JOYCEAN PARALYSIS WITHIN THE WORKS OF D.H. LAWRENCE

AND E.M. FORSTER

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
San Diego State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English

by
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Summer 2015
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Joycean Paralysis within the Works of D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my family and my love. This is also for those who need the courage to flee and find their greenwoods.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

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Master of Arts in English
San Diego State University, 2015

This project considers the way James Joyce’s portrayal of paralysis is present in the works of D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster. By observing how Joyce’s Dubliners depicts paralysis through the “The Sisters” and “Eveline” the distinct delineations of paralysis become evident and inform the way paralysis and flight is studied in Women in Love, A Room with a View, and Maurice. This study explores the way in which Joycean paralysis is present in the works of Lawrence and Forster who construct self-aware characters, but who also depict characters paralyzed and hindered by detrimental attachments to Victorian ideals all reflective of an English society unable to progress.

Paralysis is manifested through physical, social, and mental mediums. The paralyzed character is one who struggles to let go of archaic and limiting ideals which hinder his or her ability to reach fulfillment and actualization. Most frequently, reaching fulfillment rests on their ability to find genuine and reciprocated love. On the other hand is the mobile character able to break away from paralysis and pursue their passions. The flight from paralysis must be ideological and physical. In order to denounce society’s attempts at paralyzing the subject there must be an awareness of the paralyzing elements. Then there must be a willingness to commit to the sacrifices necessary to break ties with paralyzing society. This vital element of awareness comes to characters through the form of Joycean epiphanies. Prior to their moment of enlightenment these characters are usually portrayed in a Forsterian muddle. The Forsterian muddle becomes a precursor, or the liminal space prior to the subject being faced with the choice of mobility or paralysis.

With Lawrence I am able to explore the way in which society’s inability to accept homosexual love comes to paralyze Rupert Birkin who is frequently seen as progressive and even a mirror of Lawrence himself. With Forster, love is also being limited, but rather than the love being “inappropriate” for gendered reasons, the union is hindered by station and expectations of class. Maurice concludes this analysis with a protagonist who successfully flees to the fantastical greenwoods.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Quentin Bailey, Jeanette Shumaker, and Edward Beasley for assisting me during this process and for serving on my committee. Thank you for reading and painstakingly commenting on my project in its various stages of development. I have been fortunate to be surrounded by a group of peers who have now become friends and who gave me invaluable support during this process. Specifically, I would like to thank, Haley Hartzell, Meghmik Mardian, Alyssa Stenavich, and Christopher Petersen. I would like to thank my mother Aracely Alejandre, my father Eduardo Alejandre, and my brother Eduardo Alejandre for teaching me the importance of work ethic and for being a source of constant inspiration and stability. I must also thank Ricardo Torres for his love and support which was vital for the completion of this project. I have grown academically and personally throughout the course of this process and I must continuously thank all of those who have helped me along the way.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

James Joyce’s *Dubliners* is the inspiration for this study of paralysis. As each of Joyce’s stories highlight an integral aspect of Irish identity they also depict a paralyzed nation. In a letter, Joyce notes that “The book is not a collection of tourist impressions but an attempt to represent certain aspects of the life of one of the European capitals” (*Letters of James Joyce* 109). The paralysis he works to make apparent, and which is frequently studied by critics, is stated in Joyce’s ardent letter to publisher Grant Richard, where he notes, “My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis” (134). Joyce’s view of Dublin as paralysis is the lens I will use to view works which are not overtly denoting paralysis, but which likewise depict it in a less explicit fashion. Since Joycean paralysis has yet to be placed as a lens onto British texts of the same period, this project’s focus will be on D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* and E.M. Forster’s *A Room with a View* with consideration of *Maurice*. This will be done to show how the paralysis that Joyce observes in Dublin is also present in texts of the Edwardian era. The paralysis in Joyce’s *Dubliners* differs from the paralysis in Lawrence and Forster’s work due to the different cultural anxieties each author targets. Although the social and literary movements of the time were attempting to become freer avenues of expression for the individual, these modernist texts instead relay the reality of a repressed social body hung up on oppressive Victorian values. Lawrence and Forster are able to depict this paralysis through their rendering of love and commitment to fulfillment. Daniel Bell writes that within early modernism there was, “a sense of openness to change, of detachment from place and time, of social and geographical mobility, and a readiness […] to welcome the new, even at the expense of tradition and the past” (123). It is this attempted
cultural shift which will be scrutinized as the collective progressive mentality fails to develop within the English novels studied.

Although Joyce’s depiction of Irish paralysis is glaringly evident, a question remains: what aspect of society is paralyzed and why? Joseph Kelly provides an economic slant to his analysis of paralysis and its origins when he studies “Ivy Day.” Kelly argues that, “the story itself seems to locate paralysis in the Nationalist’s party’s commitment to the interests of capitalists and in its failure […] to resist the lure of class elitism” (55). He goes on to analyze the hierarchical pressures of Ireland while Marilyn French argues that it is the religious affiliations which are at the heart of Joyce’s paralysis. French argues that “the Dublin way of thinking Joyce portrayed is dominated by two sets of ideals: those of popular Catholicism and those of propriety” (444). French views this paralysis as due to the social conditions dictated by religious practices and rules of conduct which are also seen implemented in Forster’s texts. Paul Delany notes that, “the ‘paralysis’ anatomized by Joyce reflects […] Dublin’s ambiguous status: a city living off agriculture yet alienated from rural ways, and relying on English goodwill to sustain its modest commercial and administrative activities” (259). Delany views Joyce’s depiction of paralysis as a result of the way Ireland dealt with the old and new ways of conducting business in order to sustain life. This division between the old methods versus the new is seen in Lawrence’s Gerald Crich who comes to represent this division. Florence Walzl takes a far more individualistic approach when noting how, “Dubliners is an imagistic unit exemplifying the effects of a creeping paralysis in a progressive diminution of life, [by] reflecting paralysis of the most vital function of that stage of life” (222). In addition to her assertion that paralysis is about the decay within the process of aging and maturing, she is localizing paralysis to the individual rather than to society as a whole. The individual’s journey is not only seen in Dubliners as it is a focus of Lawrence. Women in Love depicts characters who are introspective and in search of self-fulfillment. Peter Garrett argues that in Dubliners, “the most frequent form of paralysis is captivity, both imposed by the deadening environment and produced by the characters’ own moral weakness” (4). Garrett attributes this to Ireland’s decayed national setting and also to the moral circumstances which troubled the nation. Each character analyzed in this study struggles with a weakness of will and this allows paralysis to exist and be passed on to the next generation. Observing paralysis through the historical conditions of Dublin and in
seeing Dublin struggle to emerge as a strong international force due to its adherence to traditional values becomes one way of understanding the inclusion of paralysis. The paralysis seen in Lawrence and Forster’s work is not motivated by the same stressors which inform Joyce’s paralysis; rather this paralysis is present as a result of society’s inability to let go of oppressive traditions primarily within the realm of love and self-identification. While each of Joyce’s stories depict paralysis within various settings and through different mediums — the political climate, love, domestic violence, imperialism, alcoholism, religion etc. Lawrence and Forster focus primarily on romantic relationships and an individual’s ability to be self-aware. They often make marriage the measure of success in an effort to criticize and ridicule the institution of marriage which many were pressured into. Love becomes the vessel through which these characters become either paralyzed or emerge mobile.

Lawrence was chosen for this project due to his depictions of individuals who actively pursue mobility and self-fulfillment. Women in Love houses Rupert Birkin who Howard Booth and other critics consider to be the “Lawrence figure in the project,” as he is concerned with reaching a profound level of self-understanding. He frequently remarks his philosophical perspective about society’s detrimental connection to dying traditions (97). By utilizing the framework of paralysis that Joyce presents, the fragility of Birkin’s self-awareness emerges and shows that perhaps this “mobile” character is instead becoming paralyzed. While Birkin provides a vital complexity and depth, Gerald Crich portrays paralysis through his stunted pursuit of self-fulfillment and through his disengagement with his natural body. Curiously, it is Ursula Brangwen who is able to exit her state of paralysis through the help of Birkin. Lawrence provides characters that are increasingly self-aware and in active pursuit of mobility. This actualization is attempted through romantic means much like Joyce’s “Eveline.” When analyzing Lawrence through Joycean paralysis what becomes evident is that the actions of even of the most self-aware individuals can become thwarted when they succumb to Victorian conventions. Lawrence’s characters are able to fall prey to paralysis which at first glance seems unlikely due to their excessive concerns with self-awareness. Yet they are still inhibited by social conditions.

While Lawrence’s characters search for fulfillment in love and their carnal connections, Forster’s A Room with a View is far more concerned with class constraints and muddled mindsets. Charlotte Bartlett perpetuates paralyzing teachings onto Lucy in an
attempt to stunt her individuality and mobility. Although Forster’s characters do not seek profound self-awareness like Lawrence’s, Forster introduces characters who are muddled prior to becoming paralyzed or mobile. For many of Forster’s and even Lawrence’s characters, the Forsterian muddle becomes a precursor for paralysis. As will become clear through the analysis of Lucy, being muddled depicts the stage of hazy awareness. When observing muddled characters through the scope of Joycean paralysis their muddled state of mind (which Mr. Emerson is able to identify due to his mobility) is a liminal space where the subject is on the brink of complete awareness or paralysis since they require assistance of others to commit to their freedom. Mobility is not an easy course for many of these characters as a flight from paralysis frequently requires a break with familiar teachings and a physical removal from the home. In this study Forsterian muddles serve as precursors and facilitate Joycean epiphanies which assist characters in reaching the necessary awareness for escape. In *Maurice*, the Forster novel with which this study will conclude this project encompasses many of the concerns present in *Women in Love* and *A Room with a View*. The protagonist begins being greatly concerned with society’s perception of him, which mirrors Charlotte and Lucy’s experience and even Joyce’s “The Sisters.” His romantic limitations are shared with Lawrence’s Birkin and Gerald. Yet, Maurice reaches a level of self awareness and possesses a willingness to become mobile that Lawrence’s Birkin and Gerald were never able to acquire. Maurice’s romantic experiences and moments of lucidity enable his escape to the greenwoods. Thus, Forster’s Maurice depicts a successful flight from paralysis as he commits to his passions and love.

The motivating factor for Lawrence and Forster’s depictions of paralysis is distinct, yet it is pivotal to examine what fuels Joyce’s paralysis as his portrayal of paralysis mirrors the research done on collective memory. Joycean paralysis represents the damaging effects of misguided collective memory on societal progress. French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs is a founder of the theory of collective consciousness. Graham Dawson notes how Halbwachs, “shifts attention away from the psychological memory of individuals to focus on the collective frameworks of remembrance established by social groups to formulate, preserve and transmit common understandings about their significant past” (48). A distinction between the ways in which individual memory is formed versus that of collective memory is necessary in order to see paralysis through the individual who represents the
collective. Among the many striking observations on the collective organism, Halbwachs’ *On Collective Memory* (1950) specifically notes how group memory relies on the social environment for formation. Halbwachs’s perspective on collective consciousness is actively working with Joycean paralysis. Halbwachs discusses how new institutions come to replace the well established older ones, but also mentions how it is not a conscious effort by the participating group. Halbwachs explains,

> We are nevertheless not certain that traditional values do not still have a role to play; we fear (perhaps mistakenly so) that if we were to eliminate them, we no longer would possess the necessary faith and creative power to find an equivalent. That is why we remain attached to formulas, symbols, and conventions, as well as to rites that must be repeated and reproduced, if we wish to preserve the beliefs which gave them birth. Through this attachment to traditional values, the society of yesterday and the successive periods of social evolution are perpetuated today. (120)

It is precisely this inability to detach from the old identity or from past tragedies that establishes paralysis within *Dubliners* and which comes to inform the paralysis in Lawrence and Forster’s work. Joyce’s view of Dublin as a “centre of paralysis” is due to society’s lingering anxieties from the tragedies that occurred during the late 19th century. The social paralysis that Joyce depicts in *Dubliners* does rely on the elements that scholars focus on, such as religious affiliations, station, economic standing, and an individual’s progressive decay from innocence into maturity. Joycean paralysis is able to delineate the detrimental effects that ensue within the social body when past experiences paralyze society from mobility and progress and hinder them from reaching actualization. Halbwachs’ study on shared assumptions is useful in analyzing how the collective structures the individual experience. Patrick McCarthy discusses how Joyce fought his publishers by arguing that the “failure to publish *Dubliners* would ‘retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in [his] nicely polished looking-glass’” (2). This demonstrates how Joyce was eager to expose the stagnation he saw within Dublin and how he strongly believed that change would occur once Dubliners were exposed to the reality of their paralysis. As will become apparent with this analysis, it is not merely the awareness of paralysis which is necessary, but also a willingness to execute the necessary change.
Paralysis is seen in the first story, “The Sisters” as this story erects the binary identities present in Lawrence and Forster. By taking a close look at the way in which Joyce sets up paralysis in individual stories, not just his motivation for including it; we are able to see how Lawrence and Forster come to evoke similar settings or literary elements. “The Sisters” opens with a boy’s contemplation of paralysis. As the young narrator shows an interest in the medical hardship of Father Flynn, he “said softly to [himself] the word paralysis […] it sounded […] like the name of some maleficent and sinful being [which] filled [him] with fear, and yet [he] longed to be nearer to it” (Joyce, *Dubliners* 231). Since Joyce is illustrating Irish society through this narrative, the boy and the priest come to signify far more than independent isolated characters. Thomas Jackson Rice notes that “each story has its double or doubles within the collection […] and each action or character has its counterpart or double in the symbolic world of its substratum” (42). Their duality is not duplicity; rather it is a binary opposition where each figure becomes either the representative of traditional Irish values or the image of modern ones. This is particularly important considering that the story was constructed during the turn of the century while the nation grew divided in its identity. This duality is present within many of Lawrence’s characters who struggle with their paralysis. Father Flynn becomes the “old” identity, as he embodies nationally engrained religious traditions. The boy remembers how Father Flynn’s “questions showed […] him how complex and mysterious were certain institutions of the Church which [he] had always regarded as the simplest acts […] and how Father Flynn] used to put [him] through the responses of the Mass which he had made [the boy] learn by heart” (Joyce, *Dubliners* 234). As the boy remembers his teachings Father Flynn’s attempts at instilling and representing religious values is evident. The narrating boy on the other hand becomes the alternative. The boy represents the new Irish identity, due to his youth and in part due to his questioning of order. The boy’s potentially rebellious, or at least critical, outlook is seen through his play with language. The boy examines the words: *paralysis, gnomon,* and *simony* in a twisted and unconventional way by connecting them to a “sinful being” (231). As the story progresses the priest’s death is contemplated along with the boy’s future. Father Flynn’s previous teaching of the narrator is brought up in order to emphasize how history and traditions inform and influence the new identity in a potentially negative way. This is important to stress since collective memory is necessary for social paralysis to exist and the
impression Father Flynn is attempting to make through the religious avenue mirrors society’s
desire to perpetuate traditional ideologies. This desire to perpetuate traditions is seen in *A
Room with a View*, through Charlotte Bartlett’s consistent attempts to force Lucy to behave
like a lady and repress her passions. Joyce is showing how this new identity is permanently
troubled by the death of the old which is something that Lawrence and Forster depict in their
texts. David Robinson interprets Joyce’s narrator as one “whose world is crowded with the
dead and whose fellow citizens are hardly alive” (389). This describes the paralysis of the
town which takes after the priest and is likewise immobile. It also comments on the
lifelessness of the rest of the characters found in *Dubliners*. The societies illustrated in
Lawrence and Forster share this lifelessness and their characters become troubled, just as the
boy, in their attempt to break the mold of tradition. By Father Flynn’s deteriorating mental
state which is later revealed and through the gradual paralysis which claims his life, Flynn
emerges as a compelling and incendiary depiction of the crack in cemented Irish tradition.

Other scenes from “The Sisters” permit an alternate observation of the collision
between the old and new identity; but more importantly demonstrate the unshakable hold the
old identity has on the new. The difficulty of letting go of the old identity and instead moving
forward with modern perspectives is a struggle for the boy in this story, but is also a
significant hurdle Lawrence and Forster’s characters try to overcome. The boy expresses a
curious read on the priest’s stoic expression after death as he reflects, “I knew that the old
priest was lying still in his coffin […] solemn and truculent in death” (Joyce, *Dubliners* 238).
Interpreting his face as “solemn” and “truculent” creates an opposing understanding of this
vessel of old tradition, or perhaps even of nationalist tradition. This defiant description
reveals Joyce’s own stance on the issue of clashing moral and religious Irish values, as both
aggressive yet dignified. This demonstrates the boy’s internal struggle, perhaps as divided
once more between the old and the new. This observation is made without the boy seeing the
physical body, and reflects how the boy imagines the symbol for tradition which he will carry
with him into adulthood. When he first hears about the death of Father Flynn he explains,
that he “felt even annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been
freed from something by his death” (234). This demonstrates how the new identity requires
the passing of the old in order to advance and become mobile. However, in order to truly
progress into the new identity there must be a far more explicit awareness of this progression.
The boy’s nightmare of the paralyzed priest illustrates how the distressing death of the old identity endures within the new identity prohibiting genuine progress from developing. The boy narrates his nightmare as he relays, “I imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralytic […and] I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting of me” (233). This prompts a different form of paralysis not restricted to the frame of the old identity and instead persisting in the new. The boy’s nightmare about the priest is thereafter engrained in his memory and thus comes to form part of his identity. The relationship between the boy and Father Flynn has been frequently perceived by critics as containing hints of sexual misconduct. Margot Norris notes how “Walzl […] creates] the startling speculation that Father Flynn’s sin might have been of a sexual nature” (18). Although the sexual undertones are a common reading, the story’s emphasis on the tension between the traditional identity and the modern one is what fuels the paralysis seen in Lawrence and Forster.

“Eveline” also portrays paralysis through a protagonist who struggles between flight and stagnation; she either pursues her romantic interest with Frank who promises to free her from a troubled domestic life, or stays at home following social obligations. As Joyce begins this story, Eveline sits at the window “watching the evening invade the avenue” and contemplates her childhood (Dubliners 255). Eveline’s father has been increasingly more abusive and she is faced with the possibility of escape with her love, Frank. Critics disagree on whether or not Eveline’s moment of introspection which leads her to choose flight, but which she ultimately fails to carry out is a Joycean epiphany. Eveline asserts that Frank “would give her life, perhaps love […] she wanted to live” (258). After choosing flight and refusing to live the same life her mother lived which consisted of “commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness” she goes to the harbor with Frank (258). Sadly, Eveline feels “a bell clanged upon her heart” once faced with the reality of a permanent flight and “grip[s] with both hands the iron railing” refusing to carry out her escape from oppressive domestic life in Ireland (259). Sean Latham argues that “To leave with Frank is, […] an uncommitted crime, but it is precisely the crime that she is supposed to commit” (124). Her inability to release the railing mirrors her paralysis and places into question the validity of her previous ‘epiphany’ which informed her to decision to flee. Latham argues that “the apparent lack of epiphany in ‘Eveline,’” contributes in part to the “brutal and seemingly unredeemable
moment of paralysis” (123). Latham goes on to argue that paralysis and epiphany are not the culprits of Eveline’s moment of immobility, and instead views the dark conclusion to her tale as Joyce’s critique on the exhausted marriage plot. However, this text does not simply criticize the limited options for women or the institution of marriage. Instead reflects the depth of her paralysis, for this “failed” epiphany is not a fully developed Joycean epiphany. The moment of realization which she experiences is lacking in potency and does not fall under the definition of a genuine “spiritual manifestation” (29) as Morris Beja views it. Thus, Eveline never experiences the necessary epiphany in order to make her escape. Her moment of self-reflection is merely a glimpse into the possibility; it is a dream of mobility. But it never develops into a Joycean epiphany as she is only able to sustain that clarity momentarily. As will become apparent through the course of this study, an epiphany able to remove the subject from the paralytic setting tends to be inspired by another character, possibly one who is already mobile and aware of the dangers of paralysis. This flight-inducing epiphany is usually experienced outside of the artificial setting which attempts to hinder the subject and is also coupled with other moments of profound awareness. Eveline’s moment of introspection is merely a moment of lucidity which will not become fruitful if not strengthened by other experiences which reveal the reality of her paralysis to her. Eveline’s experience is similar to the one Birkin and Lucy experience as they are both characters who are caught between what they desire to do and what they feel they must do.

Lawrence and Forster not only share in a depiction of paralysis, but they also have a reoccurring group of responses to paralysis. The thread of reactions to paralysis consists of three branches. First there are the characters which have been entirely paralyzed by social pressures. They are unaware of their paralysis or may experience moments of mobility, but always return to a paralyzed state. At times they are conscious of their stagnation and inability to reach fulfillment, but are unsure of the reason, or they are unwilling to make the necessary social sacrifices in order to reach fulfillment. Second are those characters that die due to their paralysis. These are people who are aware of their own inability to progress, but are unable to act in a manner that would change their position. These characters succumb to the social pressures and expectations. Instead of living through life paralyzed they alternately choose to take their lives or place themselves in a position that will lead to an early death. Third are the characters that flee the paralyzing environment. They tend to be far more
dynamic characters as they are aware of the social pressures and conditions which are placed in their life to hinder them, but disregard them for the wish of mobility. These characters often begin the text being muddled and unaware of their rebellious possibility and require assistance from others in order to reach self-awareness and the desire to follow their passions. The characters who choose to flee and are able to escape the cyclical life and pursue their passions being guided by instincts and uncensored impulses. These three courses are utilized by authors of the early modernist era as each text encompasses at least one of the three routes. As noted previously, some characters are aware of their state of paralysis to varying degrees and this can be tied to Joyce’s epiphanies. Joyce not only assists this analysis by providing the lens of paralysis but also through his value of epiphanies. Beja notes how a Joycean epiphany is “a sudden illumination produced by some apparently trivial, even arbitrary cause which seems out of all logical proportion to the moment of enlightenment or vision to which it leads” (29). The more dynamic characters that will be studied in the course of this project experience a version of a Joycean epiphany which facilitates their awareness of paralysis leading them to choose between the acceptance of paralysis, death, or flight.
CHAPTER 2

D. H. LAWRENCE’S WOMEN IN LOVE

D.H. Lawrence adopts a philosophical and multifaceted approach to love which informs the paralysis and mobility of Rupert Birkin, Ursula Brangwen, Gudrun Brangwen, and Gerald Crich in Women in Love (1920). This text is seen by Eugene Stelzig as “prophetic and apocalyptic” due to its “rejection of both bourgeois and aristocratic social and political norms for ‘values more individual, inward, and emotional’” (95). Lawrence’s ability to bypass social norms allows his characters to sustain profound moments of introspection thus allowing them to break from paralysis or to become conscious of their own stunted growth. Joyce Piell Wexler argues that, “Lawrence’s great novel is about the meaning of love in a world that has lost almost all other sources of meaning” (393). Birkin is the one who struggles to establish his place within society and humanity and utilizes romantic relationships to define himself. At first he is portrayed as a mobile character due to his self-awareness and pursuit of a romantically balanced relationship with Ursula. However, by repressing his love for Gerald, Birkin succumbs to paralysis. Marriage becomes the measure of success as Eric Levy notes how, “for Birkin, the ultimate purpose of living is the achievement of [the] ‘ultimate marriage’ with a woman” (582). Lawrence also creates a need for a break with conventions through Birkin’s attitude about society and etiquette, but this novel emphasizes the unknown element within love. Lawrence achieves this by highlighting the powerful darkness of the unconscious which consumes Birkin and pushes him closer and closer towards a state of paralysis. Birkin’s desire to reinvent a romantic connection with Ursula is a misguided attempt at reaching actualization and mobility. Sibyl Jacobson notes how Lawrence’s characters are explicitly “motivated by a desire to complete themselves, to become ‘fulfilled,’ ‘satisfied,’ and ‘perfected’” (54). Lawrence includes conversations which encompass active attempts at introspection and self-awareness as all of the characters in this text are in active pursuit of fulfillment. Often prized for his dealing with conscious and
unconscious self, Lawrence constructs characters that are invested in their ability to be introspective and their ability to criticize social norms. Because of its dealings with awareness, this novel provides a comprehensive portrayal of the various forms paralysis and mobility take within works of the early 20th century. *Women in Love* incorporates characters who struggle with paralysis by either accepting paralysis, fleeing from it, or dying in a desperate attempt to escape. The detriment that Birkin experiences as a result of polymorphous love demonstrates his surrender to paralysis while Ursula’s connection to Birkin is able to liberate her emotionally but leaves her in an ambiguously defined marriage. Through Lawrence’s dark portrayal of paralysis, Birkin, who is ironically considered the Lawrentian figure for freedom, becomes increasingly paralyzed by his failed attempts at mobility and sustained romantic repression. Thus, it is Ursula who is able to break from paralysis and the constraints of early 20th century society. Her union to Birkin is what allows her to break from her paralysis, but it itself becomes a potential source of paralysis.

**GERALD CRICH’S PARALYSIS**

Gerald Crich remains static throughout the novel with only glimmers of mobility and early on expresses his disinterest in Birkin’s philosophies of will. Gerald is seen by Peter Fjågesund as “a character who represents a tradition and a set of values that have shown themselves as not only obsolete but dangerous” (182). The set of values referenced here are the industrial perspectives that construct the majority of Gerald’s identity and become his source of identification which reflects the shared cultural perspective of the old paralyzing identity. Fjågesund asserts that “Gerald is both old England and modern, progressive England; he represents the heroic past and the quasi-heroic present, and as such he represents a dying way of life” (182). Fjågesund observes how Gerald holds a dual identity. This coincidently resembles Birkin’s perspective on the will of horses and reflects the old and new identities seen in *Dubliners*. Birkin discusses how animals either submit their will to their human master, or break free and follow their wild nature. He also provides the third option which Birkin himself unknowingly falls under and which Gerald also seems to be under — the locked will. This occurs when the subject is unable to move in either direction and becomes troubled by the binary choice present for them. Gerald does address the concept of free will early on after Birkin expresses his interest in the pursuit of spontaneity Gerald
replies “‘I […] shouldn’t like to be in a world of people who acted individually and spontaneously’” (Lawrence 31). Gerald is rejecting instinctual pursuits and in doing so he is also condemning a vital characteristic of the mobile identity. This moment also serves to demonstrate the division in identity that Gerald and Birkin share. Gerald also believes that “the only way to fulfil perfectly the will of man [i]s to establish the perfect, inhuman machine” and this desire to satisfy his need for the inhuman machine reflects his own inhumanity and his own detachment to social conditions (228). This desensitized perspective becomes detrimental and causes him angst. Although Gerald becomes a vehicle for industrial progress which would appear to be constructing a mobile identity, it is his failure to reach fulfillment and self-understanding that most clearly demonstrates his paralysis.

Gerald serves as a representation of paralyzed England and this is seen most clearly when Gerald’s sense of purpose is exposed through his connection to the mining industry. Gerald is concerned with production and technological progress as he follows his father’s path. Even as a young boy Gerald wanted to participate in the mining business like his father, yet his limited understanding of the hierarchy of the workforce troubled him and once he matured he was able to understand how, “the men were not against him, but […] were [instead] against the masters” (Lawrence 224). This understanding of the hierarchy is coupled with his motivation for undertaking the business which was not for profit or social position as instead, “he wanted […] the pure fulfilment of his own will in the struggle with the natural conditions […] the victory itself lay in the feat [of mining]” (223). Gerald believes that there must be the creation of the “perfect, inhuman machine” and this desire to satisfy his need for the inhuman machine reflects his own inhumanity (228). Gerald’s self-interest is reflected in his cold attitude, especially concerning death. His ideologies and philosophies are not as profoundly rooted and studied as Birkin’s since Gerald “took hold of all kinds of sociological ideas, and ideas of reform […] but they never went more than skin-deep, they were never more than a mental amusement” (221). This demonstrates his disinterest in social conditions and social concerns which do trouble his counterpart, Birkin. Gerald’s personality is indicative of a paralyzed identity as he is detached from social interests yet still plagued by paralysis. Even Gerald’s family home depicts the old identity. It is referenced by Ursula and Gudrun as, “‘very peaceful and charming’” and reminiscent of “‘eighteenth century [England]’” (45). The sisters then consider how Gerald’s industrial
improvements make him progressive. Yet these same improvements to the mining industry are responsible for stunting his acquisition of fulfillment. Gerald’s progressive technical advances make him appear as mobile since he is able to identify the “need for a complete break” with the traditional methods of mining but he is in fact struggling as a paralyzed character (223). He understands that “the mines were run on an old system, an obsolete idea” which Gerald is able to eliminate by presenting his own approach (223). This is depicting a characteristic of a mobile character able to detach from traditional methodologies and techniques, which the sisters acknowledge. However, Gerald felt that the newly improved system was “so perfect that a strange fear came over him, and he didn’t know what to do” (231). Knowing that his revitalized mining business was running without him made him “afraid that one day he would break down and be a purely meaningless bubble lapping round a darkness” (231). This anxiety made him feel as though “his centres of feeling were drying up” which is equal to the darkness of paralysis (232). Gerald is attempting to create a mobile identity through his progressive ideas, but limiting his possibility for fulfillment to the industry and ignoring the yearnings of his soul and self. Wexler argues that “Gerald’s failure is not that he seeks the ‘inhuman principle’ in the physical world but that he seeks it nowhere else” (397). Gerald’s progressive notions about business and the mining production indicate his paralysis and inability to find fulfillment outside of the mechanical which is in reality a characteristic of the old identity. He is a product of the paralyzing influences of England’s industrial advances and desired production which rejects introspective thoughts.

Gerald’s connection with the natural world, primarily his desired dominance over animals is indicative of his own desire for control and power which contributes to his paralyzed identity. Gerald holds a mare in front of a moving train in an attempt to acclimate her to the uncomfortable noise. This action is seen by Ursula and Gudrun and is frequently interpreted as a rape scene considering that he uses violence to keep the suffering mare in place. The scene is described: “he sank into her magnetically, and could thrust her back against herself” and after Ursula’s cries for him to stop, “he held on her unrelaxed, with an almost mechanical relentlessness, keen as a sword pressing into her” (Lawrence 110). This is seen by Andrew Howe as “a sadistic rape, as it is violent and against the mare’s will” (431). Howe also notes that Gerald commits this cruel act in an effort to “assert[ ] his own masculine power” (431). While Ursula is appalled by Gerald’s inhumane treatment of the
horse, Gudrun feels euphoric from seeing Gerald’s dominance as she “accepts his violence and even begins to look forward to it” (436). Gerald and Gudrun begin their relationship through questionable terms. In Gudrun’s acceptance of his display of dominance she is placing herself in a similar position to the mare, that of reluctant submission. As will be seen later one mobile characters tend to be empathetic towards the natural world, animals included, which Gerald is sorely lacking as he “feels […] there is a ‘natural order’ in the world, with man occupying the top place on the hierarchy and the rest of nature below” (433). When this belief is coupled with his mechanical, cold, and violent moments with animals and the natural world, his paralysis becomes clearer. Gerald “repeatedly demonstrat[es] [that] he is willing to use violence to subjugate those less powerful than himself” within both the industrial and natural setting (436). The violence he inflicts upon the mare is done with the purpose of maintaining dominance over the horse’s will. This desire for control over an animal’s natural will is reflective of his own desire for control over his will and of his desire to control Gudrun. More detrimentally still is his desire to overpower nature as his view of mankind as the superior being severs his relationship with the natural world. The natural setting or the removal of the individual from the artificially familiar setting is necessary in order for Gerald and other paralyzed characters to experience the necessary epiphanies. Without moments of introspection the paralyzed individual will remain unaware of his or her own paralysis and will thus remain paralyzed. Gerald’s perception of the world as mechanical and his desire to dominate a piece of the nature, the mare, are indicative of his distant and trouble relationship with nature and this will limit Gerald’s ability to understand that he is still paralyzed.

Once Gudrun and Gerald become closer they share an intimate moment which becomes his momentary lapse into mobility and illustrates his paralysis. During the water party, Gudrun and Gerald are on a boat together returning from a small island. As they are making their way back they share a moment of mutual understanding. While there is gentle drumming in the background where the rest of the party is Gerald feels:

almost submerged, […] almost transfused, lapsed out for the first time in his life, into the things about him. For he always kept such a keen attentiveness, concentrated and unyielding in himself. Now he had let go, imperceptibly he was melting into oneness with the whole. […] He had been so insistent, so guarded, all his life. But here was sleep, and peace, and perfect lapsing out. (Lawrence 177)
Gudrun’s presence is able to generate a sense of peace previously unknown to him. This is reminiscent of Birkin’s view of Ursula as a savior, as Gudrun is capable of helping him enter a place of bliss from which he is starved. This is one of the few instances where Gerald lets himself go and although during this moment there is no strong physical contact between them, Gudrun is able to facilitate a brief of separation from the old identity. His previous apprehensions of “letting go” are noted when it is known that he had “been so insistent, so guarded” (177). But it is mobility and spontaneity that he has been guarding himself from. As they move on the water Gudrun asks which direction they should go in and Gerald says, “‘let it drift’” (177). As “they drift[ ] almost motionless, in silence” he is able to momentarily break from the old mechanical identity which governs his self and enters the trance-like state which is the backdrop for epiphanies (177). By being in the natural landscape his connection to nature and Gudrun is facilitated and amplified. His desire to drift in the lake with Gudrun not only reflects his momentary mobility and letting go of the old identity, but it also becomes an allegory for his feelings about a union with a woman. At a different time Gerald speaks with Birkin about the morality of marriage and Gerald argues that “one comes to the point where one must take a step in one direction or another […] marriage is one direction” (344). Gerald also notes how there is no alternative to this direction, as he believes that marriage is the only option. As Gerald and Gudrun drift in the lake, Gerald desires no direction and they are “motionless” on the lake which is reflective of a stagnant relationship. Their movement is guided by nature and not by a forced direction. But instead of continuing in this drift where they share a moment of understanding and love, they are interrupted and Gerald goes in search of his sister who was at the time drowning. Gerald clings to the old identity. After their relationship develops further Gerald, “having just witnessed his father’s death, [goes…] to Gudrun in a desperate struggle for survival” (Fjågesund 193). Although Gerald is troubled by the death of his father he is able to understand that Gudrun provides him with inexplicable solace. This makes Gerald a dependent partner. Gerald knows that he needs her, not only for comfort, and because she is able to help him escape paralysis, even if only in lapses, but because he wishes to abide by social rules which dictate he finds equilibrium with a female partner. Although Birkin’s relationship with Ursula also reaches dependent qualities, Gerald’s desire to have Gudrun in his life stems from a desire to be
“whole” according to society and for the sake of appearance. Whereas Birkin’s dependency on Ursula becomes a futile attempt to reach individual fulfillment.

After being abandoned and betrayed by Gudrun, and due to his repressed love for Birkin, Gerald unravels while on holiday and in an episode of desperation and powerlessness succumbs to paralysis and dies. Prior to their travel to the Austrian Alps, Gerald and Birkin share a moment of intimacy which reflects Gerald’s paralysis, but which also elucidates a moment of mobility. As in his moment with Gudrun, wrestling with Birkin places him in a momentary mobility. Erwin Rosinberg notes how during their moment of intimacy, Gerald “both initiates and withdraws from this contact” (18). Gerald is showing temporary mobility in his closeness to Birkin which is not a characteristic of a paralyzed character, but his lapse into mobility is fueled by Birkin not Gudrun and is transient. He is unable to commit to his desire for Birkin since his paralysis is profoundly embedded. Although Gerald initiates their wrestling he is not able to remain mobile and “snaps directly back into his previous form, either unaware of or untroubled by any discontinuity in his self and his behavior” (18). Gerald is paralyzed and unable to let himself go with permanence. He is capable of having lapses where he revels in his passions, but “for Gerald, the normative is and must be the real, and so he is continually pulled back into his increasingly destructive relationship with Gudrun” (Rosinberg 19). Once in the Alps Gerald feels Gudrun’s rejection when she becomes interested in someone else causing “the female support Gerald so desperately needs [to be] gone” (Fjágesund 193). After his inability to commit to Birkin and with the rejection of Gudrun, Gerald becomes mad and grabs Gudrun’s throat. Then “disgust came over Gerald’s soul […] disgust went to the very bottom of him […] to what depths was he letting himself go” (Lawrence 475). In this moment he is succumbing to animalistic impulses, but unlike before where he is able to return to a state of normalcy, he becomes stuck in a euphoric and inexplicable state. Letting go is necessary for the mobile character, but Gerald lets go of all apprehension, of all social rules, and this hyperbolized representation of freedom becomes his downfall. Gerald’s letting go is not a break with paralysis; rather it is a break from his own humanity. Gerald’s inability to commit to his desired love for Birkin left him inept and unable to cope with the loss of Gudrun who was veiling his pain for Birkin. He is also unable to cope with losing himself and since he is not able to repose himself and return to his “normal state” he wanders into the snowy mountains. He observes “a small
bright moon shone brilliantly just ahead, on the right, a painful brilliant thing that was always there, unremitting, from which there was no escape” (475). Here Gerald is being painfully faced with the moon which is a constant image indicative of paralysis and a reminder of the social reality he has violated. Birkin’s connection to the moon likewise connects the moon to paralysis as will be explored momentarily. Gerald knows that his display of violence towards Gudrun goes against society’s rules of conduct and he is being faced with the reality of his actions, but also with the absence of the beings which helped him reach a state of wholeness — Gudrun and Birkin. He “wandered unconsciously, till he slipped and fell down, and as he fell he felt something brake in his soul, and immediately he went to sleep” (477). Gerald’s attachment to the old identity paralyzed him from reaching fulfillment and with the loss of Gudrun and Birkin he loses himself leaving him with death as the only alternative.

**RUPERT BIRKIN’S DESCENT INTO PARALYSIS**

Rupert Birkin’s refusal to be tied down by standards of behavior initially presents him as a mobile character. Birkin demonstrates his disinterest in social conventions while attending a wedding hosted by Gerald Crich. Birkin speaks with Gerald’s mother revealing his attitude regarding the social aspect of the event, “I myself can never see why one should take account of people, just because they happen to be in the room” (Lawrence 22). His apathy toward social matters which concern Mrs. Crich reflects his potential for mobility. Gerald later asks Birkin, “‘you don’t believe in having any standards of behavior at all, do you?’” (30) To this Birkin replies that standards are “‘necessary for the common ruck’” and claims that “‘anybody who is anything can just be himself and do as he likes’” without adhering to standards of conduct (30). Birkin believes that people of a lower position than him need rules of conduct implying that he is among those who do not require proper manners to demonstrate status. Class distinctions serve to show Birkin’s egotistical attitude, but also his disregard for conventionality. He follows this by mentioning how “‘it’s the hardest thing in the world to act spontaneously on one’s impulses — [yet] it’s the only gentlemanly thing to do — provided you’re fit to do it’” (30). In this moment Birkin is addressing the difficulty presented by paralysis. This conversation not only establishes Birkin’s dissociation from social conventions, it also serves to show how he prizes spontaneity and impulsive actions. Or at least it shows how he claims to prize this free
spirited lifestyle. Favorable acknowledgement of impulsive actions rather than restrictive social expectations is a characteristic of a mobile character which is why Birkin is considered to be free. Through these claims he is portraying himself as able to disregard appropriate social etiquette which limits passions and honest desires. His claim that “anybody who is anything” is allowed to act in any way he or she pleases shows that this ability to follow instinctual desire is something to be earned and deserved. He lets Gerald know that following one’s spontaneous nature is reserved for those “fit to do it” (30). What he refers to with this is arguable since he could be referencing gender differences, station, or individual will. Considering Birkin’s inflated sense of self, this “fit to do it” statement can mean that this spontaneity is reserved for those willing and brave enough to be guided by their passions. Regardless, Birkin’s perspective appears to be far removed from the conventionality which paralyzes people like Mrs. Crich who jokes and entertains Birkin’s philosophies on existentialism, but does not believe them herself all in the name of politeness. Birkin’s resistance of social expectations is at this point seemingly progressive. This desire to distance himself from restrictive social conventions also speaks to his view about romantic relationships. Carolyn Tilghman sees Birkin as “the character who complains the most about the limited and undesirable reality forced upon individuals and their freedoms by middle-class sexual values” (93). His position regarding the limits placed on an individual’s desire for passion and spontaneity parallels the limitations presented in romantic relationships which he struggles to create and understand.

Birkin often discusses the paralyzing elements which hinder England’s progress as he attributes the lack of development to society’s bond with the old identity. Ursula comments on Birkin’s apparent recovery from an illness which prompts him to respond: “one is ill because one doesn’t live properly — can’t” (Lawrence 124). His reference to living “properly” is not representative of the traditional perspective which relies on an adherence to strict codes of conduct. Rather, Birkin is approaching the concept of fulfillment and actualization and the inability to reach this idealized state due to social paralysis. While conversing with Ursula, Birkin reflects on how “humanity itself is dry-rotten’’ then he asks, “‘why are people all balls of bitter dust?’”(125) To answer his question Birkin notes how people “‘won’t fall off the tree when they’re ripe’” (125). He explains this by claiming that people “‘hang on to their old positions when the position is overpast, till they become
infested with little worms and dry-rot’” (125). Birkin observes society as crippled believing that hanging on to old notions is what leads people to rot and become paralyzed. The binary identities between the old and new emerge. He details his position by suggesting that he would not want to be one of the withering apples hanging on to the tree perpetuating archaic notions of mankind. Jacobson notes how “the word ‘ripeness’ when used in a human context carries cumulated meanings of natural process[es]” (58). By presenting this analogy using references to the natural progression of life, Birkin’s stance on nature vs. the artificial world appears. He is interpreting one element of nature — death or paralysis — as an unnecessary or misunderstood process of the circle of life. According to his analogy this cycle can be broken by letting go of the tree which requires the subject to be aware of its attachment, and to possess a willingness to detach from the façade of comfort found in conventionality. In this illustration “the organic imagery, by representing the paradoxical complexity of human nature, defines the difficulty of achieving fulfillment,” which is what Birkin struggles with throughout the novel (56). Not only does he argue that the tree which represents old notions and mankind as a whole ruins society and individuals, but he also argues that it does so through lies. In nearly nihilistic terms he presents the idea that the tree — or humanity itself — is “a huge aggregate lie” and that people who perpetuate the notion that hanging on to the tree is positive are simply, “dirty liars and cowards” (Lawrence 125). He attributes the paralysis of society in part to the rules of conduct which are in place and also to the people who perpetuate paralysis by failing to understand that letting go of the old identity is part of the natural process of life. The conversation concludes with his theory that humanity “would go on […] marvelously, with a new start, non-human” since he believes that “man is one of the mistakes of creation” (127). This bleak outlook is comparable to an existential crisis as Birkin is attempting to define his existence in reference to the world but finds no purpose for him or for mankind. David Barber notes how, “Much of Birkin's theorizing in the first half of *Women in Love* involves his desire to transcend everyday personal existence toward this timeless-impersonal plane of being” (33). Through the various conversations he holds with Gerald and Ursula regarding humanity, Birkin continuously attempts to distance himself from traditional perspectives as he views himself as someone who is able to move beyond the deeply instilled values of society.
Birkin unknowingly introduces the duality of will in connection to paralysis and mobility by viewing human will in contrast to that of horses. At one point Birkin argues that “every horse has two wills” (Lawrence 139). Birkin explains to Hermione, Gerald, and Ursula that, “with one will, [the horse] wants to put itself in the human power completely — and with the other, it wants to be free, wild” (139). He is addressing the will of animals believing that the humans differentiate significantly since they are capable of consciousness beyond pure animalistic desires. He is unknowingly describing the way in which paralysis and mobility work within people and even himself. Paralysis occurs when the will of the subject is entirely overrun by the will of society eradicating his or her own inclinations and desires. This is how he explains the horse’s submission to a human master. The will of the horse and the dominant human is parallel to society and paralysis. A person’s submission to “human power” is not reserved for any single individual rather it is a submission to society’s values and oppressive ideals. Opposingly, mobility permits the individual rights over his or her passion and will, which requires a resistance to societal standards. This is where Birkin’s reading of a horse’s alternate will is connected to mobility which likewise requires the individual to break from dominant rule and be “free, wild.” While Gerald considers horses only in animalistic terms, Birkin explores how choice works for with animalistic impulses. Birkin comments on a third possibility which occurs when “the two wills […] lock” still keeping with the analogy of horses. He explains, “— you know that, if ever you felt a horse bolt, while you’ve been driving it” (139). This locking of wills mirrors the struggle that strong-willed individuals feel after an epiphany or after an escape from the muddled mindset, which leaves them caught between paralysis and mobility. This is the space which Birkin inhabits throughout the novel as his will is locked. This locking of wills is also present in Joyce’s Eveline who is torn between pursuing her passion or remaining in her oppressive setting. Birkin is torn between Ursula who resembles the “human power” as she perpetuates conventional heterosexual marriage, and between Gerald who would connect Birkin to his uncensored passions. While he believes himself capable of defining his philosophies about mankind and about love he is blind to the reality of his own paralysis which eventually confronts him at the end of the novel.

Although his outlook on the old identity initially appears to be progressive and indicative of a mobile character aware of the trappings of paralysis, an alternate perspective
emerges when he and Ursula purchase a chair. At the market-place Birkin and Ursula spot a beautiful old chair which “almost brought tears to the eyes” and impulsively purchase it (Lawrence 357). Birkin exclaims, “‘my beloved country — it had something to express even when it made that chair’” (357). He then begins to romanticize “Jane Austen’s England” claiming that the chair “had living thoughts to unfold […] and pure happiness unfolding them” (357). Ursula’s frustration rises at hearing his praise of old England, but he continues, “‘there is no production in us now, only sordid and foul mechanicalness’” (357). This perception of people as industrialized machines without spirit or production beyond the monetary is indicative of the stunted growth paralysis generates. He claims that people are only, “‘fish[ing] among the rubbish heaps for the remnants of their old expression’” (357). Birkin’s outlook on the power of the old identity compromises his previous position on the matter as he had established the detrimental effects of holding on to the old identity. Yet here he clings to romanticized notions of the past which he believes hold valuable expressions, not ardent lies. This serves to show his confusion as he consistently contradicts his own philosophies about humanity and progress. During an animated discussion with Birkin, Ursula exclaims that he, “‘belong[s] to that old, deathly way of living’” (307). Although Birkin is able to recognize the ways in which paralysis and the old identity become a hindrance, seen through his analogy of the tree, he is not able to commit to the new identity as in this brief moment his idealization of the past takes hold and he defends “Jane Austen’s England” rather than the new identity which Ursula advocates and which he believes he is forging.

The chair which at first divides Ursula and Birkin on the issue of the old vs. new identity quickly assists them in uniting against paralysis as they plan to flee. After Ursula insists that the chair is a representation of materialistic England rather than an enlightened and ideal version of England, Birkin changes his position, “‘at any rate, one can’t go on living on the old bones of beauty’” (Lawrence 358). Immediately after agreeing that the chair is symbolic of the materialistic past they feel inclined to get rid of this symbol as urgently as possible and both decide that they “‘don’t want old things’” (358). Birkin furthers this by saying “‘One should just live anywhere — not have a definite place […] you must leave your surroundings sketchy, unfinished, so that you are never contained never confined, never dominated from the outside’” (358). Birkin and Ursula contemplate the practicality of living
without the commitment of a household to confine and control them. What is evidenced here is their ability to understand how paralysis is working. Once Ursula is able to remind him of a harmful characteristic of “Jane Austen’s England” Birkin is able to return to his original position. They realize that the only way they can truly let go of society’s paralyzing elements is by letting go of their possessions which promote conventionality, like the chair. Linda S. Grimes notes how their attempt at removing themselves from a confining life begins with them gifting “the chair to a young, scruffy-looking city couple whom Lawrence describes as a couple also falling far from his ideal of balance and perfection in love” (26). Birkin and Ursula continue their conversation and Birkin promises that they will, “‘look at the world beyond just this bit [... since] [he] want[s] to be disinherited’” (Lawrence 364) Ursula suggests that “‘one way of getting rid of everything [... is by] get[ting] married’” (364). They are planning on leaving the confining setting of a traditional home which promises to paralyze them into conventionality by marrying. This becomes Birkin and Ursula’s plan to flee from paralysis, yet it is through a different form of convention, marriage. Although marriage is presented as a route of escape, their relationship is complicated by Birkin’s denial of his love for Gerald which turns this attempt at flight into a fruitless pursuit. The potential Birkin and Ursula see in marriage is in stark contrast to Joyce’s depiction of marriage. For Joyce’s *Dubliners* marriage is the mechanism by which social institutions are furthered not the place for individual freedom.

Birkin and Ursula explore the parameters of the ideal relationship which has the potential for mobility given their profound introspection and resistance of conventions. Although Birkin asks both Ursula and Gudrun for tea only Ursula attends since she keeps the invitation from her sister in hopes of developing a romantic closeness to Birkin. Wexler views the importance of Birkin and Ursula’s “dialogues [as they serve to] test alternative ideas of love and lead to the novel’s most positive relationship” (395). Birkin proposes that he and Ursula construct a balanced relationship which surpasses love in hopes of creating, “‘something much more impersonal and harder — and rarer’” (Lawrence 144). Birkin claims that, “‘there is a real impersonal [him], that is beyond love, beyond any emotional relationship’” and that he wishes to “‘follow the impulse […] according to the primal desire’” (145). Birkin is asking Ursula to consider a relationship which bypasses the archaic and ordinary definition of love which according to him is restrictive. His claim of wanting to
devote himself to his “primal desire” becomes his acceptance of a new and progressive identity. He eventually defines this progressive union as free from the notion that men and women are “‘broken fragments of one whole’” (200). Instead he advocates for a relationship where they would be “‘two single beings constellated together like two stars’” independent and capable of individuality yet placed together in overlapping space (200). Birkin insists that this alternate relationship would permit for neither to be the dominant figure. At first glance this appears as a progressive relationship which breaks free from traditional readings of love as Eugene Stelzig also sees how, “the astronomical metaphor of two stars in balance is […] a radical revision of the Romantic ideal of romantic love as mutual” (95). This construct of love leaves room for a third star — Gerald. While Ursula pushes Birkin to verbally admit he loves her, Wexler argues that “Birkin cannot tell Ursula that he loves her until he defines love in his own terms” (395). Birkin’s attempt to reinvent the definition of their relationship is not due to a complete love of Ursula and an attempt at reinventing tradition as a mobile character. Tather, “his intention is to redefine the traditional heterosexual domestic arrangement in order to create a supplemental space for the complete fulfillment of his desire” which is reserved for Gerald (Tilghman 95). Levy likewise argues that, “To love her only is to love himself defectively; for it is to deny himself ultimate completion and fulfillment” (575). The fulfillment referenced here is Birkin’s repressed love for Gerald. As mentioned, Birkin cannot admit to loving Ursula, because he desires Gerald and in creating this newly defined relationship with Ursula he is lying to himself. He hopes that Ursula will be able to appease his anxiety about love and become his escape from paralysis.

While Ursula cautiously accepts Birkin’s proposal for a balanced relationship Birkin’s conflicting approach to love arises after a moment of intimacy with Gerald which pushes Birkin to see Ursula not as an equal, but as a savior. Reflecting on Ursula’s initial apprehension Birkin assess that “his life rest[s] with her”(Lawrence 198). Yet, “he would rather not live than accept the love she proffered” (198). Birkin interprets Ursula’s instance on “the old way of love” as “a dreadful bondage, a sort of conscription” which he is unwilling to commit to. In this moment of reflection Birkin considers how traditional heterosexual marriage is incomplete and desires to reinvent it, “to be free” (199). He wishes “to be with Ursula as […] single and clear and cool, yet balanced, polarised” (199). While he
revisits the parameters and possibility of refashioning romantic attachment to Ursula he becomes, “confronted with another problem — the problem of love and eternal conjuncture between two men […] he had been loving Gerald all along and denying it” (205). After this moment of self-examination Birkin and Gerald wrestle naked arousing their denied homoerotic connection. The intimacy that they share is coupled with profound vulnerability which allows Birkin to enter “a complete darkness” enabling him to be “divided entirely between his spirit […] and his body” (271). This division of self and escape from consciousness allows Birkin to expose his genuine desire. During this scene Birkin enters a momentary paralysis as he is physically immobilized by the experience shared with Gerald since “his body could not answer” (271). Birkin is overwhelmed by the response of his body and mind. This moment does not simply show Birkin what his real feelings for Gerald are; it also reveals his true state of paralysis. This lapse into intimacy reveals the paralysis that Birkin is suffering with. Rosinberg notes how this scene teaches “Birkin both about the power of his own nonnormative desires and the power of all of the forces—ideological, societal, interpersonal—that work to repress them” (18). Birkin understands that the moment shared with Gerald cannot be a daily occurrence due to the societal pressures of heteronormativity. This is the truth both men are unable to confront. Once out of the physical and spiritual trance, Birkin revisits the idea of marriage with Gerald. Birkin believes that “‘marriage in the old sense seems […] repulsive’” (Lawrence 354). Birkin presents the idea of “‘the additional perfect relationship between man and man — additional to marriage’” (354). Here Birkin is showing his progress from believing that a relationship between two beings is possible and expanding this definition to fit Gerald and his hope for a relationship with a man. He is “facilitat[ing] the possibility for a realized love between two men, a love which would transcend that between man and woman” (Tilghman 95). Although Birkin sees marriage as his escape from confronting the reality of his desire for Gerald, he is still making room for Gerald within his romantic ideals. Grimes believes, “Rupert has learned to repress his nature, but according to Lawrence, that kind of repression goes against the self — it represents infidelity to the self” (26). Birkin visualizes, “marriage with […] Ursula as] his resurrection and his life” assuming that this will satiate the infidelity to the self that he is committing by repressing his love for Gerald (Lawrence 371). Birkin’s desire for resurrection not only implies that there is something in him which is dead and in need of revival parallel
to paralysis, but it also places Ursula as a moral superior who is capable and responsible for reviving him. Birkin “[i]s so nearly dead […] so near to being gone with the rest of his race down the slope of mechanical death” that he relies on Ursula and the convention of marriage to save him (371). Birkin even considers Ursula as “the perfect Womb, the bath of birth, to which all men must come” (310). He places his break from paralysis onto his reinvented definition of marriage with Ursula as a way to cope with the denial of his real longing for Gerald.

Birkin offers Ursula three rings in an attempt to sway her into accepting his love while the rings become symbolic of their inability to establish a mobile relationship. On a drive Birkin hands Ursula three rings of which only one fits her. They begin arguing about Hermione’s spiritual grip on Birkin and Ursula throws the rings in the mud. Birkin sees the rings as “little tokens of the reality of beauty, the reality of happiness in warm creation” (Lawrence 311). Grimes asserts that, “Neither character — Rupert who gives the ring, nor Ursula whom it fits — is capable of fidelity, because they are still unfaithful to their own true nature, the unified nature that knows how to recognize and accept that ‘abysmal other’” (25). Their inability to be faithful to their passions and impulses is emblematic of their inability to break from paralysis. Birkin is unable to commit to Ursula since his real passion is not limited to her as it extends to Gerald. Debra Journet reasons that the rings “represent[ ] an equilibrium of consciousness and unconsciousness that allow[s] Birkin and Ursula to transcend the old world and break out of the ego” (50). Journet’s view reconnects Birkin and Ursula to the binary of the old and new identities. But it also reads them as able to “transcend” which is arguable since only one is able to become a mobile character by the end of the novel. Hermione is depicted by Ursula as “dirt” and spiritually unclean only desiring “immediate power” and “the illusion that she is a great woman” (Lawrence 307). After accusing Birkin of falling for someone like Hermione and of being just as corrupted as Hermione, Ursula leaves. Hermione and Birkin’s correlation to “dirt” is certainly methodical considering that “Ursula did not accept Birkin’s jewels until they had been thrown into the mud” (Journet 50). After Ursula pushes Birkin to see Hermione as someone who stands for “lies, […] false[ness], […] and death” Birkin is forced to reevaluate his position whom he sees the rings resting in the mud (Lawrence 307). Birkin fishes the rings out of the mud while Ursula is still away and as he does so the imagery is amplified as “his life [becomes]
dissolved in darkness over his limbs and his body” (311). As Birkin struggles with his attachment to Hermione and the lifestyle she represents, he becomes figuratively immobilized. The reality of paralysis is visible to Birkin in flashes and he is not able to make a significant change without Ursula’s assistance.

Together, Birkin and Ursula observe the reflection of the moon and their interaction reveals their connection to each other and paralysis. While on a night stroll Ursula encounters Birkin at the edge of a pond and remains hidden in order to observe him in solitude. Birkin is troubled by the reflection of the moon on the water and throws stones in the water in order to disrupt the moon’s reflection. This disturbance is described: “shadows, dark and heavy struck again and again across the place where the heart of the moon had been, obliterating it altogether” (Lawrence 247). This causes the moon’s fragmented light to flicker back together taunting Birkin and pushing him into a desperate “madness” (248). His dissatisfaction causes him to grab “large stones, and thr[o]w them, one after the other, at the white-burning centre of the moon, till there [i]s nothing but a rocking of hollow noise” (248). This moment reveals Birkin’s determination to disrupt the moon’s reflection which is indicative of his desire to break with the paralysis that is gradually taking hold of him. The moon serves as a symbol of the paralyzing society he wishes to be free from. The moon’s continual return to its predictable structure is symbolic of the societal standards which are continuous and unchangeable. Regardless of the size of the stone that he throws, the moon’s reflection returns to its original form. He does not understand that his method is ineffective and that he is attempting to break social paralysis rather than flee from it. He is attacking the social rules which are cemented into social consciousness. The stones which he throws to dismantle the certainty of the moon’s regrouping reflection become symbolic of his refashioned marriage with Ursula. Reinventing traditional marriage causes him to feel momentary liberty, similar to the momentary pleasure of breaking the reflection. There is an inevitability he is not considering as he throws the stones simultaneously attacking society’s standards. Birkin is not able to permanently change the structure of the moon’s reflection because just like the moon’s reflection, society cannot be fundamentally modified in the way he needs it to be, it can only be fled. He enters a “madness” when he sees the moon’s image regrouping and this causes him angst. This emotional response is symbolic of the turmoil that is present within him to which he is still blind. Paralysis becomes an inevitable outcome since the relationship
he needs to construct must be with Gerald not Ursula. He must commit to a disengagement with the purely heteronormative structure he is paralyzed by in order to become mobile. While this metaphorical break or attempt to break from paralysis continues, Birkin throws stones as a “shadow on the border of the pond” which is representative of his marginalized position as he exists on the border of mobility and paralysis (247). His position on the sideline is also indicative of his inability to fully engage with either Ursula or Gerald as he remains on the border of both relationships unable to commit to the people he craves. It is Ursula in this moment that interjects herself in his moment of solitude, much like her interjection in his life as she presses him to admit he loves her. His Forsterian muddled mindset is due to his repressed love for Gerald, but also due to his inability to truly withdraw from paralysis as he masks this by committing to Ursula. Birkin is living within a space that is undefined as he believes himself to be mobile, yet fails to act upon the love he has for Gerald.

Once in conversation, Birkin explicitly notes his desire to possess an aspect of her identity which unbalances the relationship they are trying to refashion. Ursula is “motionless […] unaware, unseeing, that in the darkness was a little tumult of ebbing flakes of light, a cluster dancing secretly in a round, twining and coming steadily together” (Lawrence 248). She reveals her presence and Birkin is shocked at having had a spectator during his stone throwing. Ursula is unaware that the moonlight is coming together again as she is only observant of Birkin. This mimics the commitment she has made to Birkin as she has agreed to reinvent love with him unaware that Birkin’s love is not solely for her. Once engaged in conversation Birkin notes, “there is a golden light in you, which I wish you would give me” (249). This golden light is symbolic of the mobility that Ursula possesses which Birkin sees in her and wishes to obtain. Birkin is falling into gender stereotypes in idealizing Ursula. She becomes the keeper of light and purity. It is as though she is withholding a mystery that he does not want her to simply share. He wishes to have it altogether. Ursula relays to Birkin that she does not possess that which he sees in her as she says, “my life is unfulfilled” (249). But Birkin insists, “but, I want you to give me — to give your spirit to me — that golden light which is you — which you don’t know — give it me” (249). He not only claims to see the mobility in her which she fails to see herself, but he wishes to possess her, to take the light that is her and is within her. This yearning is emblematic of a desire to appropriate
that which is Ursula’s but also of his desire to become mobile. This moment of desired domination is remarkably similar to *A Room with a View*’s Cecil Vyse and Lucy Honeychurch. Cecil initially sees Lucy as a piece of art that contains a mystery he yearns to possess and becomes jealous of, much like Birkin. This exchange between Birkin and Ursula leads them to discuss their inability to “let go” as Ursula cries, “it is you who can’t let yourself go” (251). Gradually they rest “in stillness under the shadow of trees by the bank [as …] they were in darkness, barely conscious” (251). They both believe that the other is the one who is unable to let go of their physical and emotional apprehensions. The darkness that envelops them represents the paralysis they are sacrificing if they continue to hold on to the paralyzing elements of society. Although Birkin feels that he is mobile through his adamant refashioning of traditional marriage, and through his observation of paralysis in others, he is merely attempting to break from the paralysis which is slowly brewing within him. Throughout the novel Birkin is moving closer to a state of paralysis as he shows how he is unable to let go and commit to Gerald. He believes that his pursuit of the ideal relationship will liberate him from paralysis, and he believes that this relationship is working with Ursula. Yet, it only works with her because Gerald and Birkin maintain a level of intimacy throughout all experiences. Once Gerald dies, Birkin is left with the reality of his own paralysis as he struggles to accept Ursula as his only mate. Birkin tells Ursula that “to make [life] complete, really happy [he] wanted [an] eternal union with a man too” (484). Gerald’s death forces Birkin to acknowledge that without Gerald he is unable to be fulfilled and mobile because that union with a man that he needs is not being satisfied.

**Ursula Brangwen’s Mobility and Attempted Flight**

In the opening scene Ursula and her sister Gudrun discuss the traditions of marriage where they respond to the paralyzing forces of society. Ursula contemplates her impulse to resist this convention while they make their way to a wedding. Tilghman believes that “Ursula is skeptical about the rationales which hold up heterosexual marriage as the ultimate goal of every young Englishwoman” (92). Balbert considers how in this first scene, “there is an appealing sense of nurturant affection and energetic striving in [Ursula] which Lawrence
instructively contrasts with the cynical, materialistic outlook of Gudrun” (270). Ursula views marriage as “the end of experience” since she believes that there may be an unexplored liberty in remaining unmarried. She asks her sister to reflect: “do you hope to get anywhere by just marrying?”(Lawrence 5) With this request at introspection Ursula is revealing her desire for progress and mobility. She is contemplating the possibility to remain unmarried, but she is also considering whether marriage could mean something other than it has meant for years. In this perspective she is hoping for a reinvention of traditions. Balbert notes how Ursula’s inquisitive nature stems from The Rainbow since it caused her to “retain[ ] a child’s zest to find out what she feels, and to treat the promptings of her instincts as mandate and birthright” (270). She desires something deeper like the fulfillment and actualization Birkin claims to desire in marriage. Ursula is questioning whether traditional marriage would be able provide her with the necessary space to reach fulfillment. This is in stark contrast to Gudrun, who coldly views marriage as the “inevitable next step” (Lawrence 5). Ursula questions other fundamental traditions of marriage which involve children and a ritualized domestic space with a husband “coming home […] every evening, and saying ‘Hello,’ and giving one a kiss” (270). Challenging the traditional direction expected for women is a sign of a mobile character who wishes to resist paralysis. In questioning expectations of marriage she is establishing herself as capable of mobility and as part of the new identity since she “is willing when the time is right to fall from the tree, to break the connection with life” (Jacobson 58). Once she encounters Birkin she is presented with his progressive reinventions of love which appear to be her only option to break the cyclical expectations of marriage. Yet her responses demonstrate that she is muddled. Although she claims to want a reinvented marital structure there is a momentary shift within her which reveals her yearning for archaic notions of love.

When Birkin initially approaches Ursula and details his desire for a romantic relationship with her he is unaware that he is beckoning someone who is muddled. Birkin proposes that he and Ursula commit to a “romantic-sexual love [mirroring] ‘star equilibrium’” which stands outside of the boundaries of traditional marriage (Stelzig 95). He also informs her that this structure would contain no love, instead that “there [would be] something else” (Lawrence 145). His proposed relationship is supposed to represent a deviation from cultural norms which she criticized in the beginning of the novel. However,
hearing that the relationship would not be defined by “love” causes her to exclaim that without love there is nothing for her. Ursula is unable to comprehend the meaning of his proposal as more than love and she is stuck wondering if his proposition means that the relationship would be loveless and empty. She wishes to leave since he resists defining his affection for her as love, and Ursula pathetically asks, “‘But don’t you think me good-looking?’”(146) Her inability to interpret his proposal as progressive or as potentially mobile demonstrates her muddled mindset. Regardless of whether or not Birkin is able to commit to his own doctrine is irrelevant since she is unaware of his repressed love for Gerald. In this moment she is simply presented with the opportunity to act upon her initial desire of a marriage without traditional limitations. She is not entirely paralyzed since she is able to question marriage as she did earlier with her sister, but her response demonstrates that she is muddled. In asking Birkin if she is good-looking she is placing herself within the restrictive and old notion of love which prizes the patriarch’s approbation and interest in the female subject. She is clinging to archaic ideas of love and revealing her desire for him to be dominant and subscribing to expected gender roles. She began the novel questioning traditional marriages and when placed with the possibility of nurturing a relationship outside the norm she does not pursue its possibility. Instead she asks Birkin, “‘If there is no love, what is there?’” demonstrating her inability to actively act upon a relationship outside the limiting parameters of marriage (145).

Although her immediate response to Birkin is to reject the proposed modernity of a mobile marriage, she grows from this conversation after an opportunity to consider the finality of death. After the drowning of Diana, Ursula finds herself in a virtual paralysis as she is “suspended in a state of complete nullity” (Lawrence 190). This isolated lapse in mobility is due to her outlook as she saw herself, “fulfilled in a kind of bitter ripeness, there remained only to fall from the tree into death” this pondering occurs while she “drifted into unconsciousness” (190-191). By associating death with mobility she is preventing herself from a breaking with paralysis and in viewing it in this way she is complying with the tree analogy that Birkin created earlier choosing to remain on the tree instead of detaching in order to become mobile. After further ruminating on the journey towards and on the inevitability of death, “in a kind of spiritual trance” which mirrors the process of a Joycean epiphany, she escapes the trance and begins to “feel within the darkness, the terrible assertion
of her body” (191). And with the clarity “of ultimate knowledge” and physical freedom she becomes mobile. She concludes that it is, “better to die than live mechanically a life that is a repetition […] and cut off within the motion of the will” (191). Ursula is able to escape the muddle and sees how a mechanical life equates a permanent paralysis filled with desensitized repetitions of tradition. She is being faced with three options: death, paralysis, or flight. At this point she rejects becoming a casualty; she also rejects the mechanical life by describing it as “shameful” (191). Thus, she is left with flight and eventually “she withdr[aws] from Gudrun and from that which she stood for, she turn[s] in spirit towards Birkin again” (264). And because she is able to grow from her moment of introspection she concludes that “love [i]s everything [since] love far surpasse[s] the individual” (265). These realizations denote her growth throughout the novel. At first she entertains the idea of mobility when conversing with Gudrun, yet when faced with the opportunity to develop a marriage outside of the boundaries of tradition and paralysis she cowers and finds comfort in conventional representations of love. However, after a moment of introspection and self-awareness she recognizes that Birkin yields the only alternative to paralysis through his questionable yet progressive notions of love. This epiphany not only allows her to reject paralysis but also informs her of the connection paralysis has with the old identity. She is able to emerge out of her enveloping spiritual trance and the darkness she was experiencing as a mobile character. Sadly, this mobility is dependent on Birkin’s willingness and ability to deliver on the ideal of marriage.

Once Ursula enters a state of mobility understanding that Birkin’s “theories might chart a way out for her,” she is able to identify the old and new identity when she and Birkin purchase a chair (Balbert 275). While Birkin, as noted previously, defends “Jane Austen’s England” Ursula identifies this attachment to the chair and its symbolic meaning as crippling and unworthy of romantic reminiscing, “‘I don’t think so much of Jane Austen’s England’” and she claims that “‘it was materialistic’” (Lawrence 357). Ursula comments, “‘I hate your past […] I even hate that old chair, though it is beautiful [ ] it isn’t my sort of beauty’” (358). Ursula is able to acknowledge that there is beauty in the chair just as there is a value in the old identity, but that that same paralyzing identity is not her type of beauty. The distinction that Ursula is making between her kind of beauty and Birkin’s establishes the polarization between them, but also creates a distance between her and the old identity. At this point in
the novel Ursula had already begun to break from the muddle that was gradually drifting her into paralysis due to Birkin’s previous conversation with her about love and marriage. She is able to detach from Birkin’s idealization of the past as she says, “‘I wish it had been smashed up when its day was over, not left to preach the beloved past to us’” (358). In this exchange Ursula is the one who emerges as the mobile character understanding that there must be a break from the old identity in order to break from paralysis. She is capable of identifying the crippling effect of old notions while Birkin, who helped her understand paralysis through his theories, is still reminiscing and over the symbolic significance of the chair and of “Jane Austen’s England.” This conversation is extended to the meaning of marriage and possessions, from which Ursula suggests that they flee and abandon all traces of conventional marriage.

Ursula not only observes the old and new identity existing in Birkin, but she is also able to identify it within her family setting indicating the depth of her new found mobility. While Ursula and Gudrun return to their family home which is vacant to retrieve their last items, they discuss the life they lived among those walls. Rather than experiencing an inflated nostalgic moment, they see how “everything was null to the senses” (Lawrence 374). They see their childhood home as an “enclosure without substance” (374). Ursula assumes that if they had led lives in that ordinary home they would be “vile” and without individuality (375). The sisters contemplate the lives of their parents as Ursula ponders, “‘When I think of their lives — father’ and mother’s, their love, and their marriage, and all of us children, and our bringing-up — would you have such a life […] it all seems so nothing’” (375). Together they denounced the life their parents created for them. Ursula is now ardently rejecting the emptiness of a paralyzed life and Gudrun in this moment also renounces it claiming she would run if this life were to be her future. As Ursula removes herself from her childhood home she not only comes to pity the life of convention and paralysis, but also questions the social construct of marriage, with her “absolutely instinctual” sense (Balbert 278). Ursula asks, “‘Why does every woman think her aim in life is to have a hubby and a little grey home in the west […] why is this the goal of life […] why should it be?’” (Lawrence 377) In demonstrating her rejection of paralysis, she is committing to the same queries concerning marriage she had presented at the beginning of the novel. Birkin enters the house to escort them and “his presence, […] lambent and alive […] made even the impertinent structure of
this null house disappear” (377). Here she is able to discredit conventionality because of Birkin. He helped her commit to her initial concerns about marriage by conversing with her about a reinvented marital dynamic and by entering the space which houses her past life of conventionality. Her fondness for him grows and reflects how she sees him as her way out of a future like the one of her parents had. Gudrun admits to Ursula, “you will be out of it all, with Birkin […] He’s a special case […] But with the ordinary man, who has his life fixed in one place, marriage is just impossible” (376). Gudrun anticipates the unique freedom Birkin offers Ursula as she compares Birkin to Gerald’s fixed identity. While Birkin has previously seen Ursula as a savior, in this setting it is Ursula who comes to see Birkin as more than a romantic partner. Since Birkin’s energy disrupts the grey null presence of paralysis she understands that Birkin is her route of escape. Marriage which she ridicules other women for pursuing is the route she is likewise taking to ironically free herself from confining conventions. Birkin and Ursula construct a relationship where they see each other as a route of escape from paralysis. They “exemplify [the] modern man and woman who have not reached the Laurentian perfection” (Grimes 25). This ideal relationship is not acquired because although “the couple strives to unite, […] at the deep personal level where unity ultimately prevails, they remain divided” (25). The division referenced here is present due to Birkin’s split romantic interest between Ursula and Gerald which prevents them from achieving genuine unity.

By the end of the novel Ursula has become a mobile character able to reject conventional marriage and paralysis by uniting with Birkin, yet, this union which promised her an escape from paralysis ultimately leaves her in an ambiguous union. After Gerald’s icy death in the Alps, Birkin is confronted with the reality of his own paralysis. This truth leaves Ursula in a relationship which is no longer moving away from paralysis. Although she agrees to be with Birkin and his refashioned idea of marriage, “she wanted unspeakable intimacies […] she believed that love far surpassed the individual […] that love was everything” (Lawrence 265). Believing that Birkin is capable of removing her from a life of paralysis she commits to him and represses her passions in hopes of developing alternate passions. She is willing to reinvent love with Birkin. While in the Alps Ursula’s liberation from paralysis is evident, “She wanted to have no past” and “she had just come into life […] this [was a new] Ursula, in her new world of reality (410). This break from the old paralyzing identity
becomes clearer as she is described, “That old shadow-world, the actuality of the past — ah, let it go! She rose free on the wings of her new condition” (411). Ursula emerges as mobile once she renounces the crippling demands of the old identity, yet this new found sense of self is quickly placed into question as her union with the “liberating” Birkin reveals itself to be lacking. The death of Gerald, who also held Birkin’s affection, prompts Birkin to admit to Ursula that she is not enough for him. This confession reveals the denied emptiness within their marriage, at least on behalf of Birkin. The novel ends with ambiguity concerning the future of their relationship as Ursula exclaims, “‘you can’t have two kinds of love […] why should you’” which Birkin rejects saying “‘I don’t believe that’” (485). This conclusion not only shows Birkin’s position on marriage, but it shows that Ursula is not enough to satisfy his amorous needs. Therefore, illustrating that Birkin and Ursula’s union is incomplete or one sided. Birkin’s inability to feel fulfilled without Gerald’s presence paralyzes him. Through profound introspection and conversations regarding society and social rules Ursula becomes mobile, only to find herself trapped in a marriage with a paralyzed counterpart.
CHAPTER 3
E. M. FORSTER’S *A ROOM WITH A VIEW*

**THE PARALYSIS OF MISS CHARLOTTE BARTLETT**

Charlotte’s paralysis manifests itself in the first scene of the novel through her reaction towards Mr. Emerson. As the novel opens, Lucy and her chaperon Charlotte complain about their viewless rooms while in a vacation pension in Italy. Charlotte protests that Lucy should at least receive a better room as she is conscious of the class difference between them. Lucy and her family are of a higher economic and social standing, while Charlotte is poor, unmarried, and frequently cast aside. Throughout the novel this class distinction creates a complication within the chaperon relationship between her and Lucy. Charlotte struggles to place herself as an authority figure to Lucy, while having little authority herself. This struggle is apparent in the first scene which takes place far from the English countryside. Although they are away from England they are in an artificially English setting. This Italian pension accustomed to English tourists modifies the boarding rooms and the lobby to replicate English comforts for its patrons. Nostalgic images of England surround Charlotte and Lucy while they bicker about the inadequacy of their rooms. Jeffery Heath notes how the, “backdrop of the Pension Bertolini dining room [is] decorated with ‘heavily framed’ portraits of Tennyson and Queen Victoria, and with a notice of the English church” (396). The narrator mentions that “even more curious [is] the drawing-room, which attempt[s] to rival the solid comfort of a Bloomsbury boarding-house” (Forster, *A Room* 11). This replicated setting is so well crafted that the narrator even considers: “was this really Italy?” (11). Charlotte’s paralysis is powered by her devotion to English values which this artificial English setting does not let her forget. Lucy and Charlotte’s dialogue initiates an unwelcomed discussion with Mr. Emerson who offers to switch rooms in order for them to enjoy their stay. Miss Bartlett is uninterested in Mr. Emerson’s status as her outlook is
comprised of assumptions, “She knew that the intruder was ill-bred, even before she glanced at him” (8). After making her assessment of Mr. Emerson a profound observation is made and quickly discarded, “There was something childish in those eyes [of his…] Miss Bartlett did not stop to consider, for her glance passed on to his clothes” (8). This moment reveals Charlotte’s inability to make human connections effectively as she is blinded by rules of conduct. It also demonstrates Charlotte’s ineptitude as a chaperon for Lucy as she fails socially and later asks Lucy to assist her in mending the situation. When Charlotte first sees Mr. Emerson she notices how he is not of the same social level as Lucy and those in the pension. This superficial attitude is part of social expectations as those around Charlotte and Lucy are “shocked at this [impromptu dialogue with Mr. Emerson] and sympathized with the new-comers” (8). Charlotte not being of the upper class only mingles with them due to her responsibility for Lucy. She does not inherently belong with the upper class and ironically accuses Mr. Emerson of being ill-bred for not belonging. Rather than pursuing the peculiarity found in his eyes, she overlooks this possible insight into his character, and instead places her energy on his appearance.

This first scene is one which reflects Charlotte’s deep-seated paralysis. Heath notes how at this time there “is a battle between the spontaneous response to life (the direct, open, sincere, and childlike) and the muddled response (the self-conscious, rehearsed, ostentatious, inhibited, and excluding)” (396). The term “muddle” is indispensable for Forster as he integrates it throughout to emphasize the confusion that takes hold of his characters inhibiting their ability to reach fulfillment. Forster utilizes Mr. Emerson to further his anxieties about a muddled culture as Mr. Emerson is the one who is able to see through the muddle. He is the only character who is mobile and conscious of social paralysis and frequently identifies Lucy and George as muddled. Heath argues that, “Muddle is what results when people ignore their deepest promptings and respond dishonestly” (396). In this scene Charlotte’s spontaneous opportunity occurs when she notices something profound in Mr. Emerson’s childlike gaze. However, she quickly subdues any significant query by instead focusing on the class symbol of clothing. Charlotte’s desire to suppress meaningful observations and instead pursue shallow lines of inquiry does more than construct her as superficial; it produces insight into her paralysis. She is able to detect depth within others, yet is unable to act upon any impulse misaligned with social obligations due to fear of acting
wrongfully. Charlotte is so ingrained with social conventions which dictate that she be superficial, that she never returns to the perceptive observation of Mr. Emerson. After judging Mr. Emerson Charlotte hears his offer of switching rooms in order for her and Lucy to acquire rooms of their liking and “in reply, opened her mouth as little as possible” (Forster, *A Room* 8). She then says “Thank you very much indeed; that is out of the question” (8). With this, Charlotte provides her unwavering response to his proposal without consideration. Curiously, Charlotte’s physical response provides insight into her paralysis as she “opens her mouth as little as possible” in hopes of not allowing any other words to escape her except for those necessary for formulating a response. This detail illustrates her concern with self-censorship and image. Perhaps in her attempt to emulate an upper class woman she feels it necessary to be stern in order for onlookers to see her rejecting an out of line proposal. Her reaction is also influenced by her status as chaperon. Michael Curtin examines how manners were passed on through the use of etiquette books and through teachings all with the purpose of furthering a strict English identity during the Victorian era. Curtin argues that, “when teachers find themselves to be of a lower social status than their own pupils, they may also find that virtue is superior to birth” (397). This is reflected in Charlotte’s decision to behave with a heightened level of superiority in order to become an example of a virtuous woman for Lucy. Or more interestingly, perhaps Charlotte may not trust herself in saying what is expected of her, and fears that her own tongue may betray her. She only parts her lips briefly and is frugal with her words in fear that her real emotions will emerge. Her rejection of the offer contradicts her inner desires making this response insincere and consistent with Heath’s perception of the muddled person’s reaction as “dishonest.” Charlotte’s response is not supported further as she merely iterates that the offer is “out of the question” and turns away (Forster, *A Room* 8). Charlotte’s desire of having a room with a view, and her rejection of an offer that would provide her with the room serves to show how she is able to suppress her own yearnings for the greater good of outward appearance. In this moment she is nearly physically paralyzed not only figuratively as she sits up rigidly. She remains unmoved and merely mocks Mr. Emerson for the inappropriate invitation which demonstrates the depth of her paralysis as she is unable to engage with Mr. Emerson on a more profound level.
This scene is dominated by rules of conduct and social conventions which were pressed upon Charlotte in England and inform her paralysis. While Charlotte urgently tries to rid herself and Lucy of Mr. Emerson, Lucy makes an attempt to tell Mr. Emerson why they cannot accept his proposal, “‘You see, we don’t like to take —’ began Lucy” and instantly, “Her cousin again repressed her” (Forster, *A Room 8*). It is Charlotte’s social duty to reject an unconventional proposal. But it becomes Charlotte’s responsibility to also teach her younger cousin not to converse with someone like Mr. Emerson. In order to keep Lucy from deviating from proper etiquette Charlotte must “repress” her cousin’s instinctual and impulsive kindness. This repression of voice is symbolic of Charlotte’s future attempts to paralyze Lucy. Through all of Charlotte’s actions and apprehensions in this scene her knowledge of social conduct emerges as it becomes her source of motivation rather than her own desires. Charlotte’s age suggests that she was likely to have experienced training provided by etiquette books. There ways for a lady to handle herself in questionable situations. These teachings are now being transferred to Lucy in an attempt to socialize her properly. Life in England during the Victorian era was sometimes guided by etiquette books which instructed women on the ways they were to behave in different social settings, but primarily on how they had to behave within the domestic space. Curtin elucidates these conventions as he notes, “in the nineteenth century, etiquette books were organized around particular social situations dinners, balls, receptions, presentations at court, calls, promenades, introductions, salutations rather than according to the moral virtues of an ideal individual-grace, fortitude, self-control” (409). These etiquette books were primarily meant for young women of the upper class who were at the mercy of gossip and needed to maintain an appearance for the purpose of marriage and social standing. The notions emphasized in these handbooks seem to be bleeding into the early Edwardian era as they are crippling Charlotte. Social rules of conduct not only came through the form of etiquette books, but these ideals were also integrated into literature for young women. Curtin also notes how “women were not active in the world and hence did not require instruction about worldly things in their books of manners” (419). This left women at a disadvantage as their primary source for understanding how to behave in questionable situations outside of England is through the form of Literature. The Baedeker is also a text which would advance these ideas as will be noted later on. Charlotte Brontë’s (1847) *Jane Eyre* furthers the attitude required for a lady by depicting
a young woman entering the world through adventurous travel, just like Lucy. George Eliot’s (1871-2) *Middlemarch* also explores the Victorian expectations of femininity and propriety. These texts were popular during Charlotte’s time and were likely part of her upbringing. A gendered discourse arises when considering the paralysis of Charlotte and the mobility of Lucy in contrast to that of the male characters. Charlotte’s commitment to English rules of conduct and etiquette are her primary source of paralysis as these rules prevent her from forming profound connections with others or from being completely honest in her desires. Although she does her best to follow English guidelines of etiquette in order to keep her reputation and image intact, she fails and instead becomes oblivious to her social shortcomings and a source of ridicule. Lucy observes her: “Happy Charlotte, who, though greatly troubled over the things that did not matter, seemed oblivious to things that did” (Forster, *A Room* 56). Although Lucy is younger and considered unsophisticated by those who surround her, she is able to see how Charlotte is stunted and immature.

An instance in which Charlotte is holding Lucy back from escaping a paralytic future is during the climatic kiss. As George spontaneously kisses Lucy in a picturesque field of violets, Charlotte enters the frame as a smear to remove the possibility of romance, “Before [Lucy] could speak, almost before she could feel, a voice called, ‘Lucy! Lucy! Lucy!’ The silence of life had been broken by Miss Bartlett who stood brown against the view” (Forster, *A Room* 67). Radhika Jones observes how Charlotte is, “condensed into a literal blot on the landscape, a kind of impressionistic smudge; she is nothing more than a voice and the color of her dress” (xxi). Jones is able to note how Charlotte enters the scene as an imperfection when compared to the angelic Lucy. These opposing identities collide, the old and the modern. Charlotte is serving as a representative of Victorian ideals intruding on Lucy and prohibiting her from feeling the sensation of the kiss. Here Charlotte is ushering in the rules that she symbolizes and fails to see how this is Lucy’s moment of potential freedom. Charlotte’s identity is controlled by paralyzing aspects of Victorian decorum which make her unable to process George’s kiss as anything more than an assault or violation of Lucy. Finkelstein notes how the, “influence by Charlotte and the forces of propriety, [have made Lucy] […] avoid George after their first kiss” (Forster, *A Room* 276). This avoidance of George leaves Lucy unprepared for another encounter with him. Lucy follows Charlotte’s advice which furthers the ideological perspective of the dominant culture dictating that she
distance herself from George in order to preserve her respectability. This is an instance where Charlotte’s paralysis is keeping Lucy from physical and emotional action or introspection.

Charlotte’s paralysis is still present after the passionate moment between George and Lucy and serves to further establish the stark contrast that exists between Lucy’s identity and Charlotte’s while showing the lasting effects of the kiss. Her paralysis is similar to the one seen in “The Sisters” where Father Flynn constrains the young boy’s potential for progress. In this chaperon and cousin dynamic such a division is likewise present. This distinction between the modern and old identity is overt after Lucy is abruptly kissed by George Emerson. After this shocking moment the different reactions to the kiss reflect the differences in identity. Lucy is overwhelmed by an emotion that moves her physically, “All the way back Lucy’s body was shaken by deep sighs, which nothing could repress” (Forster, *A Room* 71). Lucy waits for the time when she can discuss the incident with her cousin as she intimates, “I want to be truthful,” she whispers, ‘it is so hard to be absolutely truthful’” (71). However, Charlotte delays Lucy’s request for honesty and exposure of emotions by pushing the conversation to a later time and instead joins the others in the pension in their storytelling. Once in dialogue with Lucy, Charlotte places all of her focus on the technical aspects of the kiss, only asking how Lucy will silence George. Although Lucy eagerly wishes to explore her feelings after being kissed, Charlotte forces Lucy to think of a way to keep this from becoming public knowledge. As a chaperon Charlotte has failed in preventing a violation of Lucy’s innocence. Therefore, her concern is secrecy and Lucy’s reputation after the transgression, which also indicates a fidelity to Victorian morals and rules of conduct. In this text Lucy embodies the modern and forward thinking persona as she is concerned with the emotions connected to the kiss rather than on her outward image. Charlotte symbolizes the paralytic identity. This is clearly seen through her dismissal of Lucy’s pleas for a conversation about the emotions behind the passion-driven kiss. Throughout the novel Charlotte looks down on the idea of truth, she says, “I find it difficult – to understand people who speak the truth”” (12). It is Charlotte’s emotional ineptitude that prevents her from discussing the kiss on more complex terms. She is incapable of carrying a conversation depicting the truth of human interaction. Charlotte struggles to understand the possibility of a romantic conclusion to George and Lucy’s courtship-less encounter. Although this Edwardian era culture would have seen George as the aggressor, Bonnie Finkelstein argues
that it is, “Charlotte, not George, [that] takes advantage of Lucy, for Forster clearly believes that the forces of manipulation and repression are much more dangerous than the forces of sexuality, which society so fears” (282). This furthers the point of Charlotte as a paralyzed character and demonstrates the misplacement of societal anxieties. Although society would have been concerned with Lucy and George’s reputation, it is this repression of the truth and of the inner identity and impulses which leads to a paralyzed self. Charlotte’s push for Lucy to be equally repressed serves to show the infectiousness of paralysis as she tries to sway Lucy’s instincts.

Throughout the novel Charlotte attempts to inculcate Victorian values onto Lucy in order to further the paralysis she experienced and Mr. Beebe creates an accurate metaphor of their relationship. Charlotte’s intent is not to make Lucy unhappy, but it is to replicate her upbringing in hopes that Lucy will successfully integrate socially and eventually marry. At times Charlotte is depicted as a foolish woman unaware of the social rhetoric, yet she cautiously approaches Lucy and implores her to control her desire of relaying the details of the kiss to her mother. Before Charlotte makes her request, she briefly acknowledges her own paralysis by saying to Lucy, “‘I had my own poor ideas of what a lady ought to do, but I hope I did not inflict them on you more than was necessary’” and in reference to Lucy’s mother Charlotte says, “‘I shall never face her again after this disaster’” (Forster, A Room 75). By asking Lucy to keep the kiss from her mother, Charlotte is including Lucy in her complicated relationship with the truth. She uses self-deprecating references of herself to sway Lucy into keeping this information secret. Later on she also “assume[s] her favourite role, that of a prematurely aged martyr” in order to sway Lucy (75). The desired secrecy would push Lucy into the paralysis that Charlotte suffers from. This secrecy is a form of muddling Lucy. Mr. Emerson is able to show Lucy the value of directness and honesty. That value is currently present within her, but easily manipulated as she has not yet developed her identity and ability to reject societal pressures. She caves to Charlotte’s demands and in doing so accepts the virtues of propriety that Charlotte stands for.

Mr. Beebe elucidates the relationship between Charlotte and Lucy through an analogy which acknowledges Charlotte’s paralysis and discusses how it is impacting Lucy’s individual identity. The charismatic clergyman Mr. Beebe converses with Cecil Vyse, Lucy’s arrogant suitor after traveling in Italy and encountering Lucy and Charlotte. Mr. Beebe
discusses the cousins with Cecil and says, “I can show you a beautiful picture in my Italian diary: Miss Honeychurch as a kite, Miss Bartlett holding the string. Picture two: the string breaks”’ (Forster, *A Room 91*). In this image the relationship between Charlotte and Lucy is accurately depicted. Lucy makes various attempts to do things, “of which her well-wishers disapproved” in order to break from the paralysis and essentially fly freely since she fears paralysis will consume her if she were to commit to social conventions like Charlotte (42). The kite serves to illustrate their relationship, yet the kite is also reflective of paralysis as Lucy wishes to be mobile and Charlotte opts for a conventional and old-fashioned lifestyle grounded in expectations. In this illustration Mr. Beebe wishes for Lucy to be able to break from Charlotte and flee from those crippling morals. This seems a progressive perspective as it demonstrates that not everyone wishes for Lucy to be integrated into social paralysis. Lynne Walhout Hinojosa notes how Mr. Beebe does want freedom for Lucy but that “for him, this means celibacy” (77). This contrasts the message she will receive from Mr. Emerson who teaches her that by following her passions, physical and mental, she will be able to flee paralysis, not become another victim. Finkelstein emphasizes that Mr. Beebe’s analogy later ends with Charlotte letting go of Lucy (280). Charlotte becomes vital in Lucy’s freedom, not just in her paralysis, and by the end of the novel her role in facilitating Lucy’s paralysis is left ambiguous.

The narrator at one point describes Charlotte’s concern with a question mark left suspiciously on a blank piece of paper in the vacation room which ultimately comes to reflect Charlotte and the other primary characters of the text. After Mr. Emerson, Lucy and Mr. Beebe are able to convince Charlotte to switch rooms, Charlotte ponders over George Emerson’s forgotten note which consists of a giant question mark on a loose sheet,

> Meaningless at first, it gradually became menacing, obnoxious, portentous with evil. She was seized with an impulse to destroy it, but fortunately remembered that she had no right to do so, since it must be the property of young Mr. Emerson. So she unpinned it carefully, and put it between two pieces of blotting-paper to keep it clean for him. (Forster, *A Room 17*)

This observation of a question mark serves as a foreshadowing of George’s union with Lucy and of Charlotte’s involvement. This is when the narrator communicates with the reader the symbolic relationship of the characters. The question mark represents Lucy. Charlotte will soon come to view Lucy, as “menacing, obnoxious” and even “portentous with evil” (17).
Charlotte will have this outlook on her cousin after Lucy deviates from social order and is kissed by George. As Lucy develops throughout the novel she moves away from social conventions and this is reflected in Charlotte’s view of the question mark as originally “meaningless” then growing and moving to hold a different meaning. Interpreting Charlotte as the paralyzed identity is vital since it is reflected in this moment as she is “seized with an impulse to destroy it” in other words compelled to eliminate Lucy for her deviance. Considering the relationship that is held between the old identity and the new, this desire to destroy the new threatening identity is present. This modern identity is threatening social traditions. The way in which she tries to accomplish this destruction of Lucy is through an inculcation of Victorian traditions. Charlotte knows that she is unable to destroy the question mark, or Lucy, by remembering that Lucy is not in her possession. Instead she keeps Lucy and the question mark safely guarded in order to give her/it to a male suitor. This not only encapsulates the future relationship held by these three characters, but it also depicts the belief of women as possessions which coincides with Victorian perceptions of femininity. Charlotte confines the question mark in order to “keep it clean for him” showing how she is preoccupied with the conservation of Lucy’s virtue and sexual innocence. In this Charlotte is foreshadowing Lucy’s struggle to keep her purity after it becomes threatened by George’s impulsive kiss. Charlotte places the question mark within two pieces of blotting paper reminiscent of the confines of social expectations that Lucy is placed within. This moment is also complicated by George’s later assertion that Charlotte played a role in getting him and Lucy together. If George’s observation is accurate this could represent the old identity or the paralyzed body of England learning to accept the new identity. Charlotte is working as a guard of Lucy’s innocence. She also serves as an insight into the mindset of the old paralytic identity as it struggles to handle the rebellious modern identity which initially seems unthreatening, but then quickly grows as a powerful force in societal change.

Charlotte’s relationship with the question mark is complicated by her ambiguous actions near the end of the novel, which indicate that there may be more depth in Charlotte than explicitly noted. She is portrayed as “meaningless” for the majority of the text, serving to demonstrate an opposing identity to Lucy. Charlotte’s “old maid” status is also meant to show Lucy what could happen to her if she does not comply with rules of conduct. Finkelstein notes how “Miss Bartlett, Miss Lavish, and the two Miss Alans represent all the
options open to celibate women” (279). These women are not portrayed in a favorable light as they are constructed as oblivious and superficial. Charlotte at one point becomes a source of mockery and could even be seen as the comic relief. It is of no surprise that the impulsive kiss between George and Lucy leaves an impression on Lucy, but this moment of passion also seems to transform Charlotte. Charlotte experiences the kiss as an outsider and since she is overrun by conventions she is forced to stop the “spontaneous, natural, and beautiful” connection (276). There is a mystery in Charlotte’s past which suggests that there is an element of her sexuality she may not be able to full repress as she eventually helps Lucy. At a critical juncture, after Lucy terminates her engagement with Cecil and still refuses to accept her love for George, Lucy steps outside as, “the night received her, as it had received Miss Bartlett thirty years before” (Forster, *A Room* 166). This brief insight establishes unanswerable questions about Charlotte’s romantic past. There seems to be an untapped depth within Charlotte and seeing the kiss between George and Lucy may have moved her in a way which enlightened her enough to assist Lucy. Although paralyzed, Charlotte comes to accept Lucy’s mobility and makes a final attempt at uniting Lucy with Mr. Emerson. Through Charlotte’s assistance in uniting the lovers she is accepting her inclination toward mobility. This is known by the ambiguity surrounding her past romantic life that may have held the possibility for mobility. The prospect of mobility is not new to Charlotte. Her acceptance of the possibility for mobility which she had been resisting only demonstrates that she has ceased her resistance of paralysis for Lucy. But this realization of mobility is not one she is capable of acting upon herself. Early on Lucy regards Charlotte as someone “whose exterior concealed so much insight and love” yet this loving perception becomes clouded by Charlotte’s own oppressive perspectives (71). Lucy is speaking to the possibility of depth in Charlotte. After being married George and Lucy discuss the circumstances which lead to their union. George argues that Charlotte knew that Lucy would encounter Mr. Emerson at the Rectory, understanding that Mr. Emerson would be able to sway Lucy into accepting her feelings for George. Therefore George is implying that Charlotte facilitated Lucy’s conversation with Mr. Emerson and in turn their union. George says, “‘She is not frozen, Lucy, she is not withered up all through. She tore us apart twice, but in the Rectory that evening she was given one more chance to make us happy […] But, I do believe that, far down in her heart, far below all speech and behavior, she is glad” (199). By complicating the
reader’s understanding of the rigid Charlotte, a new discourse emerges. George’s language indicates his awareness of Charlotte’s paralysis as he tries to convince Lucy that Charlotte is not “frozen.” Charlotte’s actions serve to demonstrate the change that has occurred between the Charlotte who stopped their natural kiss, and the Charlotte who helped Lucy escape paralysis. George’s assessment of Charlotte shows how incapacitated she has become, but also shows that there is an unknown depth to her which may house a truly mobile character. Charlotte is unable to break from paralysis and although a sensitive and progressive self may be present deep within her, the fear of social ramifications still hinder her from actualizing herself as a mobile character. Therefore, the question mark which seizes her at the beginning of the novel is forcing her to ask herself whether or not she will remain paralyzed. Or at least, it projects a crack in the façade she has carefully constructed.

**FLIGHTY MISS LUCY HONEYCHURCH**

While Charlotte Bartlett furthers the social values of Victorian England through her paralysis, Lucy Honeychurch resists these conventions by fleeing from paralysis. This flight is seen primarily through her physical movement away from England. Yet, since she comes to sustain internal complexity she is able to flee the paralytic zone permanently by using both mediums: her consciousness and her body. The text begins with Lucy’s arrival in Italy and in this new landscape, and ideally new social setting, she hopes to develop her own identity. Eventually she is able to transform through her encounter with death and through the conversations with Mr. Emerson while away from England. Cecil Vyse, the proper Englishman who courts her once in Italy and England considers how “Italy worked some marvel in her” (Forster, *A Room* 87). This noticeable transgression from a young naïve Lucy to a changed and developed Lucy is also intimated by the narrator’s view that Italy, “gave her light, and – which [Cecil] held more precious – it gave her shadow” (87). Although following this insight Cecil describes Lucy as a painting, which can be seen as a clear objectification and simplification of her identity, he is still able to perceive the change that has ensued within her. Lucy however, takes a considerably longer time to recognize her transformation and perhaps never comes to understand the symbolical implication of her resistance to social expectations. Lucy travels a great distance in order to unlock and construct her own sense of self. Initially she fails to see how the authority figures who accompany her are the symbols of
paralyzing English values. The Victorian values which Charlotte and Miss Lavish embody and impress on Lucy are not easily shaken, thus requiring of Lucy a courage she eventually musters. Jones notes how, “in addition to showing Lucy’s tendency to apply to higher authority, Forster demonstrates just how those higher authorities can insinuate their ideas into one’s individual perspective” (xix). This aspect of Lucy and her impressionability does not go unnoticed by those who surround her. Nearly everyone around her attempts to infringe upon her desire for actualization by becoming a voice of authority in order to influence her into accepting paralysis.

Lucy’s paralysis is present in the beginning of the text, but is never able to consume her completely due to its underdevelopment. Part of the reason she eventually breaks away from paralysis is because she begins her journey while her paralysis is in its infancy. Lucy’s drift into paralysis is paused during her time in Italy. Her first flight to Italy fails to constitute a complete flight from paralysis. She has no intention of breaking from social conventions upon her first arrival at the pension. Her reasons for being in Italy comply with social conventions which expect her to become a cultured young lady through travel. However, her experiences while outside of England nurture her eventual flight from paralysis by providing her with epiphanies that stir her subdued rebellious spirit. It is only after she acquires assistance from a male counterpart that she is able to gain the necessary courage and knowledge to break from paralysis. Her mindset changes drastically and this is noticeable on her return to England. However remarkable her break from paralysis seems to be, Lucy is different than the conventional courageous heroine who breaks away from paralysis and oppressive traditions on her own accord. Instead, Lucy begins her break from paralysis by first being the oblivious damsel in distress needing a male hero to facilitate her flight. Then she escapes by embracing Joycean epiphanies, by nurturing her rebellious spirit which remained alive through her music, and through her unconventional conversations with Mr. Emerson (a complex representative of mobility).

Lucy is frequently repressed by Charlotte in an effort to teach Lucy about the proper way of behaving, but Lucy’s instincts and natural inclinations demonstrate her potential for mobility. In the opening scene Charlotte is seen “repressing Lucy, who [i]s about to speak” on several occasions (Forster, A Room 8). During this moment Lucy is eager to speak to Mr. Emerson after he has made the offer to trade rooms. Lucy’s impulse is to be apologetic for
Charlotte’s refusal of the rooms. Unlike Charlotte, her reaction to Mr. Emerson is unclouded by social obligations and class. Showing how she has yet to be influenced by social conventions of etiquette Lucy later implores Charlotte, “we must have the rooms now” (15). Lucy insists that, “the old man is just as nice and kind as can be” (15). It is Charlotte’s “muddled propriety [which] interrupts [Lucy’s] sincere reciprocation” (Heath 396). The narrator notes how “Lucy [at this point…] had not yet acquired decency” (Forster, A Room 9). Lucy’s instinct to speak out of turn reveals her inability to suppress her voice, like Charlotte can. Her imprudent use of language and timing within this crucial social situation is a characteristic of immaturity. But, it is also indicative of Lucy’s potential for development as her impulse is to be honest. This un-acquired “decency” shows how Lucy’s paralysis has yet to permeate her; thus, leaving her in a vulnerable place and open for the possibility of mobility. Lucy’s paralysis is susceptible to interruptions and deviations due to its underdeveloped status.

Although Lucy passes her early life following social rules meant to hinder her fulfillment, she has been able to develop mobility through music. Lucy is not a passionate piano player yet, “like every true performer, she was intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone, did she come to her desire” (Forster, A Room 33). This sensual description of Lucy’s connection to music serves to demonstrate how there is complexity within Lucy. It is by “touch” that Lucy reaches her “desire[s]” which is vital to note since it is through the physical connection between her and George that she begins to trust her passions. Michelle Fillion notes how Lucy’s choice in music reflects her emotional status regardless of her blindness to her true desires. After rejecting Cecil and George she plays Mozart “mark[ing] her decent into sterile convention[ality]” (Fillion 268). Fillion also argues that music plays an integral part of Lucy’s identity since it, “‘rounds out’ her character, suggesting the depths that she spends a good deal of the novel concealing” (268). Unfortunately, Lucy is ill-equipped and unable to access those aspects of her identity that may produce a break in paralysis since she is “hopelessly ‘muddled,’ she lies to herself and everyone else, denying her true feelings for George” (268). Her natural inclination towards music serves to show how Lucy does have the potential for mobility within her. But it also reveals that this small progress in self-discovery is frequently suppressed since its provocation of strong emotions and a sensual
connection threatens social order. Lucy’s mother seems to be conscious of the impact music can have: “Mrs. Honeychurch disapproved of music, declaring that it always left her daughter peevish, unpractical, and touchy” (Forster, A Room 42). Lucy is oblivious to the insight her relationship with the piano has produced. Music allows her to become a Forsterian round character, but it also assists Lucy in preventing her paralysis and keeping this paralysis from consuming her completely. In Aspects of the Novel (1927), Forster establishes the concept of flat and round characters. Flat characters are those who do not demonstrate a considerable change through the course of events, the Miss Alans can be and are often categorized as a flat characters since they do not exhibit complexity of mind and fall under the definition of being “constructed round a single idea or quality” (48). Whereas, round characters are capable of transformation and depth (54). Without realizing it, music became Lucy’s silent resistance against conventionality and against paralysis. Music offered her an escape from paralysis.

While seeing the city, Miss Lavish tries to emancipate Lucy from her devotion to the Baedeker, an action which pushes readers to interpret Miss Lavish as a free spirit. Lucy first meets Miss Lavish in the pension and soon finds herself exploring Santa Croce in her company. Charlotte admires Miss Lavish for being a “clever lady” and develops a close bond with her that endures past their time in the pension (Forster, A Room 19). Lucy is inspired by Miss Lavish’s free-spirited approach to life and her inquisitive nature brought on by her profession as a writer. Lucy relies heavily on her Baedeker and expects to learn about art and Italian culture by meticulously following the Baedeker’s recommendations. The Baedeker is a travel book, first established by Karl Baedeker in 1829, who soon wrote a handbook for major cities of Europe (Jones 201). Baedekers were equipped with “practical advice for travelers, including detailed maps, a star-rating system for hotels, restaurants, and cultural sights” (201). Baedekers “became indispensible companions in print form and coincided with the rise of middle class tourism in the nineteenth century” (201). This tool for travel is what Lucy is holding on to as Miss Lavish promises to take her into town “by a dear dirty back way” pledging that this entrance into the city will prove to be an “adventure” (Forster, A Room 19). After hearing about the excursion, (one which would not be adventurous with Charlotte) Lucy “at once open[s] the Baedeker, to see where Santa Croce [i]s” (19). This is Lucy’s first outing without Charlotte and Lucy’s impulse is to look up the city through the
handbook. The Baedeker provides Lucy with an order to the acquisition of knowledge and culture. Miss Lavish exclaims, “Oh, but that is the word of a craven! And no, you are not, not, not to look at your Baedeker” (21). Miss Lavish continues her reprimand of Lucy’s referral to the Baedeker by insisting that Lucy not carry it, claiming that they “will simply drift” (21). This moment serves to show the opposing ways in which Lucy and the “liberal” Miss Lavish regard the exploration of a different society. Lucy has been appropriately assimilated into believing that a tourist must abide by the suggestions found in a Baedeker, while Miss Lavish claims to desire adventure and spontaneity. These opposing approaches to travel coincide with the binary dynamic that seems to be a recurrent thread in this analysis of paralysis: the young, high-spirited, and modern identity versus the old and traditional. This parallel is marked between Charlotte and Lucy yet fails to be genuine between Miss Lavish and Lucy. At various points Miss Lavish attempts to construct herself as the modern identity by making bold statements about tourism. She argues that, “the narrowness and superficiality of the Anglo-Saxon tourist is nothing less than a menace” (60). Finkelstein argues that, “Miss Lavish shocks people for the sake of shocking them […] and that] even her feminism is false, for she takes the pen name of a man” (278). Finkelstein also notes how Miss Lavish’s novel contradicts many of her forward thinking claims by providing a romanticized “description of the kiss between Lucy and George [which] only perpetuates arbitrary and conventional sexual roles” (278). Miss Lavish is someone who is mistaken for a mobile character as she attempts to portray herself as free of rules and able to see the world outside of the Baedeker. However, she is able to discard Lucy’s Baedeker because her paralysis, although slightly more superficial than Charlotte’s, is present and needless of a conduct book. Miss Lavish’s desire to interject spontaneity within her excursion with Lucy is simply a façade. Under the guise of liberal thought, Miss Lavish comes to serve the same purpose of the paralyzing Baedeker.

Alongside Miss Lavish, Lucy allows herself to be taken by beauty relinquishing her need for the Baedeker, but her moment of amazement is interrupted by Miss Lavish. While in the town square of Annunziata, Lucy becomes mesmerized with the “terra-cotta […] babies” (Forster, A Room 22). The narrator notes that Lucy “had never seen anything more beautiful” (22). Lucy’s connection to the artwork is sincere and is being experienced without instruction from the Baedeker or Miss Lavish. Lucy is finally able to indulge in something not explicitly
stated in the guide book. Rather than feeling comfort in having a text tell her how to understand culture and art she stands in the square observing the architecture and begins to contemplate the possibility of beauty outside of the pages of her Baedeker. The Baedeker works as a representation of Victorian values of conduct and expectation, as a tool for paralyzing Lucy and preventing her from exploring aspects of the city which are not approved of by society. Lucy allows herself to indulge in the beauty of the city since she still has the safety of Miss Lavish by her side. This in turn allows Lucy to begin to see the possibility of mobility and begin discovering her identity. Sadly, Lucy’s self-reflection is shortened when, “Miss Lavish, with a shriek of dismay drag[s] her forward, declaring they were out of the path” and pushes her back onto the “correct” path (22). Although Miss Lavish is facilitating Lucy’s view of the world without a Baedeker, she is serving as a tool for Victorian order and social paralysis. In thrusting Lucy out of her trance with the terracotta babies she is placing Lucy back on the course for paralysis. She is forcing Lucy back into activities of tourism proper for a lady, such as gathering “chestnut paste out of a little shop, because it look[s] so typical” and with that the narrator somberly notes the ending of the adventure (22). This moment is reminiscent of Charlotte’s interruption of Lucy and George’s first kiss. After Lucy was kissed by George the narrator notes how Lucy was unable to feel the kiss or any emotions due to the immediate interruption by Charlotte; here the same spirit is present. Just as Lucy is beginning to move away from her Baedeker and those paralyzing aspects that it represents, Miss Lavish is there to push her back into order.

Soon after Lucy’s interrupted self-discovery in the plaza Miss Lavish abandons Lucy. Once Miss Lavish spots her “local-colour box” she leaves Lucy. After waiting for the return of Miss Lavish, Lucy “remember[s] that a young girl ought not to loiter in public places” (Forster, A Room 23). This reminder of propriety prompts Lucy to produce, “tears of indignation […] partly because Miss Lavish had jilted her, partly because she had taken her Baedeker” (23). Lucy is struggling to understand how to behave without Miss Lavish and without her Baedeker. Through this unexpected abandonment, Miss Lavish is inadvertently forcing Lucy to develop independence. This is also testing Lucy’s ability to continue her gaze and acquisition of knowledge without her Baedeker. Without anyone there to comfort her and assure that she does not stray from socially accepted inquiries Lucy reflects on how only “a few moments ago she had been all high spirits, talking as a woman of culture, and
half persuading herself that she was full of originality” (23). This demonstrates how profoundly her experience viewing the terra-cotta babies had been. She had believed herself capable of “originality” once again showing that there is possibility for growth and mobility. Lucy wanders into a church feeling humiliated for not knowing the history of the church instead of embracing her freedom from Miss Lavish and the Baedeker. She continues her walk in hopes of finding direction elsewhere. After people watching she returns to believe herself capable of “originality” and capable of mobility as “the pernicious charm of Italy worked on her, and, instead of acquiring information, she began to be happy” (23). Miss Lavish is the first person to facilitate Lucy’s mobility and becomes an underappreciated catalyst for Lucy’s exit from paralysis and first encounter with the Emersons. Without Miss Lavish’s abandonment of Lucy in the town square, she would not have met with Mr. Emerson and would not have had the conversation that fuels her eventual flight from paralysis. With the negligence of the chaperons that embody propriety and social order like Miss Lavish and Miss Bartlett, Lucy is able to begin her break from paralysis. Lucy’s meeting with Mr. Emerson is in part due to Miss Lavish’s inattentive chaperoning, but this moment also foreshadows Charlotte’s future facilitation of Lucy’s encounter with Mr. Emerson near the end of the novel.

After this brief lapse in self-discovery Lucy encounters Mr. Emerson and his son George which proves to be a pivotal component of her escape from paralysis. Mr. Emerson addresses Lucy in an unusually direct way by requesting her to stop “pretending to be touchy” and offended by his invitation to have her join him and his son on their exploration. Later Mr. Emerson discusses how his son George should be reveling in his upbringing without strict rules, “‘and think how he had been brought up — free from all the superstition and ignorance that lead men to hate one another in the name of God’” (Forster, A Room 29). Mr. Emerson reflects, “‘with such an education as that, I thought he was bound to be happy’” (29). After telling Lucy that George is not satisfied with his education free from paralysis he implores Lucy to break from her own paralysis and help George find happiness, “‘let yourself go’” Mr. Emerson implores, “‘You are inclined to get muddled […] pull out from the depth those thoughts that you do not understand, and spread them out in the sunlight and know the meaning of them’” (29). Here Lucy’s paralysis has been abruptly exposed to her and “to this extraordinary speech Lucy found no answer” (29). Mr. Emerson is
acknowledging her muddled state, which becomes the preliminary stage of paralysis for Lucy and George. By being muddled, they are unaware of the potential for mobility and of paralysis. Oblivious to this observation, Lucy suggests that George find a hobby to lift his spirits, but it is clear that she does not understand the purpose of Mr. Emerson’s discourse. However, Mr. Emerson’s message registers within Lucy in a subtle way and comes to inform the rest of her journey in Italy. It plants the seed of resistance to paralysis.

Lucy’s questioning of traditional rules can be attributed to Mr. Emerson, and is seen when she reconsiders firm teachings. The narrator notes how “Charlotte had once explained to [Lucy … that] it was not that ladies were inferior to men; it was that they were different [and that] their mission was to inspire others to achievement rather than to achieve themselves” (Forster, *A Room* 41). Lucy contemplates this traditional view and after having time to process Mr. Emerson’s thoughts becomes, “particularly restive […] and yearns to do something of which her well-wishers disapproved” (42). Here Lucy is resisting the Victorian ideals that Charlotte has tried to inculcate by wanting to rebel in any way possible so she goes to the Piazza by herself. Her defiant attitude comes as a result of Mr. Emerson’s speech although she is still unaware of its power. It is not that she is now able to grasp the dimensions of Mr. Emerson’s conversation; rather, she is becoming equipped in identifying social paralysis. The narrator considers how Lucy, “was conscious of her discontent; it was new to her to be conscious of it” (42). Desperate to establish herself outside of the strict parameters of men and women for even a minute, she travels alone into the Piazza searching an adventure: “‘the world,’ she thought, ‘is certainly full of beautiful things, if only I could come across them’” (42). Prior to her encounter with Mr. Emerson, she had been wary of loitering in public spaces for fear of disrupting protocol (23). Now she is actively seeking those public spaces and hoping to disrupt those rules of propriety and order.

Her solitary venture proves to be transformative for George and Lucy and affects them in distinct ways. After seeing the death of an Italian in the Piazza and Lucy’s fainting into George’s arms, “the world seemed pale and void of its original meaning” (Forster, *A Room* 43). Once George sets her down after breaking her fall he tells Lucy: “‘sit down till you are rested […] and don’t move till I come back’” (44). Obediently she suppresses her desire to move away from George and from the town square and remains seated. While staying still, “the thought occurred to her […] the thought that she, as well as the dying man,
had crossed some spiritual boundary” (43). Here not only is she being restrained by George who has command over her body and has decided that she not move, but also exhibits conflicting signs of transformation. She is progressing in her self-awareness by feeling as though she has “crossed some spiritual boundary,” essentially beginning her departure from social paralysis by allowing this experience to affect her emotionally. Alternatively, Heath argues that it is not the sight of death that stirs her, instead, “she has been deeply moved, […] by the embrace in the piazza” (403). Perhaps it is George’s touch which prompts her to feel herself transgressing a boundary rather than the sight of death. Although she is taking mental steps forward in her quest for mobility, she is still in a muddled mindset. During the hazy aftermath of the Italian’s death and George’s embrace she is reverting to the comfort of complying with etiquette and orders — especially when they are given by a man regardless of George’s mobility. The conversation between them once the kerfuffle ends demonstrates how they are each troubled in opposing ways. George, the man who was raised in a paralysis-free environment tells Lucy, “‘something tremendous has happened; I must face it without getting muddled’” (Forster, A Room 46). He hesitantly continues, “‘it isn’t that a man has died’” and before completing his thought his introspection is harshly interrupted by Lucy (46). Lucy asks him not to tell the women in the pension of her fainting. Here Lucy is concentrating on how this information would create gossip and how her image would suffer. With her interjection of superficial matters, she prohibits George from reaching a Joycean epiphany and instead demonstrates her attachment to conventions of conversation for women. Heath notes how, “Forster plainly wants George and Lucy to have an entire conversation — one that is direct, open, reciprocal, and not disrupted” (398). Lucy is incapable of entering a dialogue that is not socially acceptable for a young lady, while George’s paralysis-free education allows him to engage in conversations that explore the profundity of death. In this regression to order and conventionality she is going back to the image of woman she was initially trying to escape and showing how she is not yet ready for break free from paralysis.

Even though there are competing interpretations of this scene in the Piazza, Lucy emerges from her experience wiser. After superficially discussing the death at the piazza to those at the pension Lucy critically judges those she had once idealized: “she had, strangely enough, ceased to respect them [Lucy] doubted Miss Lavish was a great artist, […] doubted
that Mr. Eager was as full of spirituality […] as she had been led to suppose; […] they were tried by some new test, and they were found wanting” (Forster, *A Room* 53). Lucy is no longer wandering as a paralyzed young girl, but is now beginning to see that there is falseness in the figures of authority she had been blindly following. Lucy’s contempt for these figures symbolizes her discontent with the traditional and oppressive values Mr. Eager and Miss Lavish represent. All of these moments contribute to the future epiphanies that assist Lucy in fleeing from paralysis. Much to the reader’s dismay, Lucy reaches her transformative epiphanies rather slowly and in this first half of the novel shows little maturation. However, these experiences stay with her long after she leaves Italy and once in England she reflects on her journey and affirms her flight from paralysis.

Once in England Lucy is presented to her fiancé’s family and in this moment her paralysis becomes noticeable to those of the upper class. Described as “a Gothic statue” and a, “devil [of] self-consciousness” Cecil Vyse is depicted as the ideal man for Lucy, not for having loving nature, which is nonexistent, but for his class and social standing (Forster, *A Room* 85). After Mrs. Vyse meets Lucy, Lucy retires to bed while Cecil and his mother discuss his future bride.

“Make Lucy one of us,” she said, looking round intelligently at the end of each sentence, and straining her lips apart until she spoke again. “Lucy is becoming wonderful — wonderful.”

“Her music always was wonderful.”

“Yes, but she is purging off the Honeychurch taint […] make her one of us.” (118)

During this dialogue, Lucy’s lack of decorum is attributed by Cecil to her experience in Italy. Cecil also discusses how he wishes for their children to have an education like Lucy’s while his mother simply repeats that he must make her one of their own. By repeating this she is implying that Lucy is lacking an element of propriety that would make her acceptable in Mrs. Vyse’s social circles. Cecil is musing over Lucy’s musical talents while Mrs. Vyse again insists that he must change her. Unaware of the repercussions of what heeding this request would have on Lucy’s identity he remains comically dazed by Lucy’s talent focusing on his adoration of her. Lucy’s connection to music is an element of her resistance of paralysis and Mrs. Vyse is attempting to become another authority figure set on repressing this rebellious spirit and keeping her paralyzed. Heath notes how “Mrs. Vyse has already squeezed Cecil
into shape […] and she wants to do the same to Lucy” (424). Cecil is not entirely out of the range of transforming and like Lucy fleeing, but he has received an education riddled with paralytic teachings and is not willing to entertain the idea of his mother being wrong in wanting to change Lucy. Curtin argues that, “the cultivation of manners alienated man from his community […] and also] alienated him from himself” demonstrating how Cecil is unable to become a mobile character since he his education has alienated him from “community” and “himself” (408). During this discussion Lucy sleeps and as soon as Cecil and Mrs. Vyse retreat for the night, Lucy has a nightmare which prompts her to cry (Forster, *A Room* 118). Mrs. Vyse chooses to tend to Lucy herself then insists that Lucy dream of Cecil’s adoration of her to feel better. This moment is symbolic of Lucy’s cry for help and desire to not be paralyzed and turned into “one of [them].” While Lucy’s fear is quenched by Mrs. Vyse, Cecil remains asleep and does not hear her cry and instead stays in the “darkness [that] enveloped the flat” (118). His unshaken slumber indicates how he will remain unaware of the effects his mother’s request would have on Lucy, and unaware of how his education has paralyzed him already. Cecil will unknowingly serve as an agent for paralyzing Lucy.

Although Cecil’s inability to transgress or even notice his paralysis only permits him to see Lucy as a work of art, he cryptically discuss this paralysis with Lucy. Cecil admires Lucy for her resemblance to art; he sees her as “a woman of Leonardo da Vinci’s, whom we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us” (Forster, *A Room* 87). Cecil merely desires to possess Lucy as an object that has a mysterious depth he is not capable of understanding. Lucy’s rebellious spirit which is at this point still in its infancy is the depth that is inaccessible to him, and the depth which he yearns to own. He is infatuated with her when she plays the music which has served as her tool for resisting paralysis. He envies and loves Lucy, “not for herself, but [because she serves] as an avenue to mysterious and other-worldly matters that she will not yet tell him” (Heath 415). Cecil is indifferent to Lucy’s family which considers him and his sense of humor intolerable. As a response to their disapproval he begins a dialogue with Lucy that explores society’s social restrictions. Cecil begins, “I cannot help it if they disapprove of me […] there are certain irremovable barriers between myself and them, and I must accept them” (Forster, *A Room* 95). After Lucy shows little reaction Cecil furthers his point, “Sometimes they are forced on us, though […] it makes a difference, doesn’t it, whether we fence ourselves in or whether we are fenced out
by the barriers of others?” (95). Cecil begins by presenting the class difference between himself and the Honeychurches who are of a lower station. Then, he proceeds to not only identify the presence of paralysis within their culture, but to complicate it by asking if there is a difference between self-imposed or socially-imposed paralysis. This may be one of Cecil’s clearest introspective moments since he surpasses the simple notion of class differences and critically observes the barriers that are pressed upon him and Lucy. Once again, Lucy is being forced to face paralysis, although this instance is less direct than Mr. Emerson’s plea for her to “let [her]self go.” She responds by saying that it does make a difference. But the conversation quickly morphs into a discussion about the clergyman, Mr. Beebe. Cecil returns to this concept by briefly noting how when he roams London he feels as though he could never live far from it (97). This assertion illustrates to Lucy that her fiancé is deeply rooted in England and in the paralysis that she unknowingly wishes to escape.

Italy and England encompass different, but not entirely opposing, opportunities for Lucy’s mobility. The narrator relays that Lucy interpreted life for women in England as cyclical, “in this circle, one thought, married and died” (Forster, *A Room* 106). Her observation is fueled by her venture away from England and in part fed by Mr. Emerson. While “in Italy, […] her senses expanded […] she returned with new eyes” demonstrating how her identity is moving away from the passive and becoming actively critical (106). The narrator later discusses how “She might be forgetting her Italy, but she was noticing more things in her England” (149). There is an element of ownership in that assessment of Lucy, perhaps on behalf of the narrator, but none the less Lucy feels connected to these two distinct cultures by calling them “her” own. She is now able to identify aspects of her English culture that she had not previously considered worthy of scrutiny. Before her time in Italy she had no, “system of revolt” concerning predetermined gender roles and oppressive social practices (42). Curtin notes how conduct books pushed women into believing that they had, “to stay at home […] to cultivate the traditional feminine virtues of modesty, chastity, and the like” (418). Through instructional texts women were ushered into a strict ideological mindset that prized propriety and female virtue over individuality and self expression. Not only did Lucy’s experiences in Italy help her distinguish the paralyzing trappings of life in Edwardian England, but she returned “a rebel who desired, not a wider dwelling room, but equality beside the man she loved” (Forster, *A Room* 106). This illustrates her psychological break
from paralysis as she has now developed the rebellious spirit which had been dormant. It is Italy which “offer[ed] her the most priceless of all possessions–her own soul” not because there was liberty in Italian customs and ideologies that she yearned for, but because it allowed her to see her world with a new perspective (107). With time in Italy and with the Emersons she lays the groundwork for the Joycean epiphanies she will be having now back in England which contribute to her break from paralysis. This moment of introspection in which she compares cultures is one of her lesser epiphanies, yet, it serves to show how she has matured.

Cecil on the other hand is unable to experience a similar realization or break from paralysis through his time abroad. After Cecil’s return from Italy the narrator notes how, “Italy had quickened Cecil, not to tolerance, but to irritation” and Cecil “saw that the local society was narrow,” opposite of the way in which Lucy views it (107). Previously, Cecil had shown a minor level of introspection when he brought up notions of being culturally fenced in, yet, he never developed that idea due in part to Lucy’s interruption. The crippling education his mother forced on him also prevents him from reaching a higher level of introspection as he was not taught the value of self-reflection. Curtin discusses how conduct books for men would focus “on precise descriptions of the exact rules of interpersonal behavior with a relative disregard for moral thought” (409). Cecil’s upbringing, like Lucy’s did not extend into the exploration of human morality. This led them to be ill-equipped in the art of introspection, and unable to profoundly analyze the social conditions that control them. Lucy is able to escape the paralytic trappings by having initiated her journey with a paralysis that was in its early stages, by sustaining a rebellious spirit through music, and by allowing Mr. Emerson’s speech to make a lasting impact in her. Cecil has accepted the conditions of social paralysis and shows no interest in fleeing, although he is evidently bothered by paralysis, he does not actively pursue a break from it as he even says that he wishes to never be separated from England’s capital (Forster, A Room 97).

George propels Lucy’s departure from paralysis through his ardent pleas for her to leave Cecil. Ironically, and rather cruelly, Cecil prompts George’s reappearance in Lucy’s life in order to have a source of entertainment. With his return he is able to push Lucy into realizing that a life with Cecil would eventually paralyze her. George tells Lucy (while Charlotte is present) that Cecil is one of “those” men who are able to properly discuss the
values that the Edwardian upper class deems important such as art and literature, but is not able to make adequate human connections. He believes that men like Cecil “kill when they come to people” (Forster, *A Room* 158). Because of that he feels he must, “speak out through all this muddle” (158). Lucy’s time with Cecil, Charlotte, and Miss Lavish has left her in a Forsterian muddle serving as the precursor for paralysis. She is muddled because of her young age, and because her paralysis has remained in its infancy due to her rebellious spirit which survived through her passion for music. Lucy is now at a pivotal juncture, and it is up to her to channel her rebellious energy towards a break from the paralysis which is gradually taking over. George insists that Cecil is a representation of the traditional identity set on paralyzing her from reaching fulfillment and individuality since “he’s the type who’s kept Europe back for a thousand of years”(159). This view of Cecil constructs him as the crippling traditional identity which Charlotte also fits into. George hopes to convince Lucy that a union with Cecil would only hinder her personal development and he notes, “‘Every moment of his life [Cecil]’s forming you, telling you what’s charming or amusing or ladylike, telling you what a man thinks womanly’”(159). George then explains that he believes Cecil’s influence has led her to “‘listen to his voice instead of [her] own’” (159). Sadly, during George’s pleas Lucy tells him that he has failed to consider her love for Cecil as a factor. Misunderstanding the depth of an inspired speech is now a common occurrence for Lucy.

The Joycean epiphany that she experiences after her ardent discourse with George initiates her flight from paralysis. A traditional Joycean epiphany consists of moments which at first seem insignificant, but later lead to flashes of profound introspection. Beja asserts how there must be “a sudden spiritual manifestation […] or illumination produced by some […] arbitrary cause” (29). Although George’s pleas are far from subtle or arbitrary, Lucy’s eventual realization constitutes an abrupt understanding. Beja also quotes from Joyce’s *Stephen Hero* regarding how these epiphanies “‘are the most delicate and evanescent of moments’” (29). Lucy does have an experience that reaches “evanescent” proportions. Once George and Charlotte take leave Lucy’s epiphany occurs. This crucial moment of clarity is depicted within a natural setting:

But, once in the open air, she paused. Some emotion – pity, terror, love, but the emotion was strong – seized her, and she was aware of autumn. Summer was ending, and the evening brought her odours of decay, the more pathetic because
In this passage Lucy does not claim to have a deep understanding of the paralysis that Cecil embodies. She does however describe a transition which is emblematic of her own shift out of paralysis. In stepping into the “open air” Lucy is creating a momentary solitude, allowing George’s fervent supplications to register. This epiphany not only demands a separation from those who may influence Lucy, but it requires her to remove herself from the artificial elements of the domestic space. Lucy notes how she feels overwhelmed by inexplicable emotions which “seize her.” This can be attributed to or indicative of her becoming mobile and of the abruptness of a Joycean epiphany. She is beginning to feel herself without social paralysis. The traditional identity that furthers social paralysis (essentially Charlotte and Cecil) would not condone feeling strong emotions since it would be unladylike. Lucy’s awareness of autumn and the ending of summer is an analogy for the ending of her paralysis. There is an element of irony and strategy on behalf of Forster given that autumn is the transitional season in which natural life begins to die in preparation for winter, while summer is generally regarded as a livelier season. Lucy is referencing the death of the paralysis that was trying to take over by discussing how summer’s end brought, “odours of decay.” This image of decay marks the death of the paralytic identity that was being enforced by Charlotte and Cecil. Lucy also notices how a leaf is “violently agitated […] while other leaves lay motionless” which likewise becomes analogous of her status among the immobile characters such as Charlotte and Cecil. She is the leaf which is “violently agitated” since she is now emerging as a mobile character and unsure of her direction. Her awareness of mobility is allowing her to be conscious of the paralysis that plagues those around her. The concluding image from this excerpt notes how “the earth was hastening to re-enter darkness” which is reminiscent of the night Lucy and Cecil had with Mrs. Vyse. While Lucy had a nightmare which can be interpreted as a plea for mobility, Cecil, “whom the cry had not awoken, snored [while entering a] darkness [that] enveloped the flat” — a darkness that represents his paralysis (118). The darkness that Lucy acknowledges during this epiphany is symbolic of the paralysis that she sees present within those around her.

Immediately after Lucy’s moment of self-reflection she hastily chooses to break off her engagement with Cecil. Among other things she hears Cecil discuss how he is one of
those men who is only good for books and therefore wishes not to play another round of tennis with Freddy (Forster, *A Room* 161). This seemingly trivial exchange about playing another game of tennis stirs Lucy and the narrator notes how, “The scales fell from Lucy’s eyes […] and that same evening she broke off the engagement” (160). She is able to see Cecil as a man who is trying to paralyze her. During Cecil’s arbitrary conversation with Freddy, Lucy also becomes conscious of her dislike of Cecil and even asks herself “how had [I] stood Cecil for a moment?”(161) She is acting upon the knowledge she acquired during her moment of clarity. When Lucy breaks off their engagement she justifies her abrupt decision by telling Cecil that she “shall never […] behave as a wife of [his] should” (164). She also claims to “see clearly” (164). Lucy also notes how Cecil is “conventional” and argues that he tried to “wrap” her up in that conventionality of “beautiful things” (165). In this assertion she is discussing his paralysis and how her future would have gradually led her into that same paralysis. She is escaping the paralysis she was destined for by leaving Cecil. Curiously “Cecil's response to the breaking of his engagement seems at first to show him in an improved light [but] Cecil continues to use the rhetoric of abstract ‘medieval’ adoration” (Heath 417). Cecil acknowledges how Lucy has moved “from a Leonardo” to a “living woman with mysteries” (Forster, *A Room* 164). He is also able to place himself within the traditional identity that Lucy is trying to flee when he expresses, “I was bound up in the old vicious notions, and all the time you were splendid and new” (165). During this discussion Cecil understands that he is immobile and agrees that he has become a representative of the old and paralyzed identity. While Lucy is glad to terminate the engagement she is also troubled by the motivations behind her decision. As much as she is trying to exercise her autonomy she is still under the influence of a man and falling into the trope of the damsel in distress in need of a male to rescue her. Finkelstein argues that “because of George, Lucy is momentarily able to react individually and personally, not according to the sex stereotypes Cecil’s mediaevalism demands” (283). But, it is not her own voice that she uses to break with Cecil. Even the muddled Cecil is able to notice how her tone and language has been manipulated when he says that “‘a new person seems [to be] speaking through you’” (Forster, *A Room* 165). As a defense to this truth she brings up feminism and stereotypes to distract Cecil from this point. She is not ready to admit that George persuaded her although she utilizes his arguments against Cecil. This shows that although Lucy is moving away from
a source of paralysis, she is still not strong enough to make this move on her own. After she leaves Cecil she is not able to admit that she loves George and claims that she may “never marry,” and she “must be one of those women […] who care for liberty and not for men; she must forget that George loved her” (166). She needs further instruction in order to flee from paralysis entirely and commit to her love for George.

Because Lucy is unable to accept George and her love for him she takes steps backwards in an attempt to find comfort in rules and resisting profound self-awareness. Much to Mrs. Honeychurch’s dismay, Lucy chooses to travel to Greece with the two spinsters the Miss Alans she met during her time in Italy. Since she cannot face her love for George she chooses to flee. Her argueable awareness of paralysis and mobility that she acquires after her epiphany has made her unfit for the English domestic space which she had easily fit into before. Lucy realizes “that her home existed no longer” and that “it might exist for Freddy, who still lived and thought straight, but not for one who had deliberately warped her brain” (Forster, *A Room* 183). Here she is unknowingly addressing her inability to regress back to a comfortable state of paralysis. She is able to see how brother Freddy is still following conventions since he has not questioned the social paralysis that dictates his life. Forster makes a note to show how Lucy “did not acknowledge that her brain was warped, for the brain itself must assist in that acknowledgment” (183). This brings up the issue of awareness. Lucy understands how there is a social paralysis that would prevent her from reaching fulfillment, but she does not understand it through these terms. It is made clear that, “she only felt, ‘I do not love George […] I must go to Greece because I do not love George’” (183). There is no profound introspection on Lucy’s part that would lead her to develop an understanding of how this social paralysis is a cultural phenomenon. To avoid a direct awareness of paralysis she keeps her emotions superficial and distant and does not ruminate. Lucy does not want to accept a love for George due to the conflict it would create given his lower social class. This rejection of love mirrors Birkin’s inability to accept his love for Gerald. Finkelstein notes how even though Lucy leaves Cecil she, “is not yet clear of muddle” (283). Curiously, “when Lucy rejects George, the novel’s tone shifts and becomes dark” (283). This shift into darkness becomes symbolic of the darkness that has been previously connected to Cecil’s paralysis and unawareness. Cecil’s place in darkness had become his permanent mental state while her step into darkness after leaving Cecil and
discarding George becomes problematic for this heroine. She once again needs someone to lead her to a life altering epiphany.

Lucy is in a darkness which is working as a liminal space since she commits to neither paralysis in Windy Corner nor to a flight from paralysis. She is between two worlds; she is conscious that she no longer fits into English ideals since she does not comply with social conventions. This is seen primarily through her departure from Cecil and her disdain for Charlotte, the two significant figures of paralysis. She no longer fits in the small world of Windy Corner, but her resistance to Windy Corner does not constitute a flight from paralysis. Her flight to Greece does not work as a flight from paralysis since she would be in the company of the Miss Alans. These two spinsters would further inflict the notions of social paralysis onto Lucy since they “represent the social force of early Victorian propriety and prudery” (Finkelstein 277). At this moment she is in not in the space of paralysis and she is also not fleeing from it. In order for her to depart from paralysis she would need to escape with George. She is under the impression that leaving for Greece with the Miss Alans would provide her with the same sense of satisfaction as leaving with George would. When she first considered going to Greece she spoke with Mr. Beebe and insisted that she needed to leave becoming increasingly agitated and desperate with every plea. While she tries to convince Mr. Beebe that leaving Windy Corner is the best choice she sees Miss Bartlett enter the room. Miss Bartlett’s presence heightens her desperation for Mr. Beebe to agree and help her. Lucy “struck her knees with clenched fists” (Forster, A Room 174). While “at th[at] moment Miss Bartlett entered, and [Lucy’s] nervousness increased”(174). Immediately after seeing Miss Bartlett become a part of the conversation Lucy cries, “I must get away […] I must know my own mind”” (174). Considering that Miss Bartlett has sought to inculcate the restrictive elements of propriety and prudery — all aspects of paralysis — Lucy’s agitation upon seeing her is symbolic of the fear she has of turning into Miss Bartlett. Once Miss Bartlett and Mr. Beebe depart Lucy begins to play the piano. Therefore, her supplication for freedom from Windy Corner is also a plea to be free from paralysis. This desire to be mobile is seen by her agitation when the symbol for paralysis (Charlotte) enters and is also seen through her return to music. Lucy convinces herself that venturing with the two spinsters is the correct choice and mindlessly purchases a Baedeker for Greece (183). This is a powerful move and complicates our reading of Lucy. She wishes to leave the elements of paralysis
behind, yet her purchase of the Baedeker which has come to be a tool for furthering notions of paralysis relays that she also wishes to find comfort in the very ideals she is escaping. This advances the idea that she is simultaneously trying to return to a state of paralysis and escape it all at once. Lucy is attempting to leave paralysis, but ironically takes elements of the paralytic life with her for comfort. She takes the Baedeker with her and in her journey to “know [her] own mind” she chooses to travel with two women who are pillars of social conventions. These conflicting attempts to escape and somehow still return to paralysis show how Lucy exists in an indefinable space that she must quickly escape. Lucy’s struggle mirrors Eveline’s experience as she too was suspended between two possibilities.

The culminating moment of this narrative is when Lucy converses with Mr. Emerson and chooses to flee from paralysis. Anticipating a long and unconventional discussion with Mr. Emerson about Cecil, she contemplates lying and makes “the long convincing speech that she […] intended to make to the world when she announced that her engagement was no more” (Forster, *A Room* 191). In response, Mr. Emerson tells Lucy that she is “muddled” discussing how “it is only [his] muddles [he] looks back on with horror” (191). Once again Lucy is being spoon-fed the reality of her paralysis. Mr. Emerson understands that she is resorting to paralysis, but is also aware that she also yearns for mobility and he states, “I mean to shock you” since he sees it as “the only hope” for removing someone from being muddled (192). Mr. Emerson connects love to the soul and exclaims, “‘a little directness to liberate the soul!’” and then claims that she “‘is ruining [hers]’” by resisting her passion and love for George (192). Mr. Emerson also notes how “It is again the darkness creeping in; it is hell” (192). After listening to Mr. Emerson’s ardent speech about her lack of mobility and soul, the narrator notes, “as he spoke the darkness was withdrawn, veil after veil, and she saw to the bottom of her soul” (193). In this moment Lucy becomes aware of the paralysis that had taken hold of her soul. It is not simply his direct notice of her paralysis that propels her out of darkness and into mobility; it is instead that “when he forces her to view specifics, all the muddle disappears and a truer feminism emerges, truer because it is humanism” (Finkelstein 285). Lucy is able to flee from paralysis and become driven by passion and desire. Lucy’s future acceptance of George is symbolic of her acceptance of freedom. Her break from paralysis is only possible because she receives help from those who had already broken away from the paralytic cycle.
THE TWO EMERSONS

Mr. Emerson and his son George are somewhat of an anomaly within the narrative since they present a duality which deviates from the old versus the new. Mr. Emerson is portrayed as a mobile character who is not afflicted by the social paralysis that threatens Lucy’s happiness and which has already claimed Charlotte and Cecil. This same freedom from paralysis is loosely extended to George. George grew up with his father who gave him an upbringing “free of superstition and ignorance” which led many within the early Edwardian Era to be muddled and become victims of paralysis like Cecil and Charlotte. Yet, he is becoming increasingly agitated by that same freedom and is teetering between mobility and paralysis. Philip Wagner notes how George is “also trapped” like Lucy since he “is a completely ethereal person, forever intent on contemplating the ‘everlasting Why’” and due to this constant pursuit he is unable to revel in his freedom from paralysis (277). His inquiries into unanswerable questions lead George down a rabbit hole of self-discovery and introspection that ironically keeps him from reaching the fulfillment Mr. Emerson experiences. His never-ending pursuit of self-discovery paralyzes him by limiting his ability to make meaningful engagements with others. Mr. Emerson’s ability to be mobile within the confining Edwardian society is not only due to his progressive views of men and women. It is also credited to his station which illustrates the contrast of his upbringing versus that of Charlotte’s. Mr. Emerson is able to better comprehend the intricate nature of the self and is trying to intimate these findings to Lucy in order to mobilize her and in doing this he hopes to rescue George in the process.

On his first appearance, Mr. Emerson demonstrates his dismissal of behavioral conventions, thus showing his mobility and resistance of paralysis. George is able to assimilate into society smoothly, while his father struggles with even the most mundane rules of etiquette. After Charlotte rejects Mr. Emerson’s offer to switch rooms Mr. Emerson persists on receiving an adequate reason to the rejection and exclaims, “‘Women like looking at a view; men don’t’” (Forster, A Room 9). His behavior betrays the etiquette expected by those in the Pension as he “thumped his fists like a naughty child, and turned to his son, saying, ‘George, Persuade them!’” (9) In this moment Mr. Emerson is overcome by an emotion which “perplexes” Lucy and leaves Miss Bartlett’s “face reddened with displeasure”
Those in the pension such as the Miss Alans and Mr. Beebe are accustomed to specific rules of conduct which are beyond Mr. Emerson’s original class since he is a self-made man rather than rich through inheritance. The people in the pension who embody paralysis and who prize convention, “may detect vague hints [of a person’s character] but they tend to make hasty character judgments and value rankings based on surface codes of behavior, appearance and language” (Hinojosa 80). These “value rankings” are what originally leave Lucy bewildered and interested in learning more about Mr. Emerson’s unusual behavior. Curtin addresses a common occurrence within social protocol as “it was assumed that manners identified individuals according to their class and that middle-class individuals wished to blur this identification by learning the manners of their betters” (414). The descriptions of Mr. Emerson and George relay their lower social standing as they are seen as “ill-bred people” (Forster, *A Room 8*). Although Mr. Emerson and George have acquired their wealth through “the railway” (which Miss Lavish and Miss Bartlett ridicule at a later point) they do not inherently belong with this upper class. This lack of belonging anticipates the belonging in *Maurice*. Thus, Mr. Emerson’s upbringing is not likely comprised of the conventions which lead to social paralysis. Yet, Mr. Emerson is aware of what the rules are but, simply refuses to obey limitations of behavior which would allow him to mingle with those of a higher social level. Instead, he permits his emotions to trump these established expectations of conduct. Mr. Emerson’s mobility is seen through his consistent defiance of these rules. This scene also shows his value of honesty, emotions, and directness which are integral for his resistance of social paralysis. Mr. Emerson will come to teach Lucy about the importance of the individual rather than the elements by which people are classified which is what Charlotte is teaching her at this moment.

All the while George struggles between paralysis and mobility which produces a binary opposition between him and Cecil. George ponders over existential questions which are indicative of his ability to reach profound introspection. Mr. Emerson converses with Lucy about how his son is distressed by “‘the old trouble; things won’t fit’” (Forster, *A Room 29*). George does not seem to understand how the “universe” works and this causes him to feel incomplete (29). Mr. Emerson continues telling Lucy that he and George know that “‘[they] come from the winds, and that [they] shall return to them’” (30). Yet, George is depicted as unsettled and unhappy. This answer of his potential origin is one that Mr.
Emerson likely communicated to George but it does not seem to satisfy him. Throughout the novel he sustains a palpable unhappiness about his life which leads him to become “ill” toward the end of the text (188). George fails to see that his ability to make these inquiries about the purpose of the human condition reflects a mobility that is inaccessible to Cecil and still forming in Lucy. George also serves to show how overdoing an attempt at self-understanding hinders the individual. One instance where this ability to be introspective emerges is after the death of the Italian in the Piazza. George is sensitive to the sudden death of a stranger and informs Lucy that this incident has become a reminder of his own mortality as he says, “‘I shall want to live’” (46). Cecil and George manifest the same binary relationship held by Lucy and Charlotte. Cecil embodies the old and traditional identity. Even Cecil’s solitary contemplations revolve around medieval and archaic notions of order and art. Hinojosa reads Cecil as “medieval and ascetic because he does not evoke sensuality and because he fervently tries to forge himself to be a certain type of person, thereby submitting himself to a limited definition of what a human can be” (81). In contrast to George’s search for his ‘true self,’ “Cecil self-consciously tries to create himself to be a certain type, and this is medieval and ascetic” (81). George develops the modern and progressive identity that Lucy is working towards while Cecil remains paralyzed only seeing the world through archaic notions. George relies on his reveries to satisfy his existential dilemma, but his insatiable thirst for the truth become detrimental. Therefore categorizing George’s identity as purely modern is complicated due to the depression that takes hold of him at the end of the novel. George is not an autonomously mobile character as he, like Lucy, requires someone to assist him. He needs someone to help him remain mobile while Lucy needs to become self-aware. This progressive identity is also complicated by the gender dynamics between him and Lucy which are present at the end of the novel. Their mutual need for each other in order to become mobile mirrors the dependency of Ursula and Birkin previously seen and is indicative of the difficulties in overcoming paralysis.

During an outing with Lucy and others from the Pension Mr. Emerson is able to convey his philosophies concerning passion and love. While sharing a carriage ride with Mr. Eager, Mr. Beebe, and Miss Bartlett are appalled by the affection between the Italian couple who drive them. Mr. Eager and Mr. Beebe insist that the lovers terminate their display of affection by requesting that they “behave themselves properly” (Forster, A Room 62). Miss
Bartlett later describes the kissing between the couple as “unpleasant” since it defies conventions of behavior (61). The separation of the lovers which Mr. Eager regards as a “victory” is in Mr. Emerson’s view a “defeat” (62). The mobile and progressive Mr. Emerson exclaims that Mr. Eager, “ha[s] parted two people who were happy” and more ardently notes how they “have no rights over [the Italian driver’s] soul” (63). During this exchange Miss Lavish claims to want the lovers to unite, but does not make significant contributions on the couple’s behalf. Through Mr. Emerson’s pleas for the union of the lovers his philosophies of the body emerge. Here Mr. Emerson’s view of love necessitates a carnal connection and impulsive action. He later relays to Lucy that, “‘passion does not blind’” rather, “‘passion is sanity’” (187). In this scene he is advocating for the passionate union of the Italian lovers and encourages Lucy and George to join him and resist the social paralysis which has swayed the others into infringing on the “soul” of the driver. Mr. Emerson’s push for mobility is not just through the medium of introspection. There is a stark polarization by the inhabitants of the carriage as Wagner notes how, “The Victorian society of the novel does not love the body, but tries to hide it […] for the Victorians fear sexuality and, hence, have erected a number of conventions which manipulate and repress one’s sexuality” (278). The lack of response by Lucy and George demonstrates that at this point they remain muddled and at risk of becoming paralyzed. Through Mr. Emerson’s defense of the lovers he reveals his progressive identity which renounces the Victorian “fear [of] sexuality” instead valuing carnal connections over conventions (278). In order to acquire mobility there must be an acceptance of the body which defies conventional views about the body. To effectively escape paralysis there needs to be an awareness of the social conventions which seek to paralyze the subject which Lucy does come to see through the help of Mr. Emerson. But, there must also be a physical break with conventions. This necessary carnal passion is what Mr. Emerson is defending and urging Lucy and George to also defend.

Another of Mr. Emerson’s progressive perspectives includes his view of the natural body in connection to marital obligations. While in England greeting the Reverend Mr. Beebe, Mr. Emerson’s informal request prompts Mr. Beebe’s mocking comment: “‘and yet you tell me that the sexes are equal?’” (Forster, *A Room* 121) To which Mr. Emerson replies, “‘I tell you they shall be’” (121). Having begun a philosophical debate Mr. Emerson makes his outlook clear to Mr. Beebe by stating that:
“The Garden of Eden […] which you place in the past, is really yet to come. We shall enter it when we no longer despise our bodies. […] We despise our body less than women do. But not until we are comrades shall we enter the garden. […] I believed in a return to Nature once. But how can we return to Nature when we have never been with her? To-day, I believe that we must discover Nature.” (121)

Returning to nature is necessary for a flight from paralysis. The importance of nature for flight is seen through Lucy’s epiphany which could have only occurred because of her exit from the oppressive artificial setting of England. Mr. Emerson is advocating for a removal of the artificial settings which limit an individual from reaching fulfillment and self-awareness. Mr. Emerson “is the foremost spokesman for equality between the sexes and for the acceptance of the life of the body” (Finkelstein 278). This progressive position is able to resonate with Lucy allowing her to disengage with the conventions that hinder her. Once again his perspective on the body emerges as an integral component of the break in paralysis. This reflects the paralysis suffered by Birkin and Gerald who are unable to fully engage with their carnal desires, leaving them in a state of paralysis. Mr. Emerson’s progressive notions lead him to also argue that “marriage is a duty” when discussing women (Forster, A Room 121). This could be construed as a conventional observation of women’s roles, yet his view of marriage is as Finkelstein notes, “not the conventional, oppressive institution, but rather the ultimate personal relation between two equal individuals, a relation which includes ‘tenderness,’ ‘comradeship,’ and ‘poetry’” (286). Tony Brown claims that this, “‘comradeship’ will be achieved in Mr. Emerson’s view only when both sexes can emancipate themselves from the belief that their bodies are objects of shame” (287). Thus, Mr. Emerson is demonstrating his mobility through his liberal notions of men and women. He does not simply believe in a pursuit of passion which contradicts traditional social values or in equality for women, but, he also believes that there is still a necessary freedom for men as well. Women were not the only ones that Mr. Emerson feels inclined to liberate. He is conscious of the emotional hindrance present in paralyzed men which signals the extent of his disengagement with social conventions and also his ability to understand the need for progress of both men and women. Mr. Emerson is able to reach these enlightened conclusions about society and the individual since he is not inherently a part of the oppressive class which keeps Charlotte and Cecil paralyzed. The wealth which associates him with the upper class is an acquired wealth. Therefore, there is room to conclude that his
education was unlike the one which Charlotte or Cecil received. His former lower class position is what facilitates him in reaching these atypical conclusions.

George follows his father’s teachings and pursues his body’s passion. The impulsive kiss George gives Lucy while in Italy has been viewed as a pivotal contribution to Lucy’s development, yet it also became vital for George. During this scene Lucy and George are standing in a field of violets separated from the artificial environment of the pension and George, “for a moment contemplate[s] her […] then] step[s] quickly forward and kisse[s] her” (Forster, A Room 67). By following his body’s instinct George is exercising his mobility. Charlotte’s interruption of the kiss does not allow Lucy to engage with George’s mobility and this leaves George feeling incomplete once again. George’s mobility is at this point reliant on reciprocation from Lucy due to the duality of his upbringing. Although Mr. Emerson educated George with his liberal philosophies about life, George is able to seamlessly blend into the upper class in a way his father never cared for. This shows how George is able to exist within the world of his father’s mobility and in the paralyzing upper class which leaves him vulnerable and in need of validation from Lucy. After the kiss he chooses to walk back to the pension through a storm in order to avoid Lucy and Charlotte. The storm encompasses “a lightning flash” along with “rain and darkness [that] came on together” all symbolic of the darkness which takes hold of Cecil keeping him muddled. Mr. Eager points out how “‘there is something almost blasphemous in this horror of the elements’” (69). He then inquires, “‘Are we seriously to suppose that all these clouds, all this immense electrical display, is simply called into existence to extinguish you or me?’”(69) The storm represents the turmoil that George is experiencing after following his body’s instinct and receiving no reciprocation. The darkness he is facing is indicative of the “muddle” he is at risk of entering. This storm also works towards Mr. Emerson’s philosophical desire for everyone to “‘discover Nature’” (121). Yet, since Charlotte broke the natural progression of these two lovers, the storm comes “almost [as] the direct outcome of Charlotte's ‘brown’ interruption of Lucy and George's natural kiss, and its purpose seems to be to reveal the English world to be inadequate and frigid” (Finkelstein 277). George’s retreat into nature becomes a passage through the “‘horror of the elements’” rather than Mr. Emerson’s romanticized restoration or unification with the natural world (Forster, A Room 69). This walk into nature is horrific due in part to the mishandling of their spontaneous kiss.
It forces George to encounter the muddling darkness of receiving no reciprocation. Although he is walking through darkness he has been taught to be self-aware. This keeps him from becoming entirely muddled and eventually strengthens him enough to “speak out through all [...the] muddle” and convince Lucy to leave Cecil (159).

In order to become fully mobile George requires Lucy. Mr. Emerson intimates to Lucy that he taught George, “‘to trust in love […and that] when love comes, that is reality’” (Forster, *A Room* 186). Because this “reality” is unattainable to George, due to Lucy’s inability to commit to mobility he is unable to remain mobile. After Lucy rejects Cecil and George, George becomes vulnerable to the trappings of social paralysis. During the conversation between Lucy and Mr. Emerson which turns Lucy into a mobile character, Mr. Emerson tells her that George is “‘not ill: just gone under,’” and that if he does live “‘he will not think it worth while’” (188). Mr. Emerson also attributes George’s symptoms of depression to Lucy’s rejection of him. This retreat from the world and entrance into depression places George out of line with traditional gender roles as he needs a woman to rescue him. Lucy’s flight from paralysis through the acceptance of George allows her to liberate herself and her lover and enter “the garden” (121). Hinojosa deduces that by, “breaking away from England and social strictures, they have recovered freedom and a life of the body, and they are autonomous morally and spiritually, finding their true selves in love of each other” (83). At the end of the novel they are seen fleeing from paralysis as they escape to the Italian pension where they first met. Their physical flight from paralysis is momentary as they do leave England once they are married, but their honeymoon will end. Will they become paralyzed once they return to England? They were able to flee physically through the acceptance of their body’s passion, and by removing themselves from the paralytic society that housed them. Yet, they also fled from ideological oppression which is evident from the last scene. While Lucy and George are in the Italian pension Lucy attempts to mend George’s sock, but she is stopped by George which Finkelstein interprets as a “symbolic rejection of the old arbitrary roles, [as George] tells Lucy to forget about the sock, and […] carries her over to the window” so that they may observe the view as a couple (197). George’s gesture signals the ideological shift that has taken place within their union. They will return to England with an irreversible flight from paralysis evidenced through their changed ideological perspectives.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION: MAURICE’S GREENWOODS

Although through the course of this study paralysis has been seen in its various forms within *Women in Love* and *A Room with a View*, paralysis is also present within another of Forster’s work, *Maurice*. Composed in 1913 but not published until 1971, *Maurice* depicts paralysis through the protagonist’s struggle with his sexuality which is akin to the one experienced by Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich. This text not only bridges the anxieties that paralyzed Lawrence’s characters, but it is also echoes similar occurrences from Joyce’s *Dubliners*. *Dubliners* began with a childhood realization of a dark reality and duplicity. Forster’s narrative likewise begins with with young Maurice experiencing confusion and disillusionment at the hands of his “Father Flynn” — Mr. Ducie. Being Maurice’s teacher and sole paternal image, Mr. Ducie attempts to prepare Maurice by teaching him about sex and manhood. Mr. Ducie serves as the double for Father Flynn, as he also represents the old national identity that relies on religious traditions to dictate and influence an individual’s life. While Father Flynn explains “the meaning of the different ceremonies […] and] vestments worn by the priest” in an effort to instill social norms, Maurice’s experience of social instruction is channeled through a discussion about sexuality and manhood (Joyce, *Dubliners* 234). During Mr. Ducie’s promotion of ritualized heterosexuality, romance, and courtship, he becomes an emblem of social and sexual normalcy as he perpetuates traditional limiting definitions of sexuality. Mr. Ducie utilizes religious rhetoric to guide his pupil as he speaks about how “male and female, [were] created by God in the beginning [so that…] the earth might be peopled” (Forster, *Maurice* 13). While Mr. Ducie pushes for social expectations he is revealing his own paralysis as he tells Maurice: “‘you are just becoming a man now, […] that is why I am telling you […] it is not a thing that your mother can tell you, and you should not mention it to her nor to any lady’” (13). This warning depicts Mr. Ducie’s paralysis as he feels anxiety about merely approaching the issue of sexuality and manhood,
and also teaches Maurice to interpret the topic of sexuality as a secretive affair which should never be discussed openly. This relaying of repression troubles Maurice as he struggles to absorb and understand what he means especially when Mr. Ducie begins discussing the carnal differences between men and women. The confusion that Maurice experiences is similar to the confusion of the young boy in Joyce’s “The Sisters”. Although they are both concerning different aspects of “proper” behavior, either religious practices or manhood and sexuality they convey the same message of paralysis. Maurice feels a palpable difference between his body and the heterosexual life Mr. Ducie describes. Maurice “knew the subject was serious […] and related to his own body […] but he could not himself relate it” (14). Maurice’s inability to fit the mold of the heterosexual male entering adulthood becomes a loss of identity and a source of confusion. This comes to be a pivotal moment since his journey from then on is fueled by his desire to be “normal.” This conversation demonstrates how Maurice is removed from uniform society. Even at a young age it is becoming clear that he will need to assimilate to these perspectives or break free from oppressive ideologies. The otherness that he is experiencing is not his paralysis, but rather the paralysis of a society incapable of accepting an alternate sexual inclination. The isolation that Maurice feels, due to his sexuality, emerges as a useful tool as it allows him to become introspective and inquisitive about social standards which are attempting to paralyze him.

Maurice’s conversation with Mr. Ducie demonstrates society’s attempts at paralyzing him in the public sphere yet paralysis is also present within the false safety of his domestic space. Upon returning home to his mother and sisters, Maurice is told that George is no longer part of the household staff and cries. His mother tells Kitty and Ada that Maurice’s tears are due to being “overtired” (Forster, Maurice 18). Maurice understands that showing emotion for George is not accepted by his mother even within the safety of his home. Once in solitude “his heart beat violently, and he lay in terror, […] he remembered George […] something stirred in the unfathomable depths of his heart” (19). His body is able to show Maurice his true feelings about George. Stephen Da Silva reasons that as a result of George’s abrupt absence “Maurice tries to convince himself that this loss is insignificant and [tries to] adapt himself to the demands of the heterosexual marriage plot” (250). In order to convince himself to let go of George he reasons that George was a “common servant [and that] Mother and Ada and Kitty were far more important” (Forster, Maurice 20). This becomes Maurice’s
first overt suppression of individual identity for the sake of social expectations. He also does this in an effort to belong to traditional heterosexual society. In this moment Maurice is rejecting his affections and hiding behind the veil of class division in an effort to assimilate. This utilization of class is used heavily by Forster in *A Room with a View* and this demonstrates how class is used as a paralyzing element. Elizabeth Ellem agrees that “though he despises some aspects of middle-class society, Maurice still wants to have a place in it” (96). Maurice does not “reject [society]; rather he feels rejected by it” (96). Maurice experiences the conflicting duality of flight and paralysis within him as he desires to flee from oppressive ideologies of sexuality, but he still yearns to belong to the same society which rejects the nature of his true passions. Throughout the text Maurice struggles to accept and understand his own sexuality, and once his sexual inclination becomes clear, the battle between his desire for respectability and his desire for love begins.

Maurice encounters Clive Durham during his time at University and soon enters a romantic relationship with him, allowing himself to break free from the heteronormative paralysis that Mr. Ducie had attempted to instill. When Clive first confesses his love for Maurice the depth of the paralysis Maurice suffers from is exposed. Maurice has been working to repress any urges which misalign with heteronormative love, as seen with George. Being confronted with male love leaves Maurice “scandalized, horrified […] and shocked to the bottom of his suburban soul” (Forster, *Maurice* 58). Maurice condemns Clive’s declaration of love describing it as “the worst crime in the calendar” (59). In rejecting Clive he is also denying the reciprocal love he feels for Clive. His desire to belong to society has effectively swayed him. After being forced to confront the reality of his homosexual desire Maurice that “he would not deceive himself […] He would not — and this was the test — pretend to care about women” (62). In this moment of self reflection Maurice is rejecting the façade of heterosexuality and is accepting his passion which “had brewed in the obscurities of [his] being where no eye pierce[d]” (62). During this isolated moment of introspection he not only denounces the façade, but admits that he “loved men and always had loved them” (62). After this declaration Maurice commits to a relationship with Clive. Forster provides Maurice with the ability to move beyond the paralyzed society which attempted to restrict his happiness. After his moment of clarity he becomes mobile in his
devotion and passion, but society becomes a hindrance Clive and Maurice struggle with while living in England.

Maurice’s attempt to form a homosexual identity through his relationship with Clive is short lived, and its abrupt end thrusts him back into a desire for normalcy which he tries to reach with the help of Lasker Jones. During Maurice’s attempt at reaching fulfillment he becomes clouded by the darkness of heartbreak. Mr. Lasker Jones is the hypnotist that Maurice confides in after Clive returns to England claiming he no longer has love for Maurice. This hypnotist lives within the parameters of social conformity and perpetuates paralytic ideologies. Mr. Jones frequently tries to rid patients from homosexual inklings which illustrate his view of homosexuality as something which needs a cure. Although his work is meant to remove an individual’s true passions Mr. Jones loses his paralytic persona when suggesting that Maurice, “live in some country that has adopted the Code Napoleon [which decriminalized homosexuality] […] since England [is] disinclined to accept human nature” (Forster, *Maurice* 211). Mr. Jones is becoming a force trying to help Maurice pursue a mobile life through flight as Mr. Jones understands that in England, Maurice’s desire is not accepted and would criminalize him. Although Mr. Jones does not directly state that homosexuality should be accepted, he does consider it as a part of “human nature.” With semi-progressive remarks such as these, Mr. Jones separates himself from the old identity that would force him to renounce homosexuality all together. Claude Summers notes how Maurice experiences a form of self-acceptance when leaving Mr. Jones:

Maurice leaves the hypnotist’s office curiously relieved. Walking home he observes the King and Queen […] unthinkingly bares his head in a gesture of respect. Then suddenly despises these symbols of society, seeing them as victims of the very values that oppress him. (107)

In this moment Maurice becomes self-aware and recognizes that the King and Queen are acting as symbols of a paralysis he must separate from. Summers proposes that “Maurice’s self-realization is accomplished as the result of a struggle between his real self and the obscured ‘I’ of his social self” (107). Without this sudden realization of his dislike for conventionality and society Maurice may not have been able to understand the need for escape and the lack of fulfillment accompanied with belonging. This brief moment becomes the necessary epiphany that contributes to his flight from paralysis as Maurice “was not afraid or ashamed anymore” and instead Maurice considers how he wrongly “tried to get the
best of both worlds” (Forster, *Maurice* 215). In this moment Maurice is aware of the binary reality as he is divided between his desire to belong and his desire to love. Although Maurice comes to this revelation on his own he does contend that he “must belong to [his] class, that’s fixed” (215). Understanding the paralysis and mobility he is torn between is not sufficient to sway him from engrained ideals of station. Maurice is moving closer to his moment of flight.

Maurice’s fear of becoming as repressed as Clive becomes the final driving force behind his flight from paralysis. Clive enters Maurice’s life with mobility and self-acceptance, but through the course of the text he becomes immobilized by society, “Clive’s conversion to heterosexuality […] expose[s] [him] as shallow and hypocritical by the eagerness with which he embraces the ‘beautiful conventions’ that earn social approval” (Summers 102). Maurice begins his journey with disillusionment about the reality of manhood and expectations instilled by Mr. Ducie. Eventually, and after profound moments of introspection, he is able to accept himself and reaches mobility through his passionate romance with Alec Scudder. The only way for Maurice to maintain this course of fulfillment with Alec requires him to physically remove himself from the paralytic country which tried to engulf him, just as it consumed Clive. Clive is a depiction of Maurice’s future as Clive is marrying, arguing that his love for men was merely a phase and not indicative of his true desires. If Maurice were to remain in England it is likely that he, like Clive, would have succumbed to social pressure and also married a woman for social acceptance. Alec and Maurice’s escape into the greenwoods is reasoned as the only realistic route for them. These lovers must abandon life in England for the potential happiness elsewhere. They “earn[ ] their happiness through suffering and sacrifice” (109). Both Maurice and Alec must sacrifice their English identity for the promise of potential liberty in a distant place. As Maurice confesses his departure to Clive, Maurice “could suffer no mixing of the old in the new” (Forster, *Maurice* 244). In severing any lingering emotion for Clive, Maurice is also separating his new identity from the old. The greenwoods are read as a place of freedom, a place where these lovers can indulge in every part of their selfhood without the constraints of social and national pressure. This ideal escape is the positive outcome which Lawrence’s Birkin and Gerald were never able to experience. As Gerald and Birkin repressed their love for each other they became paralyzed. Their inability to commit to their passions killed
Gerald and left Birkin in a state of paralytic incompletion. Maurice is returning to nature much like Mr. Emerson beckons for in his philosophical perspective about society and the natural world. Thus, Forster provides far more optimistic texts where the lovers, Maurice and Alec, are able to escape and become mobile, leaving behind those who threatened their happiness. This happy ending is also experienced by Lucy and George. The greenwoods which Forster depicts remain a mystery, read only as a place of acceptance and opportunity. Ellem argues that the greenwoods eventually “become […] a place of refuge, but now the refugees, far from gladly relinquishing the world, are in reluctant exile from it” (89). Even if the mythical greenwoods eventually become unfavorable, one thing is certain, Maurice and Alec can only find fulfillment outside of England’s paralysis as it is still in the throes of oppressive aspects of the Victorian identity. Lawrence and Forster depict characters who, in order to become victorious in their pursuit of fulfillment, needed to be self-aware, willing to fall from the tree when ripe and disengage with the paralyzing aspects of the old identity.
REFERENCES


