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Voice, gender and mobility: haunting private and public spaces in Virginia Woolf's 'Street Haunting': Gendered space and mobility in the London of the 1930s

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Voice, gender and mobility: haunting private and public spaces in Virginia Woolf's 'Street Haunting'

Gendered space and mobility in the London of the 1930s



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Foreword

I started my English language journey in Volendam, the Netherlands, the place where I was born and raised and still reside today. While attending secondary school, I followed a Cambridge English programme that dug deeper into the language and culture of the United Kingdom – beyond the language itself. This lit a spark of interest in my thirteen-year-old self. It was then and there that I decided to learn more about this. From 2016 to 2019 I followed the Bachelor English Language and Culture at the University of Amsterdam. There, surprisingly enough, I mainly followed linguistic courses while avoiding literature courses wherever I could.

After graduating I started working for a legal translation company where my love for the language bloomed again. The urge to start following a master's started to itch and in September 2021 I started the Literature in Society: Europe and Beyond track at the Leiden University. Most of the courses I followed there were aimed at social issues and how these were tied to literature – how literature could shape or alter how people perceive society, but also the other way around, i.e. how the manner in which society is or was structured inspired various people to write novels, short stories and essays. This, in turn, inspired me to write my thesis on one of the most influential writers: Virginia Woolf. Her short story *Street Haunting* encouraged me to look beyond the words and seek what lies behind them. This is what I have tried to do in this thesis, while taking into account the influence of mobility, the different notions of both private and public spaces, how the flaneur and/or the flaneuse plays a role in all this and how the combination of these parameters deconstruct the short story on the basis of a close reading.

For me personally, it was not easy writing this thesis. It was paired with many ups and downs – while the dreading deadline came closer and closer. Of course, I could not have done this on my own. I want to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Sara Brandellero for giving me the power to persist and continue my way to the finish line. My family was a firm pillar in this process as well. This would not have been possible without the support of my boyfriend, parents and brother who were always there for me, also when I was not as positive.

I hope the reader of this thesis appreciates my research on Virginia Woolf's *Street Haunting*. Enjoy!

Lisa Lautenschutz

Volendam, 21 June 2023

Abstract

This thesis will address the position of female walker in London during the 1930s. The aim is to focus on significance of the figure of the flaneur in relation to the differences of mobility between men and women. In addition, the specific role of and differences between public spaces as opposed to private spaces are discussed. In order to do so, the short story *Street Haunting*, written by Virginia Woolf in 1930, will be used to incorporate all these aspects. It is important to question these matters as these issues are still at bay in today's society. The gap this thesis will fill is that it discusses the issue of having no explicitly gendered narrator, yet, almost all literature on the short story interpret the narrator to be female. This is due to certain social cues within the short story. The main question that will be answered is: How is the walker represented in *Street Haunting* and how does this relate to public and private spaces? The method used in order to arrive at an answer for this main question is close reading. This entails that every sentence of the short story will be examined closely and will be deconstructed and be read in its context in order to interpret the meaning of it. The aim of this thesis is to make readers aware that the power-related gender-mobility issues that are addressed in the short story, are still relevant today.

Key words: Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting*, Narrative, Gender-mobility, Flaneur

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Introduction

Subject and relevance

Virginia Woolf's 1927 short story *Street Haunting* includes the short story of an afternoon in the life of a person living in London, and how "an excuse for walking half across London between tea and dinner" (1) was needed to exit their home. The figure of the flaneur is represented in this time period as a male who is the observer but is almost never the observed. Yet, the female equivalent of this figure – the flaneuse – is not as well-known as her male counterpart. There is a body of literature on the male walker and in 'Street Haunting' the voice of the story acts as such a walker. This thesis will address how this is incorporated. The different experiences in public and private spaces, the telling thereof and how this relates to the figure of the flaneur and the research thereof still contain a certain gap. The voice of this story is not explicitly referred to as being either female or male; the story is written in a first-person plural, therefore, the interpretation that the narrator is female is solely based on social cues. In addition, the issue of urban mobility also with regard to gender is still relevant as the power relations that can be associated with it were as relevant then as they are in today's society.

In 2020, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) published research in which urban mobility and gender-sensitive infrastructure was addressed. It states that: "EIGE's survey results show that public space infrastructure – pedestrian areas, streetlights and green infrastructure – has a greater impact on women's urban mobility than on men's" and that "[t]he difference between women and men reached statistical significance ($p > 0.05$) in all cases" (3). What these statistics show is that despite living in the 21st century women still have feelings of uneasiness when trying to freely move around the city. It seems that public spaces are not designed to be used much by women. Private spaces, on the other hand, were designed to be more fit for women – and thus for them to spend more time in. The notion that to this day women are still unable to move, speak and roam freely, makes the present study all the more relevant.

Virginia Woolf's short story 'Street Haunting' addresses the issue of mobility and suggests that this is related to gender, among other things. In the time period this short story was written, it was not as common for women to walk around the city as it is today. Then, social norms demanded when and where women were allowed to go. Even though the gender of the narrator is never revealed, it can be assumed due to how the narrative is structured and the places visited, that the narrative voice is that of a woman.

This thesis attempts to incorporate the issues stated above by focusing on female experiences in both public and private spaces. The specific choice to differentiate between public and private spaces was made due to the different obligations that were associated with these different spaces. This is taken into account while also focusing on the concept of *flânerie* and the figure of the *flâneuse* as recorded in Virginia Woolf's short story 'Street Haunting'.

Problem and aim of the thesis

The narrator of Virginia Woolf's 'Street Haunting' is not explicitly a male or female. However, due to certain social cues, they are commonly interpreted to be female. These cues show that this point is still relevant as it makes apparent that even today, the reader is still tied to the same prejudices as people were in the previous century. The focus on *flânerie* then addresses the issues related to the self and how these tie in with public and private spaces. The aim of this thesis is to provide insight into how Virginia Woolf has laid down experiences of *flânerie* in the public space, how this relates to the private space and how the voice of the short story is related to haunting in the city.

Therefore, the main question this thesis will attempt to answer is:

- ❖ How is the experience of the urban walker represented in Street Haunting and how does it relate to public and private spaces?

The sub questions that this thesis will attempt to answer are:

- How is the experience of private and public spaces shaped and conveyed through experiences of mobility?
- What is the role of the *flâneur* and the *flâneuse* in society?
- What is the symbolic significance of the excuse for mobility presented by the narrative voice?

The manner in which I attempt to answer these questions is by performing a close reading of Virginia Woolf's short story 'Street Haunting'. The act of a close reading entails that each sentence of the short story is carefully examined and deconstructed in order for me to interpret it in the manner I see fit based on the literature set out in this thesis. This thesis will focus on the notion that the assumption that the narrator is female is mainly based on social cues. In addition, it will focus on the interpretation of *flânerie* as a haunting experience while relating this to an alienated experience of society, which attempts to provide a thorough insight into Woolf's experience of the city.

1 Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will set out the theories of relevant literature that touch upon theories of mobility, hauntology, the different notions of public and private spaces, and the concept of flânerie and the figure of the flaneur/flaneuse. In addition, literature on Virginia Woolf's short story 'Street Haunting' and the writer herself is discussed. This theoretical framework discusses the articles, novels and studies most relevant to answer the main and sub questions of this thesis. It will also provide insight into the key concepts and the definitions that will be used in this thesis. In addition, it will attempt to relate these concepts to each other. This thesis will refer to 'Street Haunting' as a short story. This was chosen such because an essay is considered to be nonfiction, while a short story also serves to entertain – which, in my opinion, the text subject to this thesis does. While it could be assumed that this writing by Virginia Woolf includes parts and notions that are nonfiction, this thesis will approach it to be fiction to the greater extent. This chapter will focus on mobility, hauntology and alienation, public and private spaces, and the role gender plays in society because even today, it has been demonstrated that it is still different for women to live and move in a city than it is for a man and I believe that women should have the same liberties for existing instead of being denied them.

1.2 Mobility

Across the globe, much research has been done on female mobility (Elkin, 2017; Kern, 2020). This thesis in part discusses mobility in the city, especially focusing on the difference between private and public spaces and their meaning. First, it is necessary to grasp the concept of mobility itself. What is it and how is it used? The question of mobility in relation to gender is not a new one. It has been said that the position of women in the city has always been seen as a problem (Kern 1). This became most apparent during the Industrial Revolution, when many people moved from the countryside to the city due to which the streets of the city showed a wide array of social classes. It became increasingly difficult for distinguished ladies to separate themselves from lower classes or worse, to be regarded a 'public woman'. Although even in the Victorian Era (1837-1901) women were given space to be part of the public to discuss safety and sexual violence (Kern 1) these freedoms, including the freedom to work in factories and domestic services, were frowned upon. By leaning into the independence that came with having jobs, women were blamed for "turning the family upside down" (Kern 2) as they did not have sufficient time to take care of their own homes – including all of the children – and blamed for the "demoralization of the working class" (Kern 2). Considering this, the city is seen as threatened by the other, the newcomer, and this outsider must be excluded for the original residents of the city to keep their ways. In practice, this newcomer was mostly female. However, this did not stop women

from entering the public domain as “city walks occur as significant moments for women to move beyond the home” (Mathieson 525). She continues to stress that these walks are nothing more than an interruption of daily life, but also mark “significance in terms of the development of self and agency” (Mathieson 256). Being able to walk around the city alone or with a female friend became more and more accepted and therefore, women’s confidence and independence increased. It provided them with the type of freedom to think for themselves and see a little more of the world that was always close to them, yet not available. Men – and society in itself – still expected women to be home and tend to it. This issue of agency over who gets to stroll the streets of the city and who benefits from the city is still at issue today. As Kern puts it: “women’s bodies are still often seen as the source or sign of urban problems” (3). Today’s issues are less about the purity of a woman when she roams the streets, but there are still “physical, social, economic and symbolic” (3) gendered obstacles women have to face every day. It is stressed that it is women in particular who face these struggles because men are the ones creating the cities, designing the spaces and placement of buildings without “knowledge, let alone concern for, how these decisions affect women” (3). It has become apparent that even to this day, cities are designed to support men and their traditional roles in society. She also points out that there is no or little expectation for this to change any time soon as the men who have shaped and are shaping the cities, continue this trend of exclusion even though there are many female and feminist architects, planners and services striving to accommodate women in everyday city life. An important aspect of this issue has to do with power and power relations. It is at the center of why and how cities keep women “in their place.” (4). In 2020, the European Institute for Gender Equality performed research on the gender-sensitive infrastructure of the city. This research found that women were more dependent on public transport, pavements, streetlights and parks in order to participate in society with regard to education, employment and mobility in general. The conclusion of this is that “urban planning impacts women’s safety, movement and income, contributing directly to livelihoods and quality of life” (EIGE 3). Kern argues, in that regard, that “the city isn’t really for [us women]” (5). This is an important aspect to keep into consideration as female mobility and the different notions of moving around the city are a key aspect of Virginia Woolf’s *Street Haunting*. In addition, a 1989 paper by Gill Valentine identified that women avoid specific contemporary urban spaces at certain times – more specifically during the night. This proves again that women cannot move freely and is the point of why it is important to discuss the issues of mobility in relation to power and gender.

In his 1999 essay ‘Embodiment, Power and the Politics of Mobility: The Case of Female Tramps and Hobos’, Cresswell describes that the fear for women to be seen outside without it being ‘appropriate’ to be the “tramp scare”. In general, his essay addresses “the wider geographical issues of mobility power and embodiment” (175). Even though the essay revolves around these matters taking place in

the United States, it describes the situation between 1869 and 1940, making it applicable to this thesis. The meaning he provides to mobility is that in a city, it should be considered to be “socialized movement” (176), that it is “human geographical activity imbued with meaning and power” (176) and this definition is the one that is also used in this thesis. In addition, he points out the difference between movement and mobility. Not every movement has a meaning or is a construct, whereas mobility as a concept is highly debatable and political. He then continues to argue the difference between how men move and how women move. This is particularly interesting because this has to do with intention, as women ‘have to’ appear feminine and therefore, that the expectations of society “construct the space of possible movement” (177). He argues that “[s]ocial space tends to shape bodily dispositions (such as ways of walking), which themselves constitute social identity” (178). Indicating that where someone is born and who they associate with, defines how they move. Then, why is this the case? Cresswell argues that power is a key factor in this matter because “power...is reproduced through the practices of people who act in accordance with internalized (embodied) schemes of perception” (178). According to him, any debates about the link between mobility and power are immediately linked to gender-related issues (178). This marks the importance of the issue of mobility with regard to gender and power relations.

1.3 Hauntology and alienation

The title of Virginia Woolf's short story cannot be left unconsidered. Especially with regard to the word ‘Haunting’, there are matters that are required to be discussed. As Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren state in their 2013 article ‘Spectropolitics: Ghosts of the Global Contemporary’: “across the world, there exist imaginative and social traditions involving ghost-like beings and other elusive phenomena” (91). In addition, they state that Derrida's hauntology “serve[s] as a counterweight or corrective to a stable, unitary sense of self” (95). This argues that his vision challenges the way in which the self is seen, and it helps stabilise it – to arrive at a truer self than before. A person contains aspects of their ancestors, this part is always ‘haunting’ them in a way, whether consciously or subconsciously. In his 2013 essay in ‘The Spectralities Reader’, Julian Wolfreys also relates the matter of hauntology to texts and literature, he argues that “[t]exts are neither dead nor alive, yet they hover at the very limites between living and dying. The text thus partakes in its own haunting, it is traced by its own phantoms, and it is this condition which reading must confront” (72). He continues to argue that, in a surprisingly meta-like structure, in research, books and novels and essays are often referred to as animate as if it “does things or make things occur” (72) as though “the text were merely a conduit, a spirit medium...by which the author communicates” (72). Therefore, the author is not merely the writer of the text, but there is still some part of them in the text when it is read. As such, the writer is haunting

the text and therefore, the reader. This notion can also be applied to Virginia Woolf's text, as some literature refers to the narrative voice as being Woolf herself. If this is assumed to be true, then in 'Street Haunting' the concept of Woolf is still lingering beyond the text. In this regard, the title of the short story was carefully chosen, as it is told in third person plural. Yet, this does not indicate that Woolf herself is guiding the reader with her through the story, as "it is the text itself which haunts and which is haunted by the traces which come together in this structure we call textual, which is phantomatic or phantasmatic in nature while, paradoxically, having an undeniably real or material effect, if not presence" (73). Text then, is an identity of itself and the figures that live in it belong to the "phantasmatic dimension of fabulation" (73) created by the reader's imagination. This, however, also implies that because it lives in the reader's mind, it is reality in some sense, therefore Derrida's quote that these textual imaginations lie somewhere "between the real and the fictional, between that which is neither real nor fictional" (Marx c'est quelqu'un 24).

As Sword writes in her 2018 book 'Ghostwriting Modernism', hauntology includes "a peculiarly modernist view of the spirit world, a realm marked by disconcerting physical metamorphoses, strange shifts of consciousness, and communicative frustrations that turn out to have enormous generative potential" (109). It provides an insight beyond the visual world, of what is common. Hauntology shows that there is more to what the eye can behold. It adds to the alienation of not feeling at home in the new city. This is also a modern concept which originated from the industrial revolution where people had to move from the country to the city in order to find a job. However, for many, the transition from the country to the city was not as expected. This resulted in feelings of not belonging and with sentimental feelings towards the countryside and nature. These persons were in search of their new identity in the city, while the city life around them never ceased its development. As Mariotti argues in his 2010 book 'Thoreau's democratic withdrawal: alienation, participation, and modernity', he argues that, according to Thoreau, "the instrumentalization of nature, an increasing preoccupation with business and commerce, cultural refinement, superficial manners, and rules of etiquette" (87) are what destroys what is real and imprisons people in the "trap of modernity" (87). He describes the manner in which Thoreau despises "the incessant busy-ness of trips to the post office and gossipy newspapers, and his wonder at the ways people burden their lives and ruin their health with luxury and material wealth" (87). As Thoreau was born in 1817 and died in 1862, he was one of the first to portray and discuss not only the wonders of modernity, but also the disadvantages thereof. This vision of the downside of modernity, where there was a shift of "material desires and aspirations to greater refinement and gentility" (88). This resulted in the society of 'Street Haunting' where polished items and the manner in which one was viewed became more important as "class was becoming an increasingly divisive issue" (90). This has worked its way through the 20th century, where in the society

of 'Street Haunting' nothing was more important than class, your upbringing, and having fancy items. Yet, the short story has already developed further, it has detached from this view, as the narrator floats above society instead of being part of it, and is therefore able to overview what is happening in that society without being prepressed or restrained by it. This shift in what people believed was important, is subject to power and wealth. The more privileged people were able to afford to even consider these issues, while the common people had to work endlessly in order to survive.

1.4 Public and private spaces

The meaning and importance of mobility is not complete without addressing the discussion on how the mobility in society differs between public and private spaces, and how this differs between men and women. The role that spaces play in relation to gender mobility is important because it gives rise to questions of why and how the issues related to these terms are interpreted. What is space and how does this relate to and differentiate from 'place'? It is important to elaborate on this and define these terms because what is understood to be a space or place and how this is regarded in society, shows how power is brought into play to manipulate the use of the city, especially with regard to women. In the society of Virginia Woolf's *Street Haunting*, there is a significant distinction in the female role between public and private spaces. However, before this can be discussed, it must be determined what is space and what does it mean. How is it defined and who has the agency to decide on this definition. In his 2004 book *'Place: a short introduction'*, Cresswell studies these concepts and provides an insight into the importance of the distinction between them. In its simplest form, place is nothing but "a meaningful location" (7), and the meaning of a place can be attributed by anyone. This is relevant to this thesis as it should first be established how private and public spaces are perceived in society and why some characteristics are associated with the one space, and others with the other space – and when, then, this space becomes a place. He then continues to describe place to be "both simple...and complicated" (1). Place suggests ownership and distinction – 'my place' versus 'your place'. This means that a space can be owned, and that this owner has power over this place, meaning that they can deny access or exploit the grounds. But what makes a space a place? Cresswell states that us humans make spaces places by familiarising with the space, by making it personal – in other words: a space is not a place until someone gives meaning to it. Therefore, spaces must have a connection to humans before it can become a place, people have a "subjective and emotional attachment...to place" (7). The fact that people attach meaning to a space and can then claim it as their own, also leads to "reactionary and exclusionary xenophobia, racism and bigotry" (11). This ties in with female experiences of the city as included in EIGE's study on urban mobility issues with regard to women. In the time period of *'Street Haunting'* people moved from the countryside to the city to

experience the opportunities the city had to offer. As Kern states, “the city is the place where women had choices open up for them that were unheard of in small towns and rural communities” (6). Considering this, London was a place of freedom. There were opportunities for a career, sexual freedom, and some socio-political engagement. In addition, in the public space of the city, there was the advantage of “anonymity, energy, spontaneity, unpredictability” (6). Yet, the reality is that many women were still confined to their homes. The private sphere of the home was seen as the natural domain of women. They were expected to prioritise the needs of the family over their own ambitions and desires in a constant reminder of the limitations of the private space that is considered ‘theirs’ (Mathieson 525). Even the general discourse on women revolved around the domestic sphere (Mathieson 534). As stated by Ryan in her 1992 article *Women in public between banners and ballots, 1825-1880*: “the bulk of the scholarship created by historians of women over the last fifteen years has located female subjects in more private and retiring places” (58-9). Yet, women made up a “substantial portion of the city’s labor force” (63), therefore, their presence in the public space could no longer be ignored. All sorts and classes of women utilised public spaces for shopping and recreation – either with or without a chaperone. Yet, “women’s access to new kinds of public space was welcome and enjoyable, but it had its limits and exacted its price” (87), suggesting that even though public places were increasingly more accessible to women, it was still only a certain type of women who were ‘allowed’ access to the public spheres without being considered a ‘public woman’.

In addition, Cresswell (1999) states that “the private realm has been associated with stability, rootedness and femininity, [while] the public realm has been described as fluid, mobile and masculine” (178). Although he continues to argue that the reality might have been different:

“Feminine and other critiques of this equation have asserted that women have played public roles and experienced mobility in all kinds of ways (Ryan 1990), that the private sphere can be a space of resistance and agency (see McDowell 1996a) and that the public and private spheres are permeable, with each enabling and constraining in different ways (Milroy and Wismer 1994). It has also been pointed out that the male/female, public/private binaries are often discussed from a white, middle-class perspective (Blunt and Rose 1994)” (178)

With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that the public sphere however, is not merely a place with limited access for women. Spiro also argues that “the public sphere becomes a space where the aesthetic and the moral are linked through narrative” (132). This implies that a narrative – i.e. novel, essay or short story – can define a public space. How spaces are described, is how there can be perceived. This is why it is important to discuss the meaning of private and public spaces in society. The freedom to decide for yourself where to go and when to go there are a great good and relevant to

this thesis because it suggests that because of these different meanings to places, different people have different abilities and privileges.

1.5 The flâneur and the flâneuse

The flâneur is a modernist concept and characterised by Louis Huart's quote: "Man rises above all other animals only because he can stroll". This figure is described as "a man of leisure and an observer of the spectacle of city life, perhaps also a relatively privileged worker, a journalist or artist of the urban" (Carrera Suarez 854). In the first instance, women were not considered flâneurs, but were rather regarded as lust objects for the eye. The flâneur mingled in the crowd, he did not stand out in any way. The female counterpart of this figure, the flâneuse, is controlled by her class and race (855). This because it was only accepted for white, wealthy women were able to consider merely strolling in the city without having to go somewhere. In 2017, Charlotte Mathieson wrote an article on city walking in the mid-nineteenth century. And even though this is not precisely the time period of Woolf's short story *Street Haunting*, this was the period in which the concept of the flâneur was first introduced and it provides insight into the evolution of mobility of women in the city especially. It has been assessed by Mathieson in her 2017 essay 'A Still Ecstasy of Freedom and Enjoyment': *Walking the City in Charlotte Brontë's Villetta* that "[f]eminist critics have sought to counter the cultural predominance of the male flâneur and reassert women's presence in the city, identifying a host of women walking and writing about their urban encounters." (522). The figure of the flâneuse, the female version of the male flâneur, was not common in 19th and 20th century literature. This makes writers such as Virginia Woolf all the more important. It is described how even though women are able to enjoy the pleasure of walking around the city, they are "nuanced by an ambivalence at the penalties of female movement, the dangers of disrepute that city walking entails, and the necessity and inevitability of the stasis of return. Both the pleasures and dangers of walking are represented at the level of the body; the physical becomes a vehicle for debates about women's mobility" (522-23). This entails that even though women could roam, they were not really free – they were still restrained by society's prejudices and obligations. It is important to include the concept of the flâneur in this thesis because it provides an insight into how different social groups were viewed and how this affected them. Who could and could not be in different places and what was the norm. It shows an overview of the daily life of people from all different social classes. In addition, Mathieson describes walking the city as a "significant moment for women to move beyond the home" (525) because it offered them the freedom women oftentimes did not have. She also stresses that such practices are "typically reserved for the masculine flâneur" (526), although the description of a woman walking the streets triggers the discussions surrounding the flâneuse. Mathieson describes that for women, walking "is...turned from a

prohibited act into a source of agency and independence” (526). The flâneur was an important figure to Woolf herself as well. As she also stated in *Mrs. Dalloway*: “I love walking in London. Really it’s better than walking in the country”. As such, the figure of the flâneuse returns in more than one of her novels. As Elkin describes in her 2017 book *Flâneuse. Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*, the freedom of moving around allowed Woolf’s thoughts to flow and “helped her become a professional writer” (15). In that sense, Woolf herself was a flâneur. She “[filled] her books with the people she observed, walking, shopping, working, pausing.” (17). Elkin describes this flâneur figure of *Street Haunting* and states that “in the street we are no longer ‘quite ourselves’ – instead we become ‘functions of the urban landscape’” (24). This means that the narrator of *Street Haunting* could be assumed to be Virginia Woolf herself, describing one of her own walks through London. Once more, the difficulty that relates to walking the city as a woman cannot be undiscussed. Kern states that women were also “constantly exposed to temptation, and, once ‘fallen’, a woman was doomed, many reformers believed, to a life of increasing degradation and an early and tragic death” (2). This relates to the fear that a woman who was walking in the streets at the wrong time or in the wrong place, could be regarded as a ‘public woman’. Assuming that once a woman had been in the proximity of another woman who was considered a prostitute or a public woman, she was considered only in that respect for the rest of her life. In his book from 1984, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau states strikingly: “[t]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (97). Suggesting that everyone can do it in their own way, and in doing so, will contribute to the diversity of it. It is the using of the space that shapes it. However, the issue of who can walk or speak, and when this can be done, is dependent on privilege. He argues that by walking the city, different realities and memories of places are created and only remembered by those who have seen the other. He makes a distinction between the people who walk the city, and those who observe the city. He characterises these “walkers” to be blind, unable to see the larger picture – only those able to oversee can see its meaning and importance of these places. In his 1999 essay *Embodiment, Power and the Politics of Mobility: The Case of Female Tramps and Hobos* Cresswell describes that “[t]he two areas within which the mobility of women in public space has most frequently been discussed are the flâneuse and the imperial lady traveller (178). He continues that in essence, the subject of the flâneur was created when Paris opened its boulevard where people could stroll anonymously while “gazing at fellow strollers and revelling in the everyday” (178). The figure, however, was not accepted by all. Some described him as a “modern hero moving easily through the spaces of modernity” (178), while feminist writers pointed out that these freedoms were only part of the masculine experience of the modern city. The figure of the flâneur therefore has many different aspects to it, also relating to mobility and power relations.

1.6 Street Haunting and Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf is one of the most influential female writers of the twentieth century. She ensured attention was provided to important political and social issues. An example of this is her 1930 short story 'Street Haunting'. This short story revolves around a woman who goes outside, with the intention of buying a pencil. On her way, she comes across various persons, visits various shops and certain memories come to mind whereby her imagination runs freely. The short story is not focused on the person telling the story per se, but on the telling itself – what they encounter and how this invokes thoughts and implications. It serves as a powerful example of how the afternoon of a person in the 1930s in London could look like, while observing all of its limitations and creating new possibilities. The role Virginia Woolf has played in the development of women's position cannot be overlooked. In her 1991 article 'Guerrilla in Petticoats or Sans-Culotte? Virginia Woolf and the Future of Feminist Criticism', Bette London places Woolf "at the heart of feminist scholarship" (12) and stated that she "was often at the center of the most spirited critical debates" (12). This is particularly interesting for this thesis as it implies that, at that time, a new way of looking at feminism and feminist scholarship supposedly started with Woolf's writing.

Elkin: "Within our houses, Woolf writes, we are surrounded by the objects that make us who we are: things we have chosen and arranged, which 'express' and 'enforce' our identities" (16)

Virginia Woolf is undeniably one of the more important writers of her time. She was born in London and her father was a literary critic. This already shaped her because it provided her with insights others might not have had. She often wandered through the streets of London and did so on her own most times (19). Elkin also states that Woolf believed that "the city...was forever attracting, stimulating her, giving her a play and a story and a poem" (21). This is what has made her so unique as a writer – being able to see her stories everywhere she went. But there is more to her than this alone. She was also much interested in politics and especially the position of women in society. Her "representation of the city is indicative of her attention to the economic and gendered politics of space" (Simpson 1). Showing that not only was Woolf from a privileged background, she was also a person who spoke out about it and wanted to change things for the better. The short story includes issues of gender and class, and shows the limitations imposed on women through social norms and expectations. Therefore, it confronts the reader with patriarchal systems and assumptions. Bette London describes Woolf to be a rebel and claims that she is "at the heart of feminist scholarship" (12). Therefore, it has been stated that Woolf was not only a writer, but also politically engaged, she had opinions on all sorts of matters, and that her writing should be considered in that light. In that regard, London also brings attention to the fact that feminist studies play an important role in the

“production, reproduction and transformation of social discourses and knowledge” (13) with Woolf as the main figure. In addition, she argues that over time, Woolf has achieved more critical legitimacy – she has turned from “respectable” (16) to a “guerrilla fighter” (16), she turned from a “educated man’s daughter” (15) to a female writer with a feminist literature legacy.

With regard to the short story itself, Saloman states that “‘Street Haunting’ opens with the implicit claim that it is not the subject matter or ‘purpose’ of the essay that renders it meaningful or defines it as a literary form, but rather the journey set in motion by that purpose, which need not bear any relation to the given pretext” (24). In addition to this, she argues that the author is constrained “physically and psychologically” within a small space as “her surroundings force the [author] into a given role that must be maintained for purposes of convenience and feasibility” (28). In this regard, it appears as though Woolf is both the author and the narrator. Salamon continues expressing the nature of the short story, although she refers to it as an essay, by stating that:

“The essay is as changeable as its author, and this fluctuation in the speaking persona, rather than a weakness (as it surely would be in a novel), is the mark of the essay’s authority. Its freedom of movement allows the essay to personify itself, and to create a blurring – or, better, a melding – of fictional and non-fictional worlds that differs from what the novel has to offer.” (31)

This quote holds, in my opinion, the essence of the short story. It suggests that it is unsure whether the narrator of the short story is Woolf herself or a fictional person, or that the people encountered by the narrator and the storytelling within the short story were factual experiences of Woolf herself, or purely imagined or at least exaggerated. The beauty of this short story is that we can never know to what extent it is fiction or non-fiction. Salamon refers to the short story to be “vulnerable” (31), which is striking in my opinion because of the manner in which it addresses the position of women in that society. It refers to how women desperately attempt to produce an excuse to leave their home and to be part of the new societal experiences that were arising in the city at that time. Then, in this short story, the narrator attempts to escape and imagines stories or exaggerations – as I believe – when seeing or encountering persons around them and not per se to be part of society – only to observe and encounter it. Salamon adds that the short story’s “value comes finally from its capacity to thrive in a liminal space, one located just outside or on the cusps of various intersecting identities. It is the moments in which a person passes from self to self and is caught in the spaces between that the essayist seeks to capture” (32). This suggests that the manner in which the short story is written, attempts to capture the moment in which a person sees themselves through another person and imagines themselves to be in that position in order to find another aspect of their own true selves just

outside the comforts of their own home. Cheryl Hindrichs adds to this in her 2009 article 'Feminist Optics and Avant-Garde Cinema: Germaine Dulac's "The Smiling Madame Beudet" and Virginia Woolf's "Street Haunting"' by stating that "[t]he seeming purposelessness of the imaginative perambulations of the narrator...through public and private spaces is used by Woolf...for a feminist purpose, to show the inadequacy of given gendered categories and narratives...to contain or express their subjects" (296). Suggesting that through the narrative of 'Street Haunting' Woolf has attempted to show how roaming the streets of London at night are not without a cause, it is to show that, as Cresswell has stated above, the meaning of a place and in particular in relation to gender-related issues. This thesis attempts to add to the literature on Virginia Woolf and 'Street Haunting' by addressing the significance of both public and private places in London and how this addresses gender-related issues while taking into account the role of the flaneur and the flaneuse. In this regard, it is also important to mention that the gender of the narrator is not explicitly mentioned anywhere throughout the short story. However, due to the manner in which the story is structured and the mention of certain social cues, it is generally assumed that the narrator is female. Therefore, the issue of gender-mobility are at stake as well.

2 Narrative, voice, and gender mobility

The manner in which 'Street Haunting' is formulated, and the impact it can have on the reader, is in my opinion, unique. Due to the use of the first-person plural perspective, the reader is drawn into the story. It feels as though the reader and the narrator are roaming the city of London together. The text never refers to the narrator as being either male or female, yet the shops visited by the narrator and the soft manner in which the short story is written, make it appear as though it is a woman. Some even argue that it is Virginia Woolf herself who is the narrator. These assumptions force the reader to interpret the narrator to be female. The first clue for this assumption is the first line of the short story: "No one perhaps has ever felt passionately towards a lead pencil" (Woolf 1). This line prompts the question of why should this person be so passionate about a pencil? What lies behind it? The following line explains that it is nothing more than "a pretext" and "an excuse for walking half across London between tea and dinner" (1). This wording suggests that it was necessary for a woman to make excuses before being allowed to go out. The longing with which she attempts to leave her private space and enter the public space, is exemplary for the position of women in that time. As stated above, the private space was the realm of the women. Yet this excuse provided the narrator with freedom, with independence to a certain extent. Because of the excuse "we could indulge safely in the greatest pleasure of town life...rambling the streets of London" (1). Indicating that it was only due to this excuse that it was safe for this person to be out of their home at that time of the day. This is the first social cue leading to the assumption that the narrator is a woman. The narrator continues to mention the desired hour to roam. For them, it is "the evening hour" as it "gives us the irresponsibility which darkness and lamplight bestow. We are no longer quite ourselves" (1). This suggests that when a person is out of their homes at night, it encourages them to do things they usually cannot do, as their actions are now concealed from sight. It suggests that when they are out at night, they are a different person than who they are during the day at home. Once more, it also suggests that the narrator needs this excuse in order to be someone else than society expects them to be during the day. Then the narrator continues to state that when people are outside of their homes, they "shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room" (1-2). This sentence is significant because it refers to how the character of people can be different in their private spaces as compared to the public spaces. It suggests that the narrator 'needs' to be a different person in their private space, and only when that space is left behind, they can let go of that self, of the prejudices and obligations. After this, she describes her home, her private space, and refers to a bowl standing on her mantelpiece and then to a brown stain on the carpet, both of which represent a memory of a place and a feeling – a state of being. These pieces are what make this home her home. Then once the home

is left behind, "all that vanishes" (2). Suggesting that after leaving the home, she is no longer tied to these prejudices and obligations. With regard to voice and providing a voice to others, this short story refers to minorities in a manner that is at least familiar. Upon entering the boot shop, it shows the problems a small person might experience when attempting to do something as mundane as purchasing new boots. Considering the societal stance of Virginia Woolf herself – as she was quite aristocratic – and by highlighting this, she acknowledges the reality of the prejudices small persons face and give them a voice. When she then continues to describe the manners in which "the halt and the blind" are living in the "narrow old houses between Holborn and Soho" (7), it also addresses the issues other disabled people face. It is important to take into account the fact that Woolf herself was from a well-off family, and for her to address these problems show how much of a progressive stance she had. By including the everyday issues of these persons, it gives them a voice, it shows the reader how these people are viewed and prejudiced. Here, the narrator creates a wedge between "they" and "us". In this context, it could be interpreted such that the narrator as well is one of the more aristocratic people in the streets and does not belong to the "they" who are "gold beaters, accordion pleaters" (7) but rather to the people regarded to have "sequined cloaks and bright legs of diners and dancers" (8). Yet, "they do not grudge us, we are musing, our prosperity" (7). Suggesting that they are submitting to the life they live and hoping that once, these 'we'-figures, instead of only musing on their prosperity, use it for the betterment of others' lives. This small sentence also suggests that the 'they'-people do not have time to grudge them, they are solely focused on surviving yet another day. Moreover, the text shows that in public spaces, wealth and poverty lie not far away from each other, as it is noted that homeless person:

"choose[s] to lie not a stone's thrown from theatres, within hearing of barrel organs, almost, as night draws on, within touch of the sequined cloaks and bright legs of diners and dancers. They lie close to those shop windows where commerce offers to a world of old women laid on doorsteps, of blind men, of hobbling dwarfs, sofas which are supported by the gilt necks of proud swans..." (8)

It shows the individuality that is characterised by the modernistic society. Wealth and poverty living and experiencing life this close together, but with extremely different experiences. These homeless people, blind people, and dwarfs can only imagine purchasing the items behind the shop windows. For them, being able to purchase such an item would mean a different life. The doorstep that is one's 'home', is another's sidewalk. The people there who live on the streets, live close to places where society thrives. However, they are not part of it. They use the public spaces of other people as their own private space. Subsequently, an imaginary party "in the deserted streets of Mayfair" describes the imagined life of the wealthy, which is indicated by the notion that the person is "[w]earing pearls,

wearing silk” and overlooking the public space of Mayfair. This life will never be achieved by them. Voicing these issues forces the reader to think about how these issues can be related to today's society. In large cities, homeless people are still found in and around public places the wealthy or tourists visit. Them begging for change is to them the same as the shop windows are to the persons from the story. It provides them with an idea, a hope, for a better future, that can be imagined through the change in their cups.

The narrative also tends to another aspect. It uses certain metaphors to relate the reader to the story. To make them rethink the things they have read. While at a first glance, it might appear as though the only intention of the narrator is just to purchase a pencil, the power of the pencil is consistently referred to in ‘Street Haunting’. Approximately in the middle of the short story, the narrator wonders about the irrationality of it all. It is stated: “But what could be more absurd? It is, in fact, on the stroke of six;...we are walking to the Strand to buy a pencil. How, then, are we also on a balcony, wearing pearls in June?”. This suggests precisely the power of the pencil. The power to create stories everywhere and lay them down is vested in the pencil. The pencil itself creates opportunities; it created the short story itself. It ensures the narrator of stories and being able to write them down. This is also reflected in the paragraph about the second-hand bookshop. Although it is not only the pencil that has a metaphoric meaning, it also points out the importance of novels and storytelling, about how it can consume all of the thoughts of a person and how it can shape a person. And for the narrator, this place is even a place to “balance ourselves after the splendours and miseries of the streets” (11) – where the outside world with all its expectations and prejudices does not matter for just a brief moment. The narrator goes on to argue that second-hand books are “wild” and “homeless” (11) and are more appealing to her because they are not as “domesticated” (11) as the books in the library. It suggests that this interpretation of second-hand bookshops and libraries are a metaphor of society itself. This because the second-hand bookshop suggests that the individuality of books should be emphasised whereas in libraries, books are sorted and categorised, placed in certain boxes and their individuality is disregarded. As in society, where in the wilderness of the streets, people can be anyone, do not per se belong anywhere, while in private places, people are bound by their place in society and all that belongs to it. In addition to this, the narrator mentions that in second-hand bookshops, as would be in a supposedly more ‘ideal’ world, that “in this random miscellaneous company we may rub against some complete stranger who will, with luck, turn into the best friend we have in the world” (11). This could be interpreted such that if in life people would be more open to meet people that may be outside of their ‘box’, interesting friendships and companionships could be created. That, instead of being stuck in your social class and by your social obligations, if people were more open to each other, also including others who might not fit in, and mingle, maybe there is

someone special in a place that was not expected at first glance. Then, the narrator continues to mention how in bookshops “the unknown and the vanished” (13) also have a chance to become friends with ‘us’ – the narrator and the reader. This indicates that even though these books, or certain people, might be outliers, there is a place for them to thrive and be of value. As in society, where there should be a place for everyone to thrive and be of value. Subsequently, when the narrator enters the stationer’s shop, this is the part where the significance of the pencil becomes apparent in another aspect. When the narrator enters the shop to purchase the pencil, there is a tension in the air. The shop owner and his wife have had a quarrel. However, because there is now a customer in the shop, they have to cease it. Then, the act of the pair having to work together in order to find the pencil and subsequently end the quarrel is significant because it suggests that the pencil, and the words it can write, brings people together. It suggests that despite any differences in views, the pencil has the ability to bridge these differences and rationalise them in order to reconcile these difficulties. In addition, in this paragraph, the narrator states that there is not one pencil that fits all, after all, “one had to be particular in one’s choice of pencils; this was too soft, that too hard”. This could also be applied to quarrelling and the solving thereof. In order to settle an argument, some people might require a soft handling, other a more firm one. In that respect, it could be suggested that people should be careful in choosing the manner in which they speak to and intend to use words to another person. Then, after the pencil was found, “[t]he quarrel was over”. This suggests that in providing the right person with the right type of pencil, or words, people can come closer to one another and solve any differences they may have.

Another aspect that is referred to throughout the short story is nature. It shows the softness between the hard lines of city life. The text refers to souls having a “shell-like covering” (2) that breaks once leaving the house and “there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye” (3). Suggesting that while at home our self is covered by a ‘shell’, once outside, we can become part of nature again instead of only being part of society. When the narrative shifts to describing London, it does not only focus on the buildings and people who live there, but also the nature living in it as it states that:

“[h]ow beautiful a London street is then, with its islands of light, and its long groves of darkness, and on one side of it perhaps some tree-sprinkled, grass-grown space where night is folding herself to sleep naturally and, as one passes the iron railing, one hears those little cracklings and stirrings of leaf and twig which seem to suppose the silence of fields all around them, an owl hooting, and far away the rattle of a train in the valley. But this is Lodnon, we are reminded; high among the bare trees are hung oblong frames of reddish yellow light – windows” (3)

It suggests that even though London is a city “with its islands of light”, it is surrounded by nature, it is all around and is an undeniable feature of the city. This is a highly Modern type of description. It attempts to provide the reader with a feeling of ease, of recognition, between “a London square, set about by offices and houses” (3) which represents a feeling of alienation. The text then continues on to refer to walking the city and stopping to look at something as “impeding our passage down the smooth stream by catching at some branch or root” (4) then again, the feeling alienation is awakened by the mentioning of “the sleeping army may stir itself and wake in us a thousand violins and trumpets in response; the army of human beings may rouse itself and assert all its oddities and sufferings and sordidities” (4) suggesting that now, there is still peace and quiet in the street, but once the working people are in the streets again, they bring in their dirt and wretchedness, and disrupt the nature that is still in the city. Not only nature, but mother nature and the creation of men play a role in the short story as it is stated that “it is nature’s folly, not ours” (10) that when people were created mother nature “let creep [into each of us] instincts and desires which are utterly at variance with his main being, so that we are streaked, variegated, all of a mixture; the colours have run” (10). This indicates that people are not only one thing, they can be many things at once and this was already the case upon the creation of mankind. The reference to “his main being” can be interpreted in many ways. It is solely at the discretion of the reader to how this is interpreted. In this thesis, I will interpret it to mean that this refers to what the person believes is their main being, i.e. their conscious self. Then, these “instincts and desires” are a reference to the subconscious self. This subconscious self is able to rise to the surface when roaming the city as that is the place where one can let go of society’s obligations and prejudices. The conscious self, on the other hand, is the self that is contained and reserved within the home, this is where the “main being” is outed most prominently. Yet at some moments, “the colours...run” – sometimes people fail to suppress their subconsciousness and this is where the narrator steps in. The narrator is aware of this and in doing so, makes the reader also aware of their multiple selves. This entails that before being able to let go of the “main being” and become aware of our subconscious self, with all its desires and shortcomings, the narrator needed to leave the comfort of their home and engage with their surroundings. The following chapter will dive deeper into this.

3 Haunting private and public spaces with the flaneur – in search of the true self

The previous chapter discussed the issues of the short story in relation to the narrative and voice used. In addition, gender-related aspects were also taken into account. These matters are more of the overlooking aspects of the short story. This chapter will build onto this by not only referring to mobility in itself, but also relating this to specifically public and private spaces, how the narrator moves between them and how this relates to the flaneur and to which extent this ties in with the search for the 'true' self. In 'Street Haunting', there is a certain significance to the word 'haunting. According to Merriam Webster, the word 'haunt' has three different meanings, namely, "to visit often", "to reappear continually in" and "to visit or inhabit as a ghost". This indicates that in choosing the title, Woolf has already created the notion of visiting, of lingering, of pervading public spaces. The short story refers to our souls having a "shell-like covering" (2) that breaks when roaming the streets. The short story describes London with much detail that makes the reader feel part of it. The reader is together with the voice in the streets, absorbing all that is to see in this public space. It makes one of the most explicit references to a flaneur-like state when it mentions that the soul is like "an enormous eye" (3) and, when walking the streets, "it floats us smoothly down a stream; resting, pausing, the brain sleeps perhaps as it looks" (3). This reference suggests that when walking the streets, we are not ourselves, we are only our eyes, we observe but do not feel or judge with the prejudices that lie within our brains, we only look – just as the flaneur. It is as if the narrator is not really there, as if it haunts the streets of London. The narrator of Street Haunting roams shops of London, and although it seems as though the narrator might be there to purchase something, the reader is only there to observe a situation or a thought of the narrator, after which the shop is left. This suggests that the narrator attempts to teach the reader. What does it mean to live in this society and how does this relate to how society is constructed? However, not only the shops that are visited are relevant, the persons encountered on this stroll are also significant. Through all of them, the narrator is able to find a piece of themselves, a piece they can relate to – where they recognise themselves. In addition, the excuse needed to go out, the urge to purchase a pencil relates to how the narrator feels as though they are left out and how much they long to be a part all that is perceived outside. It also relates to how a woman cannot be herself outside when she is not alone because it would remind her too much of who she is supposed to be around others, this person can be perceived as a different self, or is at least not entirely her true self. Moreover, the issue of selfhood outside is also addressed when the "army of anonymous trampers" (1) is referred to, which implies that people outside of the home convert into a single mass without individuality and by going outside, the narrator, too, becomes part of that anonymous crowd. Therefore, a person should need to be out on their own before being able to

become their true self – without having the prejudices and expectations of others imposed on them because they are anonymous outside. In addition, the different notions as told by the narrator, makes the reader wonder what is real – as she states: “[a]m I here, or am I there?” (10) then she continues to question the meaning of the true self “Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves” (10). This suggests that the true self is something that is hard to grasp. It is something that can be ‘here’ or anywhere the mind takes it. Then, the question arises: who is the real ‘I’ and when does it arise? It could be while at home, but also when with friends, or when alone in the streets. Yet, it could also be there while fantasising about different lives and places. This is also the issue of the flaneur. It observes, and takes different aspects of others they observe with them. It is stated that when passing someone in the street, you only hear or see one aspect of a person, it is only “a flash of understanding” (13) which “fabricates a lifetime” (13). All that is outside of that framework or moment, the passer-by must create themselves. Which is, I believe, what the narrator does with these persons they pass. They see and hear glimpses of their stories or lives, after which the narrator, of Woolf, creates the rest of it. In their 2013 book ‘The Spectralities Reader : Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory’ Del Pilar Blanco and Peeren also refer to Amos Tutuola who “takes the figure of the wandering subject, for whom there is no self-mastery, but who is instead forced into a continuous re-making of the self through the profoundly ambiguous and fraught dimensions of imagination, work, and remembrance” (95). Subsequently, the text suggests that it is nearly impossible to become their actual true self because society requires a person to fit in, that it is undesirable to be a “nomad wandering in the desert” (10). That in order to be a “good citizen” (10), “[one] must run his fingers through his hair and put his umbrella in the stand like the rest” (10) and blend into the mass of the city and walk on the path society has created for them. This is also emphasised further on in the short story when the narrator refers to people travelling home from work as being “in some narcotic dream” (14). As though they are drunk with the idea of ever having a life different than the one they are living now. In their minds they are “great cricketers, famous actresses, soldiers who have saved their country at the hour of need” (14), yet, “they must hang up and lock the key upon [this dream]” (14) until they can leave their desk and return home and can imagine it once again. However, when they are at work, “the clock in the hall and the smell of the supper in the basement” (14) then shatters the dreamlife all over. The narrator continues to point out that in this society, “one must, one always must, do something or other” (14). It suggests that it is difficult to do nothing or wish to achieve nothing in life in personal, academical or professional fields without being reprimanded or frowned upon. This continues to this day and can be applied to men and women equally. Following this thought, the narrator then turns the narrative around to the beginning to the novel by stating “Was it not for this reason, that, some time ago, we

fabricated the excuse, and invented the necessity of buying something? But what was it? Ah, we remember, it was a pencil" (14). In this one instance, the narrator brings the reader back to the objective of the novel: purchasing a pencil. Yet, because this phrase is placed near the end of the short story, and after having read the greater part of the short story, it enables the reader to wonder about the necessity of the purchase, of what lies behind it – the greater meaning of it. I believe that this is the point where the reader might realise the strangeness of society and its expectations, as it is this sentence with which the narrator returns to the beginning of the short story. It is significant because at the beginning of the short story, the reader is still unaware of why one can only be its true self outside their home and why it is necessary or desirable to such an extent to go outside to buy a pencil. Yet, by having read about the people and possible stories that are found outside the house, it is at this moment that the importance of the mere purchasing of a pencil becomes more apparent. However, just as the narrator wants to go to the stationer's shop they come across yet another location where yet another self is established. In this moment once more, they are torn between "obey[ing] the command" (14) or allowing "the right of the tyrant to insist" (14). This self is not one with an impressive career or a lot of money, this self is "calm, aloof, content" (15) – they do not care about the world around them. Maybe this is the self the narrator wishes to be, the self that is free and not attached to the strains of society and daily life. Yet, the narrator also voices her reservations as she states that "[i]t is only when we look at the past and take from it the element of uncertainty that we can enjoy perfect peace" (15). This suggests that there cannot be peace in the present or future moment, because this always contains an element of uncertainty as it is always unknown to what might happen. Then this could be the reason why there are so many different selves. They serve to escape the present and create a self that is in different circumstances and has no actual present or future – only that which the narrator creates. This is again highlighted in the final paragraph of the short story. It suggests that while roaming the streets and encountering the different people, one "penetrates" the lives of others "a little way, far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others" (17) in order to escape the self, still "what greater delight and wonder can there be than to leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into those footpaths that lead...into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men?" (17). It concludes that "to escape is the greatest of pleasures" (17), that while imagining all of these different lives, the narrator is able, maybe, to come closer to their own true self. However, coming home where the self is filled with "the old prejudices" (17) now once again become "sheltered and enclosed" (18) also provides a feeling of comfort. Although, as the narrator has obtained the pencil, they are now free to imagine more selves which makes them free even from the comfort or constraints of their own home. And nothing has changed inside of the home, but as a person, the narrator, and perhaps the reader, has changed by all that they

have observed while roaming the streets of London. Once the narrator returns home, everything there is still the same, “the chair is turned as we left it and the china bowl and the brown ring on the carpet” (18). The private space has not changed at all, while outside and on the inside the reader and narrator many changes have taken place while “rambling the streets of London” (1).

4 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to answer the main question: How is the female walker represented in *Street Haunting* and how does she relate to public and private spaces?

Yet first, the sub questions must be answered in order to provide an overview that leads to the answer to the main question.

The first sub question is: How do different spaces and places relate to gender mobility?

The theoretical framework has shown that spaces and places have their own meaning. In short, a space is a location without meaning to a person, but can have a function. A place is a space that has meaning to someone – for example someone's childhood bedroom. Then, mobility entails the act of moving around, however, it is not that simple. The term relates to aspects of power and is different for each gender. This because people that have more power, have a greater ability to move around much – be it by car, airplane or public transport. The issues surrounding mobility in relation to gender are “physical, social, economic and symbolic” (Kern 3), which means that they encompass the entirety of society. The private space was, in principle, the place where women should reside. They were to tend homes and raise children – not be outside and come into contact with all kinds of different distractions. The public space was where mostly men predominated. They were the ones who went to work and bars and clubs. However, the introduction of the industrial revolution changed this. Women were also allowed to work and be part of public spaces. However, this had to be contained to certain events or times of the day, otherwise, one was seen as a public woman – which was one of the greatest disgrace. This was, however, not only a problem of the past. Still, women are regarded as a problem, while men are still the ones creating the cities, designing the spaces and determining the placement of buildings without “knowledge, let alone concern for, how these decisions affect women” (Kern 3). It has become apparent that to this day, cities are designed to support men and their traditional roles in society. This means that in the past and still today, women are the ones who have to adjust their paces, schedules and routes in order to arrive somewhere safely and return home safely while men are not even aware of this problem – or ignore it at all.

These aspect can all be found in the short story *Street Haunting*. The first paragraph already provide an insight into the escapism women feel with regard to their homes. Here, the narrator provides herself with an excuse to leave the house – she will purchase a pencil. The private space serves as the narrator's safe space where everything provides them with a memory. However, her desire to leave the home is greater because “rambling the streets of London” is “the greatest pleasure”. While the

narrator has the agency to encounter many different people and places, they do feel the need to have an excuse before being able to leave their home. In addition, the different perceptions the narrator provides to the different shops gives us an insight into which shops women were allowed to visit on their own, i.e. a shoe store, bookshop and stationer's shop, without being reprimanded or frowned upon. The conclusion of the first sub question: 'How do different spaces and places relate to gender mobility?' is that to a large extent, places and spaces are related to gender mobility. Not every space can be accessed by the same persons with the same ease to the same extent. The thesis has shown that for women especially, it is more difficult and more challenging to access spaces, while for men most spaces are easily accessible. This is because it is men who have created the city for their own convenience, without considering the difficulties others might face when having to journey through the city. It then becomes an issue of power as well. Because men create and design the spaces of the city, they determine what the city looks like and who can or cannot access certain spaces and areas.

The second sub question is: What was the role of the flaneur or flaneuse in society?

The figure of the flaneur was a concept that was created in the mid-nineteenth century in Paris and later rose to fame across Europe. The flaneur is a figure, mostly male, who strolls around the city. He does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. He merely strolls the city observing the people around him. Yet, the female counterpart of the flaneur, the flaneuse, was less commonly known. The act of *flânerie* provided women with agency and independence. In doing so, they were 'free' to roam and explore the city. However, this was bound by limitations because of the limitations implied by society. When respectable women were seen in the 'wrong' neighbourhood or with the 'wrong' women, they were frowned upon. The figure of the flaneur provided men with the freedom to observe and watch while roaming the city. It provided women with the agency to decide when and where to walk, and the independence to do so on her own. As Elkin describes, "in the street we are no longer 'quite ourselves' – instead we become 'functions of the urban landscape'" (24). This suggests that in the streets, people are freed from who they are at home, and can escape in the anonymity of the city. While roaming the city, a person can become who they want, they are not bound by the rules of the home – they do not have to be anything. Therefore, the role of the flaneur in society was mainly to provide, in the first instance, men with the possibility to roam the streets without needing to arrive anywhere, just to find peace in watching and observing, without a purpose. For women, the freedom to roam the city had a different function. It provided them with the opportunity to escape their homes, to be freed from their obligations. It gave them the agency to make their own choice – to simply be. This also becomes apparent from the text of the short story. The narrator of *Street Haunting* is not truly a part of the story. She only encounters and observes. She does, however, add her own imagination to parts of the story in order to find – or lose – her own true self. As she roams

around the city, the narrator provides the reader with an overview of the city and the people living in it, as “an enormous eye”. The conclusion of the second sub question: ‘What was the role of the flaneur or flaneuse in society?’ is that the flaneur was an interesting figure for the 19th century. He – or she – portrayed the desire of people to roam, to observe. Because of this figure, it became more common for people to wander. And because of his female counterpart, the flaneuse, the figure also provided women with this freedom. In addition, it has been demonstrated in this thesis that while roaming the city, a person can let go of the obligations and prejudices imposed on them in daily life. It is then that a person can become their true self – or at least then they have the time and space to try to find out who their true self is. Moreover, the flaneur, or the flaneuse has no face, they are only there to observe, they do not judge. This means that anyone can be a flaneur or flaneuse. Therefore, the role of the flaneur is for people to let go of their every-day life, and search for who they are without hindrance of society's restrictions.

The third sub question is: What is the role of the pencil and the book?

The short story *Street Haunting* has an important link to the object of the pencil. In the first instance, it provides the narrator with a simple excuse to leave their home – to purchase a pencil. However, this simple errand is more than just that. It entails that the narrator then has the freedom to roam around the city of London which is “the greatest pleasure”. It also gives the narrator the opportunity to encounter new people and places, to imagine stories and to leave the ‘self’ behind. It prompts the reader to find herself in people she sees around her, to relate to them and create their life in her mind. It gives her the opportunity to escape the obligations of her own life in order to encounter and imagine. In addition to this, the meaning of the pencil as a means is evident from the fact that with its ability to write words, it has the ability to make a change – they have an effect. The manner in which the couple of the stationer’s shop resolve their quarrel in finding the pencil, proves the power of the pencil. Yet, how the pencil is used, and which pencil is used, changes the way in which words are interpreted. Therefore, it suggests that people should be careful in using their words. In addition to this, the book has a similar function in this short story. In the second-hand bookshop, second-hand books are compared to friends you haven’t met yet. This could be related to society itself, as many people who are disregarded, as second-hand books, are no longer part of society or only on the outskirts of it, could be a valuable part if only there was one to see that value. The conclusion of the third sub question: ‘What is the role of the pencil and the book?’ is that in this short story, the excuse for purchasing a pencil was the only manner in which the narrator was able to escape their home and its expectations. It provided her with a freedom to be nobody for a while and just live in the moment while observing the surroundings. In addition, the pencil was a metaphor for storytelling, which the narrator did during their walk across London. In addition, the pencil was a way of stating the

importance of words. It showed that how words are used can both result in fighting or peace. Words should be used carefully, and the right words should be used in order to come to the desired outcome. The metaphor of the book, on the other hand, provided a way to have a closer bond with the people around you – even those that would not be a first choice to talk to. A book disregarded by another could be a best friend in disguise. In the streets, people are not much willing to talk to one another, everyone is busy going somewhere or doing something without noticing their surroundings. Therefore, the metaphors of the pencil and the book have attempted to bring people closer together, to make the reader aware to enjoy a walk or a talk, without always going somewhere with a duct view.

The main question has many different aspects. The results of the close reading have found that The conclusion of the main question: 'How is the female walker represented in Street Haunting and how does she relate to public and private spaces?' is that in Street Haunting, there has been a large role for the female walker. She was the protagonist of the story, without the reader ever knowing anything about her. Just as the flaneur, the narrator was merely "an enormous eye" - observing all that is happening around her. It is only outside the home, in the public space, that the narrator can adopt this identity of the flaneur. In the public space is where the narrator can become, or attempt to find, her true self. The private space is where the obligations and prejudices of society are imposed. That is the reason why the narrator produces an excuse to leave it. This escapism is attached to the desire to find out what is beyond the home and the prejudices of society. Therefore, the female walker is represented throughout the short story Street Haunting and the private space is where she feels enclosed, where she knows that everything remains the same. The public space, however, is where she thrives and discovers stories everywhere. It is where she can become her true self.

This thesis has highlighted different aspects of Virginia Woolf's short story in regard to the position of women in the society of London in the 1930s. It has demonstrated that it is a difficult issue with many points of view. The relevant literature has shown how the issues of mobility, public and private spaces, and the figure of the flaneur are relevant to the issues regarding this thesis and the close reading has shown how these concepts appear in *Street Haunting*, while taking into account the narrative voice and what role it plays. No matter how much has been written on Virginia Woolf and her novels, essays and stories, there are always issues or matters that have not been noticed before. This thesis has attempted to uncover the importance of the male and female walker, the flaneuse, while observing the issues of gender mobility in relation to public and private spaces, while also observing the importance of a genderless narrator who becomes gendered through the social cues stated within the short story.

The results of this thesis to me, were quite in line with my expectations. The manner in which Virginia Woolf writes her short story shows how important the figure of the flaneuse was. As it provided women with a sense of freedom within their limitations. The literature has also beautifully shown that the importance of private and public spaces in society, and the meaning they had, also with regard to accessibility, is a notion that cannot be left untouched. New insights that have come from the results of this thesis are that Virginia Woolf's short story is one of a kind with regard to the manner in which the flaneuse is the protagonist. It has shown different social levels with great detail, while stating the manner in which these people were viewed. This thesis has shown that even though its male counterpart has been given much more research, the flaneuse is not a figure to be disregarded as for women in general, the flaneuse had a much larger impact on the manner in which they lived their lives than the flaneur did for men. The flaneuse provided women with a chance of freedom and agency. Any further research could go deeper into Virginia Woolf's own history and upbringing and research how this ties in with what she has written in *Street Haunting*. In addition, an interesting notion would be to address the narrator and what role they play. It has come to my attention that the narrator of this short story has not been portrayed or was not told to be a female or male person. However, in the way I read this short story, I interpreted it to be a woman. Yet this is not voiced anywhere. The only indication that is given is when they are at the Mayfield party imagining wearing pearls. The narrator refers to the self in the third-person form: "us" and "we". It is, however, unclear if this includes the reader or the multiple selves of the narrator. A different aspect that could be researched is the paragraph in the second-hand bookshop that mentions novels on travellers and colonialism. This short story was written in a time that the British Empire still had a lot of power. Therefore, it could be interesting to research the notions and subtleties included in that paragraph.

In conclusion, this thesis has been rather insightful for me as it has forced me to delve into the matters of the society of London in the 1930s, which, surprisingly, is not that much different from the one we have today. Women are still not free to go where and when they want. Yet, it is striking to consider that for the narrator of the short story, it was vital to come up with an excuse in order to leave the house, as “[n]o one perhaps has ever felt passionately towards a pencil” (Woolf 1). Maybe even the narrator themselves was not even as passionate about this lead pencil, however, it was a necessary means for “walking half across London between tea and dinner” (Woolf 1). While these sentences hold the questions of mobility, public and private places, the concept of the flaneur, the notion of the true self, and the haunting of the streets, for me it has been an honour to explore the short story ‘Street Haunting’ and the mind of Virginia Woolf. Her ingenuity has inspired me to research the many different aspects that come with the text and the society around it. Who would have thought that the sole urge to purchase a pencil would hold so much more meaning when reading between the lines.

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