

THE GAZE OF THE OTHER: OBSERVATION
AND NEGATIVE SELF-FASHIONING IN
POINTED ROOFS

Rebecca Bowler

Throughout the whole of Richardson's thirteen-volume *Pilgrimage*, the point of view is Miriam's. Everything is slanted through the consciousness of the protagonist. It is a technique Richardson found intriguing in the work of Henry James. In her 1938 Foreword to the Dent collected edition of *Pilgrimage*, she credits James with 'the role of pathfinder', and describes his technique with admiration: 'keeping the reader incessantly watching the conflict of human forces through the eye of a single observer, rather than taking him, before the drama begins, upon a tour amongst the properties, or breaking in with descriptive introductions of the players as one by one they enter his enclosed resounding chamber where no plant grows and no mystery pours in from the unheeded stars' (I 11). For Richardson, then, interfering authorial description of 'properties' and 'players'¹ interrupts the purity of the 'drama' about to unfold, and more, prevents 'mystery' from 'pouring in'. Richardson appropriated James' technique and used it for her own 'feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism' (I 9). Readers have often been irritated by the limited vision imposed, 'incessantly watching' 'through the eye of a single observer', especially as the first few novels in the *Pilgrimage* sequence require the reader to enter the head of an adolescent girl, whose opinions and prejudices (especially with regard to national and gender differences in the people she sees) are naïve and uncomfortable. The limiting point

¹ In a 1927 article on 'Captions' in *Close Up* magazine, Richardson asserted that 'if the direct giving of information in captions is the mark of a weak film, [which she believed to be the case] the direct giving of information in a play or novel is the mark of a weak novel or play'. *Close-Up, 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism*, James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus (eds), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.165. The film, Richardson states, has an advantage over the novel: 'an unrivalled opportunity of presenting the life of the spirit directly' (Ibid.).

of view makes what Miriam *does* see and make note of very important. Miriam keeps her eyes open all the time, collecting impressions and acting as a 'Recording Angel' as one contemporary reviewer commented.² Miriam's unceasing observation of everything around her, and of the things happening in her own head, is what makes her herself, and what gives her her power.

At the very beginning of *Pointed Roofs*, the reader sees Miriam when she is alone, walking up the stairs of her family home in the peaceful twilight and feeling thankful for her solitude: 'It would be quiet in her room. She could sit by the fire and be quiet and think things over until Eve and Harriett came back with the parcels' (I 15). The reader's first impression of Miriam is of a solitary being who needs to be alone in order to collect her thoughts and control her feelings: she can only sit and think *until* her sisters Eve and Harriett return. Even the sense of her familiar surroundings is oppressive to her. Miriam tries to look out of the window in order to separate herself from her situation and gain a clarity for her thoughts (this becomes a familiar gesture on Miriam's part throughout *Pilgrimage*), but:

There was no escape for her thoughts in this direction. The sense of all she was leaving stirred uncontrollably as she stood looking down into the well-known garden. (I 15)

The word 'escape' indicates Miriam's desire to externalise her 'uncontrollable' feelings. The 'well-known garden' is too familiar to her to allow for any emotional escape. Miriam's growing consciousness needs a more alien external landscape in which to develop, and yet she is afraid of her perceived need to adjust her self to fit into this external landscape.

Miriam's apprehension at leaving home is portrayed in a dream she has where she has arrived at her new job as a student-teacher in Germany:

² L. P. Hartley, 'New Fiction', *Saturday Review*, 10 December 1927, p.828.

the staff had crowded round her, looking at her. They had dreadful eyes – eyes like the eyes of hostesses she remembered, eyes she had seen in trains and buses, eyes from the old school. They came and stood and looked at her, and saw her as she was, without courage, without funds... (I 21).

It is striking that Richardson uses a dream sequence to show Miriam's fear at stepping out into the unknown, because Miriam, like Richardson herself, rarely dreams.³ It is also striking that it is the 'eyes' of the school staff that Miriam most fears. Her fear is a fear of being observed, and of being 'found out'. At home she has no such fear. Her sisters Eve and Harriett do not question her intelligence and bravery, and they do not unsettle Miriam. In fact, in the opening of *Pointed Roofs*, neither sister's eyes are mentioned at all. Harriett has a 'little, round, firelit face, smiling tightly' (I 17), and Miriam observes Eve's 'soft crimson cheek and white brow of the profile' (I 17). This omission in Richardson's descriptions is all the more striking because throughout *Pointed Roofs*, the characters' eyes are mentioned regularly. At home, it is Miriam who does the observing, Miriam who *looks* down at the garden from her aloof position, and therefore Miriam who is in charge.

In the scene preceding this dream sequence, Miriam's sister Eve helps her to see that she must leave home because she is different from the others. Eve tells Miriam that she is 'so strong' and 'so clever', with the implication that the rest of the family are not. Similarly, Harriett's statement 'I wish I'd got brains' provides an important differentiation for Miriam between herself and her family and justifies her impulse to leave home and strike her own path. Eve also has to reassure Miriam that, in spite of her 'cleverness', people don't hate her, as she thinks (I 19-20).⁴ It must

³ See Laura Marcus, 'Pilgrimage and the Space of Dreams', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, 1 (2008), 50-73.

⁴ In an early manuscript version of *Pointed Roofs* (Dorothy Richardson Collection, General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library), one version of Miriam's dream sequence ends simply with the words 'They came and stood and looked at her and saw her as she was'. The addition of the words 'without courage, without funds or good clothes or beauty, without charm or interest, without even the [gumption' crossed out] skill to play a part'

be noted, however, that Miriam draws these compliments from her sisters partly as a way of gathering information about the way she is viewed by other people. It almost seems as though Miriam wants to be forewarned about what impressions she herself creates, before she has to go among completely different types of people from those she has been used to. Miriam's other motivation for eliciting praise from her sisters is straightforward vanity. She may be unsure as to the nature of her identity, but she seems confident enough in the virtues of her outwards, performative persona to dare to invite criticism of it, when she is at home, at least. The effect of the transition between Miriam's need for reassurance here, and her subsequent night terrors is to highlight the sense she has that her outward self has not yet been under scrutiny, and has yet to be tested.

On Miriam's arrival at the school in Hanover, the first figure she encounters is that of Mademoiselle, the French teacher with whom she is sharing a bedroom. Miriam's first impressions of Mademoiselle are of a 'sprite-like' 'unreal creature' (I 37). Mademoiselle presents Miriam with her first taste of 'the other', close contact with a girl of the same age as Miriam, but with differences in upbringing and culture that she finds intimidating, although Miriam is relieved to find that Mademoiselle is a Protestant: 'Such close quarters with a French girl was bewildering enough – had she been a Roman Catholic, Miriam felt she could not have endured her proximity' (I 37-38).

Stirred by this initial encounter, Miriam braves the tea table at which there are 'four Germans' and 'six English-speaking girls' (I 37). The German girls, who are sat together, seem to have an unnatural force field around them. Miriam dares not look at them. Richardson writes: 'Some influence coming to her from these German girls prevented her risking with them any meeting of the eyes that was not brought about by direct speech' (I 38). The Australian girl, Gertrude, presents a barrier for Miriam's gaze as well. We are told: 'Miriam had not yet dared to glance in the

in a revision of this scene clarifies that Miriam is afraid of seeming insignificant to these foreign eyes, rather than being afraid that they will think her 'hateful' and 'clever' (I 19-20).

direction of the Australian. Her eyes at dinner-time had cut like sharp steel' (I 39). This reticence is not entirely down to natural shyness. Miriam overcomes any fear she may have of the English girls fairly rapidly and proceeds to scrutinise their appearance and probable personality in harsh detail, starting with an observation as to the quantity of their 'Englishness'. The Martins, we are told, are 'as English as they could be' (I 39), and this observation devalues their worth in Miriam's eyes. The foreign 'other' may be intimidating and new to her, but it is worth much more as a stimulant to her newly realised consciousness. Judy, by contrast, is given inverted commas around her designation of 'English'. 'Miriam guessed when she heard her ask for *Brödchen* that she was Scotch'.

Miriam has an absolute fear of being viewed and judged by the other characters. She has a horror especially of the eyes of the other girls: a fear of being watched and of meeting somebody else's eyes across the table. I have already mentioned Miriam's feeling of 'risk' involved in meeting the eyes of the Germans as a group, and the perception of sharpness in the eyes of Gertrude. One of the Germans, Elsa Speier, whose eyes Miriam does not even meet in this early passage is described as a threatening personage almost entirely using eye imagery.

Next to her was the faint glare of Elsa Speier's silent sallowness. Her clear-threaded nimbus of pallid hair was the lowest point in the range of figures across the table. She darted quick glances at one and another without moving her head, and Miriam felt that her eyes fully met would be cunning and malicious. (I 38)

There is something ethereal and witchlike about this description of Elsa, especially in the image of her eyes moving about very quickly whilst her head remains still. The 'faint glare' of the first sentence evokes an image of actual eyes glaring, but at the same time creates the impression that Elsa is actually giving off a malign glow. This is a sensory depiction: Miriam is sat beside Elsa and so presumably cannot see her very well. Her impressions are, in the main, imaginary projections cast by Miriam's/Richardson's subsequent

knowledge of Elsa's character. It is a good example of Richardson's retrospective knowledge of characters impinging on Miriam's first impressions. Miriam and Elsa do not take to each other in *Pointed Roofs*, but it is unclear how Miriam could know this to be the case and sense an almost supernatural aversion before the two characters have even spoken. The description of Elsa's hair is ambiguous, however. The word 'nimbus' could indicate that her hair is fluffy and cloud-like, or it could indicate a halo or some kind of aura. If the latter, Richardson is reinforcing the idea of a malicious energy radiating from her. This has resonance if we examine Miriam's fear that Elsa's eyes, if she allowed herself to be in the firing line of their glare, would also be malicious.

Miriam's fear of strange eyes does not extend to the familiar English 'types' around the table. The two Martins, who we have been told are very English, have less penetrating eyes: one has 'large, expressionless, rich brown eyes', and the other has 'pale eyes, cold, like a fish' (I 39). There is nothing particularly reassuring about these descriptions. The idea of somebody with cold fish-like eyes is even slightly unsettling. However, the eyes of these English girls do not pose a threat to Miriam. They are not 'quick' and 'malicious' like Elsa's, or 'like sharp steel' like Gertrude's. The Martins' eyes, by contrast, are dull and safe, but not half as interesting. Their eyes are likened to the eyes of domestic animals: one a fish, and one 'expressionless', 'rich' and 'brown' like a dog or a cow. Miriam's fear of being observed is lessened when she can reduce the observer to the status of an animal, and therefore a being without a rich consciousness or enough intelligence to be able to watch Miriam and analyse her.

Miriam is also less concerned about observation if she can fit the character into a familiar 'type'. The Martins are a 'familiar picture' to Miriam, and by implication she is probably a familiar picture to them. By contrast, the eyes of the foreign other are disturbing to Miriam because she is not sure what they will see. She has not been in a situation where she is vulnerable to being observed by people so external to her home-life before, and their presence makes her unsure of herself. It is the overwhelming sense of national 'otherness' which makes Miriam so afraid to be observed,

despite her early information gathering, or confidence boosting. However, shortly after her initial shock at the dinner table scene, Miriam settles herself down and invents handy 'types' to divide the girls into. When everyone is labelled in this way Miriam feels safer, and she is no longer threatened by their gaze. However, when it comes to pigeon-holing herself, Miriam is less sure. She doesn't feel English because the English girls are 'expressionless' in their speech and in their music. English women are, according to Miriam, more refined than Germans, and yet more smug, 'smiling and taking things for granted' (I 71). She is not German: the sentimentality of her German pupils appals even as it pleases her. Miriam is also not as domesticated as the German girls, to the point of provoking comment from the Fräulein: 'You and your sisters were brought up like countesses ...' (I 131). Miriam's distaste for German women often finds vent in her descriptions of their bony faces and their evil eyes. She tells herself: 'I haven't got a German expression and I don't smile like a German' (I 151). However, Fräulein also tells Miriam that "I think you have something of the German in you" (I 115), and this comment pleases her. Her damning judgement of all German eyes as evil doesn't extend to Emma or Ulrica, after all. She may be pleased to place herself with these friendly specimens of German women. Emma is unthreatening because of her innocent naivety: her eyes are 'dog-like' (I 94), and Ulrica, with her 'great round deeps' (I 34) for eyes is perceived as beautiful and mystical, until Miriam actually talks to her and finds that their religious views differ. The venerated 'type' of erotic Madonna which Miriam has constructed around Ulrica falls down when words intervene, and Miriam is disappointed. She often tries to define her own self in this way – taking the people surrounding her as 'types' and as foils, against whom she can measure her own self.

One of the 'types' Miriam is fascinated by is the feminine 'type'. Miriam watches the women around her to find out the secret of their femininity. She sees a woman at a church service who impresses her with her 'refinement', sweeping ostrich feather, and femininity. 'Miriam glancing at her again and again felt that she would like to be near her, watch her and touch her and find out the secret of the effect. But not talk to her, never talk to her' (I 71).

Miriam is not interested in speech with this woman: ultimately she 'would have her own way of smiling and taking things for granted'. Conversation with her wouldn't question anything, which throughout *Pilgrimage* is Miriam's purpose in conversation, and functions as a part of Miriam's masculine persona. In 'A Thousand Pities', an October 1927 article for *Close Up*, Richardson argued for the supremacy of visual observation over speech. 'vocal sound', she states, is 'always a barrier to intimacy'.⁵ Miriam often reacts against people who 'take things for granted', and whose speech would (she believes) echo their sense of the ordinariness of life. Miriam's own rallying call relates to her sense of 'the strangeness of the adventure of being, of the fact of existence, anywhere, of anything at all' (IV 638). It is the image of the churchwoman rather than what is underneath which fascinates Miriam: the feminine image which this woman so effortlessly projects. Miriam places this woman into her 'feminine woman' type.

A similar evaluation is happening in Miriam's mind in a café, as she listens to some 'wonderful German women':

She managed intermittently to watch three or four of them and wondered what kind of conversation made them so emphatic – whether it was because they held themselves so well and “spoke out” that everything they said seemed so important. She had never seen women with such decision in their bearing. She found herself drawing herself up.

She heard German laughter about the room. The sounds excited her and she watched eagerly for laughing faces

They were different The laughter sounded differently and the laughing faces were different. The eyes were expressionless when they laughed – or evil ... they had that same knowing way of laughing as though everything were settled – but they did not pretend to be refined as English women did ... they had the same horridness ... but they were ... jolly They could shout if they liked (I 89).

⁵ Donald, Friedberg, and Marcus (eds), op. cit, p.167.

Miriam's admiration for the effect produced by these women leads her to imitate their bearing and subconsciously draw herself up to match their posture. Everything they say seems important, and Miriam would like to produce this effect in her own conversation, so she uses her recurring method of watching and imitating. However, Miriam quickly comes to the conclusion that nothing these women say is worth hearing. She does not want to hear the conversation, much as she does not ever want to talk to the woman in the church. Their eyes are expressionless and false. Because Miriam sees the effect the women produce as being merely an effect, she also has a strong sense of the futility of it all. The 'decision' in the bearing of the women and the 'emphatic' way they speak gives them power: 'everything they said seemed so important'. However, the eyes betray the women. Their power is based on a conversational trick: 'laughing as though everything were settled'. This falsity of image is also perceived as threatening. Miriam believes that the women's eyes are 'evil'.

Miriam's own efforts at femininity are forced, coming as they do from studying, analysing, and imitating. If she doesn't have a model to follow, she is confused. Fräulein Pfaff (Richardson's employer Lily Pabst's fictional counterpart) orders a group hair washing in the middle of the day, and Miriam, who is unprepared for this, is terrified at the prospect of having wet hair when she goes down for tea:

What had the other girls done? If only she could look into the school room before going down – it was awful – what should she do? ... She caught sight of a sodden-looking brush on Mademoiselle's bed. Mademoiselle had put hers up – she had seen her ... of course ... (I 61)

She is trying to imitate the other girls, and it is her sharp eye which picks up the clue to the mystery: something must be done with pins.

Despite Miriam's keen observance and imitation of the tricks of femininity in *Pointed Roofs*, she objects to any definition of herself

as either a woman or a man. She objects to the (male) German lecturers treating their pupils as silly girls: 'she felt that they were formal, reverently formal, "pompous" she called it, towards the facts that they flung out down the long schoolroom table, but that the relationship of their pupils to these facts seemed a matter of less than indifference to them' (I 79). However when Miriam is recovering from her 'fury' at the teacher Pastor Lahmann's assumption that a woman's existence is fulfilled by becoming a 'well-willed wife', Pastor Lahmann (who has earlier been described, more than once, as having 'the eyes of a child' (I 106) takes Miriam's pince-nez from her to examine her eyes, thus reducing her vision. Miriam's pince-nez is a barrier between herself, and the nightmare-ish world where people might see her for what she really is ('without courage, without funds'). In her first lesson, Miriam 'hoped she looked like a teacher. She knew her pince-nez disguised her and that none of the girls knew she was only seventeen and a half' (I 55). Lahmann reduces Miriam to a child so that they can be on equal terms, and he calls her 'poor child, poor child', referring to her 'lame, lame eyes'. Miriam's powers of observation and analysis have been removed, and yet she doesn't seem unwilling to let this happen. She is upset by Fräulein's interruption of their conversation: 'Pastor Lahmann had made her forget she was a governess. He had treated her as a girl. Fräulein's eyes had spoiled it. Fräulein was angry about it for some extraordinary reason.' (I 130) Gillian E. Hanscombe in *The Art of Life*, states that 'Miriam's naïveté here is almost incredible for one so forthright and clever; what Richardson wishes the reader to see, however, is that Miriam's refusal of the feminine role entails a "blindness" to the ways of lovers'.⁶ However, I don't believe that Miriam has fully refused the feminine role in this scene. She does indeed show 'fury' when Lahmann recites his poem about the 'little wife', but she still wishes to be a feminine woman on some level, and doesn't resent her power being taken from her, indeed she feels comforted by it: 'she saw only a dim black-coated knowledge, near at hand, going perhaps to help her' (I 129).

⁶ Gillian E. Hanscombe, *The Art of Life: Dorothy Richardson and the Development of Feminist Consciousness* (London: Owen, 1982), p.66.

Joanne Winning examines the Pastor Lahmann scene, and argues convincingly that *Pilgrimage* is 'heavily influenced by the models of psychoanalysis and by its narratives of female and lesbian development'.⁷ Winning goes on to use Freud's theories to explain Miriam's gender difficulties, including the son-like oedipal desire apparent in Miriam's relationships with her mother and father.⁸ Freud's view of the uncanny might also be used to decode the confrontation between Miriam and Pastor Lahmann. As well as an emphasis on the 'evil eye' as a disturbing force, Freud observes a great fear, especially in children, of 'damaging or losing [the] eyes'.⁹ He links this fear to the fear of castration. If we read Miriam's enforced reduced vision as a form of castration, removing as it does her masculine, analytical capacity, then Miriam's assertion that Pastor Lahmann had 'treated her as a girl' carries resonances of gender differences as well as the infantilising involved in using the word 'girl' instead of 'woman'. Richardson herself also had a lifelong fear of losing her sight, exchanging eye massage and 'distancing' tips in letters to John Cowper Powys,¹⁰ and worrying about the effects of sitting in the front row of a cinema on the eyes: 'when I raised my eyes to the screen I had no sense of blinding glare or effort to focus'.¹¹

This same exchange confronts Miriam's career difficulties. Miriam was aware of her innate refusal to be defined by her job at the very beginning of *Pointed Roofs*, joking that when she returned she would be 'staid and governessy' (I 18). The only other option

⁷ Joanne Winning, *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), p.71.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, (London: Penguin, 2003), pp.146-147.

¹⁰ Some of the advice she gives to Powys is eminently sensible, such as 'try bathing eyes with warm water at night to relax surrounding muscles, & cold, cupped in the hand & *thrown* at them, in the morning, to brace': *Powys and Dorothy Richardson: The Letters of John Cowper Powys and Dorothy Richardson*, Janet Fouli (ed.), (London: Cecil Woolf, 2008), pp.189-190. Other advice is more unusual, and pseudo-spiritual: 'Try to withdraw from them [the eyes]: Train your imagination to see them, not as tortured *instruments*, but as media vitalised & perpetually renewed by an in-flowing, through-flowing current. Look, in reading or writing, not *with*, but through them' (*Ibid.*, p.196).

¹¹ Donald, Friedberg, and Marcus (eds), *op. cit.*, p.172

Miriam can see this early in *Pilgrimage* is marriage as a career. She contemplates the idea of marrying a German man:

There would be a garden and German springs and summers and sunsets and strong kind arms and a shoulder. She would grow so happy. No one would recognize her as the same person. She would wear a band of turquoise-blue velvet ribbon round her hair and look at the mountains.... No good. She could never get out to that. Never. She could not pretend long enough. Everything would be at an end long before there was any chance of her turning into a happy German woman. (I 167)

It is significant that the only way Miriam can visualise making that future career work is by becoming a different person: a different person with a different nationality, but she is also questioning her suitability for the role of teacher. After her receipt of a wonderful, freedom-giving blouse, she had run through the streets, and arrived in the school humming 'I'm not a Lehrerin – I'm not – I'm not' (I 127) and suddenly finding it much easier to meet people's eyes. It is this meeting of the eyes which almost gets Miriam into trouble with Pastor Lahmann. When Miriam first decides she must leave, she can see the other girls 'every one at once clearly' (I 180) and manages to look them in the eyes:

They were beautiful. She wanted to cry aloud. She was English and free. She had nothing to do with this German school [...].

Miriam looked fearlessly up at the faces that were turned towards her. Again she seemed to see all of them at once. The circle of her vision seemed huge. It was as if the confining rim of her glasses were gone and she saw equally from eyes that seemed to fill her face. She drew all their eyes to her. They were waiting for her to speak. For a moment it seemed as if they stood there lifeless. She had drawn all their meaning and all their happiness into herself. She could do as she wished with them – their poor little lives. (I 181)

Miriam's sudden confidence has to do with a sudden sense of identity – ultimately, she is *not* German, she is 'English and free' (I 180). It is typical that with Miriam, the national differentiation comes first. Then Miriam abandons her fear (for the time being) and looks everyone full in the face. Her self-consciousness disappears so entirely that she almost feels God-like: 'she could do as she wished with them – their poor little lives.' There is also something of the psychic vampire in Miriam's behaviour here. It is as if she is saying: I am not afraid of you any more, I have learnt all that you can teach me, I am claiming your meaning and your happiness as my own (in her memories perhaps?), and I have finished with you. Self-consciousness is banished, and replaced by a feeling of superiority. This is also evident in Miriam's changed relations with the Fräulein. As Fräulein escorts Miriam to the train station Miriam begins to talk to Fräulein for the first time 'as to an equal'. Miriam's feeling of superiority also leaves her free to look at and analyse Fräulein more than she has ever been able to do: 'Then Miriam gazed freely at the pale profile shining at her side. Poor Fräulein Pfaff, getting old' (I 184). As she prepares to leave, however, Miriam feels more despair than mastery:

She had achieved nothing. Fräulein had made not the slightest effort to keep her. She was just nothing again – with her Saratoga trunk and her handbag. Harriett had achieved. Harriett. She was just going home with nothing to say for herself. (I 183-184).

Miriam is miserable because she feels she has not managed to forge her identity in the trip abroad which was supposed to help her realise who she was. Richardson reminds us of Miriam's unstable identity with the words 'she was just nothing again', a reference to her failure to keep a job by which she can be defined. The job of governess has given a certain sense of belonging, and Miriam wryly contrasts this jobless state with her sister Harriett's 'achievement'. Harriett is going to be married and therefore employed. The repetition of Harriett's name is also interesting. Miriam is wretched in her sense of failure because of her sister Harriett. Safe, unthreatening Harriett has done better than she has.

The other reference implicit in Miriam's declaration that she is 'nothing again' is an emphasis on her solitude as she picks up her cases and leaves the house without waking anyone. For the whole of *Pointed Roofs* Miriam has defined herself by contrasting what she sees in the other girls in the school with her own perception of herself, and even with what she guesses to be the perception of the others. Now she has no opposites against which to position herself, she feels that she is back where she started.

However, at the beginning of *Backwater*, Miriam realises that she is not back to where she started in her quest for self-knowledge, although she may be at home. Her experiences have changed her and set her apart from her family life. Her consciousness has been awakened just enough to ensure that she cannot give up her pilgrimage.

It'll always be like that now. Short holidays, gone in a minute, and then the long term. Getting out of touch with everything, things happening, knowing nothing about them, going home like a visitor, and people talking to you about things that are only theirs now, and not wanting to hear about yours ... (I 264-265).

The main outcome of Miriam's journey, and her encounters with people completely unlike those she had experienced before, is that on her return she is alienated from her family, who have stayed in the same place. She is a 'visitor' in her own home and so cannot stay there. In the last line Miriam muses that the people at home don't want to hear about her 'things', yet are keen to tell her about their 'things'. This carries an implication of Miriam's superiority. Miriam feels that she has experienced a foreign 'other', explored it, looked it full in the face and bottled the experience to carry about with her. It is her 'thing', her object. This acquisition of experience marks her as different from her stay-at-home family, with their blinkered vision.

Janet Fouli, considering Miriam's 'pilgrimage' and her succession of false starts in discovering her self (of which the sojourn in Germany is the first) states that 'each of her experiences brings

only a limited revelation of the truth she is seeking',¹² and Kerstin Fest states that 'Miriam's formation of identity is largely based on her finding an appropriate part to play'.¹³ None of the characters in *Pointed Roofs* have provided Miriam with an acceptable model for her outward, performative self, and Miriam is driven to find new places, new people, and to try out different roles in order to find her 'truth': the nature of her self. Richardson later called her work in the trio of teaching jobs the 'strange poses of an untrained dancer',¹⁴ emphasising both her awkward fit into these roles, and realising her efforts at conformity as a performance: a dance she was not trained for. The struggle for identity begun in *Pointed Roofs* is the pilgrimage of the title. Miriam will 'try on' many different job titles, cultural labels, and stances in her quest for the perfect fit, only to discard them all as mere disguises towards the end of her journey. In *Dimple Hill*, Miriam separates her own self, her childhood self, from the selves she has acquired through observation and imitation:

before the wide mirror in which hitherto had been reflected her image entangled with a thousand undetachable associations, she saw only her solitary self, there had come that all-transfiguring moment during which in the depth of her being she had parted company with that self, masquerading under various guises, with whom she had gone about ever since leaving home, and joined company with the self she had known long ago. (IV 407)

It is only through a long process of testing multitudinous ways of being, that Miriam can learn to separate the performative from the actual. The irony is that Miriam's 'actual' self, she eventually discovers, is the one she left behind in the family home.

¹² Janet Fouli, *Structure and Identity: the Creative Imagination in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage* (Tunis: Faculté des Lettres de la Manouba, 1995), p.28.

¹³ Kerstin Fest, *And All Women mere Players: Performance and Identity in Dorothy Richardson, Jean Rhys and Radclyffe Hall* (Wien: Braumüller, 2009), p.49.

¹⁴ Dorothy Richardson, 'Beginnings: A Brief Sketch'. Dorothy Richardson Collection. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.