

María Francisca Llantada Díaz, *Form and Meaning in Dorothy M. Richardson's Pilgrimage* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2007). 220pp. ISBN 978-3-8253-5363-6.

*Juliet Yates*

The exciting and ever-expanding base of Richardson criticism turns to the mythical in María Francisca Llantada Díaz's book *Form and Meaning in Dorothy M. Richardson's Pilgrimage*. Llantada's engaging study examines both a textual and mythical analysis of *Pilgrimage*, exploring diverse areas from its place within Modernism through narratological devices to how each novel-length chapter can relate to the Tarot. This mythical reading is plotted against the arcana of the Tarot where Miriam's pilgrimage is viewed through the Fool's journey; this innovative interpretation is the most appealing part of her study. At the root of Llantada's argument is the idea of a modernist 'quest' for self-fulfilment, which proceeds through cycles, an idea she finds in other canonical modernist texts such as *The Waste Land*, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *The Cantos* and *Ulysses*.

Llantada endeavours to set *Pilgrimage* beside key modernist concepts to give a general outline of the modernist topos. Chapter 3, for example, begins in this way then narrows its focus to examine how the relationship between tradition and innovation in Eliot and Woolf differs from that in Richardson's work. While situating *Pilgrimage* in relation to other Modernist movements such as Imagism, Futurism, Cubism and Impressionism is a useful exercise, it is not always clear how Llantada's mythological approach helps to clarify Richardson's place within early twentieth-century literature. For example, while the discussion of the relationship between scientific advances and Richardson's experimental form is illuminating, the idea that 'the modernist topos of the mythical descent to the underworld may be said to parallel the scientists' descent to the "underworld" of the atoms' (13) might seem a bit of stretch to some readers.

*Pilgrimages: A Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies* No.3 (2010) 84

Where Llantada's writing is most convincing is in her close comparisons between Miriam and mythical figures; one such example is her concept of 'poet-as-prophet or shaman', where 'Miriam's task is to gain access to a deeper knowledge of reality which transcends the superficial knowledge of ordinary things' (14) and providing supporting examples such as Stephen Dedalus and Plato's *Ion* only goes to strengthen her argument. For those more au fait with Richardson's work, Chapters 1 and 3, 'A Biographical Note on the Author' and '*Pilgrimage* in a Modernist Context, might seem a little like going over old ground; however, for those new to her work, both these sections work successfully to give a general overview of her background as well as establishing her role within the larger context of Modernism.

Chapter 4 reads *Pilgrimage* as a *Bildungsroman* from a narratological perspective. Four sub-sections each look at different narrative devices. Drawing on Mieke Bal's and Genette's terminology, Llantada illustrates the blurring between the narrative instance and that which is focalised through Miriam and her thoughts. Aided by Dorrit Cohn's work on free indirect style, Llantada offers a multitude of examples showing 'varying degrees of ambiguity regarding their attribution to the narrative instance's paralepses by means of narrated monologue or free indirect style, psychonarration and quoted monologue' (54). This allows her to pose a traditional textual analysis alongside a mythical reading of the text and the physical/spiritual 'maturation of the heroine' (7). In this part of chapter four Llantada clearly shows Miriam's maturation process as the novel cycle progresses, as she moves further away from the need for narrative instance in the third person to express her situation and feelings to independent thought in quoted monologue. The table featured at the end of this section provides a quick guide to this process, detailing the extensive use of third person narration in the early novel-length chapters to the less frequent use which is overtaken by Miriam's own narration and use of 'I'.

The subsection, 'Narrative anachronisms' (4.3) explores Richardson's use of ellipses as a means of both 'accelerating the pace of the narrative' and providing 'an emptiness left by the

evident gap in the story time' (69). Llantada argues that both are 'significant for the development of the story and refer to key events in the life of the hero or heroine that are not explained' (69). Equally, a nuanced reading of prolepses within *Pilgrimage* provides a really engaging analysis and supports her overriding concept of the quest. In Llantada's view, the two anticipations which bookend the text 'provide a frame for the whole narrative of *Pilgrimage*' (73). She contends that the opening homodiegetic anticipation in *Pointed Roofs* foretells Miriam imminent journey, (which we soon follow as readers) and she compares it to the heterodiegetic anticipation of her future in the last lines of *March Moonlight* (something about which we, as readers, can only guess). Heaven and hell are depicted in the use of analepses where Miriam is either taken back to Eden in her childhood garden memories or to Hades with surfacing memories of her mother's suicide; her ability to deal with the latter, more painful, memories signals her progress in her *Bildung*. Again, as with the previous section, this section of Chapter 4 closes with both a detailed but clear table illustrating the use of ellipses, summaries, pauses, anticipations and analepses. Section 4.4 'Other narrative devices' is a somewhat mixed analysis of cinematic and epistolary techniques; whilst both are interesting techniques to examine, this section is a little less clear, sitting somewhere between a passing nod to a narratological approach and an in depth study, while not quite achieving either.

The majority of Chapter 5 concentrates on the mythical analysis of *Pilgrimage*. Like other modernists, Richardson uses the framework of the 'quest' as a method to 'grant overall unity to their otherwise fragmentary works by having recourse to myth' (93); this 'quest' is seen throughout the whole of the *Pilgrimage* and is the one topos that connects all of Llantada's numerous approaches. In 5.1 Llantada successfully positions *Pilgrimage* as a 'productive fusion' (94) of both the *Bildungsroman* genre and the *roman fleuve*; it is here where her extensive footnotes come into their own and substantiate the claim that *Pilgrimage* should also be viewed in the latter genre as a multi-volume work in which its separate subsections successfully stand alone as well as within the whole. After situating *Pilgrimage* in these genres, this section concentrates on the religious connotations of the novel (Christian, Quakerism)

rather more than the mythical. Offering an enamoured view of the Quaker religion and its founder, George Fox, we are finally pointed towards the importance of 'light' in Miriam's mythical journey.

In 5.2, Llantada turns her attention to the Tarot, using it as a means of understanding the structure of each of the novel-length chapters of *Pilgrimage*; this concept is supported by the use of Jungian and occasionally Freudian theory. Miriam's own journey, it is suggested, corresponds with the Fool's journey through the twenty-two major arcana of the Tarot, where the first half of her journey is concerned with the self confronting the outside world and the second half with the ego confronted by the inner depths of the psyche. This correspondence is plotted against a figure eight of the twenty-two major arcana; the two circles (also illustrative of the 'mathematical symbol of the infinite' (108)) represent the cyclical nature of the quest, where the end of one stage of the journey is the start of another. To align the thirteen novel-length chapters with the twenty-two arcana, some of the instalments of *Pilgrimage* need to relate to more than one arcanum. For example, *Interim* corresponds with The Emperor and The Pope and *Oberland* with The Hanged Man, Death and Temperance.

The next twelve subsections of Chapter 5 look at each of the instalments in relation to their corresponding cards. *Pointed Roofs'* card, The Fool, is paired together with Miriam as they both set out on their journeys with naivety and immaturity. The addition of another symbolic figure, The Green Man (112), to this group slightly blurs the boundaries of this relationship. Their seeming defiance of conventions leads Llantada to claim that 'Both The Fool and Miriam are regarded as insane by ordinary people' and that 'They are despised by society' (112) – rather a stringent assessment of Miriam's status perhaps.

In 5.2.2 Llantada offers an interesting Jungian analysis of Miriam's masculine qualities. Suggesting that these stem from her 'mother-complex, a 'relationship that leads the daughter either to a hypertrophy of the feminine side or to its atrophy' (128). In Miriam's case the suicide of her mother has impacted negatively

on her relationship to the feminine. Llantada shows this negative effect can be seen in her relations with other women such as Eleanor Dear. Miriam is inclined to take up a masculine position, dissociating herself from the feminine and its connotations of fragility, vulnerability and disease.

The mythological approach come into focus most clearly in the section dedicated to *Interim*, where Llantada convincingly associates Miriam with the two arcana: The Emperor and The Pope. Miriam's role in different social circles and the fact that, as the novel title suggests, 'Miriam's life is still more potential than immediate' (136) are linked well with the Tarot and their related qualities. However, when the psychological analysis is introduced at the end of this section it seems to veer from the point. Equally, the analysis of *Deadlock* works well until the comparisons with the mandala and Indian religious imagery which reads as a somewhat rushed postscript.

*Dawn's Left Hand* gives Llantada the opportunity to indicate the extent of Miriam's progress in her journey – she is now more confident and closer to reaching self-fulfilment. The role of Amabel as an 'anime' figure offers an interesting take on the feminine/masculine duality and furthers Llantada's previous argument about these warring aspects of Miriam's identity. Hypo provides one of 'The Devil' figures, with whom the sexual encounter leaves Miriam, like the mythical hero, negatively 'tainted with the odour of the flesh' (165); perhaps an argument about the difference between the relationships Miriam has with Amabel and Hypo would have worked well to reinforced this idea. 5.2.11 details the associated card as The Sun which corresponds well with the Quaker idea of the inner light.

While her quest for writing is not yet finished, Llantada suggests that Miriam's search for inner light is completed in *Dimple Hill* as 'Miriam and the members of the Quaker group emerge 'from the silence luminous' (176). Section 5.2.12 signals our hero's, Miriam's, quest coming full circle – or full two circles, if the Tarot figure eight is to be followed – and brings her back to the card of The Fool by ways of the arcana: Judgement and The World. Miriam

once again becomes The Fool, but this time ‘ignores the precipice in front of him because he knows that he is immortal and cannot be harmed’ (181), she is able to step forth and begin her new quest as this part of ‘her life journey and search for illumination and gnosis finally culminates with successful writing’ (183). Again, as with Chapter 4, Chapter 5 ends with a chart summarising the schematic structure of each of the twelve subsections which include: significant events; characteristics of the corresponding Arcanum; and motifs.

Writing of the fragmentation found in modernist texts, Llantada appears to emulate this in her splintered approach. The back of the book jacket even highlights this, stating that the work includes approaches such as: Russian formalism; physical and psychological maturation (Jung and Freud); textual analysis; modernist techniques; analysis of the roles of the narrator/protagonist, mythical hero’s quest, arcana of the Tarot and, finally, Quakerism.

In the end, it has to be recognised that this is an incredibly ambitious book which scores highly on several counts, despite the initial disclaimer that as a study it may have ‘misread’ the text. The conclusion works hard to bring together the many different threads of analysis; but, perhaps, it would have been even more successful if the approach were more streamlined – fewer approaches in greater depth.

The psychoanalytic approach is fruitful with respect to Miriam’s gendered identity, however, Llantada’s primary methodology is to read for myth and this works best when it is not weighed down by Jungian analysis. Sometimes the links can seem tenuous. An example would be Llantada’s claim that:

Miriam’s descent to the centre of her being surely is inspired by her unconscious. Her idea of the series of circles she has to cross parallels both Dante’s descent into Hell and Jung’s notion that our conscious personality is part of a whole, or a small circle contained in a bigger one. (178)

More convincing is the perhaps surprising linking of Quakerism and the Tarot to prove that 'like the archetypal hero's quest, Miriam's life journey is both external and internal, physical and spiritual' (197).

The layout of the book into smaller subsections and the visual representations of theories in the form of tables and charts allows for an easy and enjoyable reading experience. Llantada opens up a broader vista in Richardson criticism and this study provides an interesting examination and a new perspective on Miriam's journey from the purblind heroine to poet-as-shaman.