons. Firstly, because it gives an insight into the way early readers attempted to negotiate Richardson's modernist form, balancing such reservations with enthusiasm for her attention to an engrossing individual psychology (Miriam's 'independent mind'). Secondly, we can note how assessment of Richardson's developing and experimental prose style flows into a discussion of education, not only in terms of the book's content—the story of Miriam's teaching experience—but also in the effect the text has on the reader and its links with the

¹⁵ H.M.S., 'New Novels', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 August 1916, 3.

educational landscape of the day. Richardson's representation of education, the reviewer asserts, encourages the reader to wonder how education could be different. Rather like 'the education of desire' in William Morris, and what E. P. Thompson glossed as a utopian process of 'open, speculative', and imaginative 'adventure', *Backwater* inspires 'meditations upon a more vital system of education'.¹⁶ Richardson, the reviewer suggests, belongs in the company of other radicals who were rethinking the purpose and possibilities of education. The reference to Bertrand Russell is to his lecture tour from January to March of 1916, the text of which would be published as *Principles of Social Reconstruction* in November of that year, where he argued for a progressive model of education, based on 'mental adventure' and a utopian ambition to bring about 'a shining vision of the society that is to be'.¹⁷ The review raises the possibility of an education that is not separated off from life; one that is 'more vital' and which has contact with the wider world and is integrated into all aspects of existence. Writing of Richardson's central protagonist almost as if she were a real person, the reviewer is evidently keen to discover more about the unfolding life of Miriam, hoping that she can continue her vocation for teaching and apply her gifts to 'public as well as private uses'.

Pilgrimage has long been associated, however, with another review, one which emphasised very strongly the 'private' or internal aspects of Miriam's experience. As Peter Fifield has argued, Richardson's visibility within cultural histories of modernism has come at 'the price' of being attached to or even overshadowed by May Sinclair's 1918 article in *The Egoist* on 'stream of consciousness' in the first three books of *Pilgrimage*.¹⁸ Offering an influential interpretation of *Pilgrimage* as a great work of psychological fiction, Sinclair's famous remark that the text 'is just life going on and on' has informed critical responses to Richardson ever since. The implication of this interpretation is that Richardson has written a profound exploration of an individual psyche (that fiercely 'independent

¹⁶ E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 790-91.

¹⁷ Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1997), 114, 116, quoted in Natasha Periyar, 'Women in Love and Education: D.H. Lawrence's Epistemological Critique', *Modernist Cultures*, 14 (2019): 360.

¹⁸ Peter Fifield, *Modernism and Physical Illness: Sick Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 145. See also Rebecca Bowler and Claire Drewery, 'One Hundred Years of the Stream of Consciousness: Editor's Introduction', *Literature Compass* (2020), 1-10.

mind”), but one which seems to disavow the external world and even the drama and events that usually make up a conventional plot. ‘Nothing happens’, Sinclair declares: ‘It is Miriam Henderson’s stream of consciousness going on and on’.¹⁹

The review in the *Manchester Guardian*, though, suggests that other readers found in *Pilgrimage* a much stronger interest in the world beyond Miriam’s ‘stream of consciousness’ (a phrase Richardson herself rejected). Or, to put it slightly differently, the review seems to hint at a connection between Richardson’s exploration of ‘a very young but very independent mind’ and broader political and social realities, such as ‘the education of the young’. Others were struck by this theme in *Backwater*. Recalling her experiences as a schoolgirl during the First World War, Bryher felt she was ‘neither dead nor alive’ at her boarding school, and remembered ‘struggling like Atlas to hold up some grain of individual identity against a monstrous cloud’. A turning point came when, in 1916, she read a review of Dorothy Richardson’s *Backwater*, perhaps the same from the *Manchester Guardian*: ‘It was said to be critical of education so I immediately bought a copy. I defied all rules and read on until I had finished it. For the first time as I said excitedly to my schoolfellows, “somebody is writing about us.”’²⁰ In his 1931 essay on Richardson, John Cowper Powys viewed the school scenes in *Backwater* within the wider frame of *Pilgrimage*, which had by now reached ten volumes in length. He argued that Miriam suffers throughout *Pilgrimage* from ‘a series of very definite miseries that make her cry, that hit her to the heart, that send her reeling and staggering into the inner sanctum of her soul’. It is in *Backwater*, he says, when Miriam suffers possibly ‘the worst of these miseries’ while teaching at the school in north London: ‘One of the most pathetic touches in the whole of literature of lonely adventure’.²¹

We could think, then, of *Pilgrimage* as a novel of education: about education, on the theme of education, and perhaps even performing a kind of education: inspiring us to think about education differently. But if we are to think of *Pilgrimage* in this way, within the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* or as a pedagogic text, it is important to note how

¹⁹ May Sinclair, ‘The Novels of Dorothy Richardson’, in *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 444.

²⁰ Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis: A Writer’s Memoirs* (Collins, 1963), 167–68.

²¹ John Cowper Powys, *Dorothy M. Richardson* (London: Village Press, 1974), 36.

Richardson—like other modernists—deliberately subverts established forms of fiction and education.²² Chris Baldick has called *Pilgrimage* a ‘bold’ and experimental ‘recasting’ of the *Bildungsroman*, one which abandons the nineteenth-century European version’s concern with tracking a protagonist’s linear development and growing coherence of experience and identity. Baldick emphasizes an aesthetics and a pedagogy of unfinishedness in the novel: just as the various chapters present the ‘inconclusive sensations, thoughts, and conversations’ of Miriam’s life, ultimately *Pilgrimage* ‘draws no lessons and attains no graduation’.²³ If a novel without a coherent plot or a compelling conclusion risks leaving readers disappointed, an education without a lesson or graduation would surely seem disastrous. But in what follows, we will see how Richardson herself described an unfinished education in more promising terms.

‘Getting Awake’: Two Versions of Women’s Education

Pilgrimage sets its sights particularly on the question of women’s education, exploring the ways in which young women’s lives are impacted by different forms of schooling, a topic which is explored from the outset, in *Pointed Roofs*, when Miriam travels to Hanover in Germany to take up a position in a girls’ boarding school with male masters who are, she thinks, ‘openly contemptuous’ of their female students. Miriam, crucially, has gone to work at this school out of necessity, following her family’s financial crisis, and there is a sense in which her own derailed youth and education contributes to her feelings of resentment towards the school and its chaotic, deadening atmosphere:

During those early days Miriam realised that school-routine, as she knew it—the planned days—the regular unvarying succession of lessons and preparations, had no place in this new world. Even the masters’ lessons, coming in from outside and making a kind of framework of appointments over the otherwise fortuitously occupied days, were, she soon found, not always securely calculable.

²² See Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), and Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. Albert Sbragia (London: Verso, 2000), for discussion of the transformations of this genre, before and within modernism.

²³ Chris Baldick, *The Modern Movement: The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 10: 1910–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 197, 198.

Herr Kapellmeister Bossenberger would be heard booming and intoning in the hall unexpectedly at all hours.²⁴

There is a fundamental insecurity at this school, the timetabled lessons not even forming much of a reliable ‘framework’ for Miriam or the young students. The master’s teaching lacks sympathy and care and is notably hurried: ‘he taught impatiently. He shouted and corrected and mimicked’.²⁵ With his ‘booming and intoning’, the Kapellmeister foreshadows the Steinerites who ‘expound their doctrine’ at Richardson.

Another male teacher, this time of history, ‘would begin lecturing almost before he was inside the door’:

For the last few minutes of his time he would, ironically, his eyes fixed ahead of him at a point on the table, snap questions—indicating his aim with a tapping finger, going round the table like a dealer at cards. Surely the girls must detest him. . . . The Germans made no modification of their polite attentiveness. Amongst the English only Gertrude and the Martins found any answers for him. Miriam, proud of sixth-form history essays and the full marks she had generally claimed for them, had no memory for facts and dates; but she made up her mind that were she ever so prepared with a correct reply, nothing should drag from her any response to these military tappings.²⁶

Miriam’s refusal to engage with ‘these militant tappings’ is almost—for she does not know the answers in the first place—a form of protest against this teacher and his uninspiring style of questioning (a method of delivery, ironically enough, that echoes the *Guardian* reviewer’s complaint about Richardson’s ‘uncivil’ narrative style). The students ought to ‘detest’ this croupier of a teacher, but between the Germans’ ‘polite attentiveness’ and the English girls’ barely being able to muster an answer, the class seems to be characterised by a peculiarly civil kind of boredom and resignation. As Allison Pease notes, while women’s education expanded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, modernist novels by women frequently drew on the condition of boredom experienced by the modern, often middle-

²⁴ Dorothy Richardson, *Pointed Roofs: The Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume IV*, ed. Scott McCracken (Oxford University Press, 2020), 53.

²⁵ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 53.

²⁶ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 54.

or upper-class woman who, though educated, was still denied opportunities for meaningful intellectual development and choice in her life, a theme which will be discussed more below.²⁷ The school seems to inspire a refusal of interest in Miriam and to deny genuine engagement with the young women who study there.

Miriam's own schooling, as we can see in the previous extracts, is very clearly in her mind as she encounters 'this new world'. The disordered and 'contemptuous' system at the Hanover boarding school provokes Miriam to reflect on her own school days, which had been much more affirmative, egalitarian, and, importantly, interesting. She recalls being taught by her 'literature master':

a friend of Browning, reading, reading to them as if it were worth while, as if they were equals . . . interested friends—that had never struck her at the time. . . . But it was true—she could not remember ever having felt a schoolgirl . . . or being “talked down” to . . . ²⁸

As I have observed elsewhere with regards to this moment, for Richardson a scene of reading and listening with a teacher of literature provides the basis for a moment of educational significance.²⁹ It is a far cry from the boarding school at Hanover, an education with a very different kind of relationship between teacher and students. The concept of friendship is central here, forming a link between Robert Browning, the teacher, and Miriam and her peers, who are treated like 'equals . . . interested friends', engaged participants in a serious intellectual encounter. This comes as an epiphany to Miriam, as Richardson's punctuation gives the effect of these thoughts about the significance of her schooling only just occurring to her: the ellipses and dashes suggest thoughts unfolding spontaneously before us. It is only from the vantage point of the woefully inadequate boarding school that Miriam can realise that she had been spared the experience of being patronised or made to feel inferior. The teachers at her own school 'felt the importance of what they taught', but it is also a joyous atmosphere

²⁷ Allison Pease, *Modernism, Feminism, and the Culture of Boredom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9–10.

²⁸ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 54.

²⁹ Charlie Pullen, "'As I Learn From You, I Guess You Learn From Me': Three Modernists on the Teaching of English", *English: Journal of the English Association*, 73 (2024), 27–38.

in which they learn arithmetic from a 'laughing' barrister.³⁰ When she tries to figure out what it was that was special about the school, she recognises that she and her peers were respected and taught to value their learning as well as themselves: 'Things *bad* mattered there. Somehow the girls had been made to feel they mattered'.³¹

It is an education that seems to have been drawn very directly from Richardson's own time as a student at the Southwest London College, which was based at Southborough House in Putney, south London, an experience which she called a 'revelation'.³² Run by Harriet R. Sandell, a progressive headmistress who, according to John Rosenberg, 'believed in the most liberal kind of education' for girls, Richardson remembered how this 'Head, a disciple of Ruskin, fostered our sense of fair play, encouraged us to take broad views, hear all sides and think for ourselves'.³³ Her own experience of being taught literature, also by a friend of Browning's, was akin to 'coming into a goodly heritage': 'he gave us through this one doorway the key to much else'.³⁴ Richardson remembered her education, which also included lessons in psychology, as an important experience of expansion, transition, and, crucially, she credited it with helping her form an independence of mind—to 'hear all sides' and to think in her own way. The school at Putney, 'with its avant-garde syllabus and teaching methods', as Janet Fouli has pointed out, leaves 'an indelible impression' on the rest of Miriam's life throughout *Pilgrimage*.³⁵ Miriam gains an awareness of herself as a unique and valuable subject, as her education amounts to an activation, a process of 'getting her and her mates awake and into relationship with something'.³⁶ It is in this way that we can think about the novel's form as being linked intimately to the theme of education. *Pilgrimage* is about a woman's consciousness that matters, a text that insists upon the significance of a woman's psychological and lived experience. If *Pilgrimage* is Miriam's 'quest for the existential self, a quest marked by epiphanic moments in which a heightened awareness of existence or being

³⁰ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 55, 54.

³¹ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 55.

³² Dorothy Richardson, 'Data for a Spanish Publisher', in *Journey to Paradise: Short Stories and Autobiographical Sketches*, ed. Trudi Tate (London: Virago, 1999), 134.

³³ John Rosenberg, *Dorothy Richardson* (New York: Knopf, 1973), 9.

³⁴ Richardson, 'Data for a Spanish Publisher', 134, 135.

³⁵ Janet Fouli, *Structure and Identity: The Creative Imagination in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage* (Tunis: Publications de la Faculte des Lettres de la Manouba, 1995), 58.

³⁶ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 55.

is evoked', then it is tempting to say that her education marks the beginning of that quest.³⁷

It may be here at school, for instance, that she begins to value non-linear, circuitous thinking. One teacher's relaxed and ponderous style of teaching is a kind of pedagogical equivalent of the prose style that captures the unfolding nature of Miriam's thoughts: 'Monsieur dreaming over the things he read to them, repeating passages, wandering from his subject, making allusions here and there'.³⁸ Here, then, is a kind of stream-of-consciousness teaching, a style of pedagogy that seems to be grounded in the live, spontaneous movements of the teacher's mind and interests.³⁹ While this might seem like ineffective, incoherent teaching (again, in a way that recalls the *Guardian's* assessment of Richardson's narrative), Miriam's affection for this teacher suggests a possible point of connection between Richardson's inclination towards anti-coercive forms of narrative, education, and Roland Barthes's later thoughts on digressive teaching. For Barthes, as he put it in a 1977 inaugural lecture, 'what can be oppressive in our teaching is not, finally, the knowledge or culture it conveys, but the discursive forms through which we propose them'. He thus felt drawn to 'looser' methods of teaching and writing that could 'loosen', creating more space than didactic, monological discursive forms (epitomised by the croupier teacher with his 'snap questions' or the doctrinal Steinerites). Where in writing Barthes looked to a modernist 'fragmentation', in teaching he saw 'the fundamental operation of this loosening method' in 'digression' or in a playful kind of '*excursion*', perhaps akin to the wanderings of Miriam's dreamy teacher.⁴⁰

Miriam's schooldays thus occupy an important place in her psychic life. As Laura Marcus has observed, both instances of Miriam dreaming in *Pilgrimage* relate to schools, the first being in *Pointed Roofs* when Miriam fears what awaits her at the German boarding school, and the second in *Honeycomb* (1917) when, just before her mother's suicide, she dreams of

³⁷ Howard Finn, 'Writing Lives: Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair, Gertrude Stein', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 192.

³⁸ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 55.

³⁹ For another discussion of stream of consciousness and education in Richardson, modernism, and education via William James, see Howarth, 278.

⁴⁰ Roland Barthes, 'Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France', in *A Roland Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (London: Vintage, 1993), 476.

her own school at Putney ‘hovering invisible’.⁴¹ It is also significant that Richardson describes Miriam’s education in *Pointed Roofs* as a recollection, a moment when Miriam’s present concerns bring her to an awareness and a renewed appreciation of past experiences in her life. In the sixth chapter-volume of *Pilgrimage, Deadlock* (1921), during one of her conversation-cum-debates with Michael Shatov, Miriam feels as if she had suddenly ‘travelled back enraptured across nine years to the day, now only yesterday’, when she remembers the first time she read the economist William Stanley Jevons, a memory which serves to ‘cast a fresh glow of reality across her schooldays’.⁴² If it can be said that Miriam, to echo Baldick, ‘attains no graduation’ from her education, it is because it does not end. Miriam’s education is continuous, something which returns to her and which she returns to throughout her life, gaining reality in some sense, and informing her development in the present. The temporality of this education is long, but without being prohibitively burdensome for Miriam and what Mary Ann Gillies calls her ‘constantly evolving’ self.⁴³ The effect of this education is not aggressive or invasive, for the school’s influence leaves Miriam paradoxically both transformed and unchanged, in keeping with the anarchist principles she would later be drawn to: ‘The school had done something to her’, she says, but ‘it had not gone against the things she found in herself’. Miriam’s education is adjusted to her internal being, which means she can become the individual she has always been—‘Herself to begin with’.⁴⁴

Miriam’s ideas about education develop through a process of experience and reflection that involves comparing her own schooldays to other systems of education that she encounters directly or of which she seems only intuitively to be aware. In Hanover, Fraulein Pfaff does not understand Miriam’s school, calling it ‘a kind of high school’—a summary Miriam cannot accept, since ‘she knew it had not been this. She felt there was something questionable about a high school’. To Miriam, a high school is where girls learn ‘something called elocution—where the girls were “finished”’.⁴⁵ Playing on a pun relating to the idea of a finishing

⁴¹ Cited in Laura Marcus, *Dreams of Modernity: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Cinema* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 213.

⁴² Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage* (Virago Press, 1979), 3:175.

⁴³ Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 158.

⁴⁴ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 57.

⁴⁵ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 56.

school, which gains a moderately sinister meaning, to be ‘finished’, whether perfected or hemmed-in according to bourgeois standards, is Miriam’s worst nightmare. As Peter Howarth has said of this moment in the text, drawing a link to the larger formal project of *Pilgrimage* and its literary experiment: ‘The idea of any girl being “finished” is the one that the entire form of *Pilgrimage* sets out to refute, as it resists both the marriage plot and the omniscient narrative comment’.⁴⁶ Such schooling means having one’s future ‘finished’ or decided in advance, after being churned out as conventional or prepared for a particular role in society. Miriam is struck by the possibility that, if she had attended that school up the road, her life could have been different. ‘Perhaps’, Miriam wonders, ‘she would have grown up a Churchwoman’.⁴⁷

‘Equals and Fellow Adventurers’: Coming of Age at Wordsworth House

In *Backwater*, with the Hanover school behind her, Miriam goes to live and work at a high school called Wordsworth House, where, as the *Manchester Guardian* notes, she comes up against a system of education that sets up the girls for ‘lives dedicated to narrowness’, and where they seem to be already finished. Wordsworth House is located in ‘Banbury Park’, a fictionalised version of Finsbury Park in north London, and a locality which is distinctly suburban, lower-middle class, and viewed by Miriam as unpleasantly claustrophobic.⁴⁸ Like the German boarding school, Wordsworth House is deemed to have a problematically determining influence on the girls’ lives. The German girls ‘did not seem to be in the least afraid of the future’, because ‘What they were going to do with their lives was only too plain’.⁴⁹ The girls at Wordsworth House, too, are already finished and will ‘be dreadful all their lives. Nothing she could do would make any difference to them. They did not want her. They were quite happy’.⁵⁰ Allison Pease notes again that it is in the space of the school, while working as a teacher, that Miriam ‘comes to understand the role of education in shaping women’s expectations of themselves’, a knowledge that is still tainted with her own frustration and ambivalence about how

⁴⁶ Howarth, 270.

⁴⁷ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 57.

⁴⁸ For more on Richardson’s attitude towards suburbia, see Tanya Pikula, ‘The Thrills of Modernity: Representations of Suburbia in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* Series’, *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, 8 (2016): 27–53.

⁴⁹ Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 57.

⁵⁰ Dorothy Richardson, *Backwater: The Works of Dorothy Richardson, Volume IV*, ed. Scott McCracken (Oxford University Press, 2020), 259.

women conform to cultural ideals concerning how they ought to live their lives.⁵¹ As an institution, Miriam thinks, ‘What a prison school must seem’.⁵²

The association of school and prison was common in this era, finding peculiarly vigorous expression in modernist culture. D.H. Lawrence, for example, recalled in the late 1920s his own schooldays when he and the other boys at his Nottinghamshire Board School ‘felt captives there’: ‘They hated the masters because they felt them as jailers’.⁵³ Before this, in 1910, George Bernard Shaw (famous for his snide jokes about education—including the one credited to him that those who can, do; those who can’t, teach) declared rather implausibly that schools were worse than prisons because, where prisoners are subjected to a kind of external disciplining of their bodies, schoolchildren must suffer an internal violence: schools ‘torture your brains’.⁵⁴ In 1916, the year of *Backwater*, American anarchist Emma Goldman compared the regular ‘school of today’ to a range of disciplining institutions: ‘It is for the child what the prison is for the convict and the barracks for the soldier—a place where everything is being used to break the will of the child, and then to pound, knead, and shape it into a being utterly foreign to itself’.⁵⁵ Over against the ‘school of today’ Goldman celebrates a new form of education coming into being as part of the Modern School Movement in Spain and America. These Modern Schools, inspired by the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer, combined what historian Judith Suissa has called ‘non-coercive pedagogy’ with radical politics, community organising, and, as Paul Avrich has documented, a rich seam of engagement with American modernist artists and writers, such as Man Ray and Hart Crane, as part of the schools’ creative writing and arts workshops.⁵⁶ Goldman’s culinary metaphor—of

⁵¹ Pease, 86.

⁵² Richardson, *Pointed Roofs*, 57.

⁵³ D. H. Lawrence, ‘Enslaved by Civilization’, in *A Selection from Phoenix*, ed. A. A. H. Inglis (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 484.

⁵⁴ ‘George Bernard Shaw, ‘Parents and Children’, in *The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw* (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965), 54.

⁵⁵ Emma Goldman, ‘The Social Importance of the Modern School’, *The Anarchist Library*, 3. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-the-social-importance-of-the-modern-school> [accessed 28 May 2024].

⁵⁶ Judith Suissa, “‘The Space Now Possible’: Anarchist Education as Utopian Hope’, in *Anarchism and Utopia*, ed. Laurence Davis and Ruth Kinna (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 242; Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

being kneaded and reshaped—is another version of Richardson’s anxiety about the inauthentic lives produced by schools. Here, in *Backwater*, the metaphor of imprisonment is linked to the idea of one’s life being determined by an institution in which no change seems possible, partly because the students themselves are resigned to their fate.

The name of the school, Wordsworth House, is significant in this context, not least because Richardson was interested in the legacy of William Wordsworth’s literary exploration of reality, memory, and consciousness.⁵⁷ Cowper Powys called Richardson ‘a Wordsworth of the city of London’: ‘she is after precisely the same thing’, he said, ‘what Wordsworth himself, indeed, calls quite simply “the Pleasure which is there in Life itself.”’⁵⁸ Wordsworth House, ironically, is a place far removed from, emptied of ‘Life itself’. But more particularly, we can think of Richardson’s presentation of the school alongside Wordsworth’s ‘Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’ (1807), that classic text of romantic childhood, which offers the vivid image of youth being vulnerable to imprisonment: ‘Shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing boy’.⁵⁹

It is not only the growing girls but Miriam herself who feels the shades of the prison-house close upon her at this school. As a figure for whom moving is an essential part of her identity, Miriam is anxious that the school stymies her mobility and fixes her in one position, worrying that ‘Every one would now think of her as a teacher; as someone who was never going to do anything else’.⁶⁰ This, in the words of the *Manchester Guardian* reviewer, amounts to a ‘burying alive’.⁶¹ Teaching here threatens to inhibit Miriam’s thoughts, shackling her to a life of the ever-same:

Go to sleep. It would be better to think in the morning. But then this

⁵⁷ Annika J. Lindskog, “‘Not Recalled, but Present’: Narrating the Past in the Present in Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*”, *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, 11 (2020–2021): 13–15.

⁵⁸ Cowper Powys, 18.

⁵⁹ William Wordsworth, ‘Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’, in *Selections from Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*, ed. Ifor Evans (London: Methuen, 1966), 106.

⁶⁰ Richardson, ‘Backwater’, p.219.

⁶¹ H.M.S., ‘New Novels’, p.3.

clear first impression would be gone and school would begin and go on from hour to hour through the term, mornings and afternoons and evenings, dragging you along further and further and changing you, months and months and years until it was too late to get back and there was nothing ahead.⁶²

Unlike her own experience as a schoolgirl, which seems to have helpfully facilitated her own growth, Miriam fears the life of teaching could turn her into something else. In the next volume of *Pilgrimage*, *Honeycomb* (1917), set after Miriam leaves Wordsworth House, she even speaks of regaining parts of herself that ‘had dried up and seemed to die’, as she throws off ‘her governess self’, the life that ‘made her face yellow and stiff’.⁶³ Richardson’s own experience of teaching, Gloria Fromm notes, left her physically unwell, ‘with no energy’, and a feeling of being ‘confined, if not trapped’, difficulties which are rendered in *Pilgrimage* as threats to Miriam’s existential as well as physical wellbeing.⁶⁴

The school threatens to leave Miriam, in words that echo Wordsworth himself, ‘dried up’ inside and out. In *The Prelude* (1805), Wordsworth pauses his autobiographical narrative to identify an ‘evil’ that is spreading across the land, one which he is glad to have escaped in his own childhood:

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
To transitory themes, yet I rejoice,
And, by these thoughts admonished, must speak out
Thanksgivings from my heart that I was reared
Safe from an evil which these days have laid
Upon the children of the land—a pest
That might have dried me up body and soul.
This verse is dedicate to Nature’s self
And things that teach as Nature teaches.⁶⁵

⁶² Richardson, ‘Backwater’, p.214.

⁶³ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage* (Virago Press, 1979), 1:351.

⁶⁴ Gloria Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 20.

⁶⁵ William Wordsworth, ‘The Prelude (1805)’, in *The Prelude*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979), 162, ll. 223–31.

The ‘evil’ that Wordsworth refers to was the ‘plague of educational theories that had followed the publication of Rousseau’s *Émile* (1762)’, including Maria Edgeworth’s *Practical Education* (1798), a book which promoted a scientific approach to early years education and recommended experiments to help children learn by hands-on activity.⁶⁶ (Incidentally, the model for the fictional Wordsworth House was the school that Richardson herself taught at in Finsbury Park—Edgeworth House, an institution named after Maria Edgeworth).⁶⁷ Wordsworth, and maybe there is an element of this in Richardson too, possessed an antipathy towards educational theories—especially the kind of pedagogical system or doctrine that might be forced on someone else, and which lacked the kind of gentle, unregulated, and tactful way that ‘Nature’ teaches. For Wordsworth here, these ‘evil’ systems of education are ‘laid / Upon the children of the land’, yet another artificial thing that alienates the children from Nature and risks leaving them withered in ‘body and soul’. Richardson’s run-in with the Steinerites in the 1940s is perhaps one expression of her resistance to educational theory made too much of a pest, turned into doctrine and dogma, and stripped of anything more flexible and vital.

A related problem at Wordsworth House is to do with anxieties about standardisation in education and learning, which Miriam takes to contain the threat of oppressive standardisation of people. When she comes across a copy of a textbook, Alexander Melville Bell’s *Standard Elocutionist*, a popular education text which passed through many editions from the 1860s, she associates its standard status with a demand for conformity as well as being a marker of its readers’ standardised lives: ‘It was a “standard” book and must therefore be about something she ought to know something about if she were to hold her own in this North London world’.⁶⁸ ‘The word offended her’, Miriam thinks, for it implies ‘fixed agreement about the things people ought to know and that she felt sure must be wrong’.⁶⁹ Once again we have the criticism of things be ‘fixed’ or locked down, and this time it is an inflexible, unwavering, and, for Miriam, suspect consensus about what is worth learning about. With standards comes the threat of regulation, and she is warned of ‘Certificates would

⁶⁶ ‘The Prelude’, 162, n. 4.

⁶⁷ Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson*, 19.

⁶⁸ Richardson, *Backwater*, 186.

⁶⁹ Richardson, *Backwater*, 186.

finish you off—Kill—Kill—Kill—Kill—Kill! !'.⁷⁰ To be certified is to be diminished, reduced to a piece of paper that leaves the exceptional and complex Miriam interchangeable and comparable with countless others.

Miriam's struggle with the confines of Wordsworth House is to do with an anxiety that schooling is harmfully regulated. While Miriam repudiates the oppressive chaos of the Hanover boarding school, Wordsworth House's world of timetabled lessons and divided classes likewise allows little room for the kind of wandering, unanticipated forms of learning that Miriam herself experiences. But while we might understand Miriam's antipathy for the school and the ordinariness of the girls as a form of elitist contempt for the herd-like middle classes that is often associated with modernists, she also casts herself as a sort of liberating figure, one who does feel a complex sense of sympathy with her students. During an examination, she imagines herself leading the girls to freedom:

If they could all get up together now and sing, let their voices peal together up and up, throw all the books out of the window, they might go on together, forward into the sunshine, but they would not want to do that. Hardly any of them would want to do that. They would look at her with knowing eyes, and look at the door, and stay where they were.

The room was very close.⁷¹

As the sunlight (Miriam's characteristic signal of thoughtful intensity) shines through, she experiences a moment of potential solidarity that is almost religious in its intensity. Hinging on that 'If, however, this moment is short-lived, and, ultimately, unrealised. Nevertheless, the impulse to go beyond the limits of her classroom with the young women is certainly a striking moment of desire for something different in this educational setting.

And, in the end, Miriam's final thoughts on education in *Backwater* develop from this impulse and the legacy of her own learning as a student engaged in a collaborative, educational relation with her teachers. She comes to view her own students, in turn, 'as equals and fellow-adventurers',

⁷⁰ Richardson, *Backwater*, 259.

⁷¹ Richardson, *Backwater*, 230.

determined as a teacher to proceed ‘never claiming a knowledge superior to their own’:

The business of the teacher is to make the children independent, to get them to think for themselves, and that’s much more important than whether they get to know facts,’ she would say irrelevantly to the Pernes whenever the question of teaching came up. She bitterly resented their vision of children as malleable subordinates.⁷²

Like Miriam’s momentary desire to see her students throw their books out the window, this declaration of her educational philosophy—perhaps the most powerful words on education in the whole of *Pilgrimage*—remain unarticulated, held back frustratedly as a thought, the words she ‘would’ tell her colleagues, but perhaps never will. Even if it remains in unvoiced in Miriam’s mind, this remains a striking articulation of how education could be. Rather than seeing the teacher as someone who furnishes children with information or shapes them into objects according to the desires of the educator, the pedagogic role, for Miriam, is to facilitate the learner’s development into intellectual independence. But while she wants the girls to ‘think for themselves’, Miriam also sees student and teacher as ‘equals and fellow-adventurers’, partners in an active and ongoing process, neither oppressing the other.

Backwater ends with a prize-giving. As Miriam prepares to leave, thanks are given, and she is startled to see the girls weeping at her departure. Not quite a graduation, and certainly coloured with ambivalent feelings, there are perhaps still lessons in this novel, for Miriam and the rest of us, however provisional. Equality and individuality, a sense of interdependence between teacher and student as engaged in a common experience, respect for the minds of students and the things that children have within themselves, thinking for oneself—these are the essential criteria for what Miriam imagines to be a more liberating kind of education: one firmly against coercion.

⁷² Richardson, *Backwater*, 270.