

‘GLIDING, AS IF FOREVER’:
SPEED AND MOVEMENT IN RICHARDSON’S
PILGRIMAGE

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Modernisation is not only a process that unfolds in and over time, it is also a process that fundamentally transforms the temporal structures of society.¹ The modern era is commonly connected with a gradual emancipation of time from space, with time becoming a malleable instrument of technological progress that can be used to conquer space. Zygmunt Bauman’s statement, ‘Modernity was born under the stars of acceleration and land conquest’² refers to a number of different activities, including the construction of fast vehicles that cover space more quickly and the spatial expansion of factories to produce more goods in a shorter amount of time (or to fill more space more effectively in less time). Acceleration in various fields – for example the speeding up of the tempo of life in general, or rapid social, cultural and economic changes that require constant adaptation and mobility – might hold out the prospect of new areas of development and growth, but it is also responsible for a process of disintegration and dissolution.³ Bauman’s book *Liquid Modernity* and Marshall Berman’s study of ‘The Experience of Modernity’, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, already draw attention to this specific development in their titles.

This new experience of time has been controversial from the beginning: some saw it as a certain sign of progress, others feared it as a destructive force that would sweep away tradition. Thus, a whole discursive field evolved around the concepts of time,

¹ Hartmut Rosa, *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), p.24.

² Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p.112.

³ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), p.15.

movement, speed and acceleration, a site of struggle over the meaning and reading of these phenomena.⁴ In this paper I will explore three aspects of this complex. In the first part, various conceptualisations of these phenomena in the context of modernism will be introduced and contrasted; in the second, I will discuss some responses to the issues of space, time and speed from literature and the arts; the third part will provide a reading of Dorothy Richardson's reflections on and literary negotiations with these questions in the context of the cultural history developed in the first part.

The socio-cultural perspective

As Stephen Kern has shown in his study, *The Culture of Space and Time 1880-1918*, speed and the acceleration of movement and of the pace of life played an increasingly vital role at the turn of the last century. These developments were linked to technological advances. He names shipbuilding and international competition for the fastest Atlantic crossing as well as the construction of better adjusted bicycles, faster automobiles, electric trams and electrified underground trains as examples of the cult of speed prevailing at the time. The telephone and the telegraph changed communication patterns and sped up business negotiations, reporting and news processing. Moreover, various methods were devised to optimise factory output. In the arts, movement occupied a prominent place: in the development of film as a series of moving pictures; but also in Marinetti's and the Futurists' 'new aesthetic of speed', and in the work of a number of painters and sculptors who attempted to portray movement in their respective arts.⁵

Assessments of these phenomena differed. In his seminal essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1900), Georg Simmel ascribed the intensification of nervous stimulation observable in

⁴ Rosa, op. cit., pp.80f.

⁵ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp.109-123.

contemporary society to the constant onslaught of impressions and ‘the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli’ that confronted the individual, particularly in the metropolis.⁶ While his approach was predominantly analytical and descriptive, other critics voiced increasing concern about these new developments and their effects on the human psyche and health. Doctors attributed a number of diseases to the tempo of modern life, specifically its detrimental impact on the nervous system.⁷

Greater speed led to the fragmentation of experience (looking at the world from a train moving at full speed leaves us with fleeting impressions, with glimpses of disconnected parts instead of a view of objects in their entirety), it could even lead to the fragmentation and loss of the self. Virginia Woolf described such a scene in the last chapter of *Orlando*, which is set in 1928 and in which the protagonist experiences the effects of velocity on her perception when she drives along the Old Kent Road in her motorcar:

Here was a market. Here a funeral. Here a procession with banners upon which was written ‘Ra – Un’, but what else? Meat was very red. Butchers stood at the door. Women almost had their heels sliced off. Amor Vin- that was over a porch. A woman looked out of a bedroom window, profoundly contemplative, and very still. Applejohn and Applebed, Undert-. Nothing could be seen whole or read from start to finish. What was seen begun – like two friends starting to meet each other across the street – was never seen ended. After twenty minutes the body and mind were like scraps of torn paper tumbling from a sack and, indeed, the process of motoring fast out of London so much resembles the chopping up small of identity which precedes unconsciousness and perhaps death itself that it is an open

⁶ Georg Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ [1900], in David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (eds), *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings* (London: Sage, 1997), p.175.

⁷ Kern, op. cit., pp.124-126.

question in which sense Orlando can be said to have existed at the present moment.⁸

Such preoccupations can be seen as a response to the general processes of modernisation and as an extension into the twentieth century of the nineteenth-century obsession with progress and forward Movement. In this sense, Movement can be considered as one of the key features of modernity.⁹ As Lynda Nead demonstrates rather impressively in her book on Victorian London, the nineteenth-century discourse of the modern was steeped in a rhetoric of improvement and change.¹⁰ It was powered by a strong sense of movement, a fierce orientation towards the future and a decided, albeit not always successful, attempt to supersede and leave behind the past, which was seen as nothing but a stage to be discarded in a never-ending chain of development. The idea of free and unimpeded movement to overcome stagnation and congestion materialised in the construction of the sewage system to facilitate the flow and disposal of waste; and in the demolition of slums and narrow lanes to make space for wider streets and thoroughfares in order to enhance the flow of traffic. Metaphorical representations of the city linked its water supply, drains and sewers with the blood flow in the body, and the narrow lanes and alleyways with physical and moral obstructions to circulation and movement¹¹ - an analogy borrowed from social theories of the time, which likened social structures to living organisms. I'm thinking here specifically of Herbert Spencer, who in his essay 'The Social Organism' (1860) drew an explicit parallel between the blood and blood vessels of the living body and the circulating mass of commodities and their channels of distribution in the social body.¹² Constant movement

⁸ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* [1928] (London: Granada, 1977), pp.191f.

⁹ Hans Ulrich Seeber, *Mobilität und Moderne: Studien zur englischen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007), p.17.

¹⁰ Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹¹ Nead, op. cit., pp.15-17.

¹² Herbert Spencer, 'The Social Organism' [1860], in: *The Works of Herbert Spencer, Vol. XIII: Essays: Scientific, Political, & Speculative* [1891]

also means rapid change and discontinuity. Nead describes mid-Victorian London as a permanent building-site with the face of the metropolis changing almost daily.¹³ Similarly, life on the streets was characterised by chance encounters, random contacts, ever-changing and fleeting impressions.¹⁴ This is the context of Baudelaire's conceptualisation of modernity as the transitory, the fugitive and contingent.¹⁵

A different angle on the question of time and movement was provided by some psychologists and philosophers, who used it in their conceptualisation of the principles of life, self and mind. William James' definition of the stream of consciousness stresses constant flow and motion as the most salient properties of mental processes:

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.*¹⁶

Henri Bergson's concept of duration (*la durée*) reflects a similar notion. Duration refers to the essence of a thing, and in Bergson's

(Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1966), I: 265-307. See 'But among other accompaniments of progress, common to animals and societies, comes the formation of more definite and complete channels of communication. Blood-vessels acquire distinct walls; roads are fenced and gravelled. This advance is first seen in those roads or vessels that are nearest to the chief centres of distribution; while the peripheral roads and peripheral vessels long continue in their primitive states' (p.295).

¹³ Nead, op. cit., pp.27-56.

¹⁴ Simmel, op. cit.

¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life' [1863], in J. Mayne (ed.) and trans., *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), p.13.

¹⁶ William James, *The Principles of Psychology* [1890-1905], 3 Vols, (ed.) Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), Vol. I, p.233.

system of thought that is its constant motion. He applies this concept both to human consciousness and to the world outside the subject. According to Bergson, consciousness of self is dependent on memory and can be seen as a constant progressing and growth of life, which accumulates unceasingly, because the present is always enriched by the memory of the past, and together they will mould one's future experience.¹⁷ The same principle applies to reality: 'Reality is global and undivided growth, [...] duration.'¹⁸ Duration is the essence of reality, because reality is never fixed, it is a constant process, 'a perpetual becoming'.¹⁹

This collection of examples has shown two things: firstly that movement is an all-pervading phenomenon in Modernism, and secondly that its conceptualisations and the implications following from them differ radically. Whereas the fascination with technological advance and progress accompanying the process of modernisation is geared towards external change and rather tends to discontinuity and fragmentation, William James and Bergson stress the essence and wholeness, the internal connectedness of life, reality and the human mind. With his concept of duration, Bergson explicitly criticises the kind of fragmentation produced by the sciences and by our habits of thinking in general.²⁰ Analytical thinking, he argues, attempts to grasp reality by focusing on discrete elements and on the relationship between these different elements.²¹ In an analogy with the newly developed technology of film, Bergson calls this mental activity 'cinematographical' perception or thinking. It describes the process of connecting stills (static photographs) in quick succession to recreate the impression

¹⁷ Henri Bergson, 'Introduction to Metaphysics' [1903], in *An Introduction to Metaphysics: The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1965), p.179. See also James, op. cit., Vol.I, p.228.

¹⁸ Henri Bergson, 'The Possible and the Real' [1930], in *An Introduction to Metaphysics: The Creative Mind*, op. cit., pp.95f.

¹⁹ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* [1907], trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1944), p.296.

²⁰ For a more elaborate exposition of Bergson's ideas see Eveline Kilian, *Momente innerweltlicher Transzendenz: Die Augenblickserfahrung in Dorothy Richardsons Romanzyklus 'Pilgrimage' und ihr ideengeschichtlicher Kontext* (Tübingen: Narr, 1997), pp.92-108.

²¹ Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, op. cit., pp.161f.

of movement. In other words, it attempts to reconstruct the process of becoming, duration, from an external perspective. Analytical thinking does not provide access to duration, however. In fact it can only produce an artificial reconstruction of movement by connecting discontinuous states, which are the momentary *results* of movement rather than movement itself.²²

In a similar vein Bergson reproached the sciences for relying on the cinematographical method as a means of investigation.²³ As a consequence, he argues, duration necessarily eludes them. Empirical psychology, for example, uses a mechanistic approach and tries to reconstruct the mind and the self by combining and adding up individual psychic states, a process that yields nothing but a phantom of the self, but not the real thing.²⁴ Bergson described his fundamental discovery in a letter to William James: 'scientific time has no duration; positivist science consists essentially in eliminating duration'.²⁵ The opposition evoked here is that between a mechanical approach and an organicist one, which, in contrast, is essentially vital and active.

The faculty suited to apprehend duration and to grasp the essence of things is not the intellect, that is the analytical faculty just described, but intuition. Bergson gives the following definition of intuition: 'Intuition, then, signifies first of all consciousness, but immediate consciousness, as vision which is scarcely distinguishable from the object seen, a knowledge which is contact and even coincidence.'²⁶ The vocabulary used is significant: intuitive knowledge is achieved by sudden recognition, by an

²² Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, op. cit., pp.322f.

²³ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, op. cit., p.355.

²⁴ Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, op. cit., pp.169-173.

²⁵ Letter to James, 9 May 1908, in Henri Bergson, *Ecrits et paroles*, 2 vols, comp. R.-M. Mossé-Bastide (Paris: PUF, 1957-1959), Vol.II, pp.294f (my translation).

²⁶ Henri Bergson, 'Introduction (Part II): Stating the Problems', in *An Introduction to Metaphysics: The Creative Mind*, op. cit., p.32. See also, Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, op. cit: 'We call intuition here the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it.' (p.161).

immediate merging of perceiving subject and object perceived. The description refers to a movement that is clearly distinct from the operation of the analytical faculty: it does not proceed in a linear and additive fashion but goes forward in a leap, as it were: subject and object come together in an instant. And this, in turn, implies entering a dimension beyond the time-space grid of ordinary experience. Time and space disappear in the instant of awareness of the essence, of duration: 'human reasonings [...] are at once swallowed up in the truth seized by intuition, for their extension in space and time is only the distance, so to speak, between thought and truth'.²⁷

This is a different mode of apprehension altogether, for which Bergson employs the term 'vision' (as, in another context, he speaks of duration as 'a thing spiritual or impregnated with spirituality'²⁸), a borrowing from a religious context, which already indicates that he is referring to a way of knowing that is absolute rather than relative: able to seize the essence of reality and transcend the parameters of ordinary perception. Consequently intuitive knowledge does not belong to the realm of science (or physics) but to that of metaphysics.²⁹

What becomes obvious is that thinkers like Bergson make use of the concept of movement in a subversive way, in the sense that they turn it against the connotations of movement and speed in the discourse of progress and technological advance by integrating it into a system of thought geared towards overcoming fragmentation and discontinuity. We can easily see a parallel between Bergson's intuition and the imagination as it was conceptualised by the Romantic poets, specifically by Coleridge, who in his *Biographia Literaria* describes the coming together of the perceiving subject and the object in very similar, if not identical terms. In Coleridge's theory this process is triggered by the poetic imagination, the equivalent of Bergson's intuition:

²⁷ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, op. cit., p.337.

²⁸ Bergson, 'Introduction (Part II)', op. cit., p.33.

²⁹ Bergson, 'Introduction to Metaphysics', op. cit., pp.162 and 167.

During the act of knowledge itself, the objective and subjective are so instantly united, that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs. There is here no first, and no second; both are coinstantaneous and one.³⁰

Bergson's philosophy can in many ways be seen as a continuation of Romantic theories of the poetic imagination. A further link between Bergson and Romantic aesthetic theories is that he, like the Romantics, attributes to the artist a higher degree of intuition (just as the Romantics attributed to the poet the highest degree of imagination) and thus a greater ability to experience those moments of vision, in which he or she can place himself/herself within the object perceived and in which its essence becomes manifest. Consequently it is the function of the artist to transform these insights into art and thus to enable their audience to participate in them.³¹ For our context it is important to note that Bergson integrates his notion of anti-linear movement performed by the intuition into a theory of art.

Time and movement in modernist literature and art

With this connection between movement and art established, it is now appropriate to outline some brief examples to demonstrate the role of movement in modernist art and literature. The discussion of some relevant patterns will in turn provide a suitable platform to discuss the function of speed and movement in Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and in her theory of art. Since speed and movement are intimately linked with the concepts of time and space, these coordinates will play a central role.

Futurism was the movement that most unambiguously and enthusiastically heralded and fostered the cult of speed, as can be

³⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* [1817], in H.J. Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Authors: Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.291.

³¹ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesly Brereton and Fred Rothwell (London: Macmillan, 1911), pp.150-157.

seen in F.T. Marinetti's 'Founding and Manifesto of Futurism 1909:

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. [...] a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace. [...] We stand on the promontory of the centuries!... Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed. [...] we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervour of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; [...] and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd. [...] we want no part of it, the past, we the young and strong Futurists.³²

Marinetti fiercely embraces the ideology of technological progress and forward movement, which, among other things, leads to an unsavoury glorification of destruction and war. He describes a kind of intoxication produced by speed, which annihilates the categories of time and space. The experience of speed is equated with the absolute, which for Marinetti defines precisely this state of being constantly propelled forward rather than the attainment of any kind of truth. The sense of a present which is always already the future also implies a decided annihilation of the past and thus a severing of the individual from memory and rootedness.

Marinetti's particular idea of progress can be confronted with the pessimistic views about the development of civilisation voiced by a number of thinkers with respect to the development of civilization. Their reservations can be seen as a reaction to the harmful excesses produced by industrialisation, the money economy and

³² F.T. Marinetti, 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism 1909' [1909], in Umbro Apollonio (ed.), *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), pp.21-23.

other processes of modernisation, as well as to the catastrophe and aftermath of the First World War. In the field of literature, T.S. Eliot comes to mind. In *The Waste Land* (1922), he presents us with the melancholy state of a civilisation in shambles: Edmund Spenser's 'sweet Thames' and its banks have turned into a polluted and rat-infested rubbish-tip.³³ All that is left to the speaker is to deplore the vanishing power of cultural fragments to sustain a meaningful grasp of reality: 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins.'³⁴ A disintegrating present is here set against a nostalgic vision of a past that seems forever lost. In Eliot's literary theory the past is given prominence as a constitutive element of the present, specifically in his concept of impersonality, which reduces the poet to a mere catalyst, a kind of medium through which the literary tradition expresses itself. Contrary to Marinetti, there is no obliteration of the past; Eliot's theory rather amounts to a negation of the future as an independent time-slot. Instead, poetry for Eliot, as he explains in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), is 'a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written'. The poet must be filled with a 'consciousness of the past'. He must surrender himself completely to the past. Therefore, paradoxically, he can only move forward by moving backwards, and by denying his own self: 'The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.'³⁵

These two positions mark the extreme ends of a spectrum whose middle ground is explored in its various complexities in modernist fiction, where we often find a juxtaposition of different and competing modes of time and movement which relativise the absolute predominance of one single mode. A common feature is

³³ T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* [1922], in *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963) III, ll.173-202, 266-292.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, V, l.430.

³⁵ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' [1919], in *Selected Essays* [1932] (3rd ed London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p.17 (for all three quotations). In *Four Quartets* (1944) he repeats the same idea: 'Not the intense moment / Isolated, with no before and after, / But a lifetime burning in every moment / And not the lifetime of one man only / But of old stones that cannot be deciphered' (T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* [1944] [London: Faber and Faber, 1959], p.27).

the negotiation of the relationship between the present and the past, as well as between clock time and mind time or subjective time, which, in terms of narrative is linked to the modulation of story-time and discourse-time: the foregrounding of subjective time leads to a significant expansion of discourse-time.

The most prominent example is, of course, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. The gradual forward moving and passing of the day is indicated by Big Ben and other church bells marking the hours and half-hours. But in the novel this is merely an external time-grid: a background against which the characters' inner life is played out, consisting mainly of their memories of the past. The characters' experience of the present is shown to be strongly influenced by the past. In fact, the contours of their development and progress through time only become clear through their reflections on the past, which reveal the trajectories taken and the options excluded, the lives lived and not lived (as in the case of Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh). The immense power of the past over the present is forcefully demonstrated in the shell-shocked Septimus Warren Smith, who is so much in the grip of his war experiences that they effectively block his moving forward into any future and finally induce him to commit suicide. All in all, the idea of progress is only served very moderately in *Mrs Dalloway*, and the movement forward that is indicated is strongly saturated with the past. The short story time of only one day, which unfolds over a space of approximately 200 pages, underlines this idea of slow motion.

In Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, the connection between present and past is staged as a generational conflict (mostly played out between Lily Briscoe and Mrs Ramsay, and between the two youngest Ramsay children, Cam and James, and Mr Ramsay). What becomes obvious is that the individual characters must move forward on their own respective paths, must gain a distance to the past and to tradition (in this case specifically to Victorian notions of femininity), but that this distance must be combined with an acceptance of and respect for past biographical patterns. In terms of narrative structuring, the linear movement of time and text from before WWI to after WWI is combined with a circular movement, expressed in the parallel between the first and the third

parts of the novel, which are both set in the holiday home of the Ramsays in the Hebrides. Translated into our frame of reference, progress in *To the Lighthouse* is connected with loss and melancholy (WWI and Mrs Ramsay's death) as well as emancipation (Lily Briscoe), and it is embedded in a structure that connects movement with the idea of repetition: repetition of the old with a difference.

Woolf casts another critical perspective on linearity in *The Waves*. In this novel she juxtaposes linear time (the development of the various characters through time) with cyclical time, that is the recurring, tidal movement of the waves. Here the time of civilisation is confronted with a natural time cycle, and again the effect is a questioning of the absolute validity and superiority of an ideologically charged concept of time as permanent progress.

Transcendence of chronological time can also be effected by occurrences of significant or privileged moments that give depth and meaning to particular instants of lived experience. The privileged moment, in Woolf's terminology the 'moment of being', is situated at the intersection of time with the timeless. It momentarily stops the regular flow of time (clock time) and expands into a different dimension outside the temporal ordering of everyday life. It transcends linearity and progression and opens up an illimitable space in which different temporal states can exist simultaneously. A good example is Mrs Ramsay's moment of peace when she looks at the lighthouse and seems to leave her material body and become a 'wedge-shaped core of darkness' that can move everywhere and knows no limits.³⁶ But such moments are transient, and the subject experiencing them must necessarily return to the realm of linear time, so that these moments are like loops on a horizontal time axis. The significant moment is of course also one of the central and defining features of Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, the next and final object of my investigation.

³⁶ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* [1927] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p.69.

Time, speed and movement in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage

The best starting point for a discussion of Dorothy Richardson's handling of time and movement is her distinction between 'being' and 'becoming'. In *Pilgrimage* this marks one of the fundamental differences between Hypo Wilson and Miriam Henderson. 'Becoming' refers to a horizontal movement, to a constant and relentless striving forward into the future. Hypo is characterised in the following way:

A man achieving, becoming, driving forward to unpredictable becomings, delighting in the process, devoting himself, compelling himself [...] to a ceaseless becoming, ceaseless assimilating of anything promised to serve the interests of a ceaseless becoming for life as he saw it.³⁷

This is radically different from Miriam's sense of self. She deeply deplores Hypo's attitude: 'For so dismally, in every one, he saw only what they were becoming or might become, and of the essential individual knew, and wanted to know, nothing at all' (IV, 220). In her view, an exclusive focus on 'becoming' operates merely on the surface, considers an individual's development as a series of successive changes and states unanchored in anything deeper or more substantial. 'Being', on the other hand, implies a vertical orientation, a movement down to 'one's own deep sense of being' (IV, 167), to the 'unchanging centre of being'³⁸ that is at the core of the individual self.

For Richardson being and becoming are gendered concepts.³⁹ 'Becoming' corresponds to a male mode of consciousness, 'being'

³⁷ Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage* [1915-1967], 4 vols (London: Virago, 1979), Vol. IV, p.220. All subsequent references to this edition will be indicated in the text.

³⁸ Dorothy Richardson, 'The Queen of Spring', *Focus: A Periodical to the Point in Matters of Health, Wealth & Life*, 5, 5 (May 1928), 262.

³⁹ Cf. Eveline Kilian, 'Female Consciousness': Aesthetic Concepts and Feminist Thought in Dorothy Richardson's Writing', in Ann Heilmann (ed.),

to a female one. Our systems of thought are erroneously and fatally based on the principle of becoming, as Richardson claims in one of her journal articles:

The man (and always, that is perhaps the most striking part of the evidence, always it is a man)...who attempts to separate being and becoming, conscious and unconscious, civilisation and culture, spring and autumn, is the uneasy victim of a trick of the senses. Humanity, the civilizations, look to him like a series of becomings. His sense of being is relatively small. Hence his good passion for becoming... The good passion that is the generator of his 'ambitions,' 'creeds, philosophies, arts, sciences, and religions. Also of his panics, personal, national, international, and even cosmic panics.⁴⁰

This zest for becoming is also linked to thinking in dichotomies ('conscious and unconscious, civilization and culture' etc.), which, in its necessary exclusion of one part is always reductionist. This one-sidedness is, according to Richardson, responsible for man's 'incomplete individuality',⁴¹ and it is this lack, which triggers his relentless ambition, the unswerving pursuit of his aims and his constant pushing forward, traits that she diagnoses as 'a form of despair'.⁴² Richardson is convinced that this kind of thinking is on the decline and that even scientists have come to realise this:

Everyday humanity was left to make its choice between denying the deductions of science and being whirled headlong into the dizzying conception of a universe devoid of stability, existing only at the price of an eternal becoming. Perhaps the worst of that nightmare is over. Science, though still holding to its evolutionary hypothesis, still assuming even of the spirit of man that its every aspect has an evolutionary

Feminist Forerunners: New Womanism and Feminism in the Early Twentieth Century (London: Pandora Press, 2003), pp.154-163, 230-234.

⁴⁰ Dorothy Richardson, 'Spengler and Goethe: A Footnote', *Adelphi*, 4 (1926), 311.

⁴¹ Dorothy Richardson, 'Women and the Future', *Vanity Fair*, 22 (April 1924), 40.

⁴² Dorothy Richardson, 'Women in the Arts: Some Notes on the Eternally Conflicting Demands of Humanity and Art', *Vanity Fair*, 24 (May 1925), 47.

history, is through with its cocksure youth and confessing right and left that the universe is far weirder and more wonderful than it had supposed.⁴³

In other words, she predicts a paradigm shift in modern science, although she is not very specific about what it will look like. But by her choice of words ('weirder', 'more wonderful') we can surmise that it will have to include a metaphysical dimension beyond a purely scientific approach, that it might even have to reintroduce some transcendental or quasi-transcendental element to overcome the 'disenchantment of the world'.⁴⁴ And it will have to take into account the realm of 'being' to a much higher degree, which in turn will substantially modify the idea of 'becoming' and consequently produce a more holistic approach. Her own view of the relationship between 'being' and 'becoming' is summed up in *Pilgrimage*, in Miriam's combination of the two, as opposed to Hypo's position:

Being versus becoming. Becoming versus being. Look after the being and the becoming will look after itself. Look after the becoming and the being will look after itself? Not so certain. Therefore it is certain that becoming depends upon being. Man carries his bourne within himself and is there already. (IV, 362)

Here 'being' and 'becoming' are closely linked, but 'being' is definitely more vital than 'becoming'. Through this link, moving forward from one experience to another always remains connected to the subject's unchanging centre of being. For Miriam Henderson 'being' and 'becoming' are truly interdependent: On the one hand certain developments and decisions bring her in closer contact with her immutable identity; and on the other hand,

⁴³ Richardson, 'The Queen of Spring', op. cit., p.261.

⁴⁴ Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' [1918/19], in *Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970): 'The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world"' (p.155).

the ever-growing importance of her sense of identity and its impact on her determine the steps she takes to organise her life.

These passages show that for Richardson the alternative to becoming or moving forward is not stasis and immobility, but a qualified sense of becoming, one that is deeply implicated in the notion of being. And she achieves this specific qualification of becoming by introducing a whole network of movements going off in different and competing directions. This can be read as an ingenious strategy that divests the notion of progression of its exclusive orientation towards the future by integrating it into a multi-vectorial field. And this field needs to be subjected to closer analysis.

In *Pilgrimage*, *horizontal* development is provided by the successive unfolding of Miriam's life-story over a period of about eighteen years, from her first job as a teacher at a boarding-school in Hanover to her finally finding her vocation as a writer (*Pilgrimage* is, after all, a novel of development). This pattern is connected with a *circular* structure, however, which comes to the fore in those situations when Miriam returns to her inner origin, that is during those moments of heightened awareness when she gains access to her immutable core of being. In addition, this shift from outer development to inner expansion is accompanied by a *vertical* movement, a 'journey down [...] to the centre of being' (IV, 609):

Bidding her mind be still, she felt herself once more at work [...] upon an all-important enterprise. This time her breathing was steady and regular and the labour of journeying, down through the layers of her surface being, a familiar process. Down and down through a series of circles each wider than the last, each opening with the indrawing of a breath whose outward flow pressed her downwards towards the next, nearer to the living centre. (IV, 498)

Such privileged moments, in which the centre of being can be reached, cut through the horizontal time axis, interrupt the flow of time, enter the realm of timelessness where all time levels merge into one and where, therefore, succession is replaced by

simultaneity. The destination reached after travelling ‘towards this radiance’ (IV, 49) is a state ‘where past and future, vanished from their places, lay powerless to nudge and jostle, far away within the depths of a perfect present’ (IV, 453).

The journey to her inner self also involves a recuperation of the past, of her past life, which is effected by a bilateral movement: by her memories travelling into her present consciousness (III, 97: ‘the early days flowed up, recovered completely from the passage of time’), and by Miriam travelling towards her memories (III, 197: ‘When she was alone, she moved, thoughtless, along a pathway that led backwards towards a single memory’). As this last quotation indicates, moving *backwards* is another direction involved when focussing on the past, and it is one that effectively checks and slows down development on the horizontal time line. In narrative terms this is expressed in a slowing down or temporary stopping of story-time, which finds its equivalent on the plot level in Miriam’s retreat from the futile bustle of daily life into a mood of reflection and contemplation. Consequently her conceptualisation of the relationship between life and time shows similar priorities:

Life *ceased* when time moved on. Out in the world life was ceasing all the time. All the time people were helplessly doing things that made time move [...]. Young men died in advance; it was visible in their faces, when they took degrees and sat down to tasks that made time begin to move; never again free from its movement, always listening and looking for the stillness they had lost. (III,188)

The subject of Miriam’s writing is her own past, and thus the process of writing, that is the production of art, requires the same kinds of movement as her journey to her inner self – it is a journey backwards and downwards that finally transcends time altogether. It entails plunging ‘down into oblivion’ (III, 142) until ‘everything vanishes but what I contemplate. The whole of what is called “the past” is with me, seen anew, vividly’ (IV, 657). These states of mind not only free Miriam from the coordinates of time and space and open up endless horizons for her to explore, they also dissolve

the boundaries of the self so that she can merge with the world around her, for example when she imagines herself lying in her London room, ‘tingling to the spread of London all about her, herself one with it, feeling her life flow outwards, north, south, east, and west, to all its margins’ (III, 273).

What we can deduce so far is that Richardson effectively counteracts the one-dimensionality of the progressive model based on a constant striving forward by introducing multi- or omnidirectional movements that not only reintegrate the past but also add a quasi-transcendental dimension. This becomes particularly obvious when movement is devoid of any sense of direction whatsoever, when it is seemingly pursued for its own sake. Such instances link Richardson to Bergson and his focus on duration, on constant motion, rather than on the individual states resulting from it. The example in Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* is skating. The skaters are ‘[h]eld together by the enchantment of this continuous gliding’ (IV, 86). When Miriam watches the skaters at Oberland, she recognises ‘the secret of their bliss’, which she ‘had shared long ago’ (IV, 87). It is a type of movement that triggers those cherished feelings of transcendence:

Gliding as if for ever; the feeling [...] of breaking through into an eternal way of being. [...] In dancing it was there. But most strongly that sense of being in an eternal way of living had come with skating in the foggy English frost. (IV, 87)

Despite a number of similarities, a fundamental difference to Bergson’s theory also becomes obvious, however. The similarities consist in them both assuming an inseparable unity between present, past and future; and for both access to the essence, to the absolute, is based on privileged moments of awareness that lead the subject beyond the ordinary realms of time and space. But whereas for Bergson movement *is* the essence, for Miriam Henderson and for Richardson movement is *the means* to get to the essence. It is a catalyst that helps to dislodge the subject from its spatial and temporal moorings and sets it free to travel to its centre of being, which is in itself stable and immutable, however. This finding is corroborated by the fact that the privileged moment is

often initiated by a physical sense of being dislodged. In one instance, Miriam has the impression that the staircase is 'swept from under her feet' and she has 'a feeling under her like the sudden drop of a lift' (I, 245), in another passage she feels capable of flying (I, 416).

These examples have paved the way for a final discussion of the function of speed and acceleration in *Pilgrimage*. The effect of speed is specifically explored in *Oberland*, in connection with various sports that involve fast movement. After her first rather anxious and bumpy attempts at tobogganing down various slopes, Miriam's enthusiasm makes her almost drunk with speed: 'All she lived for now [...] was to rush, safe-guarded by a properly mastered technique, at the utmost possible speed through this indescribable air, down slopes from which the landscape flew back up' (IV, 74). It is typical for these passages to present a universe of paradoxical movements which create a mental impression of displacement and topsy-turvydom: She 'took the sharp *bend* [...], and was out of sight careering *down* the first slope of the valley run with sky and landscape sweeping *upwards*, mountains gigantically sweeping *upwards* to the movement of her *downwards* rush' (IV, 85; my emphasis).

These experiences have, again, a decidedly transcendental quality. Miriam describes her surroundings as 'paradise' (IV, 85) and revels in the 'joy of streaming forward for ever through this moving radiance' (IV, 85). In the same context, she describes ski-jumping as 'a deliberate movement into eternity' (IV, 115). And again velocity has a purely catalytic function, as becomes evident in the following passage:

Lifting her feet to the bar, leaning back to swing free and steer by her weight, she let herself go. The joy of flight returned, singing joy of the inaccessible world to which in flight one was translated, bringing forgetfulness of everything but itself. Bend after bend appeared and of itself her body swayed now right and left in unconscious rhythm. The landscape flew by, sideways-upwards, its features

indistinguishable. She was movement, increasing, cleaving the backward rushing air. (IV, 119)

The point of speeding down the slope is not to arrive somewhere quickly, but to create a sensation of pure movement ('bringing forgetfulness of everything but itself'; 'She was movement'), which catapults her out of time altogether into the otherwise 'inaccessible world' of timelessness where the past becomes the present and different time levels exist side by side simultaneously. When we compare these reflections to Marinetti's seemingly similar claim that we 'already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed', we can see how Richardson creatively adopts the contemporary obsession with speed and movement and instrumentalises it to achieve a state of timelessness which results in an expansion of human consciousness and, paradoxically, provides access to different time levels simultaneously.

Conclusion

Dorothy Richardson's negotiation of speed and movement in *Pilgrimage* participates in a highly charged and highly contested discursive field. Acceleration of life and of social processes being an undeniable fact of her time, her strategy is not to ignore or even negate the impact of these issues. Instead, she fathoms their potential to contribute to her own system of thought and exploits them for her own purposes. Her conceptual framework shares a number of concerns with Bergson, notably a strong sense of unity, of connection between different states of the self and between the self and the world, and the conviction that the past forms an integral part of the present.

Wyndham Lewis, who in his *Time and Western Man* (1927) tried to explain the different approaches to time philosophy and the obsession with time in his own age to a more general readership, deplores that 'no doctrine, so much as the Time-doctrine, lends itself to the purpose of the millennial politics of revolutionary

human change, and endless “Progress”⁴⁵ I think this statement needs to be qualified. Even if we concede that his assessment might be correct in principle, it is obvious that a number of thinkers and artists, who shared the contemporary fascination with time and velocity, used these concepts creatively and subversively, and integrated them into a framework that combines speed and movement with a restoration of principles they did not want to see discarded.

In that sense Richardson, as well as Bergson, must be seen as critics of those aspects of their age which foster an uncompromising mechanisation, and thus dehumanisation of life, a process that is implied in Georg Simmel’s diagnosis of contemporary existence: ‘the calculative exactness of practical life which the money economy has brought about corresponds to the ideal of natural science: to transform the world into an arithmetic problem, to fix every part of the world by mathematical formulas’.⁴⁶ Both Richardson and Bergson oppose this development in the sciences by reintroducing a quasi-transcendental dimension into reality that cannot be fathomed by such an ‘arithmetic’ approach.

A ‘stable and impersonal time schedule’, that is the absolute priority of clock time, is one of the preconditions to ensure the smooth flow of the money economy and an effective coordination of the various business and other activities and relations.⁴⁷ Consequently, Richardson’s (and others’) unswerving insistence on the importance and predominance of subjective time, of mind time, is another attempt to curb and transcend a view of the individual that is purely economic. And so is her insistence on combining processes of acceleration with strategies of deceleration.

⁴⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* [1927], Paul Edwards (ed.) (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1993), p.422.

⁴⁶ Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, op. cit., p.177

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Since we have to assume that concepts of time and the specific temporal organisation of a society have a fundamental impact on the individual's sense of self, on her/his sense of reality and situatedness in the world,⁴⁸ the issues of time and movement cannot be separated from questions of subjectivity and identity. Acceleration of life presents a potential danger to the stability of identity. In this respect, Richardson can be seen at her most creative: she uses the properties of speed to dislodge the subject from her moorings, to dissolve the self, but only in order to finally reunite her with her immutable sense of being, and thereby, paradoxically, effect a stabilisation of identity.

⁴⁸ Rosa, op. cit., pp.236f.