

## A Body Signifying Its Own Reality: Body in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*

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### Abstract

Dorothy Richardson's monolithic novel *Pilgrimage* proposes the leading theoretical and political perspectives of her time and touches upon issues regarding body in feminist theory. She not only points out future discussions on body but also presents an account of social and economic exploitation of women as well. By rooting the concept of body in Descartes' Cartesian dualism and Thomas Hobbes' theory of government, I will demonstrate the transition of discussions regarding the body and by doing so, I will approach the portrayal of women's material bodies in *Pilgrimage* from a broader point of view. Thus, this paper presents discussions on mind / body dualism, defiance of sexual binaries and the "lived experience" through the stream of consciousness of the female protagonist of *Pilgrimage*. I trace the questionings that lead Miriam Henderson to resist the ideas regarding the body as a biological object, and to begin a quest to redefine her body by herself without reenacting socially described bodily performances.

**Key Words:** Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage*, Miriam Henderson, body, gender

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# Bedenin Kendi Gerçekliğini İfade Ediři:

## Dorothy Richardson'ın *Pilgrimage*

### Romanında Beden

#### Öz

Dorothy Richardson'ın yekpare roman serisi *Pilgrimage* döneminin teorik ve politik tartışmalarına ışık tutmanın yanı sıra beden tartışmalarını öncülleyen çıkarımlar içerir. Ancak gelecek tartışmaların habercisi olmakla beraber kadınların geçmişteki sosyal ve ekonomik sömürüsüne de ışık tutar. Richardson'ın romanının böyle geniş bir yelpazeyi içermesi, kadın bedeninin cisimleştirilmesini Descartes'in Kartezyen ayrımı ve Thomas Hobbes'in devlet teorisi ile ilişkilendirerek ele almayı gerektirmiştir. Bu nedenle bu makalede zihin / beden ayrımı, cinsiyet ayrımlarına karşı oluş ve "bedensel tecrübe" kavramları romanın ana kadın karakteri Miriam Henderson'ın zihin akışından hareketle ele alınarak farklı yaklaşımlara yer verilmiştir. Böylece Miriam Henderson'ın bedenini yalnızca biyolojik bir nesne olduğu düşüncesine karşı duruşu ve beden performanslarını sergilemekten kaçınarak kendi bedeninin tanımını kendisinin yapmaya koyulduğu macerasının izi sürülecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage*, Miriam Henderson, beden, toplumsal cinsiyet

If the skin were a parchment and the blows you  
gave me were ink...

William Shakesperare, *The Comedy of Errors*

Bodies are inscribed with social codes and they speak these social codes through many characteristic attributes such as clothing, hairdressing, makeup, scars, tattoos, living spaces. However, before being a site of social inscription, body is a space, a means to exist in the world and a reference point to perceive the outside world. It is both a subject in itself and the object of others' gaze and perception. As pointed out by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2010) although the body is a space in itself, without it the space would not exist to us (p. 152). Our body *dwells* in time and space; however, it is not *in* time and space, it *adapts* and *coalesces* with them (p. 202). Thus, each body adapts and coalesces with time and space in different ways,

and each body presents a different way of accessing the world and other objects.

As the body is both an expression in itself and a surface to inscribe messages, it is governed by social codes and it becomes the object of power<sup>1</sup>. Male / female dichotomy helps with the conceptualization and objectification of the body and wielding power over others. As Ian Burkitt (1999) states, over the past thirty years, one of the main challenges to dualism has come from feminism, which argues that the difference of human bodies and that the Cartesian assumption of a single body being reducible to the metaphor of machine are part of the power relations that have closed women and minority groups out of the systems of power and control (p. 90). These historically and culturally specific relations of power are among the concerns that preoccupy feminist studies since Simone de Beauvoir's (2011) question "What is a woman?" in 1949 which inquires about the ideology behind the answer to this question and the discourse that has shaped the category of "woman". The physical reality of the body offers no natural foundation for the cultural assumptions about femininity and Beauvoir's question started lengthy debates about whether women have some shared "essential" characteristics or whether the whole idea of a woman is a social construct. With this, the tension between women's lived bodily experiences and the cultural meanings inscribed on their bodies were recognized and it produced debates on the idea that sex is a reality lodged in the body as a biological given which resisted the illusions of gender and discourse on sex. For instance, Judith Butler (1990) demonstrates that bodies and genders are not coterminous by suggesting that gender itself may be a performative act and that it is impossible to experience corporeality as the experience is only accessible to the subject through culture and language. Thus, corporeality has become a major area of conflict in contemporary feminist theory (especially after 1990s) and humanities and social sciences have been increasingly confronting problems related to body and body politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas on the body and ideas around social body are different approaches to the body.

*Pilgrimage* (1967) is the life story of Miriam Henderson from girlhood to womanhood which shows the reader the social and physical experiences of an independent and determined young woman in England at the end of 1890s and during the early 1900s. It consists of 13 books, or chapters as Dorothy Richardson (1873 - 1957) preferred to call them, which exceed two thousand pages in total<sup>2</sup>. Given that it is the account of Miriam Henderson's journey towards an independent and conscious life as a woman, the novels in *Pilgrimage* series contain Miriam's ideas about both women's social and political conditions and their physical experiences oppressed by the disciplinary norms of the society.

Richardson studies, mostly focus on *Pilgrimage's* narrative technique, women's social position, the modernist elements in her writings and body has been a neglected theme. Here, I would argue that the subject of corporeality is a crucial element in *Pilgrimage*, because in the series, women's corporeal experiences and social positions offer an overview of feminist ideology of the early 20th century England and this shows and defies the role of external factors in determining who the culture sees as a "real" woman. This entails a research about *Pilgrimage* to employ various perspectives about the body while analyzing female corporeal experience and empowerment. Although feminism of equality was the predominant approach to the women's movement in the period described in the book, this paper will show how Richardson's ideas differed from that ideology. I employ both the inscriptive approach and the concept of lived experience and argue that Richardson's books signal the recent arguments on body confronted by the thinkers, such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and Sara Ahmed, who opposed corporeality and elucidated constructions of sexed difference.

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<sup>2</sup> *Pilgrimage* consists of thirteen books which are separated into four volumes. The books and the volumes they belong are like that: Volume I: *Pointed Roofs, Backwater, Honeycomb*; Volume II: *The Tunnel, Interim*; Volume III: *Deadlock, Revolving Lights, The Trap*; Volume IV: *Oberland, Dawn's Left Hand, Clear Horizon, Dimple Hill, March Moonlight*. In this paper, in case of a general statement about the novels that will refer to the totality of the books I will use *Pilgrimage* and in case of quotations or specific parts I will refer to the specific books that are used.

## Body and the Battle Against It

In this section, I will discuss body in light of mind / body discussion in the 17th century and its reverberations in the 18th, 19th and early 20th century. To this end, I will briefly discuss Descartes' mind / body dichotomy by relating it to Thomas Hobbes' ideas on the social body. I relate Descartes and Thomas Hobbes to discuss body because their thoughts about mind and body have affected the understanding of body dramatically and created the necessary conditions for capitalist society to ripen, which increased subjugation of women even more. Though, at first glance, they seem to have little to offer 21st century feminism as for the most part they excluded women from their concerns, their debates on power, freedom and order offer arguments about patriarchal society. Their thoughts have intrigued feminist thinkers as well. Jean Bethke Elstain's book *Public Man, Private Woman*, Carole Pateman's work *The Sexual Contract* and Christine Di Stefano's *Configurations of Masculinity* are some of the works that deal with feminist political theory through Descartes and Hobbes. Thus, I find Cartesian dualism and Hobbes' materialist world view that reduced minds to corporeal mechanisms useful for this paper not only as they are important touchstones in modern political thought, but also because their theories provide foundational concepts and ideas associated with modernity such as equality, human nature, authority, consent, coercion, political obligation and citizenship. As argued by Susan Bordo (1987) in *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture*, the modern philosophy, Descartes' in particular, is the source of the ideals of reason and objectivity that are gendered male and generated ideals antagonistic to women (p. 8). Thus, Hobbes' political theory and Cartesian rationalism that produced the norms of modern science, mark a break with a cultural tradition that was more accommodating of female sexual roles. The philosophical background of *Pilgrimage* rests on the break with the cultural tradition in that it is modern political thought and the concepts it produced that Miriam defies. Her criticism is not limited to the socially approved sexual differences, but included questioning of the tools of modern society as well, such as education system, political inclinations, religion to name a few.

Though body has been an issue in philosophical thinking for a long time, discussions on body escalated in the 17th century and they mostly developed around mind / body dichotomy based on Descartes' Cartesian dualism; but this was not just a philosophical debate prioritizing mind / reason over body that was regarded as a vehicle steered by the soul in it. Rather than that, as Silvia Federici (2004) demonstrates in her book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, Body and Primitive Accumulation*, it was a social reformation in the "Age of Reason" that was attempted by the bourgeoisie to remould the subordinate classes (p. 135). In fact, the battle against the body was an attempt to form a new type of individual who was seen as a workforce and who served the interests of the bourgeois society.

In Cartesian thought, body is nothing more than a pile of organs that function mechanically and provide a space for the soul to exist. In *Discourse on the Method* (1637) and *Treatise on Man* (1664) Descartes focuses on the mechanics of the body to institute an ontological divide between physical meaning and mental domain. In his philosophy, he defines the body in line with machines and animals and points to the mind as the substance that cannot be reduced to what is physical. In the fourth part of the *Discourse on the Method*, examining his own body, he comes to the conclusion that even though he can pretend that he has no body, no world and a place for him to be in, he cannot pretend that he does not exist; whereas if he ceases to think he will have no reason to think that he exists which leads him to the idea that he is a *substance* only *essence* of whom resides in thinking (p. 29). For him, thinking is not dependent on any material thing (p. 29). Such mechanization enables the body to be purged from its mysterious functions and become a substance that can technically be handled and organized (Federici, 2004, p. 140). This means that in Descartes' thinking body is obedient to superior power, and exist to be conquered and used for the betterment of men. Thus, in Descartes, the reduction of the body to the mechanical matter allows for the development of mechanisms of self-management that make the body subject to the reason. So, this philosophy paved the way for the social engineering that turned bodily powers into work power which was a basic need of the capitalist society and created

a hierarchy between mind and body (p. 140). Although body was the condition of existence, it was also regarded as a limit and was associated with evil properties and irrationality. The reconceptualization and mechanization of the body reduced it to predictable and controllable mechanisms that were affiliated to the scientific rationalization.

Thomas Hobbes' (1651) political theory is relevant to body politics in that in this way the individual body transforms into social body. For Hobbes, body is also a mechanical substance that lacks autonomous power. In his theory of government, Hobbes re-describes the role of the individual and the relation developed out of the needs of the government and people by, first of all, comparing body to the state. For him, the mechanized body whose major concern is to preserve himself (Hobbes means men when he writes about individuals) develops a different body politic which does not renounce the effect of the physical body on the mind. Although body is compared to an automata, he does not put corporeality of the body completely aside.

In the first part of *Leviathan*, "Of Man", Hobbes defines and limits the senses, imaginations, speech and reason of the body in relation to its corporeality. Instead of discarding the body, Hobbes describes the mechanical work of the body and defines the sensations, emotions and imaginations of the body relating them to the external world in order to reveal its need to be managed and controlled by some higher power. This way, he is able to underline the role of the individuals in the formation of the government because of the need to be preserved and to be at peace or getting themselves out of the miserable condition of war (p. 144). In order for people to defend themselves from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another, they need to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men (p. 146). So, they reduce their voice and will unto one will and appoint one man or assembly to bear their person. From then on, this person's or assembly's judgement is their own which is the real unity of all in one.

This is a form of social reformation in which people are alienated from their bodies and renounce the right over their bodi-

es to somebody else freely. In Hobbes, mechanization of the body legitimizes submission of the individual to the power of the state. This rationalization bypasses the authenticity of the individual and selectively determines the useful features of the body and declares others as irrational, evil or useless. As a result, negative features of human beings are assigned to the body and the ones necessary for the mechanization of the body, and the will to submit self to a higher power are deemed positive. Such a mechanization creates a homogenized society in which people get standardized and are required to accommodate. In her article "Corporeal Representation in / and the Body Politic", Moira Gatens (1997) asserts that in political theory, this metaphor of the unified body functions to achieve two important effects. First, the artificial man incorporates, thus controls and regulates women's bodies in a manner which does not undermine his claim to autonomy. Secondly, insofar as he can maintain this apparent unity through incorporation, he is not required to acknowledge difference (p. 82-83). Besides, according to Gatens, from its classical articulation in Greek philosophy, only a body deemed capable of reason and sacrifice can be admitted into the political as an active member (p. 83). Seen incapable of fulfilling the appropriate forfeit (for instance, being incapable of performing military service to protect the political body from an attack), women are excluded from the political body and active citizenship (p. 83). Thus, women are defined by mere nature and mere corporeality and they have no place in the political body except to serve it at its most basic and material level.

In Descartes' (2006) work, mind becomes superior to the body and this allows for the interiorization of the power and subjection of the body (p. 149). With Hobbes' theory, a greater power that controls and subjectifies all bodies occurs. The idea of submitting oneself to a higher power and associating body with negative features deepen the already existing alienation and belittlement of women, as women are associated with the body. Although they do not mention it in their theories, objectification of the women's body and women's belittlement gets rationalized by Descartes' and Hobbes' theories besides resonating the assumption that women are emotional and bodily



creatures. The control over women's body is more strict than men's and by inhibiting the right of abortion and birth control, women's bodies are simplified down to machines that reproduce. Abstraction and social disciplining are to such an extent that, women are not considered as "individuals". Although these theories cultivated bourgeoisie and subjugated women, nevertheless, a feminine consciousness developed out of bourgeoisie's own conditions. Descartes' argument for equal rational abilities among individuals and for the universal doubt rather than generally accepted truth enabled women to become involved in spheres of activity from which they were excluded. In other words, his views led to the legitimation of female rationality and empowered women to speak up.

Recognition of print as a medium of mass communication and the increase in the number of books and periodicals in the 17th century along with the Cartesian emphasis on the equal rational abilities among individuals, allowed women to participate in the intellectual atmosphere in England. Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673), Duchess of Newcastle, Sarah Fyge Field Egerton (1670-1722), Mary Astell (1666 – 1731) and Judith Drake (1670s-1723) were the first women in England who were bolstered by the ideas of Cartesianism and who publicly claimed that women needed to be included in formal education. Cavendish claimed rationality for herself and her female contemporaries in England in her book *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* published in 1655. In her work *The Female Advocate, or, An Answer to a Late Satyr Against Pride, Lust and Inconstancy of Woman*, anonymously published in 1686, Egerton (1687) also claimed that a male and a female, both of the same species, are both indued with the same rational souls. Mary Astell proposed the foundation of an educational institution for girls and women of wealthy families in her work *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694). In 1696, Judith Drake published *An Essay in the Defence of Female Sex* arguing that women were in possession of the same rational as men.

However, it is necessary to remember that the discussion of parity or equal rights for men and women was limited to a small upper-class elite. Aristocratic and upper middle class women were the ones who were referred to when women's rights were discussed.

The idea that a farmer's wife or a maid might need emancipation was not the object of discussion. Arguments advanced about women's right mostly evolved around the right for formal education and that women had the same capacity for talent and creativity. As Karl Heinz Göller (1983) argues in "The Emancipation of Women in Eighteenth Century English Literature", in the 17th and 18th centuries, much of the discussions about equal rights and equal status for women originated in the periodical *Athenian Mercury* (p. 81). The question whether it would be proper for women to be educated was one of the big controversies discussed in the periodical, as while the editors suggested that women ought to be learned, the degree and kind of the learning were questionable (p. 82). Additionally, in *Sophia Pamphlets*, published in 1739, it was discussed that the inequality of women could only be the product of upbringing, education and socialization (p. 83). Later, enlightenment intellectuals, like Jean Jacques Rousseau (2005), redefined social institutions like family, the state and education, according to reason. His book *Emile* was devoted to define the roles of women as supporters of men. In response to that, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft (1996) insisted that women were rational creatures as well as moral and intellectual equals to men. She stressed the right and the need for women to be educated like men in order to be emancipated.

After the theoretical discussions and debates about the rights of women in the 17th and 18th centuries and technological innovations in the 19th century, the exclusion of women from public sphere started to change, yet the question of the place of women in society was still a topic of debate. Ann Oakley (1974) argues in her book *Housewife* that the most important and enduring consequence of industrialization for women has been the emergence of the modern role of housewife as the dominant mature feminine role (p. 32). Industrialization in the 19th century affected the roles of men as well, but while it enlarged the world outside the home for men, for women it meant an involution of the world into the space of the home (p. 32). As a result of the industrial revolution that began about 1750, the domestic economy in which women and men worked together failed

and the population grew and became more mobile, work became more specialized and communications expanded (p. 33). In this new order, work became separated from family life and women became economically dependent housewives. Thus, 19th century, namely the Victorian era, was characterized as the domestic age. In this age, the ideal woman and wife, the "Angel in the House", was expected to be devoted to her house and husband, be submissive, passive, pious and virtuous. However, the decrease of domestic economy together with bourgeois economy's mass production, that benefited from the mechanization of human beings, inevitably led to a spatial change of production and created an opportunity for women to work outside the house. While upper and middle class women were not allowed to work, working class women were not restricted in this way. As a result of the mechanization of the production, the first impact of the industrial revolution was felt in textile production which was an industry dominated by women as workforce. Women who used to produce textile at home as wage earners became factory employees after the mechanization of the production (p. 35).

This change meant long hours of labor, lower wages than men and extra effort at home, as women continued to work at home after work. The emergence of these new conditions turned women's bodies into work power and it also created a new form of social control over their bodies which was done through work hours and rate of wage. However, this process developed new faculties in women as they confronted the repressive and alienating power of the bourgeoisie and the state. Women who used to work at home and support the home economy before now had to endure heavy working conditions and repress their desires, needs and emotions and got alienated from their bodies. Besides being seen as reproduction machines they were now also seen as cheap workforce. But these harsh working and living conditions represented the birth of a new woman in capitalist society. Women created awareness out of this subjugating and unequal characteristics of bourgeois society and waged a war against it in purpose of getting the right of education and the right to vote. The suffrage movement that started in 1860s and continued until 1928 occurred as a challenge against these conditions as well as Vic-

torian and Edwardian gender roles, and demanded the right to vote and equality with men. In “The Making of Suffrage History”, Sandra Stanley Holton (2000) provides an account of the suffrage history by predicating the cause of the movement to the legal disabilities of women, especially of wives under coverture by emphasizing the importance of the changes that accompanied the Industrial Revolution (p. 17). It also meant a definition of a new relation with the body which led to deep transformations occurring in this domain.

In the 19th century women started to oppose to this abstraction and objectification and in the 20th century different approaches were developed to theorize the body. Social and political theory put great emphasis on mind and until recently, body was the neglected part of the mind / body dichotomy. According to Elizabeth Grosz (1995) the growing interest in the body has been motivated by an attempt to devise a non-dualistic subjectivity (p. 83). The physical existence of the body is correlated to its social existence which brings us to different theoretical approaches. In modern, Western capitalist society body has become a text, a system of signs to be deciphered and “read” by others as expressive of a subject’s psychic interior (p. 34). The body is seen as a storehouse of inscriptions and messages that construct body’s movements into “behavior” that has socially identifiable meanings and functions in a social system. For Elizabeth Grosz, one of these approaches is “inscriptive” method which conceives the body as a surface on which social law, morality and values are inscribed (p. 33). While psychological and phenomenological approaches focus on the body as it is experienced and inscribed meaning, the inscriptive approach is concerned with the process by which the body is transformed, disciplined, and institutionalized. In *Discipline and Punish*, while criticizing the modern society, Michel Foucault (1995) has argued that an unprecedented discipline is directed against the body which invades and seeks to regulate it. Regarding the body as an object and target of power, the body is manipulated, shaped, trained until it obeys, responds, becomes skillful, increases its forces and turns into a “docile body” (p. 136). For Foucault, discipline is the art of human body (p. 137) which defines “how one may have a hold over other’s bodies, not only so that they

may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency one determines" (p. 138). Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, docile bodies. Women are subjected to many forms of discipline and this partitions time, space and movements of their bodies. In her article titled "Foucault, Femininity and Patriarchal Power", Sandra Lee Bartky (1997) describes these forms of disciplines and she considers them under three categories: Those that aim to produce a body of a specific size and general configuration; those that bring forth from this body a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and movements; and those directed toward the display of this body as an ornamented surface (p. 132). Women subject themselves to these disciplinary powers to be up to date and they practice this discipline on and against their bodies as a result of which they become self-policing subjects committed to a relentless self-surveillance (p. 149).

The other approach relates to the lived experiences of the body. With her book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (2011) becomes the pioneer in theorizing the lived experience of the female body. She recognizes that "to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world" (p. 39). Thus, bodies are never simply *human* bodies or *social* bodies. The sex assigned to the body (and bodies are assigned a single sex) makes a great difference to the kind of social subject and the social norms inscribed on it (Grosz, 1995, p. 84). Beauvoir's (2011) recognition of the roles assigned to the women's body provided a starting point to reformulate the discussions developed in feminist theory in 1970s by providing an account in which the material and cultural embodied selves are intertwined. In her book, Beauvoir provides phenomenology of the lived experience through different stages of woman's life. She highlights the fact that girls experience their body in a different way than boys in their childhood. While boys are encouraged to move freely, girls are encouraged to treat their bodies as passive, delicate objects (p. 306). Girls learn to please others. Thus girls' education and surrounding prepare them to live their bodies as objects for another's gaze (p. 307). As a result, women accept their bodies as objects and

internalize the gaze. Hence, Beauvoir's account of sexual difference created a new way to understand the sexed subjects. In her book *What is a Woman?* Toril Moi (1999) contends with this existential term "lived experience". For her "lived experience" designates the whole of a person's subjectivity and describes the way an individual makes sense of her situation, actions and interaction with the world (p. 63). This denounces the objective way of looking at the world. Thus, each body, being a subjective entity, is within some specific situation that determines the point of view. For Moi, to claim that body is in a subjective situation means that a woman's body is bound up with the way she uses her freedom and with the other situations she meets (p. 65). The historical background and theoretical approaches to the body politics discussed above shed light on the social background of the novels and enable me to show the socially inscribed meanings that Miriam tries to defy while focusing on her own lived experience.

### **Embodiment in *Pilgrimage***

In *Pilgrimage*, Dorothy Richardson portrays the life of Miriam Henderson in England between 1891-1912. Although the novel is pushed to the modernist periphery, with a narratological adventure, Richardson employs a different narration technique that is also used by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf termed as "stream of consciousness" that enables her to masterfully depict both social and psychological perspectives deftly. By focusing mainly on Miriam's mind and her train of thoughts triggered by male-dominated society, Richardson creates a feminist discourse. Centering Miriam's questionings around social, political, economic issues, she presents the conditions that justify women's social subordination and defies them one by one. As such, this narration technique highlights a locus where a woman articulates her mind that separates herself from the social practices of the society. This paves a way for her to appreciate her body and defy the limits and fixities that define women. It is a text which includes and intertwines various approaches to the body. Given that it is the feminist perspective of a single woman, Miriam

Henderson, and criticism of the prevailing paradigms on women and femininity, Miriam's account of the events opens up a different vantage point. In what follows I will analyze how the discourse in the novel both rejected an essentialist point of view and formulated a feminist discourse of its own.

Miriam Henderson, born and raised in a society fiercely loyal to its traditions and customs, grows up by learning to accept the inferior position of women in the society. However, as she becomes an adult and starts to work as a student teacher<sup>3</sup> in Germany, Miriam realizes that she does not share the belief that those characteristics defined as women's essence are shared in common by all women. Due to her father's bankruptcy, she willingly chooses to work as a teacher and goes Germany, a complete foreign place for her. Even though she has a peculiar personality and mind, Germany is the place where possibilities of change open up for her. Working as a teacher in Germany, Miriam realizes that all societies are structured to pose social constraints on women. Although the way these constraints imposed on women can change, the problem remains the same. With this critical mind, she cannot accommodate herself to the German ways and returns to England to teach in London. Her working experiences provide her a space to observe the social life of London and meet different women and lifestyles. After teaching at boarding schools, she works as a governess in a private house which enables her to observe rich, bourgeois marriage. Upon these experiences, realizing that the social roles imposed on two sexes are not equal and that women's education is not formulated to enable them think freely or have a job, Miriam changes her job and starts to work as a dental assistant. With this change she has more free time, has her own rooms and feels more independent. It is after this social change that Miriam's mind focuses on the subordination of women more eagerly, and she starts to question the masculinity of the knowledge, normalization of the disciplining of the female body and women's exclusion from social and public life. She then changes her life accordingly.

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<sup>3</sup> Student teacher: a trainee teacher.

The narrative technique of the novels contributes to the presentation of the reasonings of Miriam. Richardson (1967) defies male-dominated discourse and embraces a feminist perspective in her novels. While criticizing realist writers such as Honoré de Balzac and Arnold Bennett, she explains her endeavor in the foreword of *Pilgrimage* with these words:

Since all these novelists happen to be men, the present writer, proposing at this moment to write a novel and looking round for a contemporary pattern, was faced with the choice between following one of her regiments and attempting to produce a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism (p. 9).

Richardson wishes to present an alternative to what men had already written and did not feel her writing to be less worthy than that of a text produced by a man. She argues that women had been confined by the rules of the world and the writing created by men, and deliberately tries to break away from that confinement (p. 10). Deborah Parsons (2007) emphasizes that Richardson resents the definitions of femininity by male writers and the social and economic obstacles facing the woman (p. 82). To achieve her goal, Richardson delves into Miriam's internal world more than the external world and she attempts to capture her perceptual conscious experience as it occurs, which is shown with her thoughts that jump quickly from one subject to another. In the "Introduction" to *Pilgrimage*, Walter Allen (1967) defines Richardson's lifelong task as rendering current existence as reflected in the consciousness of her heroine (p. 3). Besides, Richardson herself embraced all the criticisms accusing her of being a feminist, of failing to perceive the value of the distinctively masculine intelligence and for the difficulty of reading her book for being unpunctuated. She aspired to reflect the consciousness of her heroine and thought that feminine prose should properly be unpunctuated, moving from point to point without formal obstructions (p. 12). She confirmed avoiding the stereotyped systems of signs and showed that she didn't seek approval.

This narrative form reveals the psyche of the female character, as one of the purposes of the novel for Richardson is to bring for-



ward the female psyche and redefine it in the novel. This redefinition is drawn with a self-conscious, independent and very individualistic character that suits to the modernist aura of the period and her technique enabled her narrative to connect to the feminine voice. Miriam obtained her voice through taking women, patriarchal social codes and knowledges as the object of her questionings after which she formulated her own ideas, rejected the heterosexual codes of society and male paradigms. As it struck Virginia Woolf (1986), this technique enabled Richardson to express states of being as well as states of doing which still continues to strike its reader (p. 10).

Apart from the narrative technique, the *spatio-temporal* relations of the body is an important element in rendering bodily experiences of the female character in the novels. The images of the light, changing seasons and the long narration of Miriam's life add a profound temporal element to the novel while her experiences in a different country and her spatial occupations in different parts of England locate the body in different contexts and create a space for rethinking and questioning. In this sense, the novels have various spatio-temporal features and Miriam's teaching experiences in Germany and London underline a sense of confinement. In Germany she is confined to the school she teaches at, can only go out with her students under the supervision of the head of the school, Frau-lein Pfaff; when she goes out the route she has to take and the time she has to be back at the school are strictly fixed. But here she has at least the chance of comparing English education system to the German's. She realizes that here the girls are not only thinking about music and other feminine duties but they thought about themselves too (*Pointed Roofs*, p. 45). Although her bodily movement is strictly controlled in Waldstrasse, her experiences as a teacher in Germany bring the sense of going forward and forward through space in light (p. 50). This boarding school is where she starts to feel strong and independent (p. 56). Germany is the place where Miriam's intellectual self-regulation is triggered as she has a chance to be far from her family and the social codes she grew up with. She has to stay in someone else's property, does not own her room or a private space for herself, but nevertheless this confinement enables her to recognize how

her body is controlled. In the sermons of the school Miriam feels like she knew all the women she saw; the way, with little personal differences, they would talk, the way they would smile and take things for granted (p. 70). This is an awareness about how society eliminates the differences and how it cannot tolerate an unexpected behaviour and force her to pretend. It is this recognition that leads Miriam to take on a different role and decide to become a radical, refusing to be preached by men (p. 71). Although remaining indoors and being confined to a place make her feel like she is positioned in space, like an object, the spatial and cultural changes that comes with Germany render Miriam to refuse singular reality dominated by masculinity and help her to recognize that she has to be different. This is a complex process in which she understands that the space that is physically available for her is bigger than the space she uses and inhabits. The space beyond that is not available for her to use and this creates a duality for feminine spatiality as the space of “here” and the space of “yonder” (Young, 2005, p. 40). The space of yonder is a space in which someone could move, but not her. Thus, it exists for her, but only for her to look into rather than freely move into (p. 41).

Teaching at Wordsworth House, a boarding school in London, is a period in which Miriam has time to observe social practices, understand the given attributes and create time for herself to read. This time she is more critical, and questions the position of women and the role of education and religion endorsing this position. For her, education is a process in which social codes and norms are inscribed to the body and relying on education means leaving the mind open for whatever the system chooses to say and giving up your conscience (*Backwater*, p. 258). Faith is an abnormal condition of the mind for her. Meanwhile, her intellectual level increases as she creates time for reading novels secretly in the school. After a while she ventures to change her outside walking route and feels like an intruder as she is outside instead of being at school. Finding out the location of the library and having access to the books is the result of this venture which changes her entire life. She discovers that she reads books as a psychological study of the author and that books are not stories printed on paper, but rather they are real people which makes her prefer

books to people (*Honeycomb*, p. 384-385). It is when she is alone reading she realizes the size of her hands and their lack of feminine expressiveness (*Backwater*, p. 283). Recognizing the difference of her hands from other women's is one of the most important parts in the novel in which she realizes the message socially inscribed on hands that she lacks. Her bodily difference makes her sad as she thinks she is a bad unsimple woman who is heading to be a "blue-stocking" (p. 284). Her hands are her body parts that she focuses at this point of her life. In a short holiday in Bristol with her sisters and their friends Miriam gets close to a man. While walking alone with Mr. Parrow he holds her hand and she is really self-aware about her hands. Though she wants to drag her hand, after a quick thought she resists being a prude and the hand gives her confidence (p. 328). Her hand becomes the object of her focus which is followed by her eyes later on. With this incident, Miriam becomes aware of herself as an embodied entity and she realizes that she is composed of different parts all of which contribute to her formation as who she is.

<sup>2</sup>Bluestocking<sup>2</sup> which refers to intellectual women, is an important characterisation which sheds light on Miriam's identity and its negative perception by other people. Because of being a person not in agreement with accepted beliefs, because of her reading habit and her extraordinary attitude towards life, Miriam's sisters fear that Miriam is a bluestocking. Being a bluestocking is connected to being a willful subject as well. Used as an offensive expression for women, this phrase explains a lot about how women are dismissed from society when they do not fit in the social norms and about Miriam's feminist experiences. It refers to willfulness which is discussed by Sara Ahmed (2017) in *Living a Feminist Life*. Willfulness is used to explain how subjects become the source of their unhappiness and to describe someone or someone's stance as willful is used as a technique of dismissal (p. 54). Then, to be willful is to be willing to announce your disagreement, and to put yourself behind it (p. 54). It is a paradox of life; becoming what you are judged of being and it is an effort not to go with the flow, which becomes a style of politics (p. 57). Loneliness is what willful people are threatened with if they persist in being or doing what they are being or doing (p. 57). Miriam is

judged for being a bluestocking and going against the grain. As she persists in being who she is, she bears the consequences by accepting to lead a solitary life and being in conflict with people and society. As a bluestocking and a willful subject she renounces the social codes and people representing these codes.

From the beginning of the novel, Miriam acts like a willful subject without being aware of its political connotations. Her questionings regarding the relationship of men and women, about marriage and the lifelong process of getting ready for marriage without any chance of personal improvement or freedom imply her willfulness. Her teaching experience and job as a dental assistant as a woman who solely depends on herself are other reasons of her being regarded as a bluestocking. However, rather than being a compliment, it is referred as a bad sign; a sign which points out that she will not be married in the near future or she will not lead a conventional life seen appropriate for a woman. Besides, most of the time she is aware of being accused of her own unhappiness, being regarded as the reason of her loneliness. She is not considered a feminine woman for not committing to the social codes that define women. Without openly declaring her disagreement, Miriam experiences the biases of the society which, in later points, leads her to accept not being feminine and being called bluestocking. She becomes what she is judged by and she dedicates her life to stop the flow. Her lifestyle becomes her weapon in defying the patriarchal rules and she realizes that to be willful and stubborn means to lead a lonely life. Therefore, throughout the novel, Miriam prepares herself to this idea.

For the most part, narration focalizes on Miriam's observation which means according to her gaze upon objects and people. Especially in the first three books of the series, Miriam's stream of consciousness focuses on other people's body parts, specifically on the eyes. The important thing is that other people are not seen as a whole. This gaze means objectification of the body, but especially of the female body. Feminine subject posits her movement in space as the motion that is *looked at* which causes women to experience their body as something to be *looked at* and *acted upon* (Young, 2005, p. 39). Thus the gazes Miriam sends and receives and the emphasis on the sense

of sight show that she rejects being objectified by having the gaze. She denies being a body that is acted upon. Thus, this perspective profoundly affects her consciousness that creates the sense of a separate self situated outside the environment she is looking at.

Iris Marion Young argues that the space available to women is a constricted and imaginative space which restricts women's movement (p. 33). Therefore, women tend to remain in one place more than men do; women tend to wait in a place and react to other people's approaches and situations. Women often approach a physical engagement with timidity, uncertainty, and hesitancy and they lack trust in their bodies (p. 33). At the beginning of the novel, Miriam's approach to her body is similar to this. She is not confident, she seems hesitant about doing things in front of other people, such as playing the piano and singing, and is confined to indoors. However, after her mother's death, Miriam's enclosure to the interior places ends too, as her mother is the last bond with her family. Instead of small, dark, old rooms full of objects and judgemental people Miriam spends time in the streets of London and enters into the public space. The end of her enclosure and inclusion to the public space increases her feminist awareness, as she starts to question the masculine dominance and subordination of women. She deliberately goes on to streets, cafes of London in which women are not welcomed. She starts smoking, which is not an approved behavior and as a step further she smokes in front of other men. Smoking turns into a public defiance of the freemasonry of women and she deems herself as a "new woman" who is not in the crowd of other women (*Honeycomb*, p. 436). After these changes, occupying the same room with men leads her to bear an aggressive attitude towards them. While being in the streets brings a sense of invisibility, being in a room with people always reminds her of her body (*Deadlock*, p. 72).

In *The Tunnel*, the dialogue between Miriam and her friends, Mag and Jan, is an important part that exemplifies the transgression of boundaries. These three women are extraordinary examples of their times and this becomes quite apparent when they talk about riding bicycle at night at Russell Square with knickers only. Let alone riding bicycle being quite an extraordinary change for women, doing

this alone at night is something revolutionary. Hearing the adventure of the girls with knickers, Miriams' reaction is "Oh, the freedom of movement" (p. 148) which reveals that women cannot be physically comfortable and wear something light. Their clothes, their shoes, the hours they are allowed to be in the street and the places they are allowed to be, all restrict women's spatial movement which cause them to behave like objects positioned in the space. They do not own the space, it is as if the space owns them.

The unfairly exercised control over women's bodies denies them freedom of using public space whenever they want. The threat of rape, sexual abuse and violence prevent women from being streets at night. This threat is reflected in the novel when Miriam starts to feel freer in the street and forgets about men. At these moments, usually a man intercepts her path. For instance, in *The Tunnel* when she rides a bicycle in the country alone, she recognizes a man in the distance which scares her terribly (p. 231-2). To understand Miriam's state of mind, looking at the importance of riding a bicycle in Victorian and early 20th century women will be useful. Riding a bicycle was an enormous cultural and political change in the late 1890s as it became an emblem for women's rights and was considered as a step further for the equality with men. In her work "Cycling and Women's Rights in the Suffrage Press", Christine Neejer (2011) states that riding a bicycle was regarded as a beginning of a change for women of the restrictive Victorian society as the Victorian women rarely exercised and were poor in condition and they wore exaggerating clothes that concealed the flesh (p. 43). Women's clothes greatly restricted their physical capacity and the social codes required women to don in demure dresses. Furthermore, women did not have access to practical means of transportation which they could use on their own, the only option being a horse which most of the women couldn't afford (p. 44). Riding bicycles, on the other hand, provided them with a transportation means easy to manipulate which was only restricted with their heavy clothes and strict conventions. In spite of all the social condemnation, women persevered. As Neejer points out, it was a change in women's social life; first the clothes started to change to enable women to ride on a bike easily and they became able

to leave the house and exert themselves physically (p. 44). Keeping this in mind, Miriam is a woman who emancipates herself by using a bicycle and this experience makes her feel more relaxed, free and self-sufficient. Just as she feels liberated, seeing a man in such a lonely place scares her as riding a bike is not an approved behavior for a lady and how he will react to her is a mystery to her. It also pinpoints that every place belongs to men; women are only allowed to use them, but they cannot own them. That's why, the instant she sees a man, her sense of independence and freedom end. Even though Miriam yearns to lead a man's life (*The Tunnel*, p. 230), this is not possible for a woman. So, as she says earlier in that book, "She was somehow between two worlds, neither quite sheltered nor quite free" (p. 163).

As Sandra Reeve (2011) contends in her book *Nine Ways of Seeing a Body*, the way a person moves and behaves reveals their attitude and their preferred way of accessing the world as movement integrates thoughts with feelings and physical sensations (p. 12). Miriam's gaze on people, her free movements in the street (until a man intercepts her), her egoistic, individualistic behaviour and her stream of consciousness mostly triggered by the objects she sees and people she talks to, are all integrated with her feelings and sensations. Thus, in *Pilgrimage* we gradually see her development as an embodied movement with an independent woman's voice. Miriam's questioning eye, strong sense of individualism and nonconforming thoughts on corporeality are productive ways of depicting a body as socially constructed. Miriam thinks in an aggressive way and men are not her only targets. Miriam finds pretentious women irritating and harshly criticizes the ones who do not think and spare room for ideas (*Honeycomb*, p. 404). She does not admire a woman just for the sake of her sex, she despises the ones who share a common ideology with men and have peace with the characteristics society attributed to them. This is the reason she is reluctant to take care of the sick nurse of Baker Street, Miss Dear. When the clergyman who wants to take care of Miss Dear asks Miriam to help Miss Dear passing through her ordeal, Miriam thinks that he is mistaken in calling on her for help. She believes that "domestic care and the care of aged and the

sick, and other nerve-racking, never-ending things are dumped on women”. However, while women are openly praised for these tasks they are secretly despised for their unselfishness (*The Tunnel*, p. 279). Though clergyman, Mr. Taunton, is a scholar Miriam finds her time more valuable than his and rejects the tasks assigned to women (p. 279). This is not an insistence on the equality of the sexes. She embraces her difference and most of the time she even finds her mind and other women’s superior to men. This is a defiance of masculine definition of women, which is seen in *Clear Horizon* also where Miriam tells Hypo Wilson that “the formation within myself of another human being, and so on ad infinitum [...] is neither the beginning nor the end of the feminine being” (p. 331). For her, reproduction is not something that could define women and their bodily functions. Although she refers to gender with the use of “feminine being”, it is not aligned with the conservative / dominant opinions on gender or womanhood of the period. Yet, her ideas regarding the superiority of women due to their biological characteristics are quite essentialist.

According to her, marriage is an institution no woman needs to be in because men marry a *wife*, not any particular woman; they marry a smart, worldly woman for their profession, or a thoroughly healthy female who will keep a home in the country for them and have children and pour out their tea, grow things in the garden (*The Tunnel*, p. 279). Her ideas about marriage leads her to decide upon lifelong loneliness. Women who have relations with men are not themselves; they play a part all the time (*Interim*, p. 321). It is loneliness and silence that can only bring happiness and realization for her. The social incompatibility and loneliness remind her of her past and what she has learnt from the fragments of forgotten experiences. She does not want to be same with other women and by rejecting marriage, she rejects the social norms of society; she rejects the “honorable” position of being a wife and a mother. By this, she not only subjects social practices to feminist critique, but also rejects the patriarchal representation of her body.

In *Dawn’s Left Hand* Miriam meets a French woman, Amabel, in a woman’s club in London who illuminates a different side of identity and reveals her lesbian desires. Miriam feels vibrant and alight



from head to feet and she starts to question if this emerging quality is the very root of her being (p. 192). Amabel draws Miriam into a thrilling attraction:

'Yes, you are English, that is the strange thing,' she remarked in a polite, judicial tone, 'and so *different*,' she added, head sideways, with an adoring smile and a low voice thrilling with emotion. Her hands came forward, one before the other, outstretched, very gently approaching, and while Miriam read in the girl's eyes the reflection of her own motionless yielding, the hands moved apart and it was the lovely face that touched her first, suddenly and softly dropped upon her knees that now were gently clasped on either side by the small hands (p. 190).

Miriam withholds the desire to stroke Amabel's hair and though for an instant she bravely determines to reveal herself and keeps nothing back, later she dislikes the idea and abandons the thought (p. 191). Although this epiphany reflects a lesbian desire and a courage to be herself as she is, Miriam does not pursue her desires as it would mean opening herself up for complex yet crucial relations. Miriam's sexual desires indicate Richardson's attempt to change the mindsets and accepted heteronormativity. Instead of a reductive reading of feminist lives and texts, Richardson creates a personal narrative that questions male and female dichotomy and adds another dimension to her novel. However, it is important to remember that, lesbian desire is not a thematic structuring device throughout the novel as Kristin Bluemel (2003) argues in *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism: Dorothy Richardson's "Pilgrimage"*. In *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson* Joanne Winning (2000) states that these desires are more like representing the disembodied voices and fractured identities of modernity and modern consciousness (p. 11). Winning considers *Pilgrimage* as a text with a dual purpose: "merging the project of rendering this modern fragmentation into language with the need to find a "new", autonomous language (p. 11). Thus, Richardson puts the "unspeakable" into writing and into language. Miriam, who yearns to lead a free life and who has sexual desires for a woman can be read as a sign of Richardson's questioning of the dualism of male and female. She is contesting the boundaries and the biological facts by challenging the body definitions based on genitalia. By trying to

lead an independent and a single life through which she can focus on her own body and by being attracted to both men and women, Miriam is deliberately defying the binary frames. She does not consider her body as biologically given and she redefines her body by herself without reenacting socially described bodily performances.

## Conclusion

By the end of the novel, Miriam decides to write her autobiography. Writing functions as a self-reflexive act with which *March Moonlight* closes the narrative (Winning, 2000, p. 15). Miriam uses her own life story and her own bodily experiences as the material of her book which, on its own, address political and social implications. In Miriam's stream of consciousness the reader observes the spatial division of self and the other, as narrative focalizes on once at Miriam's mind and then to her surroundings, outside world. Richardson describes Miriam's lived experience felt in the flesh and she depicts her character's state of mind profoundly. Additionally, throughout the account of Miriam's life, we see that her embodiment is depicted as a mode of being in the world, it is lived, rather than superficially narrated. It creates a meaning of itself, different from the perception of men in terms of her way of living and even her way of forming, expressing her ideas about everyday issues, philosophical texts, literature, politics, etc.

Miriam always faces the material facts of her body and its relation to a given environment. Her body has certain feeling capacities and she functions in certain ways; her size, age, health, training, education and cultural background make her capable of strength and movement in relation to her environment in specific ways. That is why while she chooses not to marry and be independent by earning her own life and taking her own decisions, her sisters end up in completely different ways. This description of lived female experience can reveal that differently situated women may have different embodied experiences which can relate the analysis of embodiment and gender in the novel to the concept of "lived experience" (Young, 2005, p. 12).

As Toril Moi (1999) states in *What is a Woman?* : “To claim that the body is a situation is to acknowledge that the meaning of a woman’s body is bound up with the way she uses her freedom” (p. 65), Richardson also creates a new kind of life, the life of the “New Woman” of the early 1920s in England who embraces her feminine identity, and creates her way of thinking, her way of acting and defies sex and gender dichotomy. She creates this thinking about the embodiment of the female body in relation to a thousand years of history, and traditions that control and restrict women’s lives tightly. She places the body between a lived interiority and a sociopolitical exteriority that produces interiority through the inscription of the body’s outer surface. For Miriam Henderson and for the society biased against feminine identity, this stance entails a lonely life. Miriam Henderson is aware of this threat and refuses to be intimidated by it. Thus, she accepts to lead a lonely life without being intimidated by what or who she might lose. By refusing society’s appeals, Miriam acts like a “killjoy” and happiness is not a principle she upholds. She refuses to keep silence not to make other people unhappy and her acceptance to live alone is a principle of her feminist manifesto. For Sara Ahmed (2017) a feminist manifesto exposes the violence of patriarchal order and the machinery of gender (p. 252). Considered in this light, *Pilgrimage* can be read as the feminist manifesto of Dorothy Richardson.

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