Politics and Poetics of Mobility: Gender, Motion, and Stasis in E. M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*

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Abstract: This article proposes an interdisciplinary reading of E. M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. It essentially argues that Forster's novel offers a precious opportunity to tap into the reciprocal exchange between Mobility Studies and narrative practices. By examining the dynamics of movement and stasis in the novel, it sustains a dual emphasis on the way motion defines the aesthetic orientations of the narrative, and the way (im)mobility undergirds discourses of power and control. The narrative, itself a vehicle for the circulation of ideas and cultural representations, engages a discussion about who has the right to move and who is forced to stay put, and how (im)mobility shapes social and gendered spaces. Forster's predilection for employing contrasts as a platform for his social critique advances mobility and immobility as major concerns in his novel. The article homes in on differential mobilities and discusses gendered motion and stasis.

Keywords: E. M. Forster, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, embodied mobility, material mobility, gendered mobility, (im)mobility (in)justice

Virginia Woolf's reading of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* brings to the fore E. M. Forster's acute awareness of his surroundings and his tour de force in capturing the spirit of the age, the zeitgeist of the Edwardian era. Woolf bears witness to Forster's keen eye for details and discerning narration of the quotidian and the mundane. She offers as evidence the writer's interpolation of the bicycle in his narrative: "In 1905 Lilia learned to bicycle, coasted down the High Street on Sunday evening, and fell off at the turn by the church. For this she was given a talking to by her brother-in-law which she remembered to her dying day" (Woolf 1966, 342). Woolf's reading of the bicycle episode stops at praising Forster's capacity to transform his narratives into cultural archives, claiming that "the social historian will find his books full of illuminating information" (342). While benefiting from Woolf's perceptive remark on the

socio-historical quality of Forster's novel, I carry on in this article where she had left. I propose rerouting the bicycle incident to the field of mobility studies and reading it as a sign of damaged mobility. My focus is not reduced to the various means of transportations in the novel; I am far more interested in an intersectional (im)mobility (in)justice wherein acts of movement and stasis intersect gender, class, and culture.

The rationale behind this article is to look at Forster's *Where Angels Fear Tread* from the prism of mobility studies, a road relatively not well-trodden thus far. The interplay between mobility and immobility offers an innovative venue to appraise the novel and steer a path in its social and cultural conflicts. Indeed, Forster's attention to movement and stasis makes his fiction pertinent to recent debates in mobility studies. The two critical studies that explicitly position their arguments in mobility studies are Sarah Gibson's "A seat with a view: Tourism, (im)mobility and the cinematic- travel glance" (2006) and Nour Dakkak's "Mobility, Attentiveness and Sympathy in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*" (2019). Gibson's article is a quite pertinent critical intervention conjugating research in mobility and film studies. It focuses on the cinematic adaptation of *A Room with a View* and centers on social, embodied, and technological mobilities related to tourism. Dakkak's article, on the other hand, presses the borders of mobility studies to literary analysis and looks into the impact of modern mobilities on human care and neglect. The two articles partake in an interdisciplinary mode of analysis, a venture I try to pursue in my reading of Forster's debut novel.

Even though my work intersects those two articles in its concern with mobility, it departs from them in its attempt at reading *Where Angels Fear to Tread* from the perspective of the new mobility paradigm as conceptualized by Mimi Sheller and John Urry. It homes in on differential mobilities and the entangled inequalities related to movement and stasis in Forster's novel. I argue that the narrative, even in its aesthetic orientations, is entrenched in a politics of uneven distribution of (im)mobility based on gender and class. I propose three interrelated axes to examine this topic. The first is theoretical and seeks to explain the polyvalent usage of the term mobility, which can be approached both literally and metaphorically. The second is attentive to the aesthetics of mobility as well as its material side. It mainly argues that motion is central to the plot and is intricately intertwined with narrative strategies and devices. And the third axis examines the ethos of (im)mobility and deconstructs the power of discourses monitoring gendered motion and stasis.

Of Mobility and Justice

The mobilities turn instigated by Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2006) is an interdisciplinary venture, wherein spatial studies is absorbed into sociology. The rationale behind this fusion is to align mobility with spaces of mobility, for "mobility like place, space and territory, involves a politics of hierarchy, of inclusion and exclusion" (Cresswell 2011, 167). Such awareness of differential mobilities and asymmetrical regimes of movements and stasis is at the core of what Mimi Sheller calls "mobility justice," which she defines as "an overreaching concept for thinking about how power and inequality inform the governance and control of movement, shaping the patterns of unequal mobility and immobility in the circulation of people, resources, and information" (Sheller 2018a, 36). Mobilities research is not only concerned with movement, but maintains a more comprehensive project of deconstructing the mobility apparatus, a complex system of discourses and practices which regulate (im)mobility.

Though it adopts the term "mobility" as a keyword, mobility studies is also attentive to immobility. The use of "(im)mobilities," Sheller explains, "is meant to signal that mobility and immobility are always connected, relational, and co-dependent, such that we should always think of them, not as binary opposites but as dynamic constellations of multiple scales, simultaneous practices, and relational meanings" (Sheller 2018b, 20). Mobility and immobility are constitutive and deeply entangled. The mobility of some people can concretize only if other people or places, as a matter of fact, are immobile. The tourist-like travels of Philip, Caroline, and Harriet to an Italy they assume is stuck in the Middle Ages provide the most typical example in Forster's narrative. The converse is equally true, as the immobility of some people happens at the expense of the mobility of others. This is the case of colonization and forced deportations. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Mrs. Herriton's immobility is only secured with Lilia's movement to Italy. There is no mutual hierarchy governing mobility and immobility. For example, mobility does not always imply a favorable state, while immobility does not in itself indicate a damaged condition. Both mobility and immobility can signal a desired state and/or a coerced situation.

The term "justice" is inextricably linked with its antonym "injustice," much like the term "mobility," which intrinsically refers to immobility. (Im)mobility injustice, therefore, is more attentive to the damage inflicted on someone in their capacity as (im)mobile agent. Mobility injustice, argues Sheller, first targets our bodies

and "the ways in which some bodies can move easily through space than others, due to restrictions on mobility relating to gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and physical abilities" (Sheller 2018b, 24). Put differently, mobility regimes sustain uneven modes of movement and stasis and corroborate the fact that all people are mobile, but some people are more mobile than others. Indeed, such differentiated mobility as conceptualized by Doreen Massey's "power geometry" shows that some people "initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it" (Massey 1994, 149). Material mobility is also an integral component of mobility systems. Similar to bodies, objects can either move or stay put. The same regulatory mechanisms directed at bodies control the circulation of goods and resources. One of the chief questions raised by mobility justice is: "who governs or controls mobility systems?" (Sheller 2018b, 22), a question at the heart of my reading of Forster's novel.

The corporeal and the material, albeit fundamental aspects, are not the only elements of concern in mobilities research. The field comprises the ambulatory capacity of cultural representations and racial prejudices and stereotypes. Stephen Greenblatt's conceptualization of mobility is attentive to the impact of movement on spaces and vice versa. The third point in his *Manifesto* stipulates that "mobility studies should identify and analyze the 'contact zones' where cultural goods are exchanged" (Greenblatt 2010, 251). The field is also receptive to a metaphorical understanding of mobility and stasis. Greenblatt proposes a useful figurative expansion of the word "movement," which can encompass the motion between "center and periphery; faith and skepticism; order and chaos; exteriority and interiority" (Greenblatt 2010, 250). I propose in this article to press further this metaphorical use of mobility to the realm of narratology. In fact, my analysis of Forster's novel aligns to Ian C. Davidson's approach in his article "Mobilities of Form," wherein he concentrates on "the ways that literary works provide representations of movement and mobility in their narratives and subject matter, and the ways that the form and genre of the work is influenced by mobility practices" (Davidson 2017, 548). The following section of this article centers on textual mobilities or the interplay between narration and motion.

A Narrative in Motion

The plot of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is built on movement. Lilia, chaperoning Miss Abbott, leaves Sawston for a tour of Italy. There, she encounters Gino and marries him. Mrs. Herriton, her mother-in-law, dispatches her son Philip to bring

Lilia back to Sawston, but to no avail. Lilia dies after giving birth to a son, and Mrs. Herriton decides to transport the baby to Sawston. She sends both Philip and Harriet to Monteriano where they were preceded by Miss Abbot, who also wants to save the baby from what she deems an inferior culture. As Gino refuses to give up his son, Harriet kidnaps the infant who is inadvertently killed on the way to the station. The narrative, which starts with a train journey, ends on the railroad back to England. Nicholas Royle describes the novel as "a speedy narrative" (Royle 1999, 8). Indeed, the book reads fast not only because of its length, which makes it a novella rather than a novel, but because it is in perpetual motion. The only moments of real stasis in the narrative happen in Sawston, and they are rare. Otherwise, events are successive and follow a hasty rhythm. Narration in some parts of the text imitates the speed of a train and the fleeting views a traveler may catch from a window. The following description of Philips' and Harriet's trip to Verona provides a pertinent example:

> They travelled for thirteen hours downhill, whilst the streams broadened and mountains shrank, and the vegetation changed, and the people ceased being ugly and drinking beer, and began instead to drink wine and to be beautiful. And the train which had picked them at sunrise out of a waste of glaciers and hotels was waltzing at sunset round the wall of Verona. (Forster 1976, 90)

In this expeditious narration, Forster reproduces the pace of the train and testifies to the influence of mobility technologies on his style. Motion, I argue in this part, defines the whole narrative aesthetically and thematically.

Journeys are not mere movements in space; they are incorporated into the techniques of narration. Lilia's opening journey provides an excellent setting for the exposition as all the English characters assemble at Charing Cross to bid her goodbye. Forster finds a measured position to sketch the tensions in relationships that will develop later into conflicts. The ungovernable Lilia, the snobbish Mrs. Herriton, the pedantic Philip, and the frenzied Harriet, as well as the other characters, are presented to the reader in a speedy way tuning with the hastiness characterizing a departing train. As the narrative unfolds, each subsequent journey signals a new conflict and serves to increase tension. If Lilia's journey is related to a social conflict between the affluent Herritons and the socially mobile daughter-in-law, Philips' first journey to Italy shifts the focus to a cultural con-

flict between a civilized England and a less civilized Italy. The second journey, in which Caroline and Harriet participate, generates entangled social, cultural, and spatial conflicts. The death of Gino's baby, a climactic moment in the novel, also happens in motion, as the carriage transporting Philip and Harriet to the station accidentally collides with another one. Finally, the denouement, which shows a vexed Philip and a lovelorn Caroline, takes place on the move. The narrator's timely statement a few pages before the end of the novel: "The train was crawling up the last ascent towards the Campanile of Airolo and the little entrance of the tunnel" (Forster 1976, 157) announces the subsequent descending movement or falling action wherein the conflict is resolved. Mobility propels narration and functions as the motor of storytelling.

Trains and carriages are not mere means of transportations, either. They function as metaphors of spatial as well as emotional connection. Employing these modes of conveyance as a trope may be sustained by Michel de Certeau's use of "metaphorai," a name given to vehicles of mass transportation in Modern Athens: "to go to work or come home, one takes a metaphor – a bus or a train" (de Certeau 1988, 115). The movement of the trains in the novel has a metaphorical capacity of traversing and organizing emotions. E/motion in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is the equivalent of "Only connect" in *Howards End*. Both express the urgent need to bring together contrasting elements in people and base human relationships on love and care. Emotion in Forster's first novel, however, can be generated only by motion. Sawston, where the impassive Mrs. Herriton, the restrained Caroline, and the passive Philip live, is a place where emotions are regulated, and therefore nobody is likely to change as long as they keep immobile.

It is on a *metaphor*, a train, that Philip and Caroline manage to appreciate each other and get rid of their mutual pride and prejudice. The case of Philip and Caroline offers a relevant example of the rapport between locomotion and emotion. The close etymological proximity of motion and emotion, both derived from the Latin *movere*, which means "to move," indicates the constitutive relationship between mobility and feeling. Their first tempestuous mobile encounter takes place in a *legno* as Caroline is subjected to a severe interrogation on the way to the hotel. Three chapters later, we find them face to face traveling up to London. This trip by train sets their new relationship in motion. Philip, even though patronizing, discovers that "Miss Abbott, between Sawston and Charing Cross, revealed qualities which he had never guessed her to possess" (Forster 1976, 74).

Caroline, on her side, thinks that "the gulf between herself and Mr Herriton, which she had always known to be great, now seemed to her immeasurable" (78). The two characters need another journey in order to be completely changed, improved, and reconciled. Once again, the elucidation of this change takes place on the train. Similar to their trip up to London, this final journey intently concentrates on the internal emotions of the two characters as the narrator restrains from any description of the external view. As the train moves on, emotion builds up and culminates into a joint confession: "She said plainly, 'That I love him.' … He heard himself remark: 'Rather! I love him too!" (158). Motion generates emotion in the novel, and emotion is triggered by motion. E/motion is, therefore, the fulcrum of the aesthetic and thematic orientations of the narrative.

Material mobility, or the circulation of objects, also plays a significant narratological role in the novel. These objects, symbolically charged, generate "a music-like effect which he [Forster] calls 'rhythms'" (Fordoński 2004, 12). While objects like letters, telegrams, and postcards are used as literary devices, they emphasize the mobile thrust of the narrative and set up its tempo. Royle is attentive to their "performative" quality as "they not only say but do things: they announce an event, they demand, they seek to effect transactions, they order, they legislate, they promise, exploit and manipulate, they declare passion" (Royle 1999, 16). Similar to means of transportation, missives are crucial elements in the motion of the plot. The first letter in the novel, the one sent by Mrs. Theobald to Mrs. Herriton informing her that "Lilia is engaged to be married" (28), triggers all the subsequent movements. The symbolic significance of this letter resides in its mobility, a quality that represents a threat to Mrs. Herriton's stationary and rigidly controlled domestic life, as I will explain in the following part.

The two other prominent and ambulant objects in the narrative are Baedeker and Harriet's inlaid box. Both are ironically employed as cultural artifacts to complicate mobility. The inlaid box is an item that travels all over the narrative. It is first mentioned in the opening scene of the novel with Harriet screaming: "I've lent you my inlaid box" (20). Subsequently, it reappears, often with the narrator's ironic reminder that Harriet has lent it, not given to Lilia, in chapters three, six, seven, and nine (Forster 1976, 50, 106, 114, 146). The inlaid box serves as a traveling metaphor of a packaged and frozen view of life. Being a part of Lilia's luggage, the box "turns into a cultural container" (Lofgren 2016, 148), a carrier of English snobbery and bigotry. That the box is Harriet's shows that Lilia's mobility is restrained and contaminated with the Herritons' social and cultural

prejudices. Indeed, her subsequent attempt at transplanting Sawston to the Italian soil transforms her into a simulacrum of Mrs. Herriton.

The travel guide also crosses the whole narrative and emphasizes Forster's awareness of embodied and material mobilities. Baedeker first appears in the opening chapter as an item tightly related to the first crisis of the novel. The news of Lilia's engagement with an Italian man results in Mrs. Herriton opening the travel guide "for the first time in her life" (Forster 1976, 29) and cull knowledge about Monteriano. Whereas she is incapable "to detect the hidden charms of Baedeker," her son "could never read 'The view from the Rocca (small gratuity) is finest at sunset' without a catching at the heart" (Forster 1976, 30–31). The narrator's ironic tone is unmistakable here and testifies to Forster's ambivalent attitude towards travel guides, one marked by fascination and annoyance (Schotter 2019, Buzard 1988). His declaration: "I have always respected guidebooks- particularly the early Baedekers and Murrays" (Forster 1961, xv) does not resonate with the treatment of this item in the novel. I am interested here in the symbolic function of the travel guide as an object connoting both mobility and immobility, hence Forster's faltering position. While guidebooks have fostered mobility, they also stand for a regimented motion. They "determine not only the route but also the reactions of their readers" (Buzard 1988, 156) and therefore restrict the free circulation of their users. Baedeker represents the material equivalent of Mrs. Herriton: both decide where people should tread. The assemblage of Baedeker's *Central Italy* and Harriet's inlaid box in the reception room, which "was sacred to the dead wife," associates the two items with death. The tomb-like room exhibits the guide book and the box, both supported on two tables and covered with dust (Forster 1976, 114). Ironically enough, these two items standing for mobility are reduced into symbols of immobility. The narrative is attentive to the questions of movement and stasis and records different and differential (im)mobilities.

Ethos of (Im)mobility

Forster's description of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* as "a novel of contrasts" (qtd. in Stallybrass 1976, 8) between two geographies, England and Italy, sets the tone for a critical assessment attentive to oppositions and polarities in the narrative. Woolf's review of the writer's three first works is perceptive of the "balance of forces which plays so large a part in the structure of Mr. Forster's novels.

Sawston implies Italy; timidity, wilderness; convention, freedom; unreality, reality" (Woolf 1966, 343). Lauren M. E. Goodlad introduces another dimension to this set of contrasts, and instead of seeing balance, she discerns "multi-faceted crossings – between Northern and Southern, male and female, Protestant and catholic, heteronormative and queer, upper-class and déclassé" (Goodlad 2006, 308). I seek in this part to bring Goodlad's alert reading of border-crossing in the novel to the field of mobility studies. I propose, therefore, mobility and immobility as a new pair of opposites that has not received critical attention so far, and, subsequently, examine the borderline between movement and stasis.

Even though Forster never uses the term "mobile" or any of its derivatives in his novel, he constructs the narrative around two sets of values: mobility, which connotes freedom, and immobility, which refers to calcified ideas. In *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Mrs. Herriton embodies the ethos of immobility and serves as the custodian of the bounded and the static. Immobility as a desired state originated in a "Greek paradigm within which the ordered movement of almost everything gravitates towards rest. Movement was seen as a temporary interruption, a process by which things find their proper *place*" (Kotef 2012, 92). This vision of the blessings of stability and stationariness is best exemplified in the placid scene following the commotion of Lilia's departure:

> Irma went to bed early, and was tucked up by her grandmother. Then the two ladies worked and played cards. Philip read a book. And so they all settled down to their quiet profitable existence, and continued it without interruption through the winter. (Forster 1976, 23)

This tableau of an ideal family captures the spirit of "homeostasis" (Womack 2000, 133) and achieves full meaning in Mrs. Herriton's grammar of domesticity, wherein gender roles are properly distributed. Indeed, the matriarch who doesn't believe in the "romance" of journeying "nor in anything else that may disturb domestic life" (Forster 1976, 23) seems in perfect tune with Blaise Pascal's credo that "the cause of all man's misfortune consists in this one thing, his inability to remain quietly in one room" (1908, 38). This domestic scene provides us with a view inside a room, the ultimate space of desired immobility.

Immobility for Mrs. Herriton encompasses the spatial, social, and cultural. It refers to stability, convention, and the status quo. A pertinent example showing the regulating power of immobility is offered in the gardening scene. This

symbolic episode illustrates how the ethos of stasis structures the space. The lovely weather encourages Mrs. Herriton "to do a little gardening" with Harriet in the kitchen garden and "sow some early vegetables": "They sowed the duller vegetables first, and a pleasant feeling of righteous fatigue stole over them as they addressed themselves to the peas. Harriet stretched a string to guide the row straight, and Mrs. Herriton scratched a furrow with a pointed stick" (Forster 1976, 26–27). The garden, an organized and cultivated space, reflects Mrs. Herriton's inflexible belief in discipline and control. Gardening is transformed into a geometric performance with mathematical exactitude, and the garden becomes a metaphor for rootedness. The potential of violence insinuated in Mrs. Herriton's use of "a pointed stick" to scratch a furrow foreshadows the domineering matriarch's brutal schemes to preserve the boundaries of her dominion. The final scene of the gardening episode depicts the antagonistic relationship between mobility and immobility, for "mobility often is perceived as a threat – a force by which traditions, rituals, expressions, beliefs are decentered, thinned out, decontextualized, lost" (Greenblatt 2010, 152). The sparrows, symbolizing total mobility, are interpolated as a threatening element to the Herriton's steady existence. The birds end up taking all the peas which Mrs. Herriton forgets to cover with earth in her agitation upon receiving Mrs. Theobald's letter, another trope of mobility as explained above. The chapter ends with the "countless fragments of the letter … disfiguring the tidy ground" (Forster 1976, 32), demonstrating the capacity of mobility to upset and destabilize static values and beliefs.

Mrs. Herriton's taming of the garden evinces her power to monitor the other characters' mobilities. Portrayed as a *primum movens*, or the primary mover who moves without being moved, she displays a capacity of empowering or damaging the mobility of all the other characters. She is first confronted with the menacing quality of mobility when her deceased son Charles "had fallen in love with Lilia" and married her despite her schemes "to prevent the match." Lilia's social mobility endangers Mrs. Herriton's power to maintain the boundaries of her social class, and she finds herself obliged to change her tactics and impose tight "supervision" on her daughter-in-law (Forster 1976, 23). Her new project of governance seeks to immobilize Lilia by disciplining her and improving her tastes. As a widow, Lilia regains her freedom of movement and "the struggle recommenced" (23) when she decides to live with her mother. Mrs. Herriton, however, ends up having the upper hand by persuading Lilia to live in Sawston with her daughter, securing, therefore, her power of surveillance. The mobile Lilia, who

"would not settle down in her place among Sawston matrons" (Forster 196, 24) is subjected to rigorous scrutiny and prevented from marrying again. Living under siege, she tries to impose her right to mobility by "[learning] to bicycle, for the purpose of waking the place up" (Forster 196, 24). The Herritons feel outraged, and Philip intervenes to curtail her mobility once for all. Lilia is wronged as a mobile agent and denied her right to free circulation.

Lilia's journey to Italy is far away from being voluntary. I read it as a coercive act of deportation. Next to "surveillance, enclosure, … imprisonment, and siege," which are forms of controlling the freedom or the threat inherent in movement, "eviction" (Kotef 2015, 6) emerges as the chief mode of discipline and punishment. Lilia's restlessness, her inability to conform to an immobile domestic model, a "docile body," in Foucault's phrasing (Foucault 1995, 136) is in accordance with the etymology of the term "mobility":

> The word first appeared in the C16 to describe gatherings of people appraised as dangerous. The L term *mobile vulgus* was abbreviated in the IC17 to "mob," a "disorderly crowd" or "fickle multitude" whose anger could be dangerous to the aristocracy of church and state. Vulgus, meaning common, changed to "vulgar," and "mobile" emerged to describe the capacity for movement or change. From this came the descriptive "mobile" or "movable," and "mobility," a term that described the opinions of crowds, and then the behavior of individuals, and finally, an attribute of things. (Bennett et al. 2005, 217)

Lilia, who is considered "vulgar" and in perpetual need of "the refining influences of her late husband's family" (Forster 196, 22–23) lest her coarseness contaminates the whole household, is akin to a *mobile vulgus*. Because she endangers Mrs. Herriton's institutionalized immobility, she must be evicted. The opening scene, in which Lilia is sent to Italy after the Herritons' conspiracy, reenacts the Transportation Act passed by the English Parliament in 1718. This law authorized the exportation of convicts, paupers, and vagrants, as well as any person who didn't conform to social and religious rules as "a means of solving troublesome social problems" (Gillespie 1923, 359). Indeed, Philips' "idea of Italian travel" is acknowledged by Mrs. Herriton as a brilliant scheme to get rid of the disruptive Lilia, an idea "that saved us" (Forster 1976, 22), in her phrasing.

Lilia's deportation, masquerading as a touristic tour of Italy, reveals the entangled relationship between mobility and immobility. Indeed, her forced mobility is intended to immobilize her or to neutralize the threat in her movement. After marrying Gino, she finds herself fighting even more fiercely for her freedom of circulation. Walking in Monteriano, like bicycling in Sawston, is not accepted as a decent feminine activity. The two geographies display the same rigidity vis-à-vis women's mobility. In Italy, the ironic narrator informs us, "women … have, of course, their house and their church … to which they are escorted by the maid. Otherwise, they do not go out much, for it is not genteel to walk" (Forster 1976, 54). Mobility is distributed on a socioeconomic and gender basis. Only those who can afford a carriage are able to secure their right to free movement, meanwhile "life is very pleasant in Italy if you are a man" (54). In Sawston, Lilia's right to mobility is ruled out by a matriarch who ventriloquizes a patriarchal discourse; in Italy, the situation does not differ much except that now it is the husband's prerogative to curb his wife's access to free movement.

If Lilia is forced into spatial stasis, she ends up textually immobilized. Her eviction from the narrative does not differ much from her banishment from Sawston. Indeed, Forster disposes of her in two final laconic sentences in chapter four: "As for Lilia, someone said to her, 'it is a beautiful boy!' But she had died in giving birth to him" (Forster 1976, 69). Death, the ultimate state of immobility, represents a narratological strategy to get rid of a threatening character whose overwhelming presence in the first half of the book leads to the eclipse of the major character, Philip. In a letter to R. C. Trevelyan, Forster announces that "the object of the book is Philip's improvement" (Forster 1976, Appendix, 161). It is not accidental that the opening sentence of chapter five juxtaposes Lilia's death with Philip's birthday: "At the time of Lilia's death Philip Herriton was just twenty-four of age – indeed the news reached Sawston on his birthday" (Forster 1976, 70). Lilia's death heralds Philip's birth or revival as the book's protagonist and the ultimate mobile subject in the narrative.

Mobility in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is a prerequisite for improvement. Philip's emotional, spiritual, and cultural transformations are the result of two journeys to Italy. However, in order to be fully improved, he must display mobility agency. It may appear striking then to contend that Philip's mobility is not significantly different from Lilia's. And yet this is how Mrs. Herriton takes advantage of being a prime mover. Philip's seemingly free movement is a mere façade hiding his mother's governance over (im)mobility. Indeed, his first journey to It-

aly is decided and planned by Mrs. Herriton before he is informed of the situation. Harriet is sent to the bank to get money, a servant is ordered to "get down" his "gladstone from the attic" (Forster 1976, 31), and Philip is literally railroaded into going to Italy. The absence of a scene showing us the discussion between mother and son testifies once again to a speedy narrative, as the urgency of the situation calls for an elliptical style. The second journey is a replica of the first one. Mrs. Herriton dispatches Philip to Italy, this time with his sister, without taking his protestations into consideration: "And before Philip had stopped talking nonsense she had planned the whole thing and was looking out the trains" (Forster 16, 88). Philip, like Lilia, is wronged in his capacity as a mobile agent and forced into movement.

If Mrs. Herriton exploits Lilia's vulgarity to control her actions, she takes advantage of her son's malleability to manage his movements. Philip's awareness of his status as a "puppet," a movable doll, is most likely what is going to set his improvement into motion: "All his life he had been her puppet," he muses, "She had let him worship Italy, and reform Sawston – just as she had let Harriet be Low Church. She had let him talk as much as he liked. But when she wanted a thing she always got it." At this stage, however, he believes that "he could not rebel. To the end of his days he would probably go on doing what she wanted" (Forster 1976, 84). It is only at the end of his second forced journey to Italy that we can see clearly what Forster meant by his statement "I did really want the improvement to be a surprise" (Forster 1976, Appendix, 161). Indeed, the most surprising element is Philip's declaration: "'I can't live at Sawston' …' So that is my plan – London and work" (Forster 1976, 155). By the end of the narrative, Philip appropriates his right to movement and emerges as the ultimate mobile subject in the narrative, especially when juxtaposed with Miss Abbott.

Caroline Abbot presents an intriguing case of voluntary (im)mobility. While she embarks on a journey of education and discovery, she opts to resume her tranquil life in Sawston by the end of the narrative. Her two journeys to Italy, however, reveal a subject in full control of her movement. In the first one, she manages to convince the curate and her father to leave for one year; in the second she travels alone "all across Europe; no one knows it" (Forster 1976, 100) including her father. At this stage, Caroline proves to be superior to the passive Philip, whose mobility is manipulated by his mother. She is even given the active role of a "mobilizer," a term referring, in Greenblatt's terminology of mobility, to "agents, go-betweens, translators, or intermediaries" whose task

is "to facilitate contact" (Greenblatt 2010, 251). Caroline clearly serves as a mediator in the violent confrontation between Gino and Philip, persuading them to share the bottle of milk and thereby ironing out social and cultural conflicts. Yet, despite her capacity to move, both in the physical and emotional sense, she chooses to remain stationary by the end of the novel. This contradictory aspect is explained by Forster in his letter to Trevelyan: "He grows large enough to appreciate Miss Abbott, and in the final scene he exceeds her" (Forster 1976, Appendix: 161). Looking at the final scene from the prism of mobility, one way to comprehend the statement "he exceeds her" is to consider his decision to leave Sawston superior to her choice of remaining there. On the narratological level, however, I believe that Caroline's final immobility does not differ from Lilia's. Both are immobilized to vacate space for Philip, so that he emerges as the supreme male mobile subject.

Conclusion

Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* offers a propitious textual terrain to apply the new mobility paradigm on a literary narrative and, therefore, facilitates an interdisciplinary conversation between mobility studies and literary studies. Examining Forster's debut novel from the lenses of this thriving field not only reroutes the focus on a text that deserves more scrutiny and appraisal, but it opens up new venues to study Forster's oeuvre in general. The emphasis in this article is twofold: first the entangled relationship between the aesthetic elements in the text and the conceptualization of motion; and second the discourses and practices of power undergirding movement and stasis. Forster's concern with contrasts brings attention to mobility and immobility, two elements that have hitherto gone under the radar. These two concepts, however, are complicated and approached as constitutive in the grammar of mobilities. While immobility is represented as the ultimate evil in the narrative, coerced mobility functions as the other facet of stasis.

This article is an attempt to examine the conjunction of (im)mobility and (in) justice in a text that advances mobility as a precondition for freedom and improvement. Mobility in the narrative is not only a physical movement in space, but also an act of crossing the borders of frozen institutions and cultural prejudices. The narrative presents two sets of confrontational characters: those who are immobile or unmoved and those who are mobile or mobilizers. The novel from this perspective becomes a site of conflicts, a nexus where ambulant so-

cial and cultural values compete, negotiate, withstand, and capitulate. Virginia Woolf employs a metaphor of construction and destruction, a dual act of building "the cage" and liberating "the prisoner", to describe Forster's proclivity for developing zones of confrontation. She ascribes this inclination to the writer's belief "that a novel must take sides in the human conflict" (Woolf 1966, 344). Once again, Woolf's reading is not conclusive if we look at the novel from the lenses of mobility studies. Indeed, the book, which is chiefly concerned with Philip's improvement, fails to take sides against differential and uneven mobilities. The narrative engages in a distributive model of mobility justice wherein women are denied the right to movement. While Forster sets out to destroy the ethos of immobility, in its literal and metaphorical senses, he ends up corroborating a gendered pattern of movement and stasis.

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