Introduction

E. M. Forster’s third novel, *A Room with a View*, is said to be the lightest and most optimistic of all his works. *A Room with a View* is one of his Italian novels that “make[s] use of Italian settings” and is “derive[d] from [the] same⁠¹ experiences” (Page 18). By dealing with the struggle between the oppressive convention and personal pursuits, the novel opens with a series of episodes that “dramatize [the protagonist], Lucy’s successive contacts with reality and her responses to these experiences” (Page 36). As the story moves between the initial “room without a view” to the “room with a view,” it attempts to unveil the phases of the becoming² Lucy undergoes.

In the text, Forster sets the novel in Italy in the first chapter, and moves to England for the second part of the novel to accentuate the influential Italy. Throughout the whole part in Italy, the invigorating stimulation Lucy experiences clearly clashes with her traditional worldview. Her paradox does not merely appear in the form of a cultural impact but also through spatial influence. The conflicts Lucy encounters and overcomes in her journey demonstrate the influence of Italy. I choose *A Room with a View* in that this novel, with its changing settings from Florence to London, from the city to the country, from the view outside to the room inside, best elucidates and examines the correlations between the space and the subject. *A Room with a View*, hence, is not only a novel that involves conflict, but also involves the dimension of spatial vision. Accordingly, this thesis investigates the following three issues. The first

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⁠¹ Forster’s the other novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, also arises from his travel experiences he had with his mother in 1901. Forster himself describes that his “creative element had been freed by his encounter with Italy” (qtd. in Page 18). This two novels with Italian settings are Forster’s “Italian novels” (Page 18).

⁡ The meaning of becoming refers to Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming theory, which will be elaborated in my next chapter.
issue panoramically explores the reconfigured self in Lucy’s travel, the second concerns her street-walking through the cityscape of Florence, and the last explores how Lucy deals with the conflicts between her original life and her nomadic self. I aim to argue that by means of her travel experiences, Lucy’s changes transcend the issue of identity politics and enter her spatial becoming toward becoming-traveler.

Throughout his works, E.M. Forster acutely observes and manifests the pursuit of personal freedom under the restrictive social confinement. As Norman Page points out, Forster is often “identified with a recognizable standpoint: liberal, humane, skeptical, unconventional, relentlessly moral without being ponderous” (9). As an Edwardian novelist known for his avowed liberal humanism, Forster strives for individuality and universal truth. He promotes the idea of “only connect” to stress that the individual is rational, essential, and that personal relationships should be valued regardless of any other social ideological barriers. His works not only are concerned with personal connections, but also seeks possible reconciliation between social classes and opposites.

J.B. Beer further observes that Forster’s work explores two dimensions, “to test the novels by the touchstone of human experience and to match them against the best that has been thought and written during the period,” which is a “highly intelligent evaluation” in terms of liberal humanist tradition (14). Nevertheless, his emphasis on reason and truth does not mean that his works lack passion or romantic style. By reading Forster’s works, one could acknowledge his “sensibility is transcended by

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3 Forster lives in the period from the Victorian to the twentieth century. His first novel begins in the Edwardian period (1901-1910), and his later works are accomplished in the later twentieth century. In spite of Edwardian class rigidity, he seeks for possible mobility in many of his works.

4 Humanism, especially liberal (or secular) humanism, is a comprehensive life standpoint that rejects the supernatural and spiritual dependence and seeks for reason, ethics, justice and truth. The endorsement of universal truth is one of the prevalent themes in Forster’s novels.

5 The idea of “only connect,” which implies the positive meaning of making ties with the other, is derived from Forster’s work, Howards End, published in 1910. Nevertheless, while Forster stresses the importance of “only connect,” he in the meantime suggests the despair and difficulty in maintaining such a relationship without the impediment to such ideological barriers.
imaginative passion, and where his moral seriousness is so dominated by an awareness of love and death that moral values lose their definition, their place being taken by a spirit which is less easy to describe” (Beer 30). Forster’s works epitomize the combination of sense and sensibility, convention and freedom, social restriction and individual pursuit.

Forster’s work focuses on “the personal links by which the individual relates himself to his environment” (Gillie 64). He is particularly brilliant in tackling the muddling predicament between society and individual, and he is simultaneously able to “see the virtues of the Victorian tradition as well as its obstructiveness, and he affirms the essentiality of the individual as well as the looming forces that threaten it” (Gillie 165). Such is Forster’s style: he expresses the yearnings and paradoxical conflicts yet holds them moderately in his plot designs. He is “sometimes critical, but rarely agonizing […] his sense of reality is always vigilant” (Beer 15). The observation and realization Forster possesses in his works reveal his anticipation to bridge society and the individual from a humane intelligible perspective. Since Forster’s novels are highly relevant to his biographical experiences of traveling, his travel in Italy and Greece gives rise to his suburban novels and short stories, such as Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room with a View. His travels in Italy impel him to “examine middle-class tourists abroad” (Lago 16). Forster apparently recognizes and confirms that the characters of English people essentially “[are] expressed in solidity, caution, integrity, efficiency; but also in lack of imagination, hypocrisy” (qtd. in Lago 17). This reflection of psychological and social conflicts unavoidably becomes the crucial element in his suburban novels.

Overall, Forster’s work seeks to present intricate human relationships on a large
scale, particularly between different countries. He attempts to explore the common spirit and discrepant perspectives in human beings. Many of his works discuss the narrow-mindedness of the British people and irreconcilable conflicts between classes and nations, just as he did in his work, *A Passage to India*. Forster sees British society “in their time as humanly constraining” (Gillie 159). His intention is not to reinforce or to fortify the clear demarcation between the divergent cultures, but to highlight the estranged barrier and misunderstanding caused by problematic prejudice. Gillie further explains that Forster “in all his works, presents again and again the notion that each of us lives in his or her horizon, and that we are much inclined to mistake our individual horizons for reality itself” (162). As the work *A Passage to India* “presents a world in which all circles are broken,” in *A Room with a View* he endeavors to demonstrate that “each of us has to learn that a horizon is an illusion, and that the illusion has to be broken if the individual is to grow” (Gillie 162). By expounding the fact that societies “more often implicitly than explicitly, dictate patterns of human relations,” Forster’s novels investigate the contradictory theme between the exposed predicament and the unrealizable mystery7 in life.

Despite the attention his works have received in general, not much detailed research has been undertaken on *A Room with a View*, possibly because it is an early work of Forster, and its structure is seen as simple and accessible to critics. A number of scholars have commented on Forster’s intention in designing the gradual spiritual awakening of the protagonist, Lucy Honeychurch. Coming from a middle-class family, Lucy is often taken as the embodiment of Forster’s personal experience. In this regard, her cousin Charlotte Bartlett fits the image of Forster’s mother, who conscientiously

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7 In addition to personal and social relations, Forster also contends that “human beings live, for most of the time unconsciously, in a world of muddled personal relationships imposed by them an illusion of order in the society into which they are born” (Gillie 112). Forster asserts that human beings are unconsciously influenced by the ineludible mysterious power, just as the cave tremendously shocks Mrs. Moore and Adela in *A Passage to India*. 
guarded Lucy. Forster in this early work “seems to have been exploring his youthful self” and creates this story on the foundation of his image (Gillie 117). Critics also note that in A Room with a View, Forster intentionally reveals his observations on the psychology of tourists in consonance with his own travel experiences. Forster’s travel experience reminds him of the ineluctable cultural conflicts and problematic social conventions. The encounter between English and Italian cultures is significantly explored in this novel.

Yet in these past studies, scholars only show how Italian liberty affects Lucy in contrast with English conventions. And they fail to fully perceive and convey Forster’s own attitude. Though the effect of Lucy’s awakening and personal growth⁹, her transitory self, and her repressed desire¹⁰ are explored, these reviews ignore the crucial connection between shifting spaces and her mobile self. In the text, Lucy is at first shocked and perplexed at Mr. Emerson’s offer to swap rooms, which is considered ill-bred and impolite for English people. Nevertheless, this choice of exchange in Italy offers possible mobility, hence initiating Lucy to challenge and reconsider the original conventions she has been educated to follow. Her later street-walking¹¹ in Florence and her encounters with Italians lead her to recognize the charm of Italian liberty, which enchants her, in contrast to the repression in England. Inspired by her constant interactions with space, the rules and values that Lucy used to abide by are thus

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⁸ See Norman Page, “The Italian Novels,” in E.M. Forster p.34. In the text, Page attempts to link the part concerning A Room with a View with Forster’s biographical experience to explain the arrangement of the characters.
⁹ In his criticism “A Room with a View,” Herz considers this novel “a cheerful Bildungsroman,” a work that depicts the growth of Lucy (138).
¹¹ Street-walking originally means prostitution due to the connection of public women in 19th century. This thesis borrows Michel de Certeau’s work “walking in the city” to explore the observation and experiences urban walkers bring about in the cityscape. Please see chapter three for further explanation.
unconsciously altered. Accordingly, in this thesis I aim to explore this novel from spatial dimensions.

*Room with a View* tells a story of Lucy Honeychurch, whose sincere and undisguised personality is often at variance with the restrained and conservative English conventions. Her journey to Italy with her cousin, Charlotte Bartlett is the commencement of her becoming that liberates her soul, urging her to embrace her inner sentiments. The story opens with Lucy and her cousin, Charlotte’s complaint over their Italian hotel room that doesn’t have a view, and their conversation is interrupted by the eccentric Emersons, a British father and his adult son, who insist on exchanging rooms with them. Even though the Emersons’ behaviors and manners are socially unacceptable, Lucy gradually has a good impression of them as they have more contact. During the trip, Lucy’s two street-walking experiences in the city lead her to discover the charm and the life of Florence. As she reconstructs her impression of the city, she retrieves her agency and reconstructs a new self by degrees. Her encounters with the other inspire her as well. She encounters the Emersons, who swap rooms with them and suggests Lucy not act with such pretense. She contacts George Emerson, whose simple frankness melts her defense and relieves her repressed desires for freedom. She has an outing in the field with other English guests, observing the beauty of Italy and the conventional attitude of the English tourists. Though Lucy is unconscious of her change, her experiences in Italy are catalytic in that she learns to face her desires and to reject convention. The Italian experience allows her to learn the “primitive earnestness of flesh and blood and feeling” (Scott-James 121).

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13 Before her journey to Italy, Lucy has limited freedom and autonomy. She is urged to obey the lady-like rules and to follow English conventions. Her Italy experiences, particularly her interactions with the city free her from the confinement so that she regains her agency and starts her deliberate transgression of the conventions.
By going through her process of becoming-other in the journey, Lucy returns to England with her nomadic changes. As the clergyman, her old acquaintance Mr. Beebe notices, Lucy might take a momentous step and learn to live her own life. Mr. Beebe sensitively points out that after her Italian journey, Lucy becomes a different person, as a kite with broken string (*A Room with a View* 107). As Lucy returns to her home, Windy Corner, she becomes firm and sensible in making decisions and gradually comes to know what she truly wants out of her life. She cancels her engagement with her fiancé Cecil Vyse, on a sudden impulsive realization that he is a man that is definitely incompatible with her nature. As she eventually accepts the fact that she is in need of freedom, Lucy leaves England and heads to Florence again. The final setting in the hotel, where Lucy and George are happily reunited, reveals that Lucy becomes a nomadic traveler after her Italian journey. Lucy’s encounters in Italy alter her values and broaden her horizons, and her elopement with George signals her change. Her travel propels her to discern that the previous self is illusory, and she will continue her incessant changes as a becoming-traveler.

**Organization and Framework**

Lucy was raised under English values, and her trip to Florence is her first contact with a very different culture. This brings shock as well as freedom to her. At first, Lucy was constrained by her cousin’s chaperonage, and always “accept[ed] [her cousin] Charlotte as a social and moral guide” (Page 35). Lucy’s travel to Italy rejuvenates her and gives her an opportunity to cross conventional boundaries and encounter the other, initiating her spatial becoming by “see[ing] the familiar with the new, more skeptical eyes and […] the possibility of salvation” (Page 39). In *A Room with a View*, spatial element is crucial to the subjects’ development. Whereas in passing decades, critics review, he criticizes Forster is too intent on instruction in presenting how the British is hypocritical and hollow. Yet, he simultaneously praises this is a brilliant novel for it is humanly absorbing and well-arranged (121-122).
have overlooked the meanings of the spatial settings in Forster’s works, this thesis attempts to argue that the production of a nomadic or sedentary self depends on one’s interaction with his or her own space.

Raised under the influence of English values, Lucy unexpectedly travels to a country in which she has experiences that she originally would not have in England. For the first time, Lucy notices that Italy leads her to taste the forbidden fruit of freedom and autonomy, which urges her to reconsider the repressed life under convention. Since she develops her nomadic self from her travel in Italy, Lucy changes her outlook on life and her relation with the other, whereas her fiancé Cecil remains unchanged. Triggered by her travel experiences, Lucy’s repressed desire for freedom is rekindled, which inevitably collides with Cecil’s possessive protection. Their parting marks Lucy’s departure from the binding conventions of her nomadic self.

In chapter two, I employ Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of becoming and Syed Manzurul Islam’s extended application on travel theory as a spatial strategy to illustrate Lucy’s nomadic changes from her travel experiences. The study of spatial theory should be traced back to early Western epistemology, which claims that space is an *a priori* existence that is rendered as a passive, neutral vessel. Against this concept of meaningless emptiness, Henri Lefebvre points out that space is a social product, an active locus of social relations that will always be reconstructed and reproduced according to human activities and historical development. Deleuze and Guattari inherit this spatial concept as well and maintain the possibility of in-betweenness. To negotiate the space; namely, the study of nomadology.

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari expound the concept of the sedentary and the nomadic that is derived from the military battles between the State apparatus and the nomads (380-382). The State strives to
claim its mastery over the nomad with an aim to assert its invincible conquest while the nomad constantly appropriates their power with the “war machine” that is external to the State (Deleuze and Guattari 351). The State thus continues to repress the nomad, for nomadic mobility is intimidating to the sedentary structure of the State. Deleuze and Guattari further explain that the characteristics of the sedentary and the nomad are distinguished in terms of point, line, and space (482). On the one hand, they note, the sedentary lines “tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to another,” following the customary paths (478); in other words, the sedentary marks rigid lines and will always return to the bounded space. On the other hand, the nomadic trajectory is distinct from the sedentary in that the nomadic goes from point to point “as a consequence and as a factual necessity” (380). It is in the smooth space that the nomadic take place, as “vectors of deterritorialization” (382). The nomadic still has its territory, yet eradicates its boundary and demarcation with lines of flight. Overall, the sedentary is home-bound whereas the nomadic is boundless.

By marking nomadic space as a boundless rhizomatic structure extending to multiple possibilities, Deleuze and Guattari contend that the becoming theory suggests boundary-crossing with lines of flight. The process of becoming-other thus is a process of transformation that begins with the deconstruction of stabilized order, suggesting an escape route into a minority. On the contrary, the sedentary space is a homogeneous and aborescent structure that is codified with fixed boundary, which excludes varieties and possibilities of becoming. Yet, this transformation of becoming-other is not an imitation of being-other. Instead, this irreversible process of becoming-molecular is defined not by the produced identity but by its capacity to undergo the transformation.

Islam further manifests the relation between travel and space, marking that
“travel can be said to be composed of movement between spatial locations” (5). He demonstrates that a genuine traveler “negotiates the between” by “traversing threshold and crossing boundary” (5). Extending Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of nomadic and sedentary space, Islam divides travelers into two kinds, the sedentary travelers are “densely coded” in striated and enclosed space with moved body whereas the nomadic travelers with moving body possess no specific territory, thus freely crossing the boundary and encountering the other (58). As a result, the nomadic travelers will not be demarcated by conventional values, yet the sedentary travelers reconsolidate one’s territory and standpoint in every voyage. By establishing a mutual relationship with the other, the interactive nomadic traveler produces intersubjectivity in the course of becoming-other, regaining a new and integrated self. Nevertheless, this incessant transformation suggests endless reconfiguration, which is not necessarily a progressive or regressive one since “becoming is not ‘involutionary’ rather than evolutionary” (Deleuze and Guattari 239).

Positioned as a fluidity in-between, the nomadic traveler thus does not indicate a simple growth or result, escaping from binary polarization. Accordingly, even though becoming “begin[s] with and pass[es] through becoming-woman,” becoming in fact breaks through all identities and transcends the concept of territory reconsolidation (Deleuze and Guattari 277). Becoming-woman is not a pursuit of representation or homogeneous collectivity. Rather than a process of self-searching, becoming implicates a directional traveler that unconcerned with the same level of self-searching that feminism argues for. Hence, in this thesis, I attempt to explore

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15 In *The Ethics of Travel*, Islam explains, travel involves the action of “leaving one spatial marker and arriving at another,” and “the presumed departure and arrival […] stages the threshold to be crossed, and enacts ‘the between’ that divides and joins spatial locations (Islam 5).

16 The nomadic travelers have flexible attitudes toward values and conventions. They are more likely to adapt to different cultures. This point will be elaborated in the next chapter: nomadic travelers are able to “encounter the other” and “becoming-other.”
Lucy’s spiritual changes from the perspective of becoming-traveler instead of the dimension of her self-awakening. Inspired by her travel experiences in Italy, Lucy as a nomadic traveler, initiates her spatial becoming and gradually gets rid of the restrictions of English conventions. English spatiality resembles “a room” that confines her soul while Italian spatiality leads Lucy to the autonomy of freedom as “a view.” Although Lucy is surrounded by a myriad of sedentary travelers that highlight the form of travel rather than its content, Lucy is still able to establish relationships on the basis of mutual understandings upon her encountering-other.

As for chapter three, I aim to investigate Lucy’s interactive street-walking in the cityscape by means of Michel de Certeau’s concept of walking in the city. While street-walking alone without a chaperone is not allowed for ladies in Victorian England, the street accordingly is particularly classified “to maintain order,” for “disreputable women were associated with the immorality of public life in the city, with the despised prostitute, […] [and] the respectable and virtuous women were connected to the home” (Nava 60). Nevertheless, Certeau’s concept provides another dimension to reconsider the meaning and impact that street-walking can possibly bring about. In spite of the regulated social confinement, Lucy’s decision in walking in the city significantly opens up her horizon to understand the city as an urban walker rather than a passive receiver. Even though she inevitably encounters struggle, Lucy’s experiences of walking in the city refreshingly leads her out from the limited vision under the codified conventions.

Michel de Certeau asserts that urban spatiality is composed of the concept city and the lived city rather than a one-dimensional perspective. The concept city presents a utopian, idealized blueprint of the city corresponding to the desire of the urban reformers. By means of the perspective and prospective vision, the authority is convinced that they have the capacity to dominate the development of the city. Yet,
even though urban planners intends to design a panorama of city image for voyeurs, their persistence may as well lead to a superficial imagination that neglects the true life experiences of the city dwellers. Certeau therefore emphasizes that in addition to the concept city, he regards the lived city as a diversified, rather than univocal cognition that complements the full vision of the city.

Compared with the visual experiences conducted by the voyeurs, urban walkers keep close tracks to the city by virtue of pedestrian acts. De Certeau contends that walking is a mobile action that creates bodily lived experiences, devising and producing unique spatial meanings. By reading the city with tangible tactility, walking is “a space of enunciation” in that the subject is able to participate and to discover the production of the city rather than passively receive the message and image given by the authority (de Certeau 98). The lived city contains unexpected surprises and a variety of possibilities that can only be procured and experienced by the agency of walking the city. In *A Room with a View*, Lucy’s experience from guidance to independence changes her interpretation for the city. Her companion, Miss Lavish directs her to leave the guidebook aside and to experience city life closely through observation. From Florentine’s smells to its sights in cityscapes, Lucy takes her first adventure into Florence and gradually discovers it attractive, which is the first shift of Lucy’s state of mind. As Miss Lavish suddenly leaves her alone in the city, she is seized by overwhelming humiliation and apprehension. It is only when Lucy tries to shift her attention to the streets and discovers the appeal of Italy on her own that she recognizes Italy amazingly charming, thus truly embracing the lived city (*A Room with a View* 23).

While Lucy’s first street-walking experiences accidental stimulations and anxiety, she moves from the recognition of a concept city and strolls along the streets with joyful leisure. Knowing that her behavior contradicts social restrictions and
expectations, Lucy chooses piano-playing as outlet for her, and a way to face her feelings and inner desires. Accordingly, her second street-walking is a deliberate transgression of regulations. Crossing the boundary of Victorian codes, Lucy anticipates sensational passion and surprise in her next walk. As she stumbles onto a horrifying murder scene, she does not merely walk in the city, but journeys through her inner conflicts and discontent. She realizes that this lived city contains both joyful freedom and miserable events. Spacing the city\textsuperscript{17} with her pedestrian acts, Lucy is able to interpret and understand the flesh and blood of the city. Her street-walking in Florence gives her an experience she normally would not have in England, and as a result, could be considered one of the effects of her encountering with others in the nomadic travel.

Lucy’s encounter with the other pivotally alters her attitude as well, impelling her to becoming-other and to develop her nomadic self. By accepting the discrepancies from the other, her two encounters with George and his father Mr. Emerson urges her to reconsider her original values and behaviors. Emerson’s advice reminds Lucy of her repressed nature and George’s frankness invigorates her to dismantle her disguised behaviors. In addition to her spatial practice in Florence, Lucy’s encounters carry a catalytic function that transforms her to becoming-other.

Chapter four discusses how Lucy’s process of becoming is carried on to take the form of action after she returns to England, and her conflicts with English convention and the sedentary traveler, Cecil. Her transformation is not a sudden dramatic change but a gradual ongoing process. She re-examines her life with a renewed vision and attitude, thus observing her incompatibility with Cecil and her mother. Practical and home-bound, Mrs. Honeychurch embodies the conventional values of the English

\textsuperscript{17} The meaning of spacing the city refers to Michel de Certeau’s idea in his work “walking the city”: “to walk is to lack a place” since walking is a pedestrian act to interpret the city (103).
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woman. Her approval of Cecil illustrates her conventional standard in choosing a man: appearance, wealth and manners. Bounded in the country society, Mrs. Honeychurch continues to reconsolidate her concept of home, which is at variance with Lucy’s nomadic changes. On the other hand, Cecil is a person with a conventional and arrogant personality. His superiority complex makes it impossible for him to establish an intimate relationship with the other, nor can he eradicate the boundary he has settled against the other. He is the typical sedentary traveler that only reinforces his stereotypical judgment even when he returns from Italy.

Lucy’s rejection of Cecil and her nomadic changes symbolize her departure from the fixed and conventional self to a new and brave self. As a nomadic traveler, she establishes her relationship on the basis of mutual understandings, rejecting assimilation and imposition by the other. Yet, she foresees her marriage with Cecil will unavoidably estrange her soul and her desire in pursuit of freedom. On the one hand, she acknowledges that Cecil’s self-centered egocentrism not only reflects on his abominable attitude towards her family, but also on his overt interference with her life and independence. On the other, Cecil’s London spatiality presses her as a fog that obscures her vision. Her apprehension is indicated in her piano-playing. She “turns from [vivid] Beethoven to [sad] Schumann” and then Mozart as she worries about her seemingly bright future descending into sterility (Sullivan 184). In the novel, Lucy’s change to a nomadic self is often signaled by music allusions. These allusions pervades throughout the whole novel and “serve as preludes to life-changing experiences for Lucy” (Fillon 268). Lucy’s spiritual state is constantly expressed musically in every great turn of her life.

Lucy’s final choice to elope with George reveals her determined embrace of freedom. As she returned to England with her nomadic self, Lucy is no longer the little girl that adheres to rules. Unlike Cecil, George allows Lucy to be herself, to
respect her, and not to impose any regulations on her. As George respects her as an independent individual, he allows Lucy to have “a room with a view,” which is what Cecil fails to achieve. Accordingly, Lucy’s choice for George indicates her desire for Italian freedom rather than conformity to English convention. Her attempt to leave England for Greece marks her nomadic changes: homeless and boundless. Her irreversible becoming-traveler leads her to take her own flight, heading toward the boundless world instead of lingering under binding conventions.