

EDITORIAL

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During the Dorothy Richardson conference held in Bloomsbury at Birkbeck College in July 2009, Suzette Henke told a story about teaching *Pilgrimage* to a mixed group of undergraduates. During a class on *Pointed Roofs*, a male student stood up in frustration and cried, 'How can you be interested in a book about girls washing their hair?'. As if by way of a prepared response, in the sessions that followed almost every paper made reference to the scene in which Miriam has an egg cracked on her unwilling head and massaged into her hair. More was found in that egg and in that head than the male student could have ever imagined.

Even without cracking eggs, it was another good year for Dorothy Richardson studies. In March, Oxford University Press gave the go-ahead for a Collected Letters. In July, the second biennial International Dorothy Richardson Conference, the occasion of Henke's anecdote, took *Pointed Roofs* as its focus and was attended by a pleasing mixture of veteran and new scholars, critics, and Richardson enthusiasts from Britain, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the USA. Two of the papers in this issue, by Rebecca Bowler and Juliet Yates (both of which discuss the hair-washing scene), were delivered at the 2009 conference. Two others, by Deborah Longworth and Joanne Winning, were originally delivered at the first conference in 2007, which marked the half-centenary since Richardson's death. We expect to publish further papers from the 2009 conference next year in issue Number 3.

This issue opens with a major article by Deborah Longworth, 'Subject, Object and the Nature of Reality: Metaphysics in Dorothy Richardson's *Deadlock*'. Richardson's relationship to early twentieth-century philosophy has long occupied the hinterland of critical work on *Pilgrimage*. At a conference devoted to Richardson in 1999, Jean Radford argued that Richardson, like Proust, wrote

what is best termed 'philosophical fiction'.¹ Mary Ann Gillies has written about the influence of Henri Bergson's ideas on Richardson's modernism, and more recently Bryony Randall has discussed the influences of both William James and Bergson on *Pilgrimage* and other modernist texts.² Despite, and perhaps as much because, of the intriguing paths of enquiry opened up by these contributions, it has become clear that there is much more to be said about Richardson and philosophy. Just as we only seem to have scratched the surface of the literary influences and allusions that permeate *Pilgrimage*, there is much to be done on Richardson's continuing engagement with British and continental philosophy throughout the 1920s and 1930s. There are, for example, the references to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herbert Spencer, and Charles Darwin amongst others, in *Pilgrimage* itself and the intriguing references to Nikolai Berdayaev in the late correspondence of both Richardson and her husband, the artist Alan Odle.

In that context, Deborah Longworth's article marks a fine, rich beginning to what we hope will be many more contributions in this area. Focusing on *Deadlock*, which contains Miriam's most explicit engagement with contemporary philosophy, Longworth identifies Miriam's earliest encounter with British philosophy at school as the background against which she attends the lectures of the British Idealist philosopher, John Ellis McTaggart. As Longworth shows, the engagement with philosophy extends far beyond the event of McTaggart's lectures. *Deadlock* displays a wide reading of the new philosophical currents of the time, including 'Spencer's social Darwinism, Emerson's transcendentalist individualism, and McTaggart's mystical Idealism'. Richardson, Longworth convincingly concludes, was also familiar with the work of Richard Haldane, as well as that of May Sinclair, one of *Pilgrimage*'s first and most influential reviewers. She proposes that 'Miriam's concerted effort to engage with philosophical thought in

¹ Jean Radford, 'Pilgrimage, Fiction and Phenomenology', paper delivered at the 'Dorothy Richardson and Modernism' conference, Queen Mary and Westfield College, 11 June 1999.

² Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal & Philadelphia: Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Deadlock might be seen to set the groundwork for Richardson's philosophical and formal project in the writing of *Pilgrimage* as a whole'.

It seems likely that Longworth's thesis will occupy Richardson critics for some time to come, even although she takes care to point out that if *Deadlock* provides clues to the philosophical underpinning of *Pilgrimage* as a whole, Miriam engages and experiments with many different positions throughout the work. Not least important, and following from her early encounters with mysticism is Miriam's encounter with Quakerism. The first issue of the journal contained an illuminating article by Eva Tucker, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Quakers. Bryony Randall's article, 'Work, Writing, Vocation and Quakers in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*', argues that, in the last two chapter-novels of *Pilgrimage*, Quakerism is associated not just with *Pilgrimage*'s long-running theme of the importance of spirituality, but with work and the 'scene of literacy' - in other words, the moment when Miriam comes to writing as her vocation. The scene of writing in *March Moonlight* arrives as a complex culmination of *Pilgrimage*'s mediation on women's work as always conditioned by a gendered and highly spatial division of labour. If *A Room of One's Own* tells one story, Richardson paints a much broader canvas.

Juliet Yates article, 'Feminine Fluidity: Mind versus Body in *Pilgrimage*', takes a new look at the contentious concept of 'stream of consciousness', using Richardson's discomfort with it as a starting point for a discussion of Miriam's contradictory relationship with her own sense of embodiment. Tracing the changing historical constructions of the feminine as flow or fluidity, Yates offers a reading of *Pointed Roofs* in relation to what she describes as Miriam's initial rejection of a fluid femininity, but then goes on to show how *Pointed Roofs* can, and perhaps should, be reread through the later chapters. By *Dawn's Left Hand*, Miriam unsatisfactory relationship with Hypo concentrates her reflections on the limitations of masculinist intellectualism. Her revelatory relationship with Amabel allows her to appreciate the fluidity of relationships between women: the 'flow of their wordless communication'. Such re-readings demonstrate the complexity of

Richardson's 'theorisation' of gender, which attempts to posit a non-contaminating fluidity that occupies neither fixed masculine nor essentialist feminine positions.

Rebecca Bowler's article, 'The Gaze of the Other: Observation and Negative Self-fashioning in *Pointed Roofs*' also stresses the importance of rereading in *Pilgrimage*. Her discussion of the politics of the gaze in Richardson's text shows again *Pilgrimage's* engagement with the contradictions of feminine subjectivity. Miriam suffers under the gaze of others and yet is sharp-eyed in her own observations. Bowler finds that eyes and the gaze – from Miriam's sense of being under surveillance, to Miriam's own Jamesian point of view, to the uncanny eyes discussed by Freud – are everywhere in *Pilgrimage*. Differing slightly from Yates, Bowler judges that Miriam does not abandon the feminine, even at this stage. Seen from the vantage point of the penultimate chapter, *Dimple Hill* and the key scene where Miriam regards herself in the mirror, *Pilgrimage* can be understood as a long process of disentangling the self from a kaleidoscope of perspectives.

Joanne Winning's 2000 monograph was and remains one of the most important contributions to Richardson scholarship. In her article in this issue, 'Dorothy Richardson and the Politics of Friendship', she returns to some of its themes, but concentrates on the under-researched area of friendship networks and the role of social, affective, and erotic attachments in the creative process. Winning suggests that these are not easily disentangled and that our own vantage point, at a very different moment in social and sexual history, often obscures as much as makes clear, offering *faux amis*: relationships and identities that we think we recognise, but which are in fact mis-recognitions. Winning finds Derrida's *The Politics of Friendship* a useful starting point for the theorisation of social networks, but her evidence comes from Richardson's writings, not just *Pilgrimage* itself, but also her letters – that rich source of material, which has as yet only been partially tapped, but which soon we hope to put at the disposal of all Richardson scholars in its entirety. Winning's nuanced readings (which exemplify what Winning herself 'calls the difficult and undeniably political job of interpretation') of the different tones and registers

Richardson used to different correspondents will be of enormous help in that collective enterprise.

So we embark on another year of things Richardsonian. The journal welcomes contributions for the 2010 issue: articles, short or long, and especially reviews, an area in which we have been a little lacking up to now, but in which we hope to improve in the year ahead.