

Eveline Kilian, **Momente innerweltlicher Transzendenz. Die Augenblickserfahrung in Dorothy Richardsons Romanzyklus *Pilgrimage* und ihr ideengeschichtlicher Kontext.** [Moments of Inward Transcendence. The Experience of the Moment in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and Its Roots in the History of Ideas.] Studien zur Englischen Philologie, 34. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997, ix + 361 pp., DM 164.00.

The purpose of this study is twofold. The first part presents a self-contained argument that elucidates the concept of the Moment in its historical dimension and contributes some new findings to the understanding of the relationship between Modernism and Romanticism. At the same time, this part provides a framework in which the various forms of the Moment in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* can be meaningfully discussed (Part II). It enables us to place this novel firmly in the context of Modernism and to highlight its significance for Modernist thought and writing in Britain.

Section I of this book is grounded in the history of ideas, more specifically in the history of concepts, and is based on Michael Titzmann's model of cultural communication. Titzmann's notion of a discursive organization of cultural knowledge allows us to consider the different modes of the Moment with respect to their distribution among various discourses, and to describe more precisely the changing conceptions of the Moment over time in terms of discursive shifts and the dominance of certain discourses over others at a given point in history.

Two general tendencies can be observed: (1) The concept of the Moment participates in the process of secularization that has influenced Western thought since the Renaissance and that has resulted in a concomitant epistemological shift, which has increasingly located the production of truth and meaning within the subject itself. This also implies the progressive assimilation of an experiential mode formerly grounded in a religious framework into other kinds of discourses (philosophical, psychological and aesthetic). (2) But despite this move towards the subject, the Moment nevertheless retains its power to evoke an instant of metaphysical or quasi-metaphysical experience. This point becomes particularly relevant with respect to the Moment in Romantic theories of art as well as in Modernist thought and constitutes a major parallel between these two periods, best exemplified in the functional equivalence between Bergson's concept of intuition (*intuition*) and Coleridge's notion of the imagination. Both of these are directed against the mechanistic views of Association Psychology and its analytic divisiveness and favour a holistic approach to knowledge instead, which is the precondition to a privileged access to a deeper reality granted in moments of heightened awareness.

The historical survey covers three major stages in the development outlined: Firstly, St. Augustine's *Confessions* and Christian mysticism, in which the moment of revelation is firmly situated in a theological context; secondly, Romanticism (esp. Coleridge and Wordsworth), in which the experience of a transcendent God gives way to a pantheist view, and in which the manifestations of the material world, as well as the mental and psychic disposition of the perceiving subject come into focus; more specifically the emphasis is put on the creative faculties of the artist; and thirdly, Walter Pater's aestheticism, which professes a view of life composed of aesthetic moments completely dissociated from any metaphysical framework whatsoever, and which marks the final step in the process of secularization. It becomes evident, however, that this position is difficult to sustain and that it causes severe problems in view of a seemingly anthropologically founded human need for some higher and binding form of meaning, a conflict that already becomes apparent in Pater's novel *Marius the Epicurean*. The Moment as it is conceived of in Modernism can be seen as an attempt to compensate for this loss of a transcendental order and thus to overcome the aporia inherent in the aestheticist stance. It is invested with the potential to achieve some kind of transsubjective knowledge through an act of consciousness and to surmount at least for a short instant, the

experience of relativity, fragmentation and isolation. This function of the Moment is exemplified particularly with reference to Virginia Woolf's work.

Moments of heightened intensity form an integral part of the protagonist's inner development in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*. They function as a protective shield against unpleasant attacks from external reality, they help Miriam Henderson to re-direct her life in crucial situations, and they finally become her most important mode of experience and aesthetic expression. On a thematic level, these moments successively connect notions of identity, memory, art and the protagonist's own literary production, thus forming a network of interdependences spanning the whole of the novel. In terms of structure, a web of cross-references is established via these moments throughout the text, thus corroborating their importance on the level of *discourse*. This repetition of moments furthermore stresses the idea of simultaneity rather than chronological movement or sequentiality, a preference that corresponds to Miriam Henderson's vertical exploration of the various layers of her consciousness, which takes precedence over the horizontal progression of external events.

An overall analysis of these moments of heightened awareness in *Pilgrimage* shows them to be compatible with the various functions the Moment has taken on in Modernism. It operates in the psychic realm and in the field of artistic production and reception and serves as a substitute for the loss of metaphysical truths by providing a flash of authentic and significant, albeit subjective insight into reality and one's own self. The predominant feature of the Moment in *Pilgrimage* resides in its function to stabilize the protagonist's feeling of identity and sameness. This is effected by Miriam's sense of an inner centre of her self, which she can reach in these privileged moments and which is related to her first conscious childhood memory of the garden at her parents' house at Babington. To this centre all other charged moments and significant experiences are linked in turn and thus authenticated and invested with meaning. This reveals a concept of identity that assumes a fixed core of being, which remains stable and immutable despite external changes. In the context of Modernist thought it can also be read as counteracting the danger of fragmentation and dissolution of personality.

A similar process can be observed when we look at the modes of memory delineated in *Pilgrimage*. The particular arrangement of events in Miriam's memory suggests that a kind of filtering or selection mechanism shifts unpleasant memories into the background and makes pleasurable ones much more easily accessible, particularly her memory of the garden at Babington, which recurs more frequently than any other. This exemplifies yet another act of personal world-making by an autonomous and self-contained subject producing its own sense of well-being and a unified self. The specific quality of these memories contributes to this impression. They are modelled on Proust's concept of *mémoire involontaire* and enable the subject to relive the past moment with complete sensuous immediacy. Thus the past supplants the present, the boundaries of time and space are transgressed. Past situations are dislodged from their original spatial and temporal context and, through memory, are made available at the subject's own discretion. Their gradual accretion over time is suddenly projected onto a plane of simultaneous co-existence, which produces yet another totalizing effect and fosters the subject's sense of personal unity. Moreover, these flashes of reliving the past in the present enable Miriam to transcend time, they propel the subject outside the laws of temporality and seem to make her immune to the vagaries of time. The glimpses of eternity the mystics and St. Augustine were able to achieve through a momentary union with God are here obtained through a reunion of the individual with her past and with the whole of her consciousness.

Similarly to Romanticism and to other authors of the Modernist period, the Moment in Richardson's work is an instant of privileged perception which merges into an aesthetic moment. Consequently we find a number of aesthetic concepts in *Pilgrimage* which correspond to Romantic and/or Modernist theories of art, notably *defamiliarization* and

impersonality. The latter one can be broken up into further subcategories: There are parallels between Richardson's notion of *sympathetic imagination* and Keats' idea of *negative capability* as well as Bergson's *intuition*, and what she terms *synthetic consciousness* has analogies with Woolf's concept of the *androgynous mind*. *Impersonality* in Richardson's text is defined by a high degree of distance from one's own self and, at the same time, by a stance of extreme subjectivity. This paradoxical combination can be seen as a paradigm for the conception of reality characteristic for *Pilgrimage* as a whole. On the one hand, it is entirely centred within the subjective consciousness, but on the other hand it lays claim to a transindividual or even absolute status. These two components are brought together in the moment of heightened experience. Its mode of representation reflects the same kind of ambivalence. Its formal and linguistic features are those of the mystic moment, whereas its experiential scope is restricted to the human psyche. This again testifies to an inner transcendence which imitates the forms of metaphysical transcendence.