



Pilgrimage, Volume 3: Deadlock, Revolving Lights, The Trap

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Dorothy Miller Richardson (1873-1957) was the first writer to publish an English-language novel using what was to become known as the stream-of-consciousness technique. Her thirteen novel sequence "Pilgrimage" is one of the great 20th century works of modernist and feminist literature in English.

Pilgrimage, Volume 3: Deadlock, Revolving Lights, The Trap Details

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Ronald Morton says

“I write about socialism in an anarchist paper”

Sorry, that line, delivered in all seriousness, struck me as particularly badass, but I’m viewing it much too much through a post-1970’s punk scene prism to have an unbiased opinion about it.

I’ve started putting together some larger scale thoughts on this work as a whole now that I only have volume 4 left to tackle, and will refrain from them for now, as they require confirmation (or refutation) through the final “chapters” of Richardson’s Pilgrimage.

[I’m not talking about anything huge here, this more just goes back to my statement in my review of volume 2 that it starts to feel repetitive praising the same sort of thing through each volume – this is not a criticism of the work, it is an acknowledgment of the work as a single, lifelong, project for Richardson, so the recurring themes and strengths are not only to be expected, but are required for the success of the work as a whole.]

But, I will note that two new points of strength here are the introduction of Mr Shatov – from the early scenes of tutorship to the more intimate courtship scenes – he provides a nice intellectual counterpoint to Miriam, and allows for an externality to be added to her focused internality; the inclusion of these more large scale intellectual discussions – as opposed to only the intellectual interior s.o.c. – allows for a further expansion on Miriam’s intellect and psyche. The other point of strength from this volume is Miriam’s transition from her clerical job to her career as a writer, which I’d been waiting for since the opening volume (c’mon, I love writers writing about writers writing); it’s slight in these volumes, but welcome nonetheless.

‘Peace. Yes. But the staggering thing about all these men, the Hamlets and the Schopenhauers, is that they don’t notice that people are *miserable* about being miserable. And uncomfortable, in varying degrees, in wrong-doing. When they make up their philosophies of life they leave out *themselves*. Like the people who talk of the vastness of space and the ant-like smallness of humanity. If *one* man, say Schopenhauer, *sees* quite clearly all the misery of life, and that it ends, for everybody, in disease and pain and death, then there is something in mankind that is not corruption.

‘Then again all these thought-system people must have an illogical as well as a logical side. A side where they don’t believe their own systems. If they quite believed, instead of making a living out of their bitterness they would make an end of *themselves*. But you know it ’s popular. There are lots of people who revel in it. Men particularly. It makes them feel superior.[’]

Jonathan says

Development of mind, of a sense of self, emergence of a tougher feminism, of an engagement with the Fabians, of a recognition of the trap of mediocrity and marriage, of the danger of settling for safety and ease,

of conflicts between and within the genders and of the promise of a life full of writing and a room of ones own

Samuel Maina says

This is the 7th installation on Dorothy's Pilgrimage series and I have to say, make no mistake that she is a lover of fiction.

The setting is in London and you can very easily see her wide knowledge as exemplified in this book and also knowledge of the history of Europe. All European people have been mentioned be it Germans, The French, The Irish, The Scotch all and sundry including those that converse in Cockney.

I like that bias continues a major theme not forgetting silence. In this installation she talks about writing in such a deep way I just had my mouth agape. In a conversation she asks what is great fiction? And contrasts this with imagination stating that It always seems insulting, belittling, both to the writer and to life. . . .

At another instance when talking about form she states that People who care only for form think themselves superior. Then there is something wrong with them. It is as if you cannot have form without art. You can only talk about form and art on the same line.

The fountain pen as a writing tool has been discussed lengthily and a declaration made that no one can write with a fountain pen. I still remember being in primary school and those lower primary teachers were on our case to always use fountain pens. At that point they insisted that it was to make our hand writing good; I only wish they had read DMR. Of course a comparison had to be made between a writing machine and a fountain pen; here it seems you are better off with a fountain pen than a writing machine.... "nothing else can come through a hand whose fingers are held stiffly apart by a fat slippery barrel. A writing machine. A quill would be the thing, with a fine flourishing tail. But it is too important. It squeaks out an important sense of writings makes people too objective, so that it's as much a man's pen, a mechanical, see life steadily and see it whole (when nobody knows what life is) man's view sort of implement as a fountain pen."

That said, you ought to have the right fountain pen for the job. Machine made things are dead things... Miriam went in hard on this one! "A pen should be thin, not disturbing the hand, and the nib flexible and silent, with up and down strokes. Fountain pen writing is like . . . democracy."

I like how intimately Dorothy M. Richardson (DMR) writes in that I always learn a new thing every time I touch her book. So many insights and good writing. Gaps in narrative is a thing she seems to have mastered and bouts of good writing as well... I will give three instances of good writing:

"Miriam came to dinner silently raging; invisible, yet compelled to be seen. Reduced to nonentity by his wrongly directed awareness, his everlasting demand for bright fussy intelligence. It was her own fault. The result of having been beguiled by joy into a pretence of conformity. "

A kitchen described... "Well, suddenly you are in their kitchen. White walls and aluminium and a smell of fruit. Do you know the smell of root vegetables cooking slowly in a casserole"

Clear thoughts make clear speech - "I am intelligent, Miriam. You're intelligent. You have distinction of mind. But a really surprising lack of expression you know. You misrepresent yourself most tremendously." "

You mean I haven't a voice, that way of talking about things that makes one know people don't believe what they say and are thinking most about the way they are talking. Bah."

Moving along swiftly, I will mention that there were moments that while reading I felt like wow! Therefore I would like to call them wow moments:

"My social happiness dependent upon the presence of some suggestion of its remembered features, my secret social ambition its perfected form in circumstances beyond my reach."

"A solid charwomanly commonplace kindness, spread like a doormat at the disposal of everybody, and an intermittent perfect dilettantism that would disgust even the devil?"

On individuality... "The sense of existing merely as a link, without individuality, was not at all compensated by the lifting, and distribution backwards, of responsibility."

"Light makes shadows. The devil is God's shadow ? The Persians believed that in the end the light would absorb the darkness."

Emancipation - "But the point is, there's no emancipation to be done. Women are emancipated."

The art of making atmospheres as exercised by most women... "Not one man in a million is aware of it. It's like air within the air. It may be deadly. Cramping and awful, or simply destructive, so that no life is possible within it. So is the bad art of men. At its best it is absolutely life-giving. And not soft. Very hard and stern and austere in its beauty. And like mountain air. And you can't get behind it, or in any way divide it up. Just as with * Art.' Men live in it and from it all their lives without knowing. Even recluses."

"I feel the atmosphere created by the lady of the house as soon as I get on to the door step."

"Women only want to be. men before they begin their careers. It's a longing for exemptions. – Sad
An insight about women - Women see things when they are not there. That's creativeness. What is meant by women * making ' men."

"Views and opinions are masculine things. Women are indifferent to them, really."

". . . The business of women ; the career ; that makes you all rivals, is to find fathers. Your material is children."

"** Then look here, if you think that, there's a perfect instance. If women's material is people their famous 'curiosity' is the curiosity of the artist. Men call it ' incurable ' in women. Men's curiosity, about things, science and so forth, is called divine." – My word!

". . . Women who are not living ought to spend all their time cracking jokes. In a rotten society women grow witty ; making a heaven while they wait. ..."

"Books about people are lies from beginning to end. However sincere, they cannot offer any evidence about life. Even lifelong loneliness is life; too marvelous to express. Absolutely, of course. But relatively Relative things are forgotten when you are alone. . . ."

"Relations remain the same however much things are changed. Interest in the stars is like interest in your neighbours before you get to know them. A way of running away from yourself."

"Science, the way of thinking and writing that makes everybody seem small, in all these new books."

"*Well, by inventing the telephone we've damaged the chances of telepathy."

The English are so full of themselves... "England has attracted thousands of brilliant foreigners, who have made her, including the Scotch, who until they become foreigners in England were nothing."

That is enough of woe moments.

I want to describe Miriam as described in the book...as a person who does not come off all the time but when she comes she comes off to no end. A ruddy, blazing temper. Can sulk too, abominably. Then one discovers an unsuspected streak of sweetness. A rare talent for forgetfulness and recovery. Suddenly pillowy. She is deep like an absolution. In short there is not getting enough of Miriam.

Bias is a major theme in this book. Men are still being taken to the threshing floor, no relenting on "it's a man's world" I feel like she tried to score it out but still not convincing....DMR would have been a modern day feminist....but this looked at with regard to the time this was written must have been what we call an obstructive classic. Look at this example "Women everybody knows nowadays, have made civilisation, the thing civilisation is so proud of—social life. It's one of the things I dislike in them. There you are, by the way, women were the first socialists." Havelock Ellis ; and Emerson quoting Firdusi's description of his Persian Lilla . . ." that is one way of looking at it.

Men have taken a thorough beating from DMR's writing. That is all I can say for now. In this book I have 25 instances where men have been highlighted in bad light; so much for making a point!

Another theme I want to mention is Women and Art – It seems like men are the only ones who get recognition for art? While ignoring to see women in light of art. Maxim of detachment and control. Deep.

By reading this book, I have come to a conclusion that Jews have got to be the most stubborn people of the earth.

A good read.

Deanne says

Deadlocked

Back in London living at a boarding house and working at the dental surgery Miriam's life continues. A new character Shatov, a russian student arrives and it is the nature of their friendship which is the subject of deadlocked.

Always strikes me as how intelligent Miriam is compared to those around her, finally she seems to have come across someone with whom she can identify.

Revolving Lights

Not really sure what it is about these books, maybe the way that Richardson writes about Miriam's thoughts and feelings. In revolving lights Miriam shares a room with Miss Holland, a woman with whom Miriam seems to have little in common.

Pia Arambruru says

Extraordinario.

Jacob says

I somehow got stalled reading *Deadlock* and *Revolving Lights* and couldn't continue, so I skipped ahead to Volume 4. I might return to this volume again, if I reread the Pilgrimage sequence in its entirety (quite likely, with Oxford University Press republishing her work over the next few years), but I can't see any reason to go back to it right now. Much easier to forge ahead with the fourth volume, followed by her shorter work, letters, and bio; going back right away would probably just frustrate me. I'll just have to settle for all of Goodreads knowing I only finished volumes 1, 2, and 4 of the Pilgrimage cycle--but that's still three more volumes than most people have read...
