

## THE SKETCHES OF A BUDDING WRITER: EMERGING FROM THE CHRYSALIS

*Florence Marie*

In the years between 1908 and 1914, Dorothy Richardson wrote a number of sketches that were published in the *Saturday Review*.<sup>1</sup> Richardson had left her job as a dental secretary in 1907 and settled for a few months with a Quaker family on a farm in Sussex. She intended to rest and to start writing. But her first sketch, 'A Sussex Auction', was written later, when she was in Switzerland in 1908—at a certain temporal and spatial distance. From 1908 to 1911 she stayed on the farm 'off & on'.<sup>2</sup> As Gloria Fromm writes, most of the sketches pay 'tribute to the beauties of the cycle of the year and of life in the villages and on the farms of Sussex'.<sup>3</sup> Though Fromm uses the plural, Richardson very often wrote about one farm in particular, as suggested by the use of the definite article, as well as in the echoes that can be detected between the sketches, which repeatedly refer to 'the old homestead', to the Jubilee and the Little Low (twin houses), to 'the evergreen oak', 'the poplars' similar to 'plumes', 'the peach-house', and the sea southward.

The Dorothy Richardson website clearly distinguishes between Richardson's short-stories (written between 1919 and 1949) and the

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<sup>1</sup> 'A Sussex Auction', *Saturday Review*, 105 (13 June 1908): 755; 'A Sussex Carrier', 107 (19 June 1909): 782-783; 'Hay-Time', 108 (31 July 1909): 132; 'A Village Competition', 108 (7 Aug. 1909): 165-166; 'Haven', 108 (4 Dec. 1909): 440-441; 'The Wind', 108 (4 Dec. 1909): 691; 'December', 108 (25 Dec. 1909): 785-786; 'The End of the Winter', 109 (19 Feb. 1910): 234-235; 'Lodge Night', 110 (19 Nov. 1910): 642-643; 'Dans La Bise', 111 (14 Jan. 1911): 46-47; 'Gruyeres', 111 (18 Feb. 1911): 208-209; 'March', 111 (4 Mar. 1911): 267; 'The Holiday', 112 (26 Aug. 1911): 268-269; 'The Conflict', 112 (25 Nov. 1911): 673-674; 'Across the Year', 112 (23 Dec. 1911): 795-796; 'Welcome', 113 (18 May 1912): 620-621; 'Strawberries', 113 (22 June 1912): 778-779; 'August', 114 (3 Aug. 1912): 142; 'Peach Harvest', 114 (19 July 1913): 78-79; 'Dusk', 118 (10 Oct. 1914): 392-393.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Bryher in Gloria G. Fromm (ed.), *Windows on Modernism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 354.

<sup>3</sup> Gloria G. Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 60.

sketches (twenty out of twenty-one were published in the *Saturday Review*). They are, however, sometimes reunited under the heading 'short fiction'. For instance, in her study on *Modernist Short Fiction by Women*, Claire Drewery analyses both the short stories and the sketches, arguing that the two genres have themes in common: 'By contrast to her lengthy novel sequence, the stories depict short bursts of insight into their characters' consciousnesses through poetic techniques and depictions of the liminal phenomenon of the inner life'.<sup>4</sup> While this is undoubtedly the case, there are formal differences between the genres of the short story and the sketch. Richardson's short stories stage fictional characters, whose sex and age are indirectly suggested. This is not the case for her sketches, which are mainly written in an anonymous, second-person narrative voice. The sketches are even more plotless than Richardson's modernist short stories. Thematically, they focus on life in the countryside (which is not the case for the short-stories). This is noteworthy as one tends to associate Richardson (and modernist British literature more generally) with the city: 'Modernist literature's primary subject is the experience of urban modernity'.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the sketches Richardson wrote while away from London were written for the *Saturday Review*, a London weekly newspaper with a mostly urban readership consisting of people who did not live in the countryside. This trait can be linked to the origin of the genre of the sketch itself, which was invented in England in the sixteenth century for people increasingly interested in realistic depictions of 'exotic' places, and written by people within those 'exotic' places, though not necessarily from such places themselves—just like Richardson's narrative voice, who arrives as a stranger at the homestead and is neither one of the household nor one of the workers: 'chill and lone as when you came' ('The Holiday').

The twenty sketches published in the *Saturday Review* share numerous similarities, as we will see, but there are also differences between them. It is possible to distinguish four types of sketches. Some of them, especially the first ones—'A Sussex Auction' (1908), 'A Sussex Carrier' (1909), 'Hay-Time' (1909), 'A Village Competition' (1909), 'The Holiday' (1911), 'The Conflict' (1911) and 'Peach Harvest' (1913)—are more human-oriented.

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<sup>4</sup> Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women. The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 87.

<sup>5</sup> Scott McCracken, *Masculinities, Modernist Fiction and the Urban Public Sphere* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007), ix.

As their titles suggest, they celebrate the labours and festivals of a rural way of life and remind one of medieval almanacs and books of hours; the experience, however, remains essentially aesthetic since the physical hardships, the 'toil and strain' ('Peach Harvest') of such a life are not foregrounded. Another grouping revolves around the seasons and the cycle of the year. Here, human activities are not given pride of place; nature is the focus with all its atmospheric events. It is looked at and described from a window or during a walk and the sketch registers the weather conditions, the flowers, and the colours of the countryside: 'December', 'The End of the Winter', 'March', 'Across the Year', 'August' and 'Dusk'. Aptly enough, the topics of the sketches included in these two groups are in keeping with the month when they were published in the *Saturday Review*: 'Hay-Time' appeared in July 1909; 'December' in December 1909; 'The End of Winter' in February 1910; 'March' in March 1911; 'Across the Year' in December 1911; 'August' in August 1912; 'Peach-Harvest' in July 1913 and 'Dusk' in October 1914. Two sketches recall the tradition of travel writing and could be read as postcards from abroad (especially as their titles are in French).<sup>6</sup> I am here referring to 'Dans la Bise' and 'Gruyères', published in 1911, in which Richardson evokes scenes from her stay in Switzerland in January 1908. The final cluster, 'Haven', 'The Wind', 'Lodge Night', 'Welcome', and 'Strawberries', gathers complex sketches in which some specific events enable the reader to listen to a more personal voice, sifting, remembering, and revelling in private 'visions'.

Leaving aside the thematic contents of the literary sketches for now and working from some of the elements expatiated on by Amy Bromley in her work on Virginia Woolf's literary sketches, I will start by focusing on the intrinsic formal specificities of the genre itself. Since a sketch is supposed to be the basis for a future moment of writing and is likely to be reactivated retrospectively, one of its main specificities is 'its representative provisionality'. Bromley refers to this feature as 'the aspect of the sketch which makes it able to look both backwards (recording a scene or characteristic impression) and forwards (as a plan for something yet to

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<sup>6</sup> 'It is through the tradition of travel writing, [...], that the sketch becomes a form integral to modernity': Amy Bromley, 'Virginia Woolf and the Work of the Literary Sketch: Scenes and Characters, Politics and Printing in Monday or Tuesday' (2017), 35, <https://theses.gla.ac.uk/8876>.

come)'.<sup>7</sup> In the course of her study she also mentions 'the simultaneous ephemerality and permanence of the sketch' and 'its potential to function as detailed study',<sup>8</sup> which can stem from the affinities with the visual sketch. Although it is not always the case, the written sketch is sometimes ekphrastic and more often than not, especially in the modernist period, it is plotless:

As Wegner points out, 'the displacement of plot by other fictional elements (notably the ones that Aristotle terms characters and spectacle) as the primary means of organizing fictional elements' in the sketch metaphorically creates a visual composition or *tableau*, leading many of the critics outlined here to read the sketch as an essentially static form [...].<sup>9</sup>

I will examine the specificities of Richardson's sketches in detail before focusing on their thematic contents, in particular the highly complex and intricate spatial and temporal dimensions at work as well as the consequences they have on the conception of the subject immersed in the life of the earth. To do this I will tap into ecological philosophy, and in particular David Abram's book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*,<sup>10</sup> in which he brings together phenomenology, ecology, and a reflection on language and literature. I follow Abram's work but also go beyond it, to examine moments in the sketches when the conventional Western conception of the subject is discarded, when the narrative voice is 'desubjectified' and another 'type of individuation, another type of temporality' seems to be at work: the narrative voice ceases to be a subject 'to become an event, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life...', or, in Deleuze and Guattari's own word, a '*haecceity*' ('*thisness*').<sup>11</sup> Some of the stylistic characteristics of the sketches will in the course of the discussion appear intrinsically linked either to the genre of the sketch or to the 'desubjectification' of the subject. The goal of the article is to show in what precise ways the sketches helped Richardson shape the writing of the novel she was about to launch into.

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<sup>7</sup> Bromley, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Bromley, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Bromley, 44.

<sup>10</sup> David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1997, New York: Vintage Books Editions, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 232–310, 262.

*Writing from and by pictures*

The sketches were the first pieces of literary work that Richardson had ever written; in John Rosenberg's words, they were 'the most creative work that she had yet done'.<sup>12</sup> As we will see, they do not lack polish and yet they can still be seen as preparatory work, stages in a writing process. They clearly served as 'a reservoir of images and techniques', to quote Bromley,<sup>13</sup> who argues that 'the quality of the sketch is something that waits to be activated and brought into relief'.<sup>14</sup> Richardson repeatedly tapped into some of the sketches, modulating some of their visions, throughout her career. 'Haven' is both a sketch (1909) and a short story (1944) and both texts, though different, deal with the experience of solitude in a secluded spot by the sea. 'A Sussex Auction' (1908) is a precursor to a passage in *Dimple Hill* (1938) in which the same auction (at Wetherby's) is dealt with.<sup>15</sup> Other sketches—'The Wind' (1909) and 'Peach Harvest' (1913)—were also reworked and found their way thirty years later into the same chapter-volume of *Pilgrimage* (IV 538-39, 541), and even later in *March Moonlight* (IV 636). Writing appears, then, as a long psychological process. This is all the more significant and moving as *Dimple Hill* stood as the end of *Pilgrimage* for twenty-nine years, thus giving the impression that the story had in a way come full circle. In the aforementioned cases the material is similar (for instance the bidding for the 'chain-barrow' during the auction; the 'many voices' of the wind) but there are striking differences between the sketches and the passages from the novel: the present tense is used in the former, but not necessarily in the latter; in the sketches the pronoun 'you' is found, while it is the pronoun 'I' for these passages in the novel; in the first sketch the narrative voice refers to 'one of the (Quaker) brothers', while he has become 'Richard' in the novel. On the whole, the sketches have not been fleshed out but, on the contrary, slimmed down (in the novel the peach harvest

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<sup>12</sup> John Rosenberg, *Dorothy Richardson. A Critical Biography* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1973), 48.

<sup>13</sup> Bromley, 62.

<sup>14</sup> Bromley, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage*, vol. 4 (London: Virago Press, 1979), 451–552, 541. This volume was dedicated to John Cowper Powys, whose own writings are set in the countryside too (with the exception of the second part of *After My Fashion*, published posthumously). Subsequent references to *Pilgrimage* will be given directly in the text, indicating volume and page number.

episode is only one-paragraph long). It is as if the rough quality of the sketches was synonymous with too much detail and polish, too many aesthetic flourishes, which can be related to what Bromley calls ‘a paradoxical professionalism (attached) to the sketch: at the same time as it retains an amateur status and can be practised in a casual way by an untrained hand, it can also be conceived as an exercise in technique, as a rhetorical manipulation of rhetorical framing, and a serious experiment with form and genre’.<sup>16</sup> If the sketches mark the beginning of Richardson’s apprenticeship and ‘indicate something yet to come’<sup>17</sup>, then what is ‘finished’ in her case (at least as far as it appears in *Pilgrimage*) turns out to be starker, more condensed and more stylistically daring (for instance, in the passage about the wind in *Dimple Hill* there is a series of forceful non-verbal sentences).<sup>18</sup> Thus it is as if Richardson’s work as the writer of *Dimple Hill* had consisted in reducing each scene to its stark outlines and bare essentials—maybe because this is precisely what time does when it reduces our memories to sheer outlines in a simplified etching.

The first definition of the word ‘sketch’ is a reference to a rough or unfinished drawing or painting. Descriptive literary sketches have retained something of this origin when they attempt ‘the verbal representation of a visual object’<sup>19</sup> and develop ekphrastic qualities. One of the most salient characteristics of Richardson’s sketches is their emphasis on the ever-changing atmospheric phenomena, and yet the reader does come across pictorial descriptions, too. The latter feature a certain number of the ‘textual markers clearly encoding the presence of the visual’ that have been analysed by Lilian Louvel in *Poetics of the Iconotext*.<sup>20</sup> These primarily include visual indications of shades and colours; the use of the present tense; strong framing effects on the narrative level and within the *diegesis*, and pictorial vocabulary. These markers can be found time and time again in the sketches, whether they are human-oriented or not. The present tense

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<sup>16</sup> Bromley, 78.

<sup>17</sup> Bromley, 5.

<sup>18</sup> To see the differences it is possible to compare the last paragraph from ‘The Wind’ and the last paragraphs of the wind sequence in Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage*, 4:539.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Sha quoted in Bromley, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Liliane Louvel, *Poetics of the Iconotext*, trans. Laurence Petit (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); see also Liliane Louvel, ‘Telling “by” Pictures: Virginia Woolf’s Shorter Fiction’, *Journal of the Short Story in English*, no. 50 (Spring 2008), <https://journals.openedition.org/jsse/699>.

is used even when the sketches are memories, as is the case in ‘Dans la Bise’ and ‘Gruyères’, written three years after the events they describe. Colour indications abound and can be as specific as the subtle and varied palette of a painter: ‘a gleaming emerald’, ‘shallow pools, softly shining grey, silver and saffron’ (‘Haven’); ‘Every leaf upon the pathway and the lawn shines brown and gold bronze and keenest yellow’ (‘The Wind’); ‘(The little clouds) glowed to saffron and promised rose and told of crimson bars to burn across the sky’ (‘December’); ‘the near bare woodlands have flushed to a dim purpling, to a tawny crimsoning blur’ (‘The End of the Winter’); ‘their gleaming rose and sapphire, their soft emerald and purple gray’ (‘Lodge Night’); ‘a vision of the sea beyond the hills flowing in all along the coast—flowing emerald and blue, amber and brown and grey’ (‘The Holiday’); ‘the far-off tiny face of an oatfield gleaming cream-warm with soft black hedgerows, a little square of the tawny gold of waiting corn, a long strip heaped with barley sheaves and a field of veitch, a lacquer of blue-green black-framed against the tender sky ...’ (‘August’). From time to time there are some framing effects within the *diegesis* itself as when windows (house-windows or train-windows) and doors enable the narrative voice to gaze at what lies beyond. According to Liliane Louvel, the framing effects recall Leon Battista Alberti’s theory of perspective: ‘to make a picture one has to draw a *quadrangolo* which is like a window open onto composition’<sup>21</sup> Such is the case in ‘December’, ‘The End of Winter’, ‘Gruyères’ and also ‘Haven’, where one of the most obvious pictorial descriptions is to be found after the reference to a sash: ‘there is no dwelling, no creature, no challenge of movement in all the scene framed by your wide-flung sash’. The following paragraph, which is a frame in itself, reads as follows:

On either hand unhampered miles of muddy sand, jewelled with shallow pools, softly shining *grey, silver* and *saffron* weed-grown, here and there *a gleaming emerald*, and across the way at comfortable range for the hungry eye a little bare strand backed by soft *dun* distances, and to the west access away and away and away until the sea lies a *dim* line along the far horizon.

The paragraph is saturated with colours in all their shades and hues. The reader’s vision is restricted by the frame of the sash and the eye is led by the spatial indications from the foreground to the horizon as in a picture

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<sup>21</sup> Louvel, ‘Telling “by” Pictures: Virginia Woolf’s Shorter Fiction’.

where a sense of perspective is rendered. Last but not least, a pictorial vocabulary is recurrent in the sketches, with words such as ‘scenes’, ‘vistas’, and above all ‘picture’: ‘the sea [...] heightening all the picture’ (‘Hay-time’); ‘For daily adventure you may go into your picture’ (‘Haven’); ‘A moment’s turn served for the picture from the stile’ (‘December’); ‘And there are the still warm days when you may take your long chair out into the gravelled space and sit, as it were, in the wide picture’ (‘The End of the Winter’); ‘(The little days) pluck the last plumage from your picture and beckon you with long vistas’ (‘Across the Year’); ‘In and out winds the little train until the moving picture slows down’ (‘Welcome’). Clearly, the impression one has when reading the sketches is that the pastoral surroundings—those of the homestead and of the Old House of a coastal village—are like soothing, relaxing ‘widespread picture(s)’ (‘A Sussex Carrier’). Kristin Bluemel suggests that these pictures can ‘resist the effects of time, change, and movement that plague the other world from which the narrator, [...], seeks to recover’.<sup>22</sup> Retrieving the past means visualizing these pictures as they emerge in the mind of the narrative voice. Thus, the carefully composed pictorial descriptions, conveying some sense of stasis, make perfect sense even though, as we will see later, it would be wrong to think that the sketches themselves do away with notions of time altogether.

Some sections of the sketches are masterpieces of prose poetry. Reading them, one is struck not only by the fact that description is emphasised over narration, but also by their sheer virtuosity. This is above all the case in the groups of sketches dealing with the cycle of the seasons and the subtle changes of nature. The aesthetic is to the fore. There is a surfeit of adjectives and double adjectives, the use of prosopopoeia and personification, hypallage in ‘the high, glad days’, the use of the pronoun ‘she’ for the afternoon and the first winter twilight in ‘Dusk’, the morning light who has ‘delicate fingers’, just like the Homeric dawn, in ‘Peach Harvest’. The wind is referred to as ‘he’ in ‘The Wind’, ‘Haven’ and ‘August’, the birds have voices in ‘December’, and the garden is said to be ‘grateful’ after a storm in ‘Strawberries’. The old house has a ‘face’ in ‘Welcome’, and in ‘Haven’, ‘All night long the spirit of the Old House possesses you, penetrating more and more completely’. As we will see later, this is no mere poetical device, there are a few comparisons and

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<sup>22</sup> Kristen Bluemel, *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism. Dorothy Richardson’s Pilgrimage*. (Athens, G.A: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 139.

metaphors here and there, such as the metaphor of ‘the picture’. Jewel images appears frequently: ‘miles of muddy sand jewelled with shallow pools’ (‘Haven’); ‘the jewels of the morning’ (‘The Wind’); ‘poignant jewels of sounds’, ‘from every jewelled blades’ (‘December’); ‘(The days) flash their jewels’ (‘Across the Year’); ‘chequers of sunlight lie upon the jewelled floor of the woodland’ (‘Welcome’); ‘(The) dark mantle (of the winter dusk) [...] is jewelled with a little hanging lamp’ (‘Dusk’). The metaphor refers either to light or to sounds, which points to another striking feature of the sketches, namely the overwhelming presence of the senses, in particular sight and hearing, but also—though far less often—smell (the ‘faint mouldering’ of the ancient house in ‘Lodge Night’, the scent of leaves in ‘March’, of ‘the long twilights’ in ‘Dusk’ and the smells in the storehouse) and touch (as when the reader is invited to shake a branch in ‘March’ or to ‘feel the swift touch of twilit nights’ in ‘Across the Year’). One discovers the world through one’s senses and these sketches evoke the world looked at or watched, listened to, smelt, and touched while quiescent in it (sitting or lying down) or walking through it. As Abram David writes in *The Spell of the Sensuous*:

I have these multiple ways of encountering and exploring the world—listening with my ears, touching with my skin, seeing with my eyes, tasting with my tongue, smelling with my nose [...] Yet my experience of the world is not fragmented; I do not commonly experience the visible appearance of the world as in any way separable from its audible aspect.<sup>23</sup>

The voices of the world can also be heard thanks to the use of onomatopoeia, whether it is deployed explicitly as in:

drip, drip, drip, the lingering raindrops fall from their sleeping branches. In the immeasurable stillness there is no sound but the sharp drip, drip’ (‘December’)

Or each time bird voices are mentioned, or used more subtly, with the sonorities aimed at reproducing the aural landscape. Sibilants, for instance, are used to capture the voice of the sea in ‘The Holiday’, although it is simply an unheard presence in the background (‘Southward the dim downs point to where the unseen sea washes the silent shore’) or to help

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<sup>23</sup> Abram, 125.

the reader hear swarming insects in ‘December’ and ‘August’ (‘the summer’s fragrant bean-rows standing in the hot sunshine festooned with the songs of sipping bees’; ‘but this morning when you were still the ceaseless sound of a million tiny hummings made you an interloper’); in ‘December’ strident and sibilant sounds imitate the blackbird’s song: ‘The song sounds faint and far, a fringe of liquid shrillings’. Music was of paramount importance to Richardson and like all poets she was aware ‘of this primordial depth in language, whereby particular sensations are invoked by the sounds themselves, and whereby the shape, rhythm, and texture of particular phrases conjure the expressive character of particular phenomena’.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the sheer poetry and musicality of some passages is stupendous, what with the play on the sonorities, the use of alliteration, and the building up of a certain rhythm with the repetition of words—as is the case, for example, in ‘March’:

All the sweet chill things of the early year are *here*, and *here*, in the heart of the garden where yesterday the snowflakes lay, stands full summer. No pale hue, no faint flush of anticipation, but fulfilment at it utmost. Hundreds of spirals of ruddy blossom *hang* clear from their ripe brown stalks, *hang* head downwards against grey-green crinkled leafage, *hang* and taper each to a crimson point. Come near, and gently shake a burdened branch; *every* dancing bell will sound, a *faint, faint*, slurring tone; *every* deep point heavy with closed red buds will sway and swing till the whole bush seems adrip.

In this paragraph the names of the flowers (‘things’) and the bush are not mentioned so that the only things that stand out are the dabs of colours and their shapes (as is the case in a picture). Three senses out of five are present: sight—with the colours; hearing—with the repetition of ‘faint’; and touch—with the phrase ‘gently shake’. The use of plosives and dentals evoking the weight of the blossom is counterbalanced by the soft sounds mimicking their song. The descriptive passage has a certain rhythm, too, with the anadiplosis of ‘here’ and the use of anastrophe working both to delay and emphasize one particular word (here the word ‘summer’ although the title of the sketch refers to spring). The whole bush is recreated in its present state just for the sake of it, without any plot function or symbolism being attached to this description as if to suggest that the only role of the narrative voice is to make the reader ‘see’, thanks

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<sup>24</sup> Abram, 145.

to a highly-crafted poetical and pictorial sketch, which is clearly an aesthetic object.

Turning to *Dimple Hill*, the chapter-volume of *Pilgrimage* devoted to the time Miriam spends in Sussex resting from her life in London and trying to write, the following sentences are revealing: ‘the serene face of the old house that already she could sketch from memory’ (IV 446); ‘Miriam departed on a mental tour. Picture after picture emerged from the past’ (526); ‘Meaningless, for him, the picture she was composing from material brimming in her mind, swiftly, urged by the pressure of the brief moments’ (549); ‘You see, Amabel, you picture it all?’ (551). Thinking of the pieces published in the *Friday Review* (as the *Saturday Review* becomes in *Pilgrimage* (IV 636)), ‘picture’ and ‘sketch’ start to seem significant. Miriam, just like the voice in the sketches, sees the world as so many pictures she can store in her mind and then pass on to others by composing ‘after the manner of a picture, with things in their true proportions and relationships’.<sup>25</sup> These pictures, however, are often about ever-changing phenomena and evanescent images (whether the phenomena are to be found in the real world or in the world of her consciousness). They may capture the moment but this does not mean that temporality is forgotten. Their temporal dimension is of a very complex kind that has nothing to do with linear causality but encompasses different strata—which was a modernist trait: ‘the aspect of the sketch which makes it able to look both backwards and forwards aligns it with the impulse of modernism towards simultaneity’.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the word ‘simultaneity’, whether one is referring to space or time, is one of the prevailing features of the sketches and accounts for some of the paradoxes at work within them.

#### *Right in the middle(s)*

The sketch ‘Welcome’, together with several others such as ‘The Holiday’, ‘The End of Winter’, ‘Lodge Night’ and ‘Dusk’, celebrate ‘the homestead’ as a warm and safe ‘ingle’ (‘Lodge Night’), providing shelter not only from the elements but also from all the places where attentiveness is not possible. It is old and thus related to the past: ‘Within is harvest, hard-won bounty, the garnered beauty of the long faithful years’ (‘Welcome’). It has a hearth and a heart which are both alive and vibrate to the wind or the fire; it is connected to its garden, that is to say, to nature and the idea of

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<sup>25</sup> Dorothy Richardson, quoted in Rosenberg, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Bromley, 25.

growth;<sup>27</sup> and the people who work in and about it follow the rhythms of nature: 'Meetings and dispersals swing secure as the movements of the sun' ('The Holiday').<sup>28</sup> Of course it would be easy to discard this nook as an enclave from modernity, a symbol of old-fashioned pastoralism on a small scale, a place out of time and, in a way, out of space. What is paramount, however, is not the idea of fixity or stasis but the idea of stability without stagnation on account of the porosity that exists between the house and its surroundings and all the other dwelling places mentioned and their surroundings—windows are (wide-)open or bared, the wind wails down the chimney ('The Wind', 'Haven') and the storm rushes into the house ('Strawberries'). The dwelling places mentioned are both secluded places and exposed spaces, where thresholds are paramount: 'Your hut at the edge of the forest' ('August'); 'the Old House stands alone on the edge of the world' ('Haven'). Five different ways connect the garden and the old homestead ('The End of the Winter') and the pathways in the vicinity coax the narrative voice into wandering along them. Although 'tethered' to the old homestead, the narrative voice is still a 'pilgrim' ('The Holiday').

As Claire Drewery has argued, 'there is a relationship between liminality and the modernist short fiction' and this is true not only with regards to spatiality but also temporality.<sup>29</sup> Richardson's sketches are a case in point. Some of them or part of them focus on specific moments of transformation, such as dusk or dawn ('Haven', 'December', 'Dusk'); others on Janus-like months, such as March—poised between winter and spring ('March')—or periods ('Across the Year'). This interest in transitional periods of time is coupled with an emphasis on cyclical time: night and day; the seasons; the landmarks in the cycle of the year; and the wonders of the year's stages with the same events happening every year at that: 'The Summer of your garden is on its way again' ('The End of the

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<sup>27</sup> When reading the last paragraph of 'Welcome' (1912) one is reminded of *Howards End* published in 1910 and of what the eponymous house stands for in the novel.

<sup>28</sup> Although the homestead is seen as a shelter and however warm and friendly the living-room is, the narrative voice, afraid of 'perpetual exposure of home' ('Lodge Night') seeks moments of loneliness; she cherishes the times when she is alone in the homestead ('Lodge Night', 'The Holiday'), during which she plunges into her treasure-trove of visions.

<sup>29</sup> Drewery, 3.

Winter’); ‘It is peach-time again’ (‘Peach harvest’); ‘another summer will have dawned long before [...] (‘Dusk’). The life of the homestead follows the rhythm of the seasons, that is to say the cycling of the sensuous earth: ‘the perfect cycle of the year, the good farm year, redeemed from toil and strain, visible at last, a gleaming chain of experience, full and complete at the heart of the immediate moment’ (‘Peach Harvest’). Indeed, when one lives in the countryside and ‘fully engage(s), sensorially, with one’s earthly surroundings (one) find(s) oneself in a world of cycles within cycles within cycles’.<sup>30</sup> Thus linear time, the ‘irreversible and rectilinear progression of itemizable events’ recedes in the background or at least competes with a vision of time that is cyclical or circular.<sup>31</sup>

When the emphasis is not on linear time but on circular time, the spatial and the temporal are no longer considered as two distinct dimensions:

(A) time that is cyclical, or circular, is just as much *spatial* as it is *temporal*. [...] Unlike a straight line, moreover, a circle demarcates and encloses a spatial field. Indeed, the visible space in which we commonly find ourselves when we step outdoors is still encompassed by the circular enigma that we have come to call ‘the horizon’. [...] The circular character of the visible world becomes explicit. Thus cyclical time, [...], has the same shape as perceivable space. And the two circles are in fact one.<sup>32</sup>

The mention of the horizon or of ‘edge of the world’ is to be found on many occasions in the sketches (for example ‘Hay-Time’, ‘December’, ‘Across the Year’). What is more, one of Richardson’s sketches, aptly entitled ‘Across the Year’, is based on a sustained metaphor conveying the idea that time is a spatial dimension. What is hinted at in the first sentence (‘the valley of the year’) is then elaborated on in the last but one paragraph of the text:

Wakening some night at the goal of your journey into the darkness and with deep hours ahead, you may see for a moment the flaming summit of the year. You may, if you care, accept the flashed challenge and set your feet upon the steep uplands lying between the year’s end and the bleak plateau of March. You may pass in a dream along the

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<sup>30</sup> Abram, 186.

<sup>31</sup> Abram, 188.

<sup>32</sup> Abram, 188-89.

high-hung valley of April and up May's winding pathway to the height. There you may watch the serene swing of widespread days and see the sunlight on earth's brimming goblet; you may feel the swift touch of twilight night across the June meadows...

The sustained metaphor undoubtedly has some religious connotations but, strictly speaking, it points to the fact that the sense of temporality should not be dissociated from the sense of spatiality, that the two are intrinsically linked. The past and the future make themselves felt in the present in the same way as the valley of April is supported by the plateau of March and hides the June meadows; they are located within the sensuous world. One is immersed as much in time as in space; or, rather, one exists in a dimension which is both spatial and temporal at the same time, as summed up by Abram:

That which has been and that which is to come are not else-where—they are not autonomous dimensions independent of the encompassing present in which we dwell. They are, rather, the very depths of this living place—the hidden depths of its distances and the concealed depth on which we stand.<sup>33</sup>

Since the emphasis is the circularity of time, what is past is not irretrievable and can still be felt in the present in the same way as what is to come is already contained in it. One cannot but read the sketches in a linear manner because of the way words are printed; nevertheless, in a lot of sketches the overlapping of different periods of times stands out. The present is infused with the past and the future at the same time. It is expansive and everything is resting in it. The sketches may focus on one particular moment in the day/year—indicated by their titles—but they also simultaneously allude to what has happened and to what is to come and there are always references to the previous and the future hours/months of the same day/year. The different periods of time no longer simply follow each other but seem interwoven and included in one another. In 'August', the sketch starts with the indication 'after tea' and the use of the present tense; it then mentions 'This morning' with the use of the past tense and goes on by adumbrating what will happen at night with the use of 'will' in the last paragraph. Thus, the reader moves back and forth in time instead of simply following the chronology. In 'the End

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<sup>33</sup> Abram, 190.

of the Winter', the last sentence conjures the future summer laying beyond the imminent spring and yet already here, as suggested by the phrase 'is on its way again': 'The Summer of your garden is on its way again, and between you and the loveliness of the long June days lies Spring with its sweet searching moments'. Similarly, in 'Dans la Bise', there is this unforeseeable reference to the height of summer right in the depth of winter: 'The black river lies asleep in its wide cleft along the bed of the valley, but somewhere a streamlet has awakened and the fairy music tells how the unthinkable summer will take her way through this same place'. In 'March', the mention of the snow is embedded between two references to the forthcoming summer, giving one the impression that everything is comprised in the present:

With tranquil sense you may breathe the warm full scent of leaf and blossom, the scent of currant time, the time of ripening fruit. And as the challenge of the soft scented bells falls upon the raw air, yesterday's snow-flakes, lying along the lawn, dying into the grey river, are forgotten. You can hear, coming up from the breast of the tide, laughter and song, the thud and creak of straining oars, the swish and fling of water the faint tinkle of slow-gliding music.

On account of the eternally recurring cycle of events and years, what has happened is never lost and what is to come is always already germinating in the present; the past and the future are 'full and complete at the heart of the immediate moment' ('Peach Harvest').<sup>34</sup>

The impulse towards simultaneity can also be seen in the descriptive passages in the sketches that are replete with '-ing' forms (whether they are present participles or adjectives). They indicate the instantaneity of what is being described, giving the impression that this is taking place out of chronological time and avoid freezing the flux. This is most particularly the case when the sea ('Haven', 'Lodge Night') or the wind are mentioned ('The Wind') and the two elements have a lot in common, as is made clear by the comparison in the following passage: 'Gathering strength like a wave, voices are sweeping up and up over the land now, borne on a wide undertone, shouting and moaning in long-drawn ululation, rising and falling, breaking and dying down to a low sobbing' ('The Wind'). The

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<sup>34</sup> This, as we have already seen, is also in keeping with the notion of simultaneity that is foregrounded by the genre of the modernist sketch.

‘-ing forms’, however, can also be linked with another dimension of the texts to which we will soon return.

The complex vision of the temporal dimension, which is that of earthly time, is in keeping with, as we have already seen, the impulse towards simultaneity that is foregrounded by the genre of the modernist sketch, a reservoir of past visions and images for a work yet to come. Above all, it is also akin to Richardson’s presentation of the working of one’s consciousness in the sketches (and later in *Pilgrimage*). Some of the sketches—for example, ‘Haven’ and ‘The Wind’—that seek, in Bluemel’s words, ‘to record the experience of consciousness will contain their origins and finales in one vast, perpetual middle’.<sup>35</sup> In the sketches, the present of the earth is infused with what has happened and what is to come: ‘the memory of the past blossoming and the love of the blossoming that is to come are at their utmost gnawing intensity’ (‘The Wind’). Similarly, right at the heart of the present, one’s consciousness can dive into the past here and now.<sup>36</sup> This is precisely what the narrative voice—hovering as she is between ‘this full moment between memory and promise’ (‘The Wind’)—does in ‘the Wind’, in ‘December’, in ‘Strawberries’ but also in ‘Lodge Night’, in which a string of three memories/visions unfolds on the page (a garden in summer ... the sea ... the mountains), while the use of ellipses between each memory suggests they could be rushing in the narrator’s mind not in a chronological order—prescribed by the writing on the page—but in a series of simultaneous layers: ‘The passage of the quite hours brings old scenes to rise and shift, to stand serene and clear, to interweave and fade’ (‘Lodge Night’). Thus, Richardson’s grasp of the workings of consciousness may have been underpinned by her observation and deep involvement in the temporal dimension of earthly life.

The sketches give the reader the opportunity to ponder on ‘another type of temporality’; they also urge him/her to think of an ‘another type of subject’ and the relationship of this new type of subject with the world. The least that can be said is that the narrative voice is in a way hollowed

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<sup>35</sup> Bluemel, 138.

<sup>36</sup> Likewise while analysing ‘Strawberries’, Claire Drewery speaks of ‘an instant in which the past of the strawberry picking in the storm becomes the speaker’s immediate present and the distinctions between past, present and future disappear’: Drewery, 87.

out or at least reduced to her senses as well as to her hoard of ‘visions’. There is no romantic outpouring of feelings and moods on to the countryside and no pathetic fallacy.<sup>37</sup> The narrative voice remains both ‘remote and impersonal’<sup>38</sup> so as to see, hear, smell, touch, and record things as they are as neutrally as possible without projecting feelings on to them.<sup>39</sup> The voice is indeed a very humble one: she is discreet, extremely vigilant and attentive, intensely present, but still detached enough to look on: ‘the seeking eye’, ‘your contented eyes’ (‘Haven’); ‘You lie listening ...’ (‘The Wind’); she sits ‘watching’ in ‘The End of Winter’. In a word, she is immersed and engrossed in the world she is watching and listening to; she is a ‘hungering eye’ (‘Haven’), which is all ears at that. Now, fastening one’s gaze on something is, according to Corine Pelluchon, the only way of having a form of intimacy with what is in front of one.<sup>40</sup> The act of perception in its own right and at first hand is in the forefront: ‘those among them who are as yet detached enough to see and feel the beauty of the day, whose perceptions are as yet unentangled, undimmed’ (‘A Sussex Auction’); ‘there are eyes to see, eyes freed from naïve amusement, imprisoned no longer in impatience and expectation’ (‘A Sussex Carrier’).

Thus, the only thing that matters is the sensuous encounter with the world at the very moment when this encounter is happening, an encounter which is active on both sides (or maybe actively passive or passive-receptive as regards the narrative voice). Since the subject is no longer the domineering

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<sup>37</sup> This was in keeping with what the people who tried to define literary impressionism strove to do as indicated by Ford Madox Ford: ‘The main and perhaps most passionate tenet of impressionism was the suppression of the author from the pages of his book. He must not comment; he must not narrate’, quoted in Rebecca Bowler, *Literary Impressionism. Vision and Memory in Dorothy Richardson, Ford Madox Ford, H.D. and May Sinclair* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 27.

<sup>38</sup> Gloria G. Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 61.

<sup>39</sup> Bowler says about *Dimple Hill* that ‘(Miriam) wants to go back to the pre-analytic, silently perceiving self [...]’: Bowler, 147.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Giving due consideration to a living being or a picture by attentively looking at them and opening oneself onto them, entails that this experience is both aesthetical and ethical. [...] Certain emotions, such as the fascination with the wonders of nature and the living world, are aesthetic and ethical at the same time’ (my translation): Corine Pelluchon, *Ethique de la considération* (Paris : Seuil, 2018), 231.

Cartesian subject, another kind of world seems to emerge. I have already mentioned the personification of the elements and inanimate objects, and it seems to me that the narrative voice's humble attentiveness means the world takes to speaking and looking too: the voices of nature (the birds, the wind, the burning sap) become audible and even 'call' the narrative voice ('Haven', 'The Wind', 'August', 'December');<sup>41</sup> its eyes become visible too ('shadowless eyes peep at you' ('August')) and looks are reciprocated ('if you look closely', 'share your gaze' ('August')). Abram notes:

To the sensing body *all* phenomena are animate, actively soliciting the participation of our senses, or else withdrawing from our focus and repelling our involvement. Things disclose themselves to our immediate perception as vectors, as style of unfolding—not as finished chunks of matter given once and for all, but as dynamic ways of engaging the senses and modulating the body.<sup>42</sup>

What with the lack of directed action, the absence of expressed feelings, and the interaction between the living, speaking, and seeing world and the narrative voice, it seems to me there are times when Richardson provides the reader with passages where the narrative voice is simply one element in the kind of 'assemblage' Deleuze and Guattari refer to as *haeccities* or 'blocks of affect':

There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name *haecceity* for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are *haecceities* in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 'Calling your hand to your curtain, the eager broken ripples poured in at your bared window [...]' ('December')

<sup>42</sup> Abram, 81.

<sup>43</sup> 'You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects. You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it. A cloud of locusts carried in by the wind at five in the evening; a vampire who goes out at night, a werewolf at full moon. It should not be thought that a

However daunting the concept may sound, Deleuze and Guattari also write that haecceities can be modest and microcosmic, which is the case in the sketches. In 'Haven', such a block of affect appears on the page with the coexistence of the sea, the hours of the day, and the listening and watching 'you': 'And as you listen to its lappings, and watch its breathing under the soft lambency of the moving light, the early autumn gloamings falls, [...], moving towards across the water, growing and deepening until the night is round you once more'. In 'The Wind', the assemblage gathers the wind, the house, and 'you' at a certain hour (categories other than individual beings are in play): '[...] it seizes your dwelling and encircles it with a roaring, fierce, flamelike. In at your window, down your wide chimney it rushes. You are at the heart of the uproar. The wind has found its prey upon the bare hillside'. In these two cases, 'you' does not exist as a subject ahead of the experience or the moment; 'you' has entered into composition with the night and the sea (sea-twilight-you) or the wind and the chimney (wind-chimney-you):

It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a decor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects, which belong to another plane.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 262.

When the narrative voice is not indoors, she takes walks along pathways, through forests or across fields. According to Deleuze and Guattari, ‘taking a walk is a *haecceity*<sup>45</sup>, as you are both in everything, at the mercy of the elements and the natural things around and outside, looking on: ‘Your winding passage has brought you into the fellowship of the encircling trees. The little wood, [...] is growing and widening at it draws you’ (‘December’); ‘A momentary halt sends you into the deepest of the solitude. The feeling of the mountains grows and grows—goes forth, until one with them, you can hear the living voices of the stillness’ (‘Gruyères’). These are assemblages of the *haecceity* type ‘that carr(y) or bring out the event insofar as it is unformed and incapable of being effectuated by persons’.<sup>46</sup>

With regard to style, Deleuze and Guattari argue that in French the verb in the infinitive is characteristic of the semiotics of *haecceities* and used to refer to ‘the time of the pure event or of becoming, which articulates relative speeds and slownesses independently of the chronometric or chronological values that time assumes in the other modes’.<sup>47</sup> It has been suggested that the present participle might be the English equivalent of the French infinitive.<sup>48</sup> This could be another way of accounting for the high frequency of present participles in the sketches, especially with a cyclical element such as the sea, or a provisional one such as the wind. Besides, the innumerable double adjectives which can be found qualifying a noun in the descriptive passages could also be linked to the notion of ‘assemblage’, to the fact that there are no fixed identities, no pre-established categories, but simply a series of compositions and interactions between two ‘objects’ (which are no longer objects), a series of events, which are in no way permanent, but provisional and always in the middle since ‘they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles’<sup>49</sup>: ‘the snow-spread plain’, ‘snow-burdened roofs’, ‘(the) diamond-sprent (mighty massif and billows)’ (‘Gruyères’), ‘the white-clad pinnacles’, ‘sun-washed snow’ (‘Dans la Bise’), ‘the gorse-sweet air’ (‘Welcome’), ‘wind-swept twilights of spring’ (‘Dusk’), ‘dew-soaked,

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<sup>45</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 263.

<sup>46</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 265.

<sup>47</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 263.

<sup>48</sup> Mathieu Duplay, ‘Gaddis / Deleuze: Jeu, Coup de Dés, Hasard’, *Deleuze Chantier, Revue Théorie-Littérature-Enseignement*, no. 19 (2001): 11–27.

<sup>49</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 261.

rain-drenched emerald meadows', 'lichen-covered wicket', 'the dew-dimmed glass', 'frost-encrusted panes', 'the damp-bound gravel' ('The End of the winter'), 'moss-cushioned' ('August'), 'weed-grown pools' ('Haven'), 'a willow-shaded stream' ('Welcome'), etc...

Deleuze and Guattari also add that '(A) *haecceity* has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome'.<sup>50</sup> The phrase 'always in the middle' prompts the reader to pay more attention to, and hopefully come to a better understanding of, the repetition of the phrases 'in the heart of' and 'at the heart' in the sketches. Their meaning is both spatial and temporal and could point to the acknowledgment of '*haecceities*': 'a gleaming chain of experience, full and complete at the heart of the immediate moment'; 'The last hours of the working day brim and brim until the hush at the heart of being has been reached once more' ('Peach Harvest'); 'You are at the heart of the uproar' ('The Wind'), 'in the heart of the spring' ('Welcome'), etc ... This is all the more salient as Richardson referred to the sketches as 'middles'. This is how they were labelled in the table of contents of the *Saturday Review* so as to distinguish them from leading articles, special articles, correspondence, reviews, and shorter notices. The word is fitting, however, for another reason, which has to do with the complex temporal dimension we have analysed—since we know that everything in the sketches takes place right in the middle of 'the developing scene' ('A Sussex Carrier'), which perfectly corresponds to 'the time of the pure event or of becoming',<sup>51</sup> in other words, as we have seen, the time of *haecceities*, involving the intensive forces of the universe with no reference whatsoever to social factors.

#### *On the road to Pilgrimage*

Having looked at some of the characteristics of the sketches, which could be considered as "a reservoir of images and techniques",<sup>52</sup> and knowing that when Richardson embarked on the writing of *Pilgrimage* in the early 1910s she wanted to reform the novel, it is possible to assert that she used some of the 'images and techniques' she had polished in the sketches to do so. While realistic novels revolve around plots and the logical and chronological concatenation of events, this is clearly not the case for the

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<sup>50</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 263.

<sup>51</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 263.

<sup>52</sup> Bromley, 62.

sketches, which are free of narrative because of their emphasis on temporal layers, simultaneity, and plotlessness. Not only can some passages from *Pilgrimage* be read as sketches in their own right—especially when there are hypotyposes dramatizing vision without any discourse—but the structure of the novel as a whole seems to have been influenced by the genre of the sketch, as the beginnings and endings themselves are not of primary importance, the focus being on pure events, undirected.<sup>53</sup> The sketches also anticipate the place-specific quality of *Pilgrimage* (even though London, not the countryside, was to have pride of place in the cycle), since space in them is not conceived as an arbitrary backdrop but as a sentient world the narrative voice is part of, immersed in, and affected by to the point that, at times, she ceases to be a subject to become an event, entering into composition with a place and a season (in *Pilgrimage* this is sometimes the case when Miriam roams the streets of London on her own in all weathers). Less obviously, the cyclical temporality associated with rural life and the land may have backed up Richardson's conception of the workings of consciousness and the role of memory, which she was to make the most in *Pilgrimage*. Last but not least, the sketches—particularly via their use of the second-person narrative voice—encourage in subtle ways the participation and collaboration of the reader, a participation that *Pilgrimage* too was to demand. This, however, is quite another topic, too vast to be broached now (although it could be the subject of another paper).

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<sup>53</sup> Bluemel, 138-39. Richardson was in fact not the only one interested in such techniques as proved by one of the sentences Virginia Woolf wrote in her diaries: 'Suppose one can keep the quality of the sketch in the finished and composed work', quoted in Bromley, 64. We can also think of what Jacques Rancières writes about fiction at the turn of the twentieth century: '(I)t was a new era for fiction, which was at last free from the usual expectations that had tethered it for so long and now open to the infinite multiplicity of the *infinitesimal sensations and nameless emotions that characterize lives which do not obey the hierarchy of temporalities*' (my translation). *Les Bords de la fiction* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2017), 152.