alliances, a hybrid critical discourse "on the borderlands." The clairvoyant and crystal-clear analysis of the interconnections between literature, culture, language and racial politics makes of *Chicano Poetics* a pleasure to read, a brilliant articulation of Chicano subjectivity, and an extremely valuable contribution to Chicano criticism.

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Kristin Bluemel
***Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism: Dorothy Richardson's* Pilgrimage**
Athens (GA): U of Georgia P, 1997.
209 p.; $50.00 cloth.

In *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism,* Kristin Bluemel conducts an intelligent, detailed study of *Pilgrimage*'s classical critical interpretations such as Jean Radford's psychoanalytic criticism and Gloria Fromm's biographical reading. This enables Bluemel to find her own critical path and makes her book an excellent starting point for readers to conduct their own

critical readings. In the course of her discussion Bluemel proposes positioning *Pilgrimage* in the intersection between canonical modernist fiction and "marginal" experimental women's fiction. From a solidly founded position in feminist literary criticism, she also offers a useful insight into gender issues in her study of Woolf's celebrated description of *Pilgrimage* as "the psychological sentence of the feminine gender" and Richardson's view of *Pilgrimage* as "a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism."

In Chapter 2, "The Missing Sex of *Pilgrimage*," Bluemel applies Marilyn Farwell's notion of "lesbian narrative space" to the novel and offers a close and detailed reading of other lesbian interpretations by Lynette Felber and Carol Watts. In Bluemel's view, homoerotic desire functions in the novel as a way of presenting its "missing" sexuality. She dissipates the apparent silence about Miriam's physical and sexual life with her theory that *Pilgrimage* presents female sexuality in new and unconventional ways. A proof of the increasing number of feminist lesbian interpretations of *Pilgrimage* is J. L. Winning's dissertation "Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* as Archive of the Self," which locates issues of sexual identity in the novel and uncovers the coded exploration of gender, femininity and lesbian sexual identity.

In the chapter entitled "Science, Class and the Problem of the Body," Bluemel offers a convincingly argued comparison of *Pilgrimage* to dentistry, grounded on an article Richardson wrote about dentistry. What lies behind this comparison is the postmodern preoccupation with the body and literary criticism's interest in fleshed and incarnate concepts as a reaction against the unhoused intellect (Eagleton 1996: 69-70). Moreover, Bluemel reads *Pilgrimage* as a self-conscious commentary on the harmful myths that surround representations of women and illness. For her, "*Pilgrimage* represents science and medicine as the authoritative discourses of the period while locating 'true' knowledge elsewhere: in individual consciousness" (1997: 120).

It must be added that although Bluemel's detailed readings of some passages from *Pilgrimage* are quite sensitive, an imprecision can be traced in her statement that "Miriam eventually drives von Heber [a marriageable doctor] away because he believes in her false, performing self, in the female body that exists for others as 'an object of romantic veneration'" (1997: 91) This inaccuracy comes from ignoring the role a Jew plays in von Heber's departure from Miriam's life. This fact is disclosed to Miriam by Mrs Bailey, who tells her that von Heber has been driven away from her by Mr Mendizabal's machinations. Miriam's thoughts picture this situation in a

wider panorama and recognize in it the familiar pattern of a Jew interposing in her way to a desirable marriage:

> Dr von Heber had been saved. The fascinating eyes and snorting smile had saved him; coming out of space to tell him she was a flirt. 'She adore me; hah! I tell you she adore me,' he would say. It was history repeating itself. Max and Ted. Again after all these years. A Jew. (Richardson, *Interim* 434)

Moreover, Mr Mendizabal's influence on Miriam flaws the "womanly woman" role she is rehearsing in Dr von Heber's presence:

> She turned the pages of her note-book and came upon the scrap crossed through by Mr Mendizabal. She read the words through, forcing them to accept a superficial meaning. Disturbance about ideas would destroy the perfect serenity that was demanded of her." (Richardson, *Interim* 390)

Bluemel maintains that *Pilgrimage* "fails to resolve the questions it has prominently placed center stage. Dimple Hill and March Moonlight, the two 'endings' of the novel, leave readers wondering what the 'real' conclusion to Pilgrimage may be" (1997: 121) She offers an account of the biographical, feminist and other explanations that have been given for *Pilgrimage*'s lack of an ending. This preoccupation about the apparent absence of a Grail that would bring the novel together can be related to the fact that despite modernism's parodical fragmentation of classical realism, the canonical modernist work of art still strives for the idea of wholeness inherent in its autonomy and introspection, because there is no fragmentation without the idea of integrity (Eagleton: 1997). Thus, it could be said that *Pilgrimage* is more modernist in its openness than other canonical modernist works of art in their closeness.

Bluemel reads *Pilgrimage* in terms of Richardson's alternate literary forms in order to reframe the problem of endings and of the body. The body struggling with death is seen by her as Richardson's illustration of the impossibility of narrative endings. Bluemel argues that Richardson's other writings, including articles in dental and political magazines and short fiction, encourage the reader to break conventional ways of reading in terms of beginnings, middles and ends. She explores Richardson's short fiction paying special attention to the thematic treatment of endings and the limitations stream of consciousness imposes on her representations of death. Thus she contends that *Pilgrimage* will continue to elude closure, holding

that "*Pilgrimage*'s perverse refusal to provide any sense of an ending" is one of its most radical experiments that differenciate it from the rest of modernist fiction.

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Peter William Evans and Celestino Deleyto, eds.
Terms of Endearment:
Hollywood Romantic Comedy of the 1980s and 1990s
Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998.

Dismissed too hastily by critics like Brian Henderson as a genre on the verge of extinction in the late 1970s, Hollywood romantic comedy has nonetheless proved to be in quite good health throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In an attempt to retain its popularity and appeal for contemporary audiences, at a time when the genre's traditional commitment to the open celebration of heterosexual love and marriage can no longer be unproblematically validated, romantic comedy seems to have initiated once again a process of rearticulation of its narrative and representational strategies, which attests to the flexibility and resilience of what has been regarded as an apparently rigid, fixed set of conventions. Drawing on this idea, the essays gathered in *Terms of Endearment*, edited by Peter William Evans and Celestino Deleyto in