

## **Dorothy Richardson: A Close Reading**

Gabriella West



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Dorothy Richardson (1873-1957) was an English novelist who pioneered the "stream of consciousness" technique in her long novel "Pilgrimage," which was published in 13 volumes over the 1920s and 1930s. Shy and from a humble background, Richardson's work is now overlooked, but in her time she was considered a peer of other famous modernist writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

This essay was originally written for a graduate-degree class in modernist women writers with the poet and teacher Kathleen Fraser, who called it "an excellent paper full of careful, insightful analysis."

"Dorothy Richardson: A Close Reading" focuses on Richardson's unusual heroine, Miriam, and her consciousness of herself as different because of her sharp intelligence. Miriam is a sometimes male-identified woman struggling in a man's world, full of ambivalence about other women (and men!), yet never losing her female identity and way of observing life. As she moves from youth to middle age, Miriam's highest priority is always her own independence.

As this study concludes, "Miriam is one of the women that Woolf wrote about in 'A Room of One's Own.' Confident yet insecure, self-doubting yet full of herself, she is emblematic of an uncertain, tentative modern consciousness struggling to escape from the solid, formidable, male-dominated world of the nineteenth century."



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