

DOROTHY RICHARDSON: MADE IN FRANCE

Howard Finn

Dear Bryher

The Nouvelle Revue Française brings me joy. I like to hear all these French formalists asking themselves questions.

(Dorothy Richardson, letter to Bryher, 1937)¹

In a 2017 article for this journal, Adam Guy discussed Gabriel Marcel's philosophical reading of *Pilgrimage* within the broader context of the existentialist and phenomenological currents dominant in mid-twentieth century French intellectual circles.² The present article is intended as a contribution to the field of research opened up by Adam Guy's work on the reception of *Pilgrimage* in France, focusing on literary reception rather than philosophy.

Dorothy Richardson was passionately interested in cinema and wrote at length about film and its audiences, most significantly in her 'Continuous Performance' column for *Close Up* which ran from 1927 to 1933. Aside from her own commentaries on film, there has been much critical discussion about how the form and style of *Pilgrimage* might be connected to or influenced by silent era cinema. It might also be possible to argue for an affinity between Richardson's aesthetic and that of some strands of post-war European art cinema which appeared long after her death, certain films of Agnes Varda, Chantal Akerman and Marguerite Duras perhaps. The Brechtian anti-realism of Jean-Luc Godard does not appear to have much in common with *Pilgrimage* and the connection between Richardson and Godard which acts as a starting point for this article could be described as, at best, tenuous. However, this connection has led to the discovery of a review of *Pilgrimage* not previously catalogued in the

¹ Dorothy Richardson, letter to Bryher 15 [April?] 1937, *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson*, edited by Gloria G. Fromm, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p.334.

² Adam Guy, 'Modernism, Existentialism, Postcriticism: Gabriel Marcel Reads *Pilgrimage*', in *Pilgrimages*, Number 9, 2017, pp.4-35.

<https://www.dorothyrichardson.org/journal/issue9/Guy17.pdf>

Guy's article also translated a brief disparaging reference to Richardson by de Beauvoir from: Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l'âge* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p.56. See Adam Guy's article p.4, footnote 2.

Richardson critical bibliography and which might give rise to a consideration of the reception of Richardson in France at a particular moment in the 1960s, not so much the moment of Godard and the *nouvelle vague* as that of Nathalie Sarraute and the *nouveau roman*.

Godard filmed *Made in USA* in 1966. Although appearing during his new wave heyday, the film has never been regarded as one of his better efforts, the critical consensus being that the film is a rather strained rehash of *Pierrot le fou*, also starring Anna Karina, from the previous year.³ During the filming of *Made in USA* Godard and Karina's marriage was in difficulties – they would separate and divorce soon after shooting – and, despite Godard's zany script, the pop art settings and Raoul Coutard's ravishing colour cinematography, *Made in USA* is overwhelmed by a sense of fatigue and melancholy. The viewer can almost feel the life, though not the love, evaporating from both the relationship of actress and director and the movie itself. It would be the last Godard feature film starring Anna Karina.

Made in USA is a parodic spy/gangster caper film with a script full of satirical references to the politics of the time – Godard would begin his longish march towards Parisian Maoism the following year, 1967, with the film *La Chinoise*. The plot, such as it is, concerns Paula Nelson (Anna Karina) investigating various espionage and counter-espionage gangs and need not detain us here. We join the film seven minutes in.

³ *Made in USA* was shot quickly in 1966 as a side-project to the highly regarded *Two Or Three Things I Know About Her*, a major film in the Godard canon. The mixed reputation of *Made in USA* was partly due to legal issues which resulted in the film being withdrawn from circulation, unseen for years, only reappearing in the late 1990s. For a concise overview of the film's complicated production and reception history see J. Hoberman *Made in USA: The Long Goodbye* (2009) at Criterion, <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1199-made-in-u-s-a-the-long-goodbye>



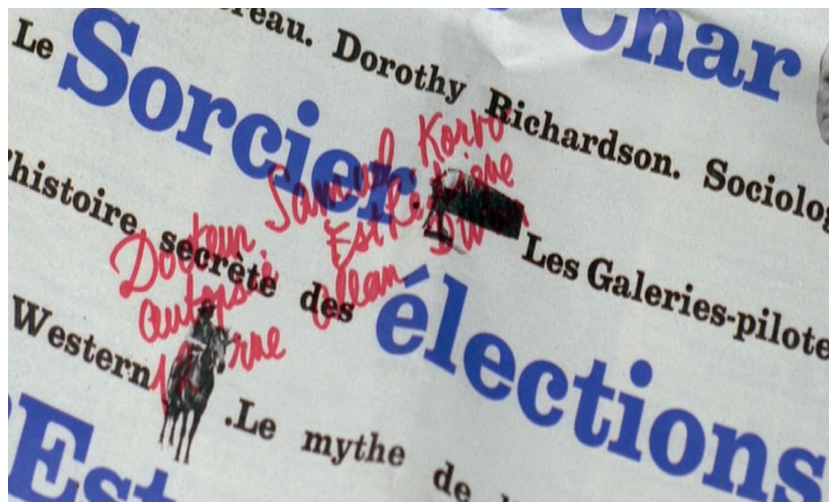
Anna has knocked out an enemy agent and laid his body on the bed. She rifles through his pockets.



In one pocket she finds a folded-up newspaper.



She straightens out the paper and studies the front page.



Godard cuts to a point-of-view shot, a close-up focusing on the middle of the front page of the paper on which a secret message in red ink has been scribbled, something about a Doctor Samuel Korvo. The significance of this message to the plot is not important for us, what is important is the

list of headings on the front page, headings referring to articles included in this issue of the paper, the most conspicuous name in the close-up, in bold print, being 'Dorothy Richardson'. This is evidently not a tabloid newspaper but a cultural journal. A strange thing to find in a gangster's pocket but by no means an unusual thing in a Godard movie.



Godard then cuts to another point-of-view shot, a close-up of a photograph of a statue. Anna has turned from the front page of the paper to its first page, and she is looking at the first article – the lead article in the paper.



Anna sits on a radiator and tears off a strip from the front page, the strip on which the secret message is scrawled and the Dorothy Richardson heading is printed. She then folds up the torn strip of paper to carry away with her.



Joined by her gang, Anna sits on the bed holding the paper, with part of the front page torn out.

We can now identify the paper as *La Quinzaine*, also known as *La Quinzaine Littéraire* (*Literary Fortnight*). This journal was founded and edited by Maurice Nadeau, an influential figure in Parisian intellectual life across several decades (born in 1911, he died at the age of 103 in 2013). As a young man in the 1930s he was a Trotskyist militant (and remained a life-long sympathiser) and was also associated with the surrealist group in Paris. Active in the Resistance, Nadeau spent the final months of the Occupation writing *Histoire du surréalisme/ History of Surrealism*, published in France in 1945 and a standard text on surrealism well into the 1970s, running into multiple editions in French and English. The book endorsed

surrealist aesthetics but criticised surrealism as a political movement, a criticism which led to a breach with Breton. Nadeau founded a cultural paper *Les Lettres nouvelles* in 1953, succeeded by *La Quinzaine* in March 1966. In these journals Nadeau provided regular publication for many writers, including Blanchot, Barthes and Foucault. According to Blanchot, Nadeau was not only a signatory but, in practice, the main organiser of *Manifesto of the 121*, the explosive 1960 public declaration by prominent intellectuals, writers and artists of sympathy with the Algerian fight for independence from French colonialism.⁴ Nadeau organised a similar declaration in support of the events of May 1968 and *La Quinzaine* became something of a platform for the intellectual ferment of the time.

Below is the front page of *La Quinzaine* 1 July 1966, the issue appearing in Godard's *Made in USA* and including the article on Dorothy Richardson.⁵

⁴ Blanchot was one of the three official co-authors of the actual declaration text. On Nadeau, see Maurice Blanchot, 'N'oubliez pas!', *La Quinzaine Littéraire*, 459, 16-31 March 1986, 11-12. Translated in special Blanchot issue 'Blanchot's Epoch', *Paragraph* vol.30 No.3, November 2007 (Edinburgh University Press, 2007). See also 'Maurice Nadeau 1911-2013' (obituary) by Ian Birchall, *Revolutionary History* at <http://grimanddim.org/under-the-sod/2013-maurice-nadeau/>

⁵ *La Quinzaine Littéraire* no.8, 1st July 1966, ISSUU online, at https://issuu.com/capucine/docs/quinzaine_008

La Quinzaine

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littéraire

Numéro 8 1^{er} juillet 1966

Heidegger  par M. Deguy.

Philippe Sollers. Michel **Foucault**



les lumières. Brodski. Romans d'Espagne, et

d'Amérique. **René Char** 

Marcel Moreau. Dorothy Richardson. Sociologie

Le **Sorcier**  Les Galeries-pilotes

L'histoire secrète des **élections**

Le Western  .Le mythe de l'espion. Théâtre

à **l'Est** et à **l'Ouest** 

Les livres de la quinzaine. Formats de poche

On this front-page, headings in large blue print are given to Heidegger, Foucault and René Char. Dorothy Richardson shares the black smaller print with Philippe Sollers. Note the image of a cowboy on horseback at the bottom of the page. In order to give a sense of the context in which the Richardson review is published, a few pages from this issue are reproduced below.

The lead article is 'A History That Stayed Silent' by Foucault – a review of Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1932) in a new French edition. The article contains the photograph of the Versailles statue which Anna Karina looks at in *Made in USA*. Foucault's article on Cassirer is followed by a section of reviews of recent French novels and a section devoted to non-French novels, the latter including the Richardson article, a review of a new French translation of *Pointed Roofs*.

A section of the July 1966 issue is dedicated to reviews of newly translated foreign books, in this issue four reviews. Three of the reviews are given one column each, Richardson gets a full page: 'Une fresque autobiographique', a review of *Pointed Roofs* by Jean-Jacques Mayoux. This is followed by a review of Genette's *Figures* by Lucette Finas and the centrepiece of the issue is a discussion of 'Heidegger Today'. At the back of the July 1966 issue (also below) is a review of a book by Raymond Bellour, a radical reading of the Hollywood Western genre and its auteurs (this is the article signalled by the cowboy on the front page), and notice the reviewer – Georges Pérec, in 1966 still caught somewhere between the *nouveau roman* and OULIPO.

It might be that Godard's primary interest in buying this particular issue of *La Quinzaine* was the article about Bellour's book on the Western and this was the reason the paper was to hand for use as a prop on the set of *Made in USA*.

Une histoire restée muette

Ernest Cassirer
La Philosophie des Lumières
Fayard éd. 352 p.

Ce livre, qui a plus de trente ans, appartient à notre actualité. Et d'abord au système présent (solide, consistant, bien protégé) de nos petites ignorances françaises : aucune des grandes œuvres de Cassirer n'avait été traduite jusqu'à présent. Qui dira jamais de quelles puissantes défenses nous avons entouré, depuis le XIX^e siècle, la « culture française » ? Les douces, les grandes figures familières où nous aimons nous reconnaître, nous soupçonnons à peine la foudre qu'elles écartaient. Ces héros n'étaient peut-être que des sentinelles obstinées : les romantiques nous ont gardé de Hölderlin, comme Valéry de Rilke ou de Trakl, Proust de Joyce, Saint-John Perse de Pound. L'effort de Maine de Biran fut salutaire contre Fichte ; la chevauchée de l'évolution créatrice a conjuré la danse bondissante de Nietzsche, Sartre le tuffait nous a bien protégés contre Heidegger. Voilà bientôt deux siècles que nous sommes en défense. Nous vivons au cœur d'un discours éreinté.

Certains signes aujourd'hui prouvent que les choses, peut-être, sont en train de changer. Commençons-nous enfin à tourner nos propres défenses ? Il faut saluer l'excellente traduction, par Pierre Quillet, de cette *Philosophie des Lumières* (déjà classique, mais ailleurs) ; F. Furet et D. Richet ont eu raison, mille fois, d'inaugurer par elle leur nouvelle collection *l'Histoire sans frontières*.

Etrangement, la date de naissance de ce livre, au lieu de l'écartier de nous, l'en rapproche et le transforme en singulier document. Au-dessous d'une voix grave, un peu solennelle, qui a la belle lenteur de l'érudition, il faut prêter l'oreille au bruit de fond qui l'accompagne en désordre, contre lequel elle tâchait de s'élever, mais qui a eu raison d'elle et l'a bien vite recouverte. Dans les derniers mois de 1932, Cassirer, allemand de souche juive, universitaire et néo-kantien, publie sa *Philosophie der Aufklärung*, quand les nazis piétinent aux portes de la chancellerie. Quelques mois plus tard, lorsque Hitler est au pouvoir, Cassirer quitte l'Allemagne pour la Suède ; il laisse derrière lui, comme un manifeste, ce vaste ouvrage savant.

Cette désirose que cette Aufklärung objecte au national-socialisme. Moins qu'on ne croit cependant. Depuis le XIX^e siècle, l'érudition allemande, le personnage allemand de l'universitaire, ont exercé là-bas une fonction que nous imaginons à peine. La France a eu ses instituteurs, l'Angleterre ses public schools, l'Allemagne ses universités ; les instituteurs français fomentaient, dès l'alphabet et la table de multiplication, une force politique ; les public schools,

à travers Tacite et Shakespeare, imposaient aux Anglais une conscience historique ; les universités allemandes, elles, fabriquaient une conscience morale. 1933 a marqué sans doute leur défaite irréparable. La *Philosophie des Lumières* prend maintenant figure d'ultime combat.

De l'œuvre si importante de Cassirer (elle a joué un grand rôle non seulement dans la philosophie anglo-saxonne, mais dans la psychologie et l'ethnologie du langage) il était peut-être paradoxal de traduire cette réflexion sur le XVIII^e siècle n'est point mineure. Loïn de là, Cassirer est « néo-kantien ». Ce qui est désigné par ce terme, c'est, plus qu'un « mouvement » ou une « école » philosophique, l'impossibilité où s'est trouvée la pensée occidentale de surmonter la coupure établie par Kant ; le néo-kantisme (en ce sens, nous sommes tous néo-kantiens), c'est l'injonction sans cesse répétée à raviver cette coupure, — à la fois pour retrouver sa nécessité et pour en prendre toute la mesure. Si les grandes œuvres philosophiques de Cassirer (et surtout son *Erkenntnisproblem*) se lisent bien dans la

quel nous appartenons peut-être encore.

L'énigme kantienne qui, depuis près de 200 ans, a médusé la pensée occidentale, la rendant aveugle à sa propre modernité, a soulevé dans notre mémoire deux grandes figures : comme si l'oubli de ce qui s'est passé, à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, lorsque le monde moderne est né, avait libéré une double nostalgie : celle de l'âge grec auquel nous demandons d'éclaircir notre rapport à l'être et celle du XVIII^e siècle auquel nous demandons de remettre en question les formes et les limites de notre savoir. A la dynastie hellénique, qui s'étend de Hölderlin à Heidegger, s'oppose la dynastie des modernes Aufklärer qui irait de Marx à Levi-Strauss. La « monstruosité » de Nietzsche est peut-être d'appartenir aux deux. Etre grec ou Aufklärer, du côté de la tragédie ou de l'encyclopédie, du côté du poème ou de la langue bien faite, du côté du matin de l'être ou du midi de la représentation, c'est là le dilemme auquel la pensée moderne — celle qui nous domine encore mais que nous sentons déjà vaciller sous nos pieds — n'a jamais pu échapper encore.

Cassirer est du côté des « Lumières » et, mieux que personne,

d'une civilisation ce que, dans notre naïveté nous croyons valable pour un sujet singulier ; un « siècle » aurait, comme tout un chacun, des opinions, des connaissances, des désirs, des inquiétudes, des aspirations ; Paul Hazard, à l'époque de Cassirer, décrivait la *crise de la conscience européenne*. Au même moment, les historiens marxistes rapportaient les phénomènes culturels à des sujets collectifs qui en étaient les auteurs ou les responsables historiques. Cassirer, en revanche, procède selon une sorte d'abstraction fondatrice : d'un côté, il efface les motivations individuelles, les accidents biographiques et toutes les figures contingentes qui peuplent une époque ; de l'autre, il écarte ou du moins laisse en suspens les déterminations économiques ou sociales. Et ce qui se déploie alors devant lui, c'est toute une nappe indissociable de discours et de pensée, de concepts et de mots, d'énoncés et d'affirmations qu'il entend d'analyser dans sa configuration propre. Cet univers autonome du « discours-pensée », Cassirer s'efforce d'en retrouver les nécessités intrinsèques ; il laisse la pensée penser toute seule, mais pour mieux en suivre les nervures et faire apparaître les embranchements, les divisions, les croisements, les contradictions qui en dessinent les figures visibles. Il isole de toutes les autres histoires (celle des individus, comme celle des sociétés) l'espace autonome du « théorique » : et sous ses yeux se découvre une histoire jusque là restée muette.

Ce découpage paradoxal, cette abstraction qui rompt les parentés les plus familières n'est pas sans rappeler les gestes iconoclastes, par lesquels se sont toujours fondées les grandes disciplines : l'économie politique, lorsqu'elle a isolé la production de tout le domaine concret des richesses, la linguistique, lorsqu'elle a isolé le système de la langue de tous les actes concrets de la parole. Il serait grand temps de s'apercevoir une bonne fois que les catégories du « concret », du « vécu », de la « totalité » appartiennent au royaume du non-savoir. En tous cas, au moment où il entendrait, à propos du XVIII^e siècle, l'histoire du « théorique », Cassirer découvre comme objet de son enquête, cette unité profonde de la pensée et du discours dont il cherche, dans sa philosophie, les fondements et les formes : le *Problème de la connaissance* et la *Philosophie des formes symboliques* montrent justement que la pensée et le discours ont plutôt leur indissociable unité, loin d'offrir la pure et simple manifestation de ce que nous savons, constitue le lieu d'où peut naître toute connaissance. En étudiant les textes du XVIII^e siècle, Cassirer saisissait, sous l'une de ses formes historiques, l'organisation de ce « dis-



Le XVIII^e siècle, à Versailles.

course d'un retour à Kant, sa *Philosophie des Lumières* leur répond dans l'ordre de l'histoire positive : quelles sont les fatalités de la réflexion et du savoir qui ont rendu possible Kant et nécessaire la constitution de la pensée moderne ? Interrogation redoublée sur elle-même : Kant s'était demandé comment la science était possible, Cassirer se demande comment était possible ce kantisme

il a su rendre manifeste le sens du retour au XVIII^e siècle. Grâce, avant tout, à une méthode d'analyse dont le modèle, pour nous, n'a pas encore perdu sa valeur. Nous autres Français, nous ne nous sommes pas encore débarrassés des prestiges de la psychologie ; une culture, une pensée, c'est toujours pour nous, la métaphore d'un individu ; il nous suffit de transporter à l'échelle d'une époque ou

Evidence du western

Raymond Bellour
Le Western
10/18, 376 p., 40 photos

Une idée centrale se dégage de cet ouvrage : elle fonde une distinction entre un western dit classique, celui de l'épopée, de l'évidence, et un western dit nouveau, qui n'en serait que le reflet douloureux, le souvenir nostalgique ou tragique : dans le premier, l'aventurier découvre la vérité du monde dans son aventure, le pionnier triomphe de la nature rebelle et des Indiens méchants, le justicier ne fait qu'un avec la loi ; dans le second, l'aventurier devient vénal, le justicier véreux, le pionnier colon, l'Indien perd ses plumes et devient *a human being*, la conscience et ses tourments font leur apparition : le doute, le désarroi, le désenchantement, l'usure fissurent la belle unité épique, on n'est plus très loin du drame bourgeois, de la comédie de mœurs ou des effusions romantiques.

Surtout sensible dans l'étude d'André Glucksmann (*Les Aventures de la Tragédie*) où elle tend à devenir la base d'un véritable système, mais développée, implicite, allusive ou dégradée chez la plupart des 27 autres collaborateurs de cet ouvrage, cette distinction est expliquée et commentée de diverses façons : on la rattache à l'histoire même de l'Ouest américain (où elle traduit l'opposition entre conquête et colonisation), aux diverses prises de conscience des cinéastes américains (anti-racisme, anti-macarthysme, actualité idéologique de la Guerre de Sécession) à l'usure propre du genre, enfin, et non pas tant des mythes que des visages sans lesquels il n'y a pas de véritable western : il est vrai que, vingt ans après, Randolph Scott, Joel McCrea, James Stewart, Henry Fonda, John Wayne, Gary Cooper, enfourchent leurs montures avec mélancolie, tirent en poussant des soupirs et semblent parfois ne vivre que dans le souvenir de leurs exploits passés. Il est vrai également que Raoul Walsh et Allan Dwan ne tournent plus...

Mais enfin, cette distinction me semble tout de même aboutir à une conclusion un peu paradoxale : le western serait-il condamné à n'être que le souvenir d'un Far West perdu ? Mais le Far West a-t-il jamais existé en dehors du western ? Le western ne serait-il plus que la marque déchirante de l'impossibilité d'aujourd'hui de recréer les épopées d'hier ? Il me semble que, coincé entre ces deux limites — l'épique et sa dégradation — le western est pour ces auteurs une forme morte et qu'ils en ont écrit l'épithète : ci-gisent les mythes usés jusqu'à la corde, ci-gisent les Dieux dont les exploits ont enchanté nos matinées du jeudi et nos veillées sublimes à la Cinéma-thèque : Saint John Ford priez

pour nous, Saint Richard Widmark ayez pitié de nous...

Or, si l'Ouest a changé, grand bien lui fasse ! Que le pionnier devienne un self-made in USA-man, que le hors-la-loi se névrose, que l'aventurier se range, ce qui définit le western, ce n'est pas qu'il réfléchisse sur lui-même ou qu'il se prenne au jeu des mythes qu'il a créés. Le bon Indien ne fait pas le meilleur western, loin de là et l'un des résultats les plus fâcheux de la perspective que les auteurs ont choisie est que l'on parle presque davantage des mauvais westerns que des bons : j'appelle mau-



vais westerns, toute subjectivité mise de côté pour l'instant, les westerns où l'on bavarde, c'est-à-dire, par exemple, *l'Homme des vallées perdues*, *le Train sifflera trois fois*, *les Sept mercenaires* et la plupart des autres Sturges, 3 heures 10 pour Yuma, *le Gaucher*, etc., bref toutes ces machines humanistes ou humanitaires qui sont au bout de dix minutes dans le larmoyant, l'imbécile ou le clinquant.

Il me semble que, plutôt que de parler de l'épopée, on aurait dû parler de l'évidence : le western partage avec le thriller et la comé-

die musicale, le rare privilège d'être un genre, c'est-à-dire une forme fixe, une combinaison de thèmes connus, parfaitement codés : l'introduction de Raymond Bellour : *le Grand Jeu* me semble d'ailleurs esquisser cette perspective et la « mythologie » qui forme la deuxième partie de l'ouvrage en constituer le développement ; mais n'aurait-il pas mieux valu parler plutôt de « glossaire » et traiter ces éléments thématiques dont la combinatoire constitue le western comme des « figures » et non comme des mythes : cheval + salon = western, de la même manière que mitraillette + prohibition = thriller ; le « contenu (idéologique, psychologique) de ces éléments me semble de faible importance comparée à l'activité qui préside à leur organisation : après Mondrian, Boulez et Levi-Strauss, Betticher et Anthony Mann me semblent mériter l'appellation d'artistes structuralistes...

Il est d'ailleurs évident que ces figures et que ce code laissent intactes toutes les possibilités de subversion : l'histoire du western peut être aussi bien celle de la résurgence ritualisée des figures qui le constituent que celle des innombrables variations, déceptions, doubles jeux grâce auxquels, en fin de compte, le western peut survivre : ils vont de la rigueur la plus pure qui fait de tel western la grammaire de tous les autres *Sept hommes restent à tuer* jusqu'à la distance la plus grande *Coups de feu dans la Sierra* ou au refus délibéré *Johnny Guitar*.

La troisième partie de l'ouvrage comprend un dictionnaire des principaux auteurs et des principaux acteurs, la liste des « 10 meilleurs westerns » selon chacun des 28 collaborateurs, un index de tous les westerns sortis en France depuis 1946 : cette compilation qui n'a pas son équivalent en France (ni ailleurs) fera la joie de tous les cinéphiles, non pas tant à cause de son intérêt documentaire que parce qu'y éclatent enfin, triomphalement, les trois qualités primordiales de tout cinéphile attiré : le subjectivisme, le terrorisme, et l'érudition (quand j'entends le mot revolver, je sors ma culture...)

Georges Pérec

1. Il suffit de lire *les Hors-la-loi du Far West*, de Paul Wellman (réemment traduit, chez Stock, par Elizabeth Gille), pour se persuader du contraire : les brigands y sont rarement bien-aimés ; de plus, ils portent barbièches et chapeaux melons et, en diverses circonstances, ils se montrent parfaitement inintelligents : ils pillent, tuent et violent, puis ils se soucient et se confessent au shérif. Ils n'ont même pas des bleu-jeans délavés ! Ils sont à peu près aussi loin des personnages des westerns que César de Rex Harrison : c'est, en l'occurrence, une très bonne chose : l'histoire de ces vrais frères James, de leurs acolytes et de leurs émules à quelque chose de crapuleux et de mesquin, pour ne pas dire de moral qui fait plutôt penser à la Bande à Bonnot ou, si l'on préfère, et c'est pire, aux westerns ou sévit Audie Murphy...

Meanwhile, back in *Made in USA*, Anna Karina leaves her flat. She has the torn off strip from the front page of *La Quinzaine* with the secret message on it, but before she follows up the lead represented by the message she stops off at a bar in which Marianne Faithfull just happens to be seated at the next table.

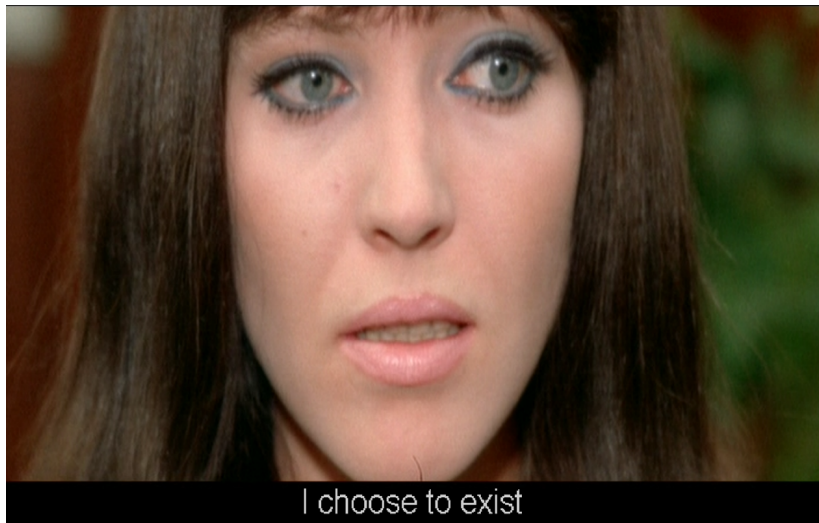


Marianne gives an impromptu recital of her melancholy recent hit 'As Tears Go by'.



Anna responds to Marianne's song – or perhaps she is responding to reading about Richardson and Heidegger in *La Quinzaine* – by declaring that the absolute only exists in the present, in the now of authentic being.





Anna concludes the scene with a categorical assertion, one with which Dorothy Richardson would surely concur.

The Reception of Pilgrimage in France

Gloria Glikin Fromm painstakingly assembled the first comprehensive Dorothy Richardson bibliography, publishing it (with brief annotations and glosses) in *English Literature in Transition* in 1965 and then including it (without glosses) in *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* in 1977. Fromm's bibliography (with annotations and glosses restored) provides the basis for the Dorothy Richardson Society online bibliography (hereafter 'Richardson Bibliography').⁶ These bibliographies inform the following account.

The lack of translations of *Pilgrimage* during her lifetime must have been a considerable disappointment to Richardson. A Japanese edition of *Pointed Roofs* appeared in 1934. The entry in Fromm's bibliography reads:

Pointed Roofs, ed. with intro. and notes by Junzaburo Nishiwaki.
Tokyo: Kenkyusha, [1934].⁷

As Fromm's reference suggests, this edition is not a translation but the English text accompanied by a lengthy introduction and notes in Japanese. The only known copy of this edition, owned by Rose Odle, is listed in Blackwell's *Rare Books: Modernisms* catalogue.⁸ Richardson, in various letters to John Cowper Powys and Bryher, was highly complimentary about Nishiwaki, his knowledge of the context of *Pointed Roofs* both English and German, and his grasp of the adolescent slang and idiomatic language from the 1890s which peppers the talk of the girls in the book.⁹

⁶ The regularly updated online bibliography can be accessed on the Dorothy Richardson Society home page at <https://www.dorothyrichardson.org/bibliography.htm>

⁷ Gloria G. Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), p.425

⁸ *Blackwell's Rare Books: Modernisms* catalogue (Oxford, Blackwells), item 176, p.94. See: <https://docplayer.net/220789612-Blackwell-s-rare-books-modernisms.html>. Thanks to Adam Guy for this information.

⁹ Letter to Bryher, 9 May 1943, *Windows on Modernism*, pp.463-5. Regarding a proposed Spanish translation, Richardson writes, 'my sympathies are with the translator whom I have offered, at need, to help. For I can hardly expect a second time to fall into the hands of one knowing every kind of English, even schoolgirl slang & remote colloquialisms, as well as the Japanese professor, who added, to his edition of *Pointed Roofs*, half a volume of notes & an exhaustive glossary!': letter to John Cowper Powys, 15 August 1943, *Windows on Modernism*, p.474.

Richardson's praise for Nishiwaki and the Japanese edition contrasts with her frustrated reporting of the long, tortuous and ultimately abortive attempts to produce a Spanish translation of *Pilgrimage*, the proposed Spanish edition being the occasion of Richardson's well-known 1943 autobiographical sketch 'Data for a Spanish Publisher'. According to Richardson, the main obstacle to completing and publishing the Spanish edition was censorship problems with Franco's state, particularly regarding the representation of Catholicism in *Pointed Roofs*.¹⁰

What must have been especially disappointing to Richardson was the lack of German or French translations, given her own extensive experience in translating novels in these languages. The bibliographies list several critical articles on *Pilgrimage* in German from the 1920s, but it is the reception of Richardson in France that is our main concern here.

Pilgrimage in France: the 1920s

An influential critic, Abel Chevalley, was enthusiastic about *Pilgrimage* in the mid-1920s, for which Richardson was grateful given the waning of critical interest in *Pilgrimage* in England at that time. Chevalley wrote three articles – one a review of *The Trap* – for the Parisian journal *Vient de Paraître* in 1925 and 1928. The Richardson Bibliography glosses these as follows:

2.1.8. The Trap. (1925)

C[hevalley], A[bel]. The 'Trap.' *Vient de Paraître* [Paris], Aug. 1925: 432.

Firmly believes that DMR can be parodied with ease, but copied or modelled after only with difficulty.

3.5. Untranslated Foreign Language Articles and Books

Chevalley, Abel. "Le Roman Anglais: Histoire et Destine." *Vient de Paraître* [Paris], July 1925: 385-386.

Discussing one of Baker's volumes of the history of the English novel, Gould's study of the contemporary novel in England (q.v.), and Meredith Starr's *The Future of the Novel* which contains comments by living novelists, quotes from DMR's contribution to Starr's volume.

Chevalley, Abel. "Les Lettres Anglaises." *Vient de Paraître* [Paris], Jan. 1928: 55-56.

Cites DMR as "un bel exemple de fidélité à sa conviction

¹⁰ See Fromm, *Windows on Modernism*, pp.474, 476, 487-488, 515. See also Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography*, pp.355-357

artistique," and claims to know nothing more original "en son genre" than her series of novels.

Chevalley also wrote a well-regarded history of the English novel *Le Roman Anglais de Notre Temps*, published in French in 1921 in collaboration with Oxford University Press through Humphrey Milford, editor of the pioneering World's Classics series and an important figure in introducing modernist writers like Eliot and Woolf to a broader readership. Chevalley's survey of the English novel was praised by E.M. Forster in his 1927 book *Aspects of the Novel* and called 'exemplary' by T.S. Eliot.¹¹ Richardson read the book and called it 'a masterpiece of condensation'.¹² The book was translated into English and ran to several editions, English and American. The Richardson Bibliography entry is as follows:

3.6. Books and Articles in which Dorothy Richardson is mentioned
Chevalley, Abel. *The Modern English Novel*. Trans. Ben Ray Redman. New York: Knopf, 1925: 210, 218, 246, 249-251.
Points admiringly to DMR's originality of form, unsought, unconscious, and yet "most closely related to the forms of painting, music and sculpture that are being developed by her generation."
Her books reward the patient, attentive reader with "powerful" and enduring "pictures of human beings and places."

The Modern English Novel begins with Defoe and runs through the canon of eighteenth and nineteenth century authors before dealing in some detail

¹¹ Eliot comments on Chevalley's book in a letter to Jean Paulhan, 16 January 1926. *The Letters of T. S. Eliot Volume 3: 1926-1927*, edited by John Haffenden, (London: Faber & Faber, 2012), p.30. Paulhan, among other things, was editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Française* to which both Eliot and Chevalley contributed. In early 1926 Eliot wrote an article published as 'Le roman anglais contemporain' in the *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, May 1, 1927. The English original, T. S. Eliot, 'The Contemporary Novel', has only recently been discovered in the Houghton Library, Harvard, as reported in the *Times Literary Supplement: TLS* <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/the-moral-interest/>.

¹² "The Frenchman's book on the English novel has come. It is a masterpiece of condensation. The man reads everything, as faithfully as Saintsbury & is without Saintsbury's [armchairly?] frivolous attitude towards the novel. I agree with him nearly all the way, with one or two exceptions. And there are two ghastly gaps. He knows no Lawrence since *Sons & Lovers* – thinks he can't get a *Rainbow* – & dismisses Joyce with a snub. I expect he will "hear of it." Dorothy Richardson, letter to P. Beaumont Wadsworth, undated late 1921, *Windows on Modernism*, pp.56-57

with the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century novel up to 1920, including sections on regional writers and women novelists. After a section on major modern writers of the 'younger generation' the book concludes with Chapter XI: 'The English Novel since the War'.

It is impossible to conclude a review of the English novel, in 1920, without pointing out in many young writers a tendency towards a new kind of fiction that breaks with all the traditions of the genre. Some of the most remarkable novels that have been published during the last few years do, indeed, display that minimum of resemblance to ancient or recent masterpieces which assures the continuity of the genre; but their most obvious peculiarities foreshadow one of those periodic changes which make up the history of the English novel.¹³

This chapter sees the new English novelists (Woolf, West, Mansfield, Joyce, Richardson) as even more advanced than the previous generation (Lawrence, Sinclair) and probably representing the most advanced wave of fiction in the world:

Mrs. Virginia Woolf makes her characters live. Here there is no intensity, no drama, but an infinity of minute, precise, shaded strokes, from which finally emerge human effigies that are never to be effaced from the memory. Above all, the young girls are unforgettable. One would say that some of her books, *The Voyage Out*, and especially *Night and Day*, had been created in accordance with the same methods as the pictures of our great impressionists.

The books of Rebecca West (notably *The Return of the Soldier*) and those of Katherine Mansfield (notably a short story: *Prelude*) are other and not less interesting examples of the contemporary flowering in fiction which, while reproducing the form of the traditional novel, has readily sacrificed its moral and social perfume – that was so ardent during the preceding generations – and infinitely shaded and toned down the colours that were so fresh, and sometimes crude, during the years before the war. *The Return of the Soldier*, based upon a Freudian psychoanalytic theory, is one of the best-constructed and most audacious novels of our day.

¹³ Abel Chevalley, *The Modern English Novel*, (New York: Knopf, 1925), p.243 at Public Domain, Google-digitized at http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

Others are still more radical. James Joyce, in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, has produced the boldest and most purely impressionistic picture of adolescence which has ever, perhaps, been dared by a British author.¹⁴

Given that in 1920 Chevalley only had access to *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919) his foregrounding of Woolf is prescient, but perhaps explains why he then goes on to argue that Richardson is the most advanced of the new English writers in 1920. The year is important because *Jacob's Room* and *Ulysses* appear in 1922, after Chevalley's survey is published in France and he did not revise or update the book for its later English editions. He doesn't seem to know quite what to do with Joyce, praising *Portrait of the Artist* but initially positioning Joyce as belonging to a different 'regional' Irish genealogy and complaining that Joyce is marred by his continuing attempts to 'startle' his readers. *Ulysses* is not mentioned in the book at all, but this remark suggests that Chevalley may have come across a serialised instalment in *The Egoist* or *Little Review*.

The final chapter of *The Modern English Novel* closes with a nuanced discussion of *Pilgrimage*, Chevalley having followed each volume up to *The Tunnel* (1919):

But of all the writers of the younger generation, Miss Dorothy Richardson seems to be the one who has gone furthest and most consciously towards a complete renovation of the English novel.

Is it a renovation or a slight sickness? One must guard against any hasty decision. The movement with which we are dealing is as yet scarcely launched. None knows the direction of this morning wind; like the Spirit, it blows where it listeth. It is possible that it will have finished blowing before this present page has wholly dried.

The innovators, or rather the innovatresses, have no doctrine and form no school. The chief among them [i.e., Richardson] proclaims and advertises her absolute independence. Yet there is a point at which, almost without knowing it, these young writers meet – these young writers who are busy breaking again the classic mould of the English novel, to make of it no-one as yet knows what: fragments or statuettes. And this is the point.¹⁵

¹⁴ Chevalley, p.245

¹⁵ Chevalley, p.246

Chevalley suggests that some psychical trauma has accompanied modernity, experienced first and most acutely in England, predating the First World War, and this has led artists, especially novelists, to lose confidence in external and collective reality and to retreat into ever greater degrees of individualistic introspection. This explains why the new writers are stripping away the novelistic apparatus and reducing their narratives to the essentials: the individual consciousness in the moment.

The novel can cease to be narrative, analysis, and sentiment; it will become instead a simple sequence of impressions, perceptions, and notations, innocent of all preparation, all connexion, and all obvious or perceptible cohesion. It will be, under the same name, something very different; but it will still be, nevertheless, a translation of life.

Just as painting, not without injury to itself, has been able to free itself from drawing and composition; just as music has discarded melody and rhythm – the two arts now expressing only combinations or infinitely shaded varieties of colour and sound – so has the novel reduced itself to doing without heroes and plot, drama and events, passion and analysis, to being no more than the fluid representation of life in a soul, a body, and a heart. The simpler, or the more readily simplified, is the receptive faculty of the observer, the more transparent and elementary will it be, the more precious will be the result.

[...]

It requires perspective, a kind of mental wink of the eye-lids, as when one stands before a pointilliste painting, to perceive, at its true value and with its true force, the image intended by the painter.

The interest will be shifted, it will diminish almost to the vanishing point for those who do not know how, or do not wish, to see this form of art. For a long time, perhaps for ever, these persons will be in the immense majority. But, nevertheless, a form of the novel art, which if not new is at least revived, will have made its appearance.¹⁶

From this analysis it is clear why Chevalley privileges Richardson as the quintessential writer of the new type and, equally, why he questions where exactly this new type of novel is heading and what its ultimate worth will be:

¹⁶ Chevalley, pp.248-249

If I have made myself understood, you will have some idea of what Miss Dorothy Richardson is now accomplishing in the English novel. I do not pretend that she has created a superior genre, but say merely that she is effecting curious and interesting essays with remarkable courage and simplicity. I do not assert that anyone can take real pleasure in this work without a call to it, without initiation. It is obvious that no analysis can give an account of these elementary books, in which everything is a reflection, a nuance, or a "find" – yes, a veritable accident of the trade – under the appearance of the most extreme professional artlessness.

Pointed Roofs was the first stage of Miriam Henderson, a poor, cultivated, sensitive girl who finds herself lodging in a German school in consequence of her having to earn a living. *Backwater* brought her back to London, into one of those ordinary little boarding-schools for young ladies, where she stifles. *Honeycomb* takes her to Newlands, into a rich circle, where the little governess widens her horizon, tastes luxury, and begins to know, to understand, and to hate men. In these short productions, innumerable touches of light and shade almost strike a balance. *The Tunnel* is a more massive, less easily penetrable work, which describes Miriam's passage through a period of independence and expansion. There is no reason why this biography should not be continued through many volumes. The work of Miss Dorothy Richardson is like life itself, it has neither beginning nor end. Like life, too, it is in perpetual mutation.¹⁷

Chevalley's comment that *Pilgrimage* 'is like life itself, it has neither beginning nor end. Like life, too, it is in perpetual mutation' echoes May Sinclair's 'The Novels of Dorothy Richardson' 1918 article in *The Egoist* – Chevalley was an admirer of Sinclair's writing so it is likely that he would have read the article and that it has influenced his appraisal of Richardson. Chevalley concludes:

There is, really, no reason to believe that Miss Dorothy Richardson has consciously sought originality. In that case she would not have found it. She wrote *Pointed Roofs* and then *Backwater*, her first novels, without any preconceived idea, and, by one of those lucky chances that are the lot of only predestined talents, she struck upon the novel form most closely related to the forms of painting, music and sculpture that are being developed by her generation. It is through

¹⁷ Chevalley, pp.249-250

other novelists – Beresford, Miss Sinclair and Wells – that she has discovered the relation between her own artistic manner and that of other innovators. Wells considers her the first of the literary “futurists” in Great Britain.

The second part of *Honeycomb*, and the greater part of *The Tunnel*, give evidence that she is growing more and more conscious of her originality. Already some of her methods seem to be hardening; for example, the device of repeating in staccato fashion, in detached words and short phrases, what is going on in the background of the mind while the conscious being is outwardly expressing itself in acts and in words. One must arm oneself with patience, and, for certain minds that are especially fond of logic and clarity, it requires as much courage as it does time to read attentively such books as these. But, when one submits to this trial, one discovers that the pictures of human beings and places evoked by Miss Richardson, the impressions of sentiments and situations which she suggests, are quite as powerful and as lasting, and of a quality more real and more profound than those which many a traditional masterpiece leaves in our memory. She asks more of the reader than any other novelist ever has, and she receives more.¹⁸

Pilgrimage in France: the 1960s

Chevalley’s work on Richardson marked something of a false dawn in the reception of Richardson in France. In 1929 *Oberland* was nominated for a prestigious Femina Vie Heureuse Prize, but there was to be no French publication of any book from *Pilgrimage* and no known significant critical commentary on Richardson for the next three decades.¹⁹ Then, in the mid-1960s, there is a modest flurry of activity, although again short-lived. First was the 1965 publication – at last – of a French translation of a book from the *Pilgrimage* series, predictably enough a translation of *Pointed Roofs*. The Richardson Bibliography entry reads:

¹⁸ Chevalley, pp.250-251

¹⁹ Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* pp.227-228. The University of Cambridge library archive says: ‘In 1904 Hachette, publishers of the magazines *Femina* and *La Vie Heureuse*, established an annual prize for a French novel. From 1919 a prize was also awarded for an English work ‘calculated to reveal to French readers the true spirit and character of England’. An English committee discussed books suggested by members and shortlisted three; a French committee chose the winner.’ https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk/agents/corporate_entities/1918

1.2.5. Translations of the Novels

Pointed Roofs. Trans. Marcelle Sibon. Paris: Mercure de France, 1965.

The Richardson Bibliography list only one critical response to this publication:

3.5. Untranslated Foreign Language Articles and Books

Las Vergnas, Raymond. "Une profonde nuit lectures anglo-américaines." *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 23 Dec. 1965: 5. Essay on Flannery O'Connor, Robert Graves, and DMR [occasioned by the translation into French of *Pointed Roofs*, Mercure de France, 1965]. DMR will probably come to occupy a permanent place among the personalities of the first order in literature: "les createurs, les originaux, les vrais écrivains."

Raymond Las Vergnas specialised in English literature, translating Woolf among others into French. O'Connor, Graves, and Richardson make an intriguing if unexpected trio and the essay evidently proposes Richardson's significance within the first rank of Anglo-American writers. It can be supposed that there are several more Richardson reviews from French journals of the time waiting to be rediscovered and added to the bibliography. As it is, thanks to Jean-Luc Godard, we can at least add the *La Quinzaine* review of *Toits Pointus*:

Mayoux, Jean-Jacques. "Une fresque autobiographique", *La Quinzaine*, 1st July 1966, p.9.

Why after such a long period of neglect did Dorothy Richardson suddenly become a writer of interest in France in the mid-1960s? Several reasons might be considered. In the immediate post-war period in France there was broad interest in the modern novel as represented by Hemingway, Fitzgerald and Faulkner rather than Joyce and Woolf. Hemingway popularized the idea of a downbeat minimalist, apparently anti-lyrical and anti-romantic, plain speech – plain description and realistic everyday dialogue – and Richardson (who was quite friendly with Hemingway in the 1920s) might have been seen as exemplifying an asceticism of the everyday. Faulkner was a major influence on certain *nouveau roman* writers like Claude Simon, particularly in the shifts of narrative time, space and perspective, united primarily by the momentum of the narrative drive itself as a kind of will to expression. *Pilgrimage* is obviously a world away in sensibility from Faulkner's Southern Gothic, but she prefigures Faulkner

in her montage narrative structure with its episodic shifts and juxtapositions.

If Faulkner had been the main point of reference for the non-French modern novel in the immediate post-war period, then Joyce and Woolf both 'arrived' (or returned) in France in the 1960s with regard to critical reception, in Joyce's case helped by Beckett's breakthrough in the 1950s. Hélène Cixous' epic *L'Exil de James Joyce ou l'Art du remplacement / The Exile of James Joyce, or the Art of Displacement* appeared in 1968 and reflected the increasing interest in Joyce in post-structuralist circles such as *Tel Quel*, Derrida also writing several essays on Joyce, the Joycean turn in Paris culminating in idiosyncratic fashion with Lacan's 1975-1976 *Le Sinthome* seminar.²⁰ A connection between Cixous, Lacan and the *La Quinzaine* review of *Pointed Roofs* will become apparent later in this article.

A more immediate reason for the interest in Joyce, Woolf and Richardson in the mid-1960s would be the influence and legacy of the *nouveau roman* and its fellow travellers. Nathalie Sarraute and Marguerite Duras, in particular, had created a new climate of reception for women writers focusing on the minutiae of mood and atmosphere, an attention to both surface and subtext and the relationship between the two – a navigation of fraught everyday inter-subjectivity similar to that which Richardson had attempted decades earlier. It might also be added that the *nouveau roman* writers were controversial in their extensive use of 'objective' description, again something which is a feature of *Pilgrimage*, and Richardson and the *nouveau roman* writers share an unfortunate notoriety for writing pages of boring unselective description (a charge which was made against Richardson in a rather more nuanced way by Woolf and Mansfield in the early 1920s). In a 1990 interview Nathalie Sarraute recalled the influence of the British modernist novelists on her youth, in the 1930s:

Then I read Joyce, Virginia Woolf, etcetera . . . I thought *Mrs. Dalloway* was a masterpiece; Joyce's interior monologue was a

²⁰ Hélène Cixous, *The Exile of James Joyce*, translated by A.J. Sally, (London: John Calder, 1972); Jacques Lacan, *The Sinthome*, translated by Adrian Price, (London: Polity Press, 2018); Jacques Derrida, *Derrida and Joyce: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Andrew J. Mitchell and Sam Slote, (New York: SUNY Press, 2014)

revelation. In fact, there was a whole literature that I thought changed all that was done before.²¹

Nathalie Sarraute's first book *Tropisms* derived its title from biology and the movements of organisms – plants – under external stimuli such as light.²² In her 1962 Foreword to the English edition of *Tropisms* (originally written in 1939, the year she read *Pointed Roofs*) Sarraute explains:

These movements, of which we are hardly cognizant, slip through us on the frontiers of consciousness in the form of undefinable, extremely rapid sensations. They hide behind our gestures, beneath the words we speak and the feelings we manifest, all of which we are aware of experiencing, and are able to define. They seemed, and still seem to me to constitute the secret source of our existence, in what might be called its nascent state.

And since, while we are performing them, no words express them, not even those of the interior monologue – for they develop and pass through us very rapidly in the form of frequently very sharp, brief sensations, without our perceiving clearly what they are – it was not possible to communicate them to the reader otherwise than by means of equivalent images that would make him experience analogous sensations. It was also necessary to make them break up and spread out in the consciousness of the reader the way a slow-motion film does. Time was no longer the time of real life, but of a hugely amplified present.

These movements seemed to me to be veritable dramatic actions, hiding beneath the most commonplace conversations, the most everyday gestures, and constantly emerging up on the surface of the appearances that both conceal and reveal them.

The dramatic situations constituted by these invisible actions interested me as such. Nothing could distract my attention from them and nothing should distract that of the reader; neither the

²¹ Nathalie Sarraute, interviewed by Shusha Guppy and Jason Weiss, *The Paris Review*, Issue 114, Spring 1990; <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2341/the-art-of-fiction-no-115-nathalie-sarraute>

²² Sarraute wrote for *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, a journal which Richardson enjoyed reading before the war (see note i above). Nathalie Sarraute's post-war articles on literature for *La Nouvelle Revue Française* were collected in *L'Ère du soupçon* (1956), published as *Tropisms and The Age of Suspicion*, translated by Maria Jolas, (London: Calder, 1963). *The Age of Suspicion* was generally seen as laying the theoretical foundation for the *nouveau roman*

personality of the characters, nor the plot, by means of which, ordinarily, the characters evolve. The barely visible, anonymous character was to serve as mere prop for these movements, which are inherent in everybody and can take place in anybody, at any moment.

Thus my first book is made up of a series of moments, in which, like some precise dramatic action shown in slow motion, these movements, which I called *Tropisms*, come into play.²³

By the 1950s and the *nouveau roman*, Sarraute is adapting interior monologue and stream of consciousness techniques in her own novels, although it is in her microscopic attention to moments of inter-subjectivity and their underlying currents that her writing most resembles *Pilgrimage*. As with Richardson, much of Sarraute's writing can be read either as an investigation of objective surface or as an investigation of subjective consciousness, a radical oscillation between levels of objectivity and subjectivity noted in the case of Richardson by J.D. Beresford in his Introduction to the very first edition of *Pointed Roofs* in 1915.²⁴

In a 2017 *Times Literary Supplement* article Gabriel Josipovici says that Sarraute published essays on Richardson but doesn't give any references. In his recent book, *The Nouveau Roman and Writing in Britain After Modernism*, Adam Guy writes:

Compared with twentieth-century Anglophone writing, for example, the shifting pronouns and frequent ellipses in Sarraute's novels bear some resemblance to the work of Dorothy Richardson, although Sarraute's style is more fragmentary and abstract – similar to Samuel Beckett's prose at points.²⁵

²³ Nathalie Sarraute, Foreword, *Tropisms and The Age of Suspicion*, pp.8-9

²⁴ J.D. Beresford, Introduction, Dorothy Richardson, *Pointed Roofs* (London: Duckworth, 1915)

²⁵ Adam Guy, *The nouveau roman and Writing in Britain After Modernism*, (Oxford University Press, 2019), p.106. Gabriel Josipovici, 'Letters': a review of *Nathalie Sarraute: Letters d'Amérique*, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 October 2017 at <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/letters-89/>

Sarraute's Shakespeare and Company bookshop lending card reveals that she borrowed *Pointed Roofs* on the 2nd March 1939 (and borrowed *Dubliners* a week later).²⁶

As can be seen from this card, Sarraute read *Pointed Roofs*, *Dubliners* and *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown* in quick succession along with Chekhov, Henry James' *The Aspen Papers* and Elizabeth Bowen's *A House in Paris* (for which she received a small fine for late return).²⁷

These cards are being digitized as part of an archive at Princeton and one commentary piece accompanying the archive discusses the division between Left Bank and Right Bank users of the Shakespeare and Company lending facility, Sarraute coming from a predominately Jewish community on the Right Bank:

²⁶ The Shakespeare and Company records are now in a Princeton University archive and a project is digitizing and putting the borrowing cards online. The Shakespeare and Company Project at: <https://shakespeareandco.princeton.edu/members/sarraute/cards/73e2f1db-d416-4cd4-ab1a-2d92c10c6931/#zoom>.

²⁷ Did Abel Chevalley frequent Shakespeare and Company? Discussing the support in Paris for her bookshop Sylvia Beach said in a 1927 radio talk: 'I received much encouragement also from M.Andre Gide and M.Paul Valéry, and from the leading authorities on English letters: M.M.Legouis, Cazamian, Charles Du Bos and Abel Chevalley.' Appendix to *The Letters of Sylvia Beach*, edited by Keri Walsh (Columbia University Press, 2010), p.322. Richardson mentions Chevalley in letters to Beach, including her well-known autobiographical sketch 'A few facts for you....' Dorothy Richardson, letter to Sylvia Beach, 15 January 1935, published in *Mercur de France*, [Paris] 1963:127-128. Thanks to Andrew Thacker for pointing out the above information.

1939

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March 2	Pointed Roofs	March 13
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April 24	Anton Tchekov	May 4
May 3	Mr. Bennett + Mrs. Brown	May 19
" 19	St. Isidore's Circus.	June 23
June 12	House in Paris (50¢ a day after June 12 th)	June 16

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~~Two Wigs of the Cabbage~~
(found this book after Mme Sarraute left)

March 1	Madame Curie returned by chauffeur	May 30
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Nathalie Sarraute, a pioneer of the “Nouveau-Roman” movement in French letters, lived at 12 square Henry Paté and then at 12 avenue Pierre 1er de Serbie. Sarraute’s lending library cards are of particular interest as they show a flurry of activity during the period when she wrote her first experimental novel *Tropismes* (1939).²⁸

There is of course a poignancy in looking at Sarraute’s avid reading in 1939, given what was about to happen in Paris and the struggle Sarraute would have, as a Jewish woman, to survive the years of Nazi occupation.

Another reason for the interest in Richardson in France in the mid-1960s would be the cult of Proust, which increased markedly in France (and England) at this time. The 1966 ‘Proust – Richardson’ special issue of *Adam International* in London makes the points of comparison explicit, *Pilgrimage* being the nearest novel series in English to *À la recherche du temps perdu* in terms of attempting such a narrative generated by a gigantic recall of a period, such a vast and detailed sustained act of memory in reconstructing an individual life and consciousness. The general line of comparative discussions of *Pilgrimage* and *À la recherche* will be familiar to Richardsonians, but what should be noted is that by 1966 in France the privileging of time, memory and consciousness (and the unconscious) – the investigation of deepest levels of the individual psyche – is taking place alongside its ostensible opposite, the anti-humanist turn marked by structuralism and its post-structuralist coda.

Literary theory – especially theories of the modern novel – became central to the philosophical and political polemics of the period, the novel finding itself an unexpected site through which problems initially concerning Marxist notions of superstructure and ideology in Althusserian circles could be debated via arguments over representation and realism, the ‘death of the author’ acting as a kind of metaphor for the supposed fall of the humanist subject of bourgeois ideology. Macherey’s *Theory of Literary Production* was published in 1966, Barthes’ *Death of the Author* in 1968 and Foucault’s *What is an Author?* in 1969, these are just some of the landmarks of a period in which various terms were proposed – text, textual practice, the work, discourse, writing, play of the signifier, deconstruction and so

²⁸ The Shakespeare and Company Project: ‘Analysis – The Literary Right Bank’ by Jesse McCarthy:
<https://shakespeareandco.princeton.edu/analysis/2021/04/literary-right-bank/>

on – in the service of the ‘symptomatic’ reading of texts, a formalist reading practice designed to tease out the gaps, erasures and contradictions within a text which might reveal underlying ideological currents or points of conflict and disavowal regardless of authorial intention.

The emergence of post-structuralist literary theory – including the influence of Lacanian psychoanalysis – provides a complicated context for the interest in Dorothy Richardson in Paris in 1966 and a paradox pertinent to the *La Quinzaine* review of *Pointed Roofs* is that the theoretical ‘death’ of the author was accompanied in practice by a dramatic increase in the significance of the author – Joyce, Proust, Woolf, Kafka – not merely as writers of individual novels but as founders of a discourse like Marx or Freud in the sense discussed by Foucault in *What is an Author?* Moreover, in the modernist novel the ‘author function’ as guarantor of the cohesion of a discourse is founded upon the explicitly autobiographical. *Portrait of the Artist, To the Lighthouse, À la recherche, Pilgrimage* and many other modernist novels explicitly offer themselves as expressions of an authorial persona. It is the autobiographical dimension that gives these novels their perceived authenticity and which mediates their points of identification for readers, and it is the autobiographical dimension that generates the modern novel’s central ‘realist’ concern with recording and depicting consciousness, time and memory. Have there ever been more ambitious exercises in what has recently been called ‘autofiction’ than *À la recherche* or *Pilgrimage*? All of which ostensibly runs against the anti-humanist formalist spirit of the symptomatic or deconstructive reading practice proposed by post-structuralist literary theory of the mid-1960s.

A more basic problem raised by the *La Quinzaine* reviewer, Jean-Jacques Mayoux, is that in theory, yes, the modern novel should discard all the nineteenth-century baggage of omniscient or first-person narration, plot, story, characterisation and tedious descriptive ‘reality effects’, and the review praises Richardson for discarding the traditional apparatus of the novel and stripping it back to its essentials. But what is then left – the ‘objective’ recording of the ‘subjective’ moment-by-moment sensations of an autobiographical subject – is too threadbare, fragmented and solipsistic to constitute a cohesive narrative.²⁹ By contrast, in Proust the interest is

²⁹ Although Mayoux stresses the autobiographical and (inter)subjective dimensions of *Pilgrimage*, Richardson’s perceived elimination of not only plot and dramatic incident but overt modes of personal / authorial intervention might have opened the way to pure formalist readings of *Pilgrimage* after 1968. However,

not so much in Marcel's passing sensations in the moment, in the present, but in the depiction of the workings of memory and the process of reconstructing the past, along with the extended commentary which Marcel provides, a commentary not just on the reconstruction of his own act of remembering but the reconstruction of an entire social world, incorporating reflections on almost every subject imaginable. *À la recherche* basically consists of this reflective commentary – a commentary entirely (and intentionally) missing in *Pilgrimage*.³⁰

So who was this unusually sophisticated reviewer of *Pointed Roofs* in *La Quinzaine*? A reviewer clearly informed about Richardson and English literary modernism and also informed about the latest trends in Parisian literary theory – and psychoanalysis – circa 1966, yet displaying a critical distance towards the direction of such theory and evincing instead a continuing sympathy for the 'classic' modernist novel and its aesthetic in which reality is rendered through transformative means of literary style and form, through the fictive, not through the documentary or a deconstruction of the 'literary' itself.

In 1966 Jean-Jacques Mayoux was Professor of English Literature at the Sorbonne, a position he had held since 1951. He wrote numerous books on English literature and art and had written an enthusiastic appraisal of Virginia Woolf as far back as 1928 in the form of a review of the just published *To the Lighthouse*.³¹ Mayoux wrote a book on Joyce in 1965 and at the time was thesis advisor to a young Hélène Cixous, supervising her research on Joyce for several years. Mayoux introduced Cixous to Lacan, who needed an assistant specifically to help him study Joyce, and Cixous

the terms in which *Tel Quel* articulated its increasingly critical perspective on the *nouveau roman* indicates why the Althusserian post-structuralists might have resisted engaging with Richardson – for example, Philippe Sollers refers in 1968 to 'the positivist ideology of the 'nouveau roman' which oscillates between remnants of psychologism ('stream of consciousness') and a decoratively structural 'descriptionism.'" *Tel Quel: Théorie d'ensemble* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), p.392, cited and translated in 'The Nouveau Roman and *Tel Quel* Marxism' by Celia Britton, *Paragraph* 12:1 March 1989, (Oxford University Press), p.72

³⁰ To clarify from a Richardsonian point of view: *Pilgrimage* does reconstruct an entire social world and period – and does contain reflections on every subject imaginable – but does so *within* Miriam's present-time experience, i.e., without a distinct reflective retrospective 'meta' commentary.

³¹ Jean-Jacques Mayoux, review, *Revue Anglo-Américaine* [Paris] June 1928. An extract of this review was included in the 1975 Woolf *Critical Heritage*.

worked with Lacan for a couple of years while completing her thesis and her book *The Exile of James Joyce*.³² In 2004 Cixous wrote an affectionate reminiscence of Mayoux:

Professor Jean-Jacques Mayoux, a man I venerated, noble and implacable, stern as Saint Just, who called himself J-J in secret in order to share in the rages and indignations of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, something I only heard about later, an upright man, probative as a surgeon's scalpel, a master who made his disciples feel the cutting edge of his knife, fond of laughter, a chaste lover of literary genius, thus it was that in the final days of his life in a hospital room, on the brink of agony, he bore up with a volume of Blake, a member of the Resistance naturally, though this I was unaware of almost to the day of his death – he wasn't one to boast. Curmudgeonly, feared, sublime, and therefore, of course, loyal, a man of absolutes, knight of the realm of literature, knight of the faith, nothing could shake him. As for the shaking that Parkinson's Disease had plagued him with his whole life long, he never conceded it so much as an inch of his mental life. For him literature, in the folds of reality literature was the supreme reality.³³

Let us, finally, turn to the *La Quinzaine* review of *Pointed Roofs* and see how Jean-Jacques Mayoux arrives at his critique of Richardson.

³² An engagement with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis is evident in Mayoux's review of *Pointed Roofs*

³³ Hélène Cixous, 'The Unforeseeable', in *Oxford Literary Review*, 2004, Vol. 26, p.173, accessed 18 April 2022 at: <https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/olr.2004.010>. Cixous has remarked on the endemic misogyny (and anti-Semitism) she encountered as a young woman in the university system and how unusual Mayoux was in this regard: 'My thesis advisor, a marvelous man, a great man of letters, and a former member of the Resistance, was so removed from misogyny that he chose to take me under his wing. His name was Jean-Jacques Mayoux. I was truly fostered and respected by men of a certain age who were great doyens at the Sorbonne, and themselves members of minorities and marginalized.' Interview with Hélène Cixous by Olivier Zahm and Donatien Grau, *Purple Magazine*, issue 24 (2015), accessed 18 April 2022 at <https://purple.fr/magazine/fw-2015-issue-24/helene-cixous/>.

Something like the Anti-Lawrence

The review is illustrated by Adrian Allinson's 1937 painting of Dorothy Richardson and Alan Odle taking tea at the table in Mrs Pope's parlour in Trevone. The inclusion of an image of this painting indicates that the article is well-informed about Richardson, given that this painting wasn't particularly well known before its appearance in Fromm's *Biography* of Richardson published in 1977.

The review begins in 1915 with Richardson publishing *Pointed Roofs* and Woolf publishing *The Voyage Out*, Mayoux then noting that by 1920 Woolf jealously saw Richardson and Joyce as her main rivals, condemning both in her diary as 'ruined' by the 'selfishness' of their focus on an individual self, 'this damned egotistical self, a solipsistic approach representing a 'danger' that Woolf would seek to avoid in her own work. Mayoux declares that *The Tunnel* and *Interim* 'probably' made Richardson 'the most advanced novelist of her time'. Yet, he adds, just two years later, in 1922, Woolf is more confident, having found her own modernist voice and a measure of acclaim with *Jacob's Room*; Joyce and *Ulysses* her only rival, Richardson now having disappeared from her diary and fading from critical view.

Mayoux gives an interesting example of why, despite 'expressing herself in shades of grey' of her style, Richardson was so 'advanced' and 'daring': a passage from *Deadlock* in which Miriam unpacks the complicated and fluid gender identifications a child, a daughter, occupies in relation to each parent.³⁴ This turbulent density beneath the 'bland' surface of *Pilgrimage* proved inaccessible to a general readership but, Mayoux suggests, is akin to stories told on the psychoanalytic couch, apparently plotless and structureless but containing secret subtexts which the critical reader can begin to trace and from which the hidden structures and patterns of the text can be discerned, an approach redolent of 'symptomatic' reading and Paris 1966.

According to Mayoux, the depiction of a girls' school and Miriam's adolescence in *Pointed Roofs* might appear almost comically innocent to a French reader, but what is being repressed returns in myriad symptoms, 'infinitesimal palpitations', trivial in themselves but which cumulatively signify nothing less than the 'soul opening and closing' and usually take aggressive forms: 'little angers, small movements of hatred'. Miriam

³⁴ See Chapter xii of *Deadlock*; *Pilgrimage* volume 3, (London: Virago, 1979), pp.219-221.

Henderson might seem passive compared to the overt resistance displayed by Charlotte Brontë's heroines in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, but she comes to be defined by a violence directed against others and against herself which is inextricably linked to the repression in the guise of innocence that governs her life: 'each meeting, each contact, each resistance, serves to define this "innocent" self – full of frustrations, inhibitions and repressions'.

Mayoux sees Richardson's close-up focus on movements of resistance and aggression as prefiguring Nathalie Sarraute's *Tropisms*. Sarraute was trying to represent the surface movements of human behaviour as a way of accessing the undercurrents of that behaviour and doing so, like Richardson before her, without the baggage of plot, commentary and explicit characterisation. Sarraute's attempt at representing preconscious states of mind bears some resemblance to how the stream of consciousness functions in the early volumes of *Pilgrimage* at a largely unreflective inarticulate level. Mayoux views Richardson and Sarraute as sharing a further tendency: Richardson's microscopic attention to both the surface and the abyssal depths of a scene reveals what Mayoux refers to as the 'tiniest oscillations' of consciousness which, like Sarraute's tropisms, often reveal repressed resistances and aggressions – and reveal the insistent fundamental demand for love, esteem and recognition of which Miriam herself is unaware:

A need, a greed, a hunger (she has at the same time little revelatory appetites) to be approved, appreciated, admired, are in her the first form of the insistent need to be loved, to achieve that validation of herself which seems to be her true goal. It is the self that counts: in egotism's great appeal, which Virginia Woolf saw so clearly and resisted, the world is something to be appropriated for oneself.

Mayoux reads these undercurrents of resistance, aggression, struggles for recognition and (self) esteem, along with repressed desire, as informing one of the centrepieces of *Pointed Roofs*, the scene at the Hanover school in which the girls have their hair washed. Miriam initially experiences this forced shampooing of her hair alongside the other girls as a violation, but

her resistance gives way to narcissistic pleasure and sensuous feelings towards the other girls.³⁵

The shampooing is a characteristic episode, because it presents itself as one of the school's obligatory rituals suffered in a fury of resistance, like a violation, before being accepted and turning suddenly into a sense of well-being, a quasi-voluptuous relaxation, almost happiness.

The 'fury of resistance' Miriam displays towards the hair washing ritual is merely the other side of the 'voluptuous' pleasure, both sides being symptomatic of the anxiety Miriam betrays in response to nature, to the animalistic, to the body, to sexuality.³⁶ According to Mayoux, this disavowal makes Richardson 'a kind of anti-Lawrence', a writer who is lost in her repression and its displacements, unable to truly engage with the instinctual side of life. It is therefore unsurprising that Mayoux moves towards his conclusion: Richardson and *Pilgrimage* may have represented the most advanced point reached by the modern novel before 1922, but it was a formalist advance too far, not just in its elimination of story, plot and the conventional novelistic apparatus, its refusal of the 'literary', but in its refusal of reflective commentary, a lack compounded by the repression of any sensuous expression of the primal drives and emotions – the very things which, he suggests, in their different ways Proust, Woolf and Joyce would restore to the modern novel.

An Autobiographical Fresco

Dorothy Richardson
Toits Pointus
trad. Marcelle Sibon
Mercure de France, éd., 272 p.

³⁵ The hair washing scene occurs in Chapter iv of *Pointed Roofs*; *Pilgrimage* volume I, (London: Virago, 1979), pp.59-65

³⁶ In later books in the *Pilgrimage* series Miriam gives expression to her engagement with nature as a site of the sublime (for example, throughout *Oberland*), but Mayoux's point is that Miriam is disgusted by 'earthy' nature, such as the nature of the farmyard. In relation to the body, her own body, this is not quite true, Miriam's bodily functions and sexuality are acknowledged in the text, albeit in often opaque ways.

Dorothy Richardson was born in 1873. However, it was only in 1915 that *Pointed Roofs*, the first element of the four hefty volumes which were to constitute *Pilgrimage*, appeared. The same year, Virginia Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, was published. 'I suppose' she wrote in her impassioned writer's diary on the 21 January 1920:³⁷ 'the danger is the damned egotistical self; which ruins Joyce & Richardson to my mind'. It is not Samuel but Dorothy that Woolf is thinking of: Richardson is, or seems then in 1920, one of the two great objects of Woolf's painful and jealous emulation, which she suffers to admire and brings herself to reject. Two years later, the recognised and almost famous author of *Jacob's Room* was reassured, I assume, about one of them. Dorothy, unlike Joyce, steps back into the shadows disappearing from the Diary with her pince-nez and her blonde hair.

The publication of the two parts of *Pilgrimage* volume II in 1920, or *Deadlock* in 1921, probably made 'Richardson' the most advanced writer of her time, and in that position she seemed irreplaceable.³⁸ It was felt perhaps that, in a writer so inclined to express herself in shades of grey, even this relatively low level of daring should be seized upon. There is a passage in *Deadlock* where Shatov, overwhelmed by Miriam's declaration of women's superiority, remarks: 'You are probably more the daughter of your father', to which she answers 'If anything I *am* my mother's son'. She then explains: a mother hopes for her sons 'that *they* will give her the understanding she never had from their father. In that I am my mother's son for ever', adding 'I'm as much a man as a woman'.

It's not clear whether many readers, or those necessary, follow *Pointed Roofs* to the end of its austere and secret journey which presents itself as featurelessness. The critic on the other hand will, I suspect, be fascinated, and how much more the psychoanalyst. The public has never been offered a more closeted history; no closet has ever been more revealing.

In this enormous autobiographical fresco, Dorothy Richardson retains only the bare essentials of literary convention. She will be called Miriam Henderson and will speak of herself in the third

³⁷ This entry in Woolf's diary is dated 26 January 1920.

³⁸ *The Tunnel* and *Interim* were published in 1919. These two 'chapter-volumes' became volume II of the collected edition in 1938. *Deadlock* was published in 1921.

person. If in passing we can say that she will not invent or bring anything new to her autobiographical narrative, this does not affect a singular gift for division, which allows the living to see themselves live, a gift conveyed through the precise memory of the moment lived, the basis of a unique effort to reconstruct a personal duration. This becomes apparent when it is compared with those of Proust, or of Joyce, or Virginia Woolf. Richardson seeks practically nothing from the association of ideas. When by chance she lets things slip and a piece of music brings back an impression of childhood, we can see that this is not her forte. The intention is elsewhere. Through a subtlety readers have to perceive from the outset if they don't want to waste their time, the whole truth of character hangs on the impression of the moment. It is up to us to construct character successively as the common ground of all the impressions that must follow, with an attention that always risks straying into the insignificant, getting bored, losing itself, when it is the subject alone that counts, presented, one might say, as the emptiness at the centre of the world.

Life minute by minute, moment by moment, memory returned to life, attentive, meticulous, tireless, she takes stock of her being in the world, of her situation among men, or to be more precise her experience of that situation. She watches her own reactions, the movements of her soul, she is a kind of barometer recorder whose graph we follow, the ups and downs, the tiniest oscillations. From the moment when, at seventeen and a half years old, the paternal home and the inevitable, incurable familiarity of each object, of each person, has been forsaken, each meeting, each contact, each resistance, serves to define this 'innocent' self – full of frustrations, inhibitions and repressions.

A young girl in a school discovers that living is difficult. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, had already touched on this subject: the beginning of the great adventure for Englishwomen. But here, in comparison with Brontë, the relationship between the two elements, self and world, is reversed. In her passionate need to encounter the world Charlotte threw herself against it, like a bird crushing its wings and bruising its head against an obstruction. Dorothy Richardson, planted on feet one imagines were a little flat, relies on herself, but trembles constantly with small anxieties. A need, a greed, a hunger (she has at the same time little revelatory appetites) to be approved, appreciated, admired, are in her the first form of the insistent need to be loved, to achieve that validation of

herself which seems to be her true goal. It is the self that counts: in egotism's great appeal, which Virginia Woolf saw so clearly and resisted, the world is something to be appropriated for oneself. Diastole and systole, infinitesimal palpitations, the soul opening and closing, little angers, small movements of hatred, little moments of plenitude, alternate rapidly one after another. An interview with the female principal of the school, a musical performance, a class, the girls shampooing each other's hair, all are valid subjects for experiencing and describing a structure of feeling. Richardson uses a method that, in its substantive opacity if not its form or style, cannot but make us think of the tropisms of Nathalie Sarraute.

The shampooing is a characteristic episode, because it presents itself as one of the school's obligatory rituals suffered in a fury of resistance, like a violation, before being accepted and turning suddenly into a sense of well-being, a quasi-voluptuous relaxation, almost happiness. Miriam shows significant disgust for the organic, making her a kind of anti-Lawrence. She finds it intolerable when, on a walk, standing on filthy ground amid smells that revolt her, she is expected to drink warm cow's milk. The slightest ambivalent or indifferent gaze is experienced as an invasion and unsettles her. During the long walk, she sees men working in the German fields (was such a sight already so rare in England half a century ago?): 'They troubled her. They looked up with strange eyes. She wished they were not there'.

The unsympathetic French reader will not fail to observe a strange bias. I have said no book has ever been more closeted. There is no 'intimacy' among these young girls, with the exception of one of the youngest who one day wants 'a little kiss' or a glass of beer. No one is ever undressed and nothing happens below the waist. But what confessions are made in each aggression, each tension, each hostile reflex or refusal! This tableau, which appears almost uniformly bland at first glance, is, on careful examination, an exaggerated depiction of a tortured soul yielded up by the curious and constant deformities of the perceived world. Dorothy has to distance herself from Miriam in order to render the truth of herself so precisely.

That said, can we share John Cowper Powys's enthusiasm in his introduction? Ah certainly, in comparison Virginia Woolf or Marcel Proust are mere manufacturers of literature. But literature does have its good points, as do artificiality and make-up. Or instead, nature can be rendered without restraint by someone like Nerval. In

this rendering of interior life, nothing strikes us more the absence of the great expression of lived experience as metaphor, which is precisely why at the end of the day we value Proust or Virginia Woolf.

Jean-Jacques Mayoux
(translation by Lionel Clauzon)³⁹

³⁹ Translating such a densely written review is challenging. I am extremely grateful to Lionel Clauzon for his translation. The main quotations in the review from Richardson and Woolf have been taken from the original English texts rather than the French translation. I am grateful to Adam Guy for checking over the translation and making a number of helpful suggestions regarding the article. Thanks also to Scott McCracken and Morag Shiach for finessing the translation.

Image Sources:

The images in this article are all discussed in the text and are all screenshots made by the article author from the following sources:

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Une fresque autobiographique



Dorothy Richardson et Alan Odie, par Adnar Allinson

Dorothy Richardson
Taïts Pointus
trad. Marcelle Sibon
Mercure de France, éd., 272 p.

Dorothy Richardson naquit en 1873. Ce n'est pourtant qu'en 1915 que parut *Pointed Roofs*, le premier élément du premier des quatre gros tomes qui devaient constituer *Pilgrimage*. La même année paraissait *The Voyage Out*, le premier roman de Virginia Woolf. *J'imagine*, écrivait celle-ci dans son journal d'écrivain passionné, le 21 janvier 1920, que le danger vient de ce maudit moi, de l'égoïsme qui ruine à mes yeux Joyce et Richardson. Ce n'est pas de Samuel qu'il s'agit, mais bien de Dorothy : elle est ou paraît alors l'un des deux grands que son émulation douloureuse et jalouse souffre d'admirer et s'accommode de rejeter. Deux ans après, je suppose, l'auteur reconnue et quasi-célèbre de *La Chambre de Jacob* était rassurée sur l'un d'eux. Dorothy rentre dans l'ombre avec son pince-nez et ses cheveux jaunes, et disparaît du Journal, à la différence de Joyce.

C'est sans doute en 1920, après la parution des deux parties du tome II, ou en 1921 avec *Deadlock* que « Richardson » fut le plus en avant de son époque, et qu'elle parut, au point où elle était parvenue, irremplaçable. La sagesse eût peut-être été, s'agissant d'un écrivain si enclin à s'exprimer en grâces, de la prendre au moins à ce stade de relative hardiesse. On eût trouvé dans *Deadlock* le passage où Shator, accablé par la proclamation de la supériorité de la femme, faite par Miriam, remarque :

Vous êtes sans doute plutôt la fille de votre père et où elle réplique : En fait je suis bien plus le fils de ma mère. Elle s'explique : une mère espère de ses fils qu'ils lui donneront la compréhension

qu'elle n'a jamais trouvé chez leur père. En cela je suis à jamais le fils de ma mère, ajoutant plus loin : Je suis autant homme que femme.

Il n'est pas sûr que beaucoup de lecteurs, ou ceux qu'il faudrait, suivent jusqu'au bout *Taïts Pointus* dans un cheminement austère et secret qui se déguise en platitude. Le critique, par contre, sera, je pense, fasciné, mais moins encore que le psychanalyste. Nulle histoire offerte au public ne fut jamais plus couverte, nulle couverture ne fut plus révélatrice.

Dans cette énorme fresque autobiographique Dorothy Richardson ne retient de convention littéraire que le minimum indispensable. Elle s'appellera Miriam Henderson et parlera d'elle-même à la troisième personne. Si l'on peut dire qu'au demeurant elle n'inventera rien, cela n'affecte pas un don singulier de dédoublement qui permet au vivant de se voir vivre, don relayé par la mémoire précise de l'instant vécu, qui est à la base d'un effort unique de reconstruction d'une durée personnelle, que l'on peut exposer en l'opposant à ceux de Proust comme de Joyce ou de Virginia Woolf : elle ne demande pratiquement rien à l'association des idées ; quand d'aventure elle s'y laisse aller et qu'un morceau de musique ramène une impression d'enfance, nous voyons bien que ce n'est pas son fort. L'intention est ailleurs. Par une subtilité qu'il est essentiel de percevoir d'abord si l'on ne veut perdre sa peine de lecteur, toute la vérité du personnage est accrochée à l'impression présente. C'est à nous à le construire successivement comme le lieu commun de toutes ces impressions que nous devons suivre avec une attention qui risque toujours de s'égarer sur l'in-signifiant objet, de se lasser et de se perdre, alors que le sujet seul

compte, présenté, pourrions-nous dire, comme le creux du monde.

Minute par minute, instant par instant de vie, de mémoire retournée sur la vie, attentive, minutieuse, inlassable, elle fait le point de son être au monde, de sa situation parmi les hommes ou plus exactement de ce qu'elle éprouve dans cette situation, elle épie ses propres réactions, ses mouvements d'âme, elle est une sorte de baromètre enregistreur dont on suit le graphique, les hauts et les bas, les plus infimes oscillations. A partir du moment où à dix-sept ans et demi, la maison paternelle et la familiarité inévitable, incurable, de tout objet, de toute personne, ont été quittées, chaque rencontre, chaque contact, chaque résistance, servent à la définition de ce moi « innocent », chargé de frustrations, d'inhibitions et de refoulements.

Une jeune fille dans une école et découvrant la difficulté de vivre, déjà *Jane Eyre* ou *Villette* de Charlotte Brontë avaient marqué en abordant ce sujet le début de la grande aventure de la femme anglaise. Mais par rapport à Charlotte Brontë la relation des deux éléments, moi et monde, est ici inversée : Charlotte se jetait contre le monde comme un oiseau se froisse les ailes et se meurtrit la tête contre un obstacle, dans une avidité passionnée de rencontre. Dorothy Richardson, plantée sur des pieds qu'on imagine un peu plats, reste sur son quant-à-soi, mais dans un frémissement constant de petites inquiétudes : un besoin, une avidité, une faim (elle a aussi ses petites boulimies révélatrices) d'être approuvée, appréciée, admirée, sont chez elle la première forme du besoin insistant d'être aimée, d'aboutir à cette valorisation d'elle-même qui semble être sa fin véritable. C'est le moi qui compte : le monde est quelque chose à s'approprier dans l'énorme

appel d'égoïsme que voyait bien Virginia Woolf. Diastole et systole, palpitations infinitésimales, ouverture et fermeture de l'âme, petites colères, petits mouvements de haine, petites plénitudes en alternance rapide se succèdent. Une entrevue avec la directrice, une séance de musique, une classe, un shampooing sont sujets valables pour éprouver et décrire cette infrastructure de la sensibilité par une méthode qui dans son opacité substantielle sinon dans la forme ou le style n'est pas sans faire penser aux tropismes de Nathalie Sarraute.

Le shampooing est un épisode typique parce que se présentant comme un des rites obligés de l'école il est subi dans une fureur de résistance, comme un viol, avant d'être accepté, absorbé, devenu du coup bien-être, détente quasi-voluptueuse, et presque bonheur. Elle manifeste un dégoût très significatif de l'organique qui fait d'elle quelque chose comme l'anti-Lawrence lorsqu'au cours d'une promenade on veut lui faire boire parmi des odeurs qui la révoltent, les pieds sur un sol souillé, du lait tout chaud, intolérablement, de la vache. Le moindre regard indifférent ou ambivalent est ressenti comme un envahissement et la démonte. Elle voit, lorsque la promenade longue un champ allemand (le spectacle était-il déjà rare en Angleterre il y a un demi-siècle ?) des hommes qui y travaillent. *Ils la troublaient : ils relevaient la tête avec des regards étranges. Elle aurait voulu qu'ils ne fussent pas là.*

Le lecteur français, mal tourné, ne manquera pas d'observer un étrange parti pris. J'ai dit que jamais livre ne fut plus couvert. Nulle « intimité » parmi ces jeunes filles, sinon qu'une des plus jeunes un jour voudrait « un petit baiser » ou un verre de bière. On n'est jamais nu, et rien ne se passe au-dessous de la taille. Mais que d'aveux dans chaque agression, chaque raidissement, chaque réflexe d'hostilité et de refus ! Ce tableau presque constamment fade au premier regard, c'est, regardé de plus près la peinture surexpressive d'une âme, grimaçante, livrée par les curieuses et constantes déformations du monde perçu. Il faut bien que Dorothy ait pris ses distances avec Miriam, pour avoir si précisément rendu la vérité d'elle-même.

Cela dit, peut-on partager l'enthousiasme d'un John Cowper Powys dans son introduction ? Ah certes, Virginia Woolf ou Marcel Proust sont à côté de celle-ci des fabricants de littérature. Mais la littérature a du bon, et l'artificiel, et le maquillage. Ou bien la nature livrée, comme par un Nerval. Dans ce rendu de la vie intérieure, rien ne frappera plus que l'absence de ce grand métaphorisme du vécu qui fait à nos yeux le prix, justement, de Proust ou de Virginia Woolf.

Jean-Jacques Mayoux