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# No destination: Queering mobility through the virtuality of movement

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# No destination: queering mobility through the virtuality of movement

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**ABSTRACT**
This article advances the epistemological potential that exists at the nexus of queer theory and mobilities research. It aims to queer mobility by rejecting the idea of the destination and embracing the virtuality of movement instead. In doing so, it draws on the queer symbolism of the closet and the cruise to highlight the heteronormative framing that has come to define and constrain the new mobilities paradigm. Arguing that anybody has the capacity to be 'queer', it calls for a redefinition of the subject and an exploration of the world-making possibilities that emerge when the virtuality of movement is foregrounded.

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## Introduction

This article draws on queer theory to offer a new ontology of movement. In doing so, it aims to have a queering effect on mobilities research. Over the past fifteen years or so, a corpus of scholarship representing the 'new' mobilities paradigm has explored the variegated patterns of movement and mobility throughout the world. Whilst it has critically interrogated the ideas that 'mobility is a way of being in the world' (Cresswell 2006a, 3) and that 'there is not an innate or essentialist meaning to movement' (Adey 2006, 83), it can also be seen to tacitly reproduce various heteronormative logics. These logics manifest in subtle but profuse ways, and often coalesce around the 'destination' (the 'point') as a predetermined and oft-assumed 'basic signifier of mobility' (Cresswell 2006a, 2; cf. Bissell 2013). By rejecting the idea and significance of the destination – indeed, by starting from the premise that there is *no destination* (after Edelman 2004) – we can, however, begin to appreciate the possibilities that might emerge from an alternative epistemology of mobility. Interpreting mobility through a queer lens provides a vision of an alternative 'imaginar[y] that undergird[s] movement' (Stanley 2020, 242; also Franquesa 2011). Whilst having no destination might undermine the very idea of what it means to 'move' or be 'mobile' for some, it also forces closer consideration of the richly productive, yet hitherto untapped, interplay that exists at the nexus of queer theory and mobilities research. The radical potentiality of this nexus is rooted in Muñoz's (2009, 72–73, emphasis added) assertion that

> we can understand queerness itself as being filled with the intention to be lost. Queerness is illegible and therefore lost in relation to the straight minds' mapping of space. Queerness is lost in space, or lost in relation to the space of heteronormativity … To be lost is not to hide in a closet or to perform a simple (ontological) disappearing act; *it is to veer away from heterosexuality's path.*

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The intention to be lost eschews the destination in favour of a more profound sense of becoming instead. It is a rejection of the heteronormative life course, of linearity, of 'pointillism' that the symbolism of the closet and the cruise – two distinctly queer tropes – represent. Moreover, the theoretical significance of this 'veer away' embraces the potentiality of an embodied subject position. Indeed, the sexual politics of queerness, and of queer mobilities therein, foregrounds the place of the body as a tool of resistance that simultaneously 'express[es] already existing normative ideals' (Cresswell 2006c, 58), but which can also 'enable new ways of being, and new methods of becoming' (Woods 2021a, 2021b). The body becomes the vector through which queer*ing* occurs, and through which ideological resistance to heteronormative movement is enacted. By developing an understanding of the body-as-vector, we can begin to see its capacity to bridge the real and the virtual through its movements. The body connects the 'eventhood of the moment where the experiential and the referential is folded' and thus realises 'the potential for alternative worlds' (Dewsbury 2003, 1930) or 'new worlds' (Muñoz 2009, 1; also Berlant and Warner 1998) to manifest. I argue that queer mobility is to recognise and embrace the virtuality of movement – itself a symbol of imaginative value that offers a glimpse into another world and other possibilities of becoming (after Sedgwick 2003; Brown 2008). It is movement without the promise of destination; it is movement-*as*-ontology; it is *more-than*-movement. The body thus provides an entrée into the alternative mobilities that a distinctly queer epistemology can give rise to.

With these ideas in mind, this article contributes to longstanding and ongoing efforts to excavate the epistemological nexus of queer theory and geography (after Bell et al. 1994; Binnie 1997). It makes two contributions in this regard. The first considers how the idea of queering mobility can extend existing work on queer geographies, and in doing so answers Knopp's (2004, 124) lament that research has tended to 'underemphasize … the attachment that many queer people … feel to movement itself, and a corresponding ambivalent relationship to both placement and identity'. Going further, Knopp's (2004, 124, original emphases) subsequent assertion that 'being simultaneously in and out of place, and seeking comfort as well as pleasure in movement, displacement, and place*less*ness, are commonly sought after experiences for *many* people' is ontologically generative, and reveals the inclusive potential of the 'queer' subject position and its distinctive patterns of movement. Whilst a handful of studies have engaged with the idea of 'queer' mobilities – the movement of bodies that identify as queer through space (Johnston 2007; Gorman-Murray 2009; Yue 2012; Brickell et al. 2018; Truman and Springgay 2019) – there has, with only a few exceptions (Di Feliciantonio and Gadelha 2017; Stanley 2020), been limited engagement with 'queer' as a theoretical position that goes beyond identity, and with queer*ing* as a perspective from which a new epistemology of mobility can be forged (Franquesa 2011; Davidson 2021). This is an epistemology that reimagines the body as something more than a vehicle that shuttles between points, and embraces its world-making capacity instead.

The second contribution is more general and considers how the intellectual thrust of this article is aligned with ongoing and accretive efforts to reimagine what sort of geography – as discipline, as intellectual standpoint, or as a series of thematic tools and openings – is needed in and for the present world. In past decades, these efforts have evolved from the poststructuralist imperative to forge a 'queer epistemology' (Binnie 1997), to 'queering the geographical imagination' (Knopp 2007, 52), to recent and concerted attempts to 'decolonise' geographical knowledge production (Radcliffe 2017; Bailey et al. 2023). Whilst this trajectory is laudable, fundamental questions concerning what it means to queer geography remain. Looking beyond the ideas, norms and assumptions that have long stabilised geographical thought is a start, but not the end. Indeed, queer geography has long been known for both its 'thoroughgoing interrogation of Cartesian rationality, Euclidean spatial ontologies, and the often norming fixity inherent in cartographic representation' (Brown and Knopp 2008, 40), and its related embrace of how researcher positionality can undermine the 'assumption that there is a real world out there to be

discovered and mapped independently of the researcher's own subjective experience' (Binnie 1997, 224). By rejecting the idea of the destination, this article signals the transformative impact that queer theory can – and should – have on the geographical imagination. It also interrogates the boundaries of inclusion that emerge from a 'queer' subjectivity. Altogether, this is a generative and open-ended form of enquiry that is constantly being (re)defined through the construction and embrace of new, rather than existing, worlds.

## New mobilities, old normativities?

The new mobilities paradigm has been credited for galvanising scholarly interest in the ways in which we move through the world and the effects of movement on the people and places we encounter along the way. Scholarly engagement has problematised the idea of mobility, as captured in Adey's (2004, 1365; also Adey 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007) observation that 'mobility is something we have always found difficult to see; slipping and evading our grasp – its forms liquefy into ebbs and flows'. Despite such difficulties, consistent is the fact that mobility has been recognised as embedded within, constitutive of, and shaped by, social relations and the workings of power therein (Cresswell 1999, 2006a; Adey et al. 2014). Relatively recently, these workings have been explored through a number of discursive expansions, including the embrace of Asian mobilities (Cresswell 2016), children's (Murray and Cortés-Morales 2019) and animals' (Hodgetts and Lorimer 2020) mobilities, and, most recently, the impact of COVID-19 on mobility as well (Cresswell 2021; Freudendal et al.- 2021). Notwithstanding, the fact remains that ''schisms' (Oswin 2014) along identity-based lines can help determine the extent and parameters of individual mobility. Indeed, it is these schisms – and the marginalities they produce – that reflect the 'old normativities' that continue to define the discourse. Recognising the effects of these schisms, efforts have been made to attend to the consequences of relative (im)mobility on social justice (Cresswell 2006b; Ernste et al. 2012). Sheller (2018, 20, 24, original emphasis) recently called for a '*new way of thinking* about social worlds' and drew specific attention to the mobilities of 'sexual minorities under heteronormative regimes'. Heteronormativity is one schism that frames the social worlds that mobilities scholarship seeks to understand. The following subsections offer three articulations of this frame. They consider, respectively, the pointillist bias, the importance of embodiment, and the limitations of existing work on 'queer' mobility.

### *Pointillism*

Movement and mobility are, in many respects, defined by their antonyms: *non*-movement and *im*mobility. To not move, or to not be mobile, is generally associated with having 'stopped', which suggests that a destination – whether final or interim – has been reached. Destinations are points on our maps – geographical, social, mental, emotional, and more – that draw us into, and define the extent of, movement. Whilst this assertion is rarely articulated as such, more often than not it remains a latent framing through which mobilities scholarship unfolds (Merriman 2012a, 2012b, 2017). For example, Cresswell (2006a, 2) defines 'abstract' and 'positivist' definitions of mobility as 'involv[ing] a displacement – the act of moving between locations', whilst Bissell (2013, 349) explains in specific terms how 'proximity is often understood in the context of an oriented connection towards points of significance and can therefore be described as 'pointillist''. Seeking to disrupt these understandings, Bissell (2013, 350) advances the notion of the 'loop' as a 'more relational and processual understanding of place' that recasts places as 'porous and emergent expression[s] of multiple intersecting mobilities, rather than an originary, essential and bounded unit that mobilities work to threaten or disrupt'. Bissell's intervention is helpful in opening up mobilities scholarship to the theoretical and analytical possibilities that might emerge from reimagining places not as points or destinations that people move to and

from, but as passive and 'emergent' signifiers that might – or might not – give meaning to movement. Evoking Augé's (1995) well-articulated notion of 'non-place', interventions like these can help us imagine a mobilities paradigm that strips places, points or destinations of any predetermined – and thus potentially exclusionary – sense of meaning.

They also force mobilities scholars to think more critically about how normative understandings of concepts like space and place might need to be rethought through a queer epistemology. To make this claim is to echo calls emanating from the first-wave of queer geographers. For example, in their critique of the idea of 'diffusion', Knopp and Brown (2003, 409) argue that 'many queer theorists continue implicitly to work with rather limited and hierarchical notions of diffusion, in which centralized forms of power more or less determine the geographical patterns whereby queer subjectivities, cultures, and politics spread'. Power is located in a central place and radiates out from there, which itself reflects a rigid and inflexible understanding of space and spatiality that is rooted in pointillism. In subsequent work, Knopp (2004, 129) writes of places – *points* – as 'fluid and ephemeral, always contingent and always becoming' which in turn reveals the queer sense of 'ambivalen[ce] towards place and the 'affection for placelessness and movement'. Advancing this intellectual project even further, Knopp (2007) went on to explore how a reframing of place can yield a recalibration of how we think about movement. Drawing on his earlier critique of diffusion, he argues that 'pathways and flows are not seen, generally, as carrying the same ontological 'weight' as the places they connect', with scholarship reflecting a heteronormative bias towards 'autonomous actors and objects circulating among and through vectors and nodes' (Knopp 2007, 50). The vector and node, the points on the map, and the places they signify are the epistemological anchors that have uncritically defined the study of movement and mobility for decades.

These ideas find important resonance in the practice of sexuality, with the point providing both a juncture and insight into the heteronormative biases of mobilities scholarship. In corporeal terms, the bodily cavities that comprise the places of sexual intercourse – vaginas, rectums, mouths, and more – can be read as destinations that are imbued with differential meanings by the socio-political structures of everyday life. The heteronormative frame that such meanings reflect is shown in Ahmed's (2006, 71) observation that 'the signs of women's desire, such as becoming wet, are read as "pointing" toward men and even toward "occupation" by men'. The physiological realities of female arousal, and the lubricating effects of arousal to facilitate reproduction, thus cause 'heterosexuality to be a "compulsory orientation"' (ibid.). Alternative orientations – *queer* orientations – reject the point of reproduction, and can, according to heteronormative logic, be seen as point*less* in their incapacity to serve any reproductive function. Ahmed (2006, 71) goes on to explain how

> the discontinuity of queer desires can be explained in terms of objects that are not points on the straight line: the subject has to go "off line" to reach such objects. To go "off line" is to turn toward "one's own sex" and away from "the other sex." To turn away from "the other sex" is also to leave the straight line.

Important to note here is the differential meanings that are attributed to points by heteronormativity. The rectum is just as much a destination as the vagina, but its holds no reproductive value as a point of sex. This logic mirrors that of Edelman's (2004) argument that queer people have 'No Future' – they *do* have a future, but it is not the reproductive future that heteronormativity prescribes. It is, therefore, valueless. So too is it reflected in the title – 'All Hyped Up and *No Place To Go*' – of Bell et al.'s (1994, emphasis added) formative article on the performance of queer sexualities in space, in which the place is not the point: the placeless act of *going* is. As these examples illustrate in different ways, heteronormative society can be understood to reject 'valueless' forms of movement. As Cresswell (1993, 259) observes:

> Mobility which is apparently purposeless and seems to result in poverty rather than 'social climbing' is not generally encouraged … Migration studies purport to be about movement but use the push and pull factors

> of points A and B as explanations. People leave point A because point B appears to be favourable. It is never the case that both point A and B are unbearable and that the motion in between is the 'pull' factor.

What Cresswell evokes here is the idea that movement –'motion' – can be meaningful, and thus empowering, in and of itself. Movement is not just about travelling between points: it can also be about rejecting points and embracing processes of becoming instead. Movement can therefore orient individuals within a different vector of meaning that has no destination. It is a process of virtuality that has 'no beginning, no end. Just event' (Massumi 2002, 169). I return to these ideas later.

### *Embodiment*

In its simplest articulation, mobilities scholarship is concerned with the movement of bodies through space and the transformation of space in response. These two emphases – of movement and transformation – have tended to define scholarship at the nexus of mobility and the body. In terms of movement, bodies have been shown to move differently according to the inscriptions of identity. Research has explored how 'mobile subjects are constructed, differentiated, classified, and at times excluded according to social, cultural and physical markers of difference' (Merriman 2017, 377; also Ahmed 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller 2017). Differential movements in relation to embodied forms of identification have foregrounded exploration of the politics of (im)mobility, with a particular focus on how mobility injustices emerge when embodied identities are 'used as the basis for restricting mobility or exclusion from public space' (Sheller 2018, 26; also Weintrob et al. 2021). These ideas have found particular empirical resonance in the non-place of the airport, whereby bordering and surveillance regimes are used to (re)classify and (re)assign the sovereign right of an individual based on how they might look, dress or behave. In this vein, Adey (2009, 274) has shown how the space of the airport is one in which 'the body's circulatory systems, biological rhythms, and affective expressions have become objects of suspicion – mobile surfaces from which inner thoughts and potentially hostile intentions are scrutinized, read, and given threatening meaning'. Beyond these politics and injustices, there has also been exploration of the poetics of moving bodies, with Merriman (2015, 89), in one example, emphasising the 'creative and expressive qualities' of movement.

In terms of transformation, research has tended to explore the ways in which the phenomenology of movement can foreground the transformation of space. Research has interrogated how the proprioceptive and kinaesthetic aspects of moving can lead to new or distinctive ontologies and cultural practices (Merriman and Pearce 2017), how movement can trigger and shape feeling (Massumi 2002), and how encounters with other bodies can 'increase or decrease [the bodies'] capacities to do things and to sense things' in ways that go beyond, but which can also redefine, identity (Bissell 2016, 397; after Deleuze 1990). Actions, intensities, and e/affects like these foreground the moving body as an active reproducer of space. The body, then, is a vector of spatial transformation and even reimagination. As Merleau-Ponty (1962, 102, emphasis added) suggests:

> By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and possibly time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actually *assumes* them, it takes them up in their basic significance which is obscured in the commonplace of established situations.

The important point here is the idea that the body 'assumes' space and time; the body *becomes* space, or a vector of spatial transformation. In doing so, it can transform the 'basic significance' of space and time and thus provide pathways through which the 'established situations' – often reflecting the heteronormative frame of mobility – can be challenged. In this sense, then, the body is a space of learning, with movement serving to incorporate new ideas into a new way of becoming in the world that is 'independent of any representation' (Merleau-

Ponty 1962, 139). Instead, it is free. These are ideas that have been recognised by scholarship, but which require further elaboration if their queering potential is to be fully realised. Indeed, this is a call that echoes some of the earliest work in queer geography, with Binnie's (1997, 228) queer epistemology being predicated on a 'greater commitment to embodiment in our work'. Echoing this sentiment, Cresswell (1999, 177; after Young 1990) recognises that the body is the 'first locus of intentionality', whilst Conlon (2004, 464) explores how 'productive bodies constitute performative spaces' in Christopher Park, New York. Taking these ideas further, Woods (2021, 9) explores the practice of dancehall in Singapore, and how the performance of male fecundity through movement provides a 'means of engaging with a new modality that involves escaping from the prescriptions and mental pressures of Singapore society, and to realise a more embodied ontology instead'. This is an ontology that recognises the freedom of performativity, and which therefore goes beyond movement. Again, I return to these ideas later.

## *'Queer' mobilities?*

This final frame is the most direct in its critique of the heteronormative biases that have come to define mobilities scholarship. It argues that even mobilities scholarship that focuses on ostensibly 'queer' subjects can still be seen to reproduce the pointillist and embodied biases highlighted above. Further, it also draws attention to some work that does not focus on the queer subject, but can nonetheless be seen to emphasise queer-*full* forms of mobility. First though, the queer subject. Over the past decade, there has been growing interest in understanding the ways in which ideas such as transnationalism, diaspora, migration and tourism intersect with the queer subject, leading to scholarly 'differentiat[ion] by sexual norms, discourses, and practices' (Oswin 2014, 86). Patterns of queer mobilities have been studied in relation to migratory flows of queer goods, people and ideas (Binnie and Valentine 1999; Binnie 2004; Yue 2012; Brickell et al. 2018), queer tourism and the attendance of pride parades (Johnston, 2007), queer walking tours (Truman and Springgay 2019), queer experiences of public transport (Weintrob et al. 2021), and how the identifiable, feeling and desiring body can serve as both a 'vector of displacement' in queer migration (Gorman-Murray 2009, 441), but also as a vector of homonormative mobility (Collins 2009). Beyond the (cross-border) movements of the queer subject, scholarship has also explored the intersections of the queer subject and social mobility, with Florida (2002) in particular highlighting the relationship between queer spaces and the upwardly mobile creative classes in cities. There have also been methodological developments, with Di Feliciantonio and Gadelha (2017, 275) arguing that ''queering' methodologies and methods is not an ontological position pre-assumed when conducting research with queer-identified subjects', but a 'process of dismantling taken-for-granted, stable, monolithic categories and identities'.

Drilling down, much of this work on the mobility of the queer subject seeks to actively distinguish itself from heteronormative accounts of movement through space, and how such movements might be an integral part of the subtext needed to redefine space itself. Some of the most generative work in this regard has come from the global south, where the queer codification of public space leads to sometimes unexpected, and often subversive, outcomes. In Cambodia, for example, Rowlett and Go (2022, 2) explore how the 'Amazingly Fabulous Tuk Tuk Race' deploys tuk tuks as 'mobile signs that temporarily queer the streets of central Phnom Penh'. This capacity for mobility itself to signal the world-making capacity of queer constructions of space is reflected in Ombagi's (2019, 106) study of queer spatiality in Nairobi, Kenya. Drawing on an analysis of the interlinkages between the nightclub, the tavern and the cruising spot, they are shown to 'allow for queer, queering and queered flows that make it possible for queer users to subvert the spaces and to make it possible to read, locate and recognize queer subjectivities within these spaces'. Another key strand of research that distinguishes queer movement explores the mechanics and policies of migration regimes, and how they serve to 'normalize and

naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices including marriage, family, and biological reproduction by marginalizing persons, institutions, or practices that deviate from these norms' (Manalansan 2006, 225). Conversely, escaping place, or even pursuing an ideal of place*lessness* (Brickell et al. 2018), is typically associated with discovering or realising a sexually-defined identity. Being rooted in the 'elsewhereness of belonging' (Binnie 2004, 88), these identities are set apart from the prejudicial surveillance regimes of the home, family or neighbourhood, and are often integral to coming-out narratives.

Looking beyond the ostensibly 'queer' subject, a strand of scholarship that draws attention to the queer-*full*ness of ostensibly straight or non-human mobilities can provide innovative insight into the epistemological possibilities that come from queering mobility. An example of how queerness might be used as a guiding logic to explore alternative modalities of mobility is Stanley's (2020) recent study of 'unlikely' hikers – that is, hikers who are fat, single women and/or representing ethnic minorities. By drawing attention to these alternative subject positions, she criticises the 'powerful normativities [that] operate within intangible systems of mobilities, affecting what we expect a 'hiker' or an 'athlete' to look like' (Stanley 2020, 243). Her point is to explore the ways in which 'queerness" can be an all-encompassing trope that implicates everybody – irrespective of sexual orientation – in the rejection of categories, normativities and expectations. Other work is also important in this regard. For example, writing at the intersection of dance and disability, Veal (2018; after Nash 2000) uses the lens of performativity to show how the body might be used to challenge and reject social normativities. In doing so, she explores the ways in which '"illicit" dance mobilities can… be understood as harbouring significant agency in their ability to transgress socio-cultural ideologies of "correct" ways of moving' (Veal 2018, 307). Work on ageing (Ciobanu and Hunter 2017; Grenier et al. 2019) and therapeutic mobilities (Gatrell 2013) has similarly shown how movement can, in and of itself, be a method of empowerment and resilience, whilst Hodgetts and Lorimer (2020, 5) recently called for more emphasis on the 'embodied and lived experiences of mobility' in ways that go beyond the human realm. I now elaborate on these ideas by exploring the phenomenology of queer mobility.

## The closet, the cruise and the phenomenology of queer mobility

Whilst the preceding section highlighted some of the heteronormative underpinnings of mobilities scholarship – and in doing so emphasised how 'old' normativities might temper the 'newness' of the new mobilities paradigm – this section focuses on the phenomenology of queer mobility. In doing so, it shifts the focus from scholarship that can ostensibly be seen to fit within the 'mobilities' paradigm, to scholarship on aspects of queerness that, in both cases, are distinctly and idiosyncratically 'mobile'. It focusses on two defining tropes of queer sexuality – the closet and the cruise – and considers how each might help us to 'counter the heteronormative limits of mobility' (Oswin 2014, 86). Whilst the closet is a metaphor of mobility that is used to describe the process of 'coming out' (or not) as gay, the cruise is a metaphor of movement that seeks the fulfilment of queer desire in and through public space. Both tropes are more than the actions to which they are indexed, and both can therefore be seen to provide preliminary insight into movement as a form of virtuality. Focussing on these two tropes is to sidestep the heteronormative gaze of mobilities scholarship and to explore instead the idea that mobility in the contemporary, globalised world 'demonstrate[s] no clear point of departure, just deterritorialised movement, at certain speeds and different levels of viscosity with no necessary end-state or purpose' (Sheller and Urry 2003, 117). These two tropes can therefore provide critical insight into the phenomenology of queer mobility.

### *The (im)mobilising effect of the closet*

The closet is spatial metaphor that evokes the idea of hiding in the dark, possibly peeping through a crack in the door at the world outside, with the nervous anticipation that comes with waiting to be 'found' (out). Closets are, almost by definition, small and cramped, and are therefore *im*mobilising constructs. They inhibit mobility as they are enclosed by physical barriers that simultaneously represent protection and constraint. They are, however, also strategically situated in the private space of the bedroom, where (many, not all) intimacies are shared, sexuality is performed and identities are (first) realised. In many respects, then, the closet represents the 'denial, erasure, and concealment of queer people, their desires, and their sexual relations' (Brown 2011, 124) that stems from heteronormativity. Without heteronormativity, the need to hide, to be found (out), or to move (out) is nullified. Yet, as much as the closet can be seen to represent entrapment, so too does the idea of forced immobility draw attention to the fact that mobility is always performed in relation to the desires and constraints through which a queer subjectivity is forged. Foregrounding the relationality of mobility emphasises, in turn, the idea that the closet is in many respects a spatial 'tactic' that is deployed by the heteronormative regime of the family, the school, the workplace, and society more broadly to control people and their movements in and through the world. In this sense, just as the closet is a 'unique form of oppression' (Brown and Knopp 2008, 41) that renders it an immobilising construct, so too does leaving it signify entry into a new world of mobility that is predicated, first and foremost, on the rejection of heteronormativity.

As mentioned earlier, coming out has been explored in terms of migration in pursuit of a more fully realised queer subject. In itself, this reveals the lingering influence of the heteronormative construct. It does not just define the terms and parameters of the closet, but extends beyond, serving to situate the closet within a particular socio-spatial field of constrained mobility. A common theme within queer narratives is 'having to move to another place to know oneself as gay. It wasn't enough to just open the closet door; one had to leave its interior for a different location' (Brown 2000, 48; also Halberstam 2005). I contend, however, that "to move to another place" – a destination, a point – does not necessarily translate as knowledge or self-understanding. Movement might defines one's sexuality in relation to the heteronormative codes of society, but it does not necessarily reject these codes, or provide a pathway to emancipation. In this vein, Sedgwick (1990) *Epistemology of the Closet* encourages us to think through how these codes might wax and wane, constrain and enable, whichever side of the closet's border one resides. Sedgwick encourages deliberate and mindful consideration of the 'affects that are layered into our ways of relating to the world, inviting us to think and act with enchantment, hope or generosity while retaining a keen sense of anger at the existence of harm, damage and suffering' (Anderson 2011, 129). Whilst the relationality of the closet might never leave its subjects, its subjects might choose to leave *it*. This insight offers quite a profound reframing of the (im)mobilising effect of the closet, as it hints at the ontological possibilities that stem from "freedom" from the heteronormative life course. Ahmed (2006, 20) evokes these possibilities in her own coming out narrative:

> Becoming a lesbian taught me about the very point of how life gets directed and how that "point" is often hidden from view. Becoming reoriented, which involves the disorientation of encountering the world differently, made me wonder about orientation and how much "feeling at home," or knowing which way we are facing, is about the making of worlds.

What Ahmed suggests here is that to come out is not just to cross some sort of threshold of identity. Rather, it is to reorient oneself to a new world in which any pre-programmed sense of directionality is rendered meaningless. The pointillism of the closet can hold little meaning outside the closet, which renders the newly emancipated disoriented, and thus directionless. There is no destination, as what the subject knew to be a destination has suddenly been taken from them by their rejection of pointillism. Ahmed (2006, 21) goes on to explain the direction – the point – of a heteronormative world, and what it therefore means to identify as queer:

> For a life to count as a good life, then, it must return the debt of its life by taking on the direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course. A queer life might be one that fails to make such gestures of return.

By the standards and expectations of heteronormativity, a queer life encompasses a sense of 'failure' that stems from its directionless nature. By this logic, coming out migration is not really mobility – or it is only a partially realised form of mobility – as it does not imply the necessity of rejecting the idea of a destination, a point, a direction, or even of failure itself. For this mobility to be fully realised, it needs to be reconciled with the ontological underpinnings of queerness. As Holliday (1999, 481, original emphasis) puts it, there is a need to 'close the gap between performance (*acting*) and ontology (*being*), a desire to be self-present to both oneself and others'. Weston (1995) takes these ideas even further, and uses them to undermine the very distinctions between the places of departure and arrival in rural-to-urban coming out migration. As she puts it, 'the gay imaginary is not just a dream of a freedom to be gay that requires an urban location, but a symbolic space that configures gayness itself by elaborating an opposition between urban and rural life' (Weston 1995, 274). The 'symbolic space' that Weston evokes is one of constructed difference on the terms of the subject. It is not one that is predetermined by the heteronormative hostilities of rural life. It is a form of mobility that is truly distinct: one that speaks from a position of strength, not compromise.

## *Cruising as more-than-movement*

The cruise is a metaphor of movement that evokes an idea of bodies passing leisurely through space, of observing the world around them, and of imagining alternative worlds. Cruis*ing* is a process that focusses completely on the possibilities that movement gives rise to, and can therefore be understood as *more-than*-movement. A queer ontology of cruising relates to the ways in which the queer subject moves through public space in ways that might both discretely or more overtly identify themselves as gay, the aim being to both search for, and attract the interest of, other queer subjects in the hope of triggering a sexual encounter. Cruising, then, is a way of moving through heteronormatively-defined public spaces. It is an encoded form of identifying oneself as different through the kinaesthetics of comportment, gesture and gaze. As Turner (2003, 60) puts it, cruising is a process of 'walking, gazing, and engaging another (or others)' that materialises as what Brown (2008, 921) describes as a 'complex choreography of postures and gestures'. The importance of the gesture is not to be underestimated as it represents a 'means without end' (Agamben 2000). It is designed to start a process of encounter, but which does not necessarily predetermine its path or outcome. As one cruiser explained to Brown (2008, 920, original emphasis), cruising is

> eye contact, basically … Or it could be the way someone's walking because often you can see oh *that* one's mincing. But a concrete yes on that would be eye contact and then when you've walked past them you look back to see if they're looking back, and if they are then you were right in making the assumption in the first place.

Brown goes on to offer a personal vignette of how such initial contacts – which are not accidental, but deeply encoded in queer movement – can materialise as an encounter. He first describes a 'quick succession of gestures … [a] cheeky, lustful vitality in the man's eye, the sly smile and the enticing raise of his eyebrow – each small act building on the one that preceded it', the cumulative effect of which led him to 'interpret it as a sexual advance' (Brown 2008, 920; also Messias 2016) by a young man riding a BMX bike. He goes on to explain the subtle choreography that subsequently served to materialise the encounter, and turn it into the promise of desire:

> We circled each other cautiously for a few minutes and there was lots of eye contact. After a while he turned and moved slowly … off towards the market. I followed and we were soon talking … The way he

> circled me slowly on his bike must have dissolved my fears. There was something seductive in his circling that is difficult to capture adequately in words (Brown 2008, 920).

The movements described above are acts of nonverbal communication and then seduction. They signal acceptance of an alternative modality of (in this case, sexual) being that rejects the non-desirous nature of public space and recasts it as a canvas of sexual becoming instead. The movements that define cruising offer a glimpse into an alternative world that is defined not just in opposition to, but as active rejection of, the structuring effects of heteronormativity and the practices of mobility therein. As Brown (2008, 928) goes on to explain, 'different rules of attraction and attractiveness apply here, compared to the outside world, and the dynamics of the action taking place in the space can take on a life of its own'. Cruising is not just the solicitation of sex: it is about accessing an alternative world in which different rules, ethics and practices of movement and mobility are dominant. Access indicates the extent to which cruising can be understood as more-than-movement. It is a process of subverting and redefining the surveillant gaze of heteronormatively-defined public space.

Cruising is a modality of movement that can help to redefine what mobility means. Precisely because it '*breaks* the rules of the city, forcing connection, rather than reinforcing separation' (Turner 2003, 54, original emphasis) it is a performative act through which public space – and the patterns of mobility therein – is redefined. It recasts public spaces as utopic spaces that exist outside the constraining mores of heteronormativity (after Muñoz 2009). The gestures and gazes that define the cruiser can be seen to 'conjure away society with the fiction of an atomistic flock of individuals who forge a relation with one another on the basis of a normative recognition of shared needs and common goods' (Massumi 2002, 68). That is, they are movements that are designed to initiate access to another world that is defined in relation to heteronormative public spaces but reject the laws, codes and expectations of civility through which society becomes mobile. They represent, in Muñoz's (2009, 162) view, acts of resistance that provide a 'valuable interruption in the coercive choreography of a here and now that is scored to naturalize and validate dominant cultural logics such as capitalism and heterosexuality'. Instead, they represent what Muñoz (2009) evokes in the subtitle of his book, *Cruising Utopia*: a *Then and There of Queer Futurity*. They evoke, as Warner (2011, 255) observes, a way of moving that has 'no specific destination', the aim instead being to 'get lost … in webs of relationality and queer sociality'. Building on these tropes, I now consider what it means to queer mobility through the virtuality of movement.

## Queering mobility through the virtuality of movement

This last substantive section brings the ideas raised in the previous two subsections into direct conversation with queer theory, and the alternative world-making practices found therein. Queerness is an appropriate theoretical vehicle through which mobilities scholarship can be redefined, as a central concern is to interrogate the spatio-temporal biases of heteronormativity according to queer ways of being. As Halberstam (2005, 1) puts it:

> Queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction. They also develop according to other logics of location, movement, and identification. If we try to think of queerness as an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices, we detach queerness from sexual identity.

Importantly then, the purpose of 'queering mobility' does not just speak to those who might identify as queer in terms of their sexual choices and preferences – whether homosexual, heterosexual, a blend of both, or more – but to anyone who deviates in some way from the heteronormative patterns of movement and being outlined above. Whilst Brown et al. (2007, 14) warn against such a capacious interpretation of the queer subject position, as doing so might be seen to 'dismiss the complexity of queer, its uneven use across geography', my contention is that

without such a capacity the potential for such 'complexity' and 'unevenness'to be realised is stymied. More shades of queer means more positions from which its radical epistemological potential can be realised. Indeed, at its core it is an inclusive form of signifier that embraces the margins through the twinned tropes of resistance and utopia. These are tropes that vibrate with radical potential, as they emphasise the 'here, the present, the now, and while the threat of no future hovers overhead like a storm cloud, the *urgency of being* also expands the *potential* of the moment' (Halberstam 2005, 2, emphases added). The two subsections that follow elaborate on these ideas. The first offers clarity as to who the queer subject' is, or might be, and how this subject position can be seen to both resist heteronormativity (Edelman 2004), but also to embrace utopic alternatives (Muñoz 2009). The second draws on Massumi's (2002) articulations of virtuality to explore the ways in which movement can be implicated in processes of world-making.

### (Re)defining the subject

'Queerness' has a long etymology, and it is only relatively recently that it has come to be associated with sexual identity in the popular imagination. Historically, its meaning was more expansive, referring generally to 'deviation from normalcy' that might include 'the state of feeling ill or bad, not straight, obscure, perverse, eccentric' (Butler 1993, 130). Contemporary associations with sexuality are epistemologically useful – not least because they focus attention on the heteronormative impulses of society – but can also be restricting if interpreted in relation to sexuality alone. Helpfully, Halberstam's (2005) analysis of queer space-times relative to heterosexual space-times helps us to realise the capaciousness of the queer subject position. Heterosexual space-times are rooted in the ideas of linearity, longevity and reproductive legacy, and thus tend to 'pathologize modes of living that show little or no concern for longevity' (Halberstam 2005, 4). The 'pathologiz[ing]' of which Halberstam speaks provides insight into the range of subject positions that 'queerness'can give rise to, and also hints at how queer space-times can help redefine mobility and movement. As he elaborates, 'formulaic responses to time and temporal logics produce emotional and even physical responses to different kinds of time: thus people feel guilty about leisure, frustrated by waiting, satisfied by punctuality, and so on' (ibid. 7). The prosaic examples of leisure, waiting and punctuality can, however, be mapped onto the heteronormative life course. This is a life course punctuated by key events ('points') to ensure linear progression: education, job, marriage, mortgage, (grand)children, death and then repeat over subsequent and successive generations. Those outside of, or who deviate from, this temporal frame can, then, be labelled queer.

Queer space-times have been the focus of queer theory, and have cleaved into two perspectives that can be reduced to their resistant and utopic visions of queer futurity. Resistance is anchored in Edelman's (2004, 2) polemic, *No Future*, which argues that the reproductive futurism of heteronormativity 'impose[s] an ideological limit on political discourse'. It obstructs the potential for queer resistance by casting queerness as outside the very terms by which heteronormative framing *can* be resisted. Queerness, then, occupies 'the place of the social order's death drive' and, as such, 'refuses identity or the absolute privilege of any goal' (Edelman 2004, 3, 22). To adopt a queer subject position is to negate what is of social value. Moreover, it is to pose a radical challenge to the idea that the social can be of 'value' itself. Goals can never be achieved, satisfaction can never be attained, destinations can never be reached: queerness obstructs them all. Whilst Edelman's polemic is rooted in the sexual politics that stem from reproductive futurism, it resonates amongst a much wider variety of queer subject positions. One example of this is provided by Cresswell's (1993, 249) reading of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road,* from which he argues that the theme of mobility was used to resist American cultural (hetero)norms that are rooted in the 'expectations of family, progress and attached sexuality'. Specifically, the mobilities of the novel's

central characters are 'frantic and directionless' (ibid.), and can, in many respects, be seen to foreshadow Edelman's (2004) later argument. As Cresswell (1993, 258) goes on to observe:

> The sense of goallessness emphasized in spontaneous movement is underlined by the lack of prospect in a totally male world. Place and roots imply future generations. The idea of place extends deep into the future and reaches far back into the past for its roots … Families have children and tradition is continued. The masculine world of the road promises no such future.

The road promises no future, but it does offer a utopic vision of an alternative world. It is at this point that the other side of the debate becomes apparent. Rooted in Muñoz's (2009) critique of how queerness is positioned in relation to 'straight' time, a queer utopia can only be realised on its own terms. As he puts it, 'straight time tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life. The only future promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality' (Muñoz 2009, 22). In some respects he agrees with Edelman's (2004) view that queerness holds 'no future', but in others he rejects the premise upon which such a viewpoint is forged. His utopic vision of queer futurity is based on the idea that

> queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality … The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structured and educated mode of desiring that allow[s] us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present (Muñoz 2009, 22).

In what can be interpreted as an equally polemic attack on the predetermined ways in which 'queerness'is (mis)appropriated in and by social theory, Muñoz takes the idea of the queer subject to a logical extreme by arguing that nobody is yet queer, as true queerness is always beyond our reach. Queerness comes from an ontology of openness that is best placed as a vision of the future. Important to note is that these two standpoints are not antithetical to each other, but are theoretically productive when seen as two sides of the same coin. Resistance to heteronormativity: queerness as utopia. Each side of the argument draws on the prescriptive and alienating logics of straight space-time, and both articulate their queer counterparts as something different, illogical, and yet often also highly desirous. Taking these ideas and applying them to ideas of mobility and movement, we can begin to see the importance of a queer epistemology of movement in the making of alternative worlds.

### *Virtuality and world-making*

Everybody moves. In many respects, movement is a defining characteristic of existence. Yet, movement can proceed along different vectors: some observable, others not; some embodied, others encased; some linear, others loopy. My point is that movement might define us, but movement itself is not a predefined act. Rather, it, much like queerness, is an ontologically open way of being in the world. This idea underpins the theoretical possibilities that might emerge from queering mobility. Straight space-times establish normative patterns of mobility that may or may not fit with those of queer space-times. Knopp (2007, 49), for example, observes how 'queers frequently are suspicious, fearful, and unable to relate easily to the fixity and certainty inhering in most dominant ontologies of space and place, due to vulnerability that accompanies being visible and locatable'. Queer space-times, and by extension, queer *futures* are rooted in alternative logics. Queerness can be seen to 'expose the obliquity of our relation to what we experience in and as social reality' (Edelman 2004, 6), with our movement in and through these 'realit[ies]' offering glimpses at how they might be reimagined. Movement in and through space-time holds the capacity for these logics to be reoriented and reimagined anew. Movement, then, can be understood as the starting point from which queer world-making begins, with queer subjects positioning themselves in ways that provide critical insight into the pointillist biases of

place. This schema provides a reversal of the normative logics of subject positioning. As Massumi (2002, 3) asserts:

> The idea of positionality begins by subtracting movement from the picture. This catches the body in a cultural freeze-frame. The point of explanatory departure is a pinpointing, a zero-point of stasis. When positioning of any kind comes a determining first, movement comes a problematic second. After all is signified and sited, there is the nagging problem of how to add movement back into the picture.

The 'nagging problem' that Massumi identifies can be seen as an epistemological barrier to movement, critical interrogation of which can be seen as the beginnings of the new mobilities paradigm over fifteen years ago. My point is that to queer mobility is to start from movement – not 'positioning' – and to work backwards from there. To start from movement is to start from the ontological potential of the body, and how it can offer insight into new methods, models and modalities of becoming a subject: of forging a position. As Massumi (2002, 30, original emphasis) goes on to explain,

> the body is as immediately virtual as it is actual. The virtual, the pressing crowd of incipiencies and tendencies, is a realm of *potential*. In potential is where futurity combines, unmediated, with pastness, where outside are infolded and sadness is happy … The virtual is a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt – albeit reduced and contained.

It is through our bodies that the virtual is accessed. It is also through our bodies – and the movements therethrough – that queer subject positions can be taken, and queer space-times realised. The virtuality of embodied movement foregrounds the 'transformation or *transitional fringing* of the actual' (Massumi 2002, 175, original emphasis; after Deleuze 1994) through the realisation of a topological spatiality. This is a distinctly qualitative spatiality, one that has 'no predictive value' as it 'resembles nothing outside itself' but nonetheless can be seen to 'literally make the virtual appear, in felt thought' (Massumi 2002, 135). Topological space renders the destination obsolete. It focusses attention on the movement – the doing – of mobility instead. This is a space that we are programmed to block out over time and through social conditioning. It is a space that blurs the boundaries between the real and the imagined. And, as such, it is a space that children readily access but for adults is an outcome of deliberate labouring (after Avilez 2019; Murray and Cortés-Morales 2019). The virtuality of movement therefore enables access to new spaces, or otherwise 'liminal'spaces that serve as 'passages where one crosses between one world and another' (March 2021, 3). Very recent scholarship has started to attend to the possibilities that come from exploring these spatial passages. In one example, Gieseking (2020, 941) lyrically explains how queer mobilities in urban spaces can be best understood as 'constellations'that 'are connected by overlapping, embodied paths and stories that bind them over generations and across many identities, like drawing lines between stars in the sky'. If nothing else, this article is an attempt to focus attention on the lines of movement that exist in-between, and which, in turn, can open mobilities scholarship up to a wider variety of epistemological possibilities.

## Conclusions

Queer mobilities are those that work through the interstices of desire and constraint. It is this sense of compromise, of in-betweenness, that both defines queer patterns of movement, but which also creates the potential for new directions, new potentialities, and new worlds to emerge. In many respects, these are movements that are rooted in and informed by the politics of sexually-defined subject positions, but which reach out and implicate many others as well. To see, engage with, and move through the world from a queer standpoint is, then, to 'see queer as a coalitional praxis' (Binnie 1997, 226) that is constantly searching for 'ways of knowing and

representing that are more inclusive than exclusive' (Brown and Knopp 2008, 43; also Lim et al. 2007). This is not a call for coherence. On the contrary, it is a call for fractures and divergences to be embraced, and a generative sense of disagreement to proliferate throughout geography in general and mobilities scholarship specifically. As a white, straight, able-bodied, cisgender male I do this from the assumed – but by no means straightforward – margins of a 'queer' subject position. These identifiers all shape how I move through the world, but that detracts nothing from the fact that any one – or more, or all – of them can become queered constructs when interpreted through the structuring logics of desire and constraint. Any regime of surveillance, judgement or expectation can be seen to constrain movement and conduct in ways that might be avoided if people more visibly *fit in*. In this sense queer patterns of mobility and movement offer theoretical openings through which the ethics of the encounter, of difference, of otherness can be interrogated anew.

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