



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

European Joint Master's Degree-
Second Cycle (*D.M. 270/2004*)
in English and American Studies

Final Thesis

—

Ca' Foscari
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia

Walking the Walk: Defining Moments
in the Literary Evolution of the
New York City *Flâneur*

Supervisor

Ch.mo Prof. Simone Francescato

Ch.mo Prof. Pascal Fischer

University of Bamberg

Ch.ma Prof.ssa Martha J. Nadell

City University of New York, Brooklyn College

Graduand

Beatrice Melodia Festa

Matriculation Number 847238

Academic Year

2014/2015

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
1. <i>Flânerism</i>	4
1.1. Urban Walking.....	4
1.2. Roots of the <i>Flâneur</i> : Baudelaire and Benjamin.....	7
2. Walking New York.....	16
2.1. New York; a City like No Other.....	16
2.2. City Strollers Wandering New York from the 1800s to the Present.....	24
2.2.1. Whitman, Riis, Johnson.....	24
2.2.2. Kazin, Auster, Hardwick and Whitehead.....	31
2.2.3. Conclusion.....	39
3. 19 th and Early 20 th Century New York: Female Strollers on the Market.....	40
3.1. The Female <i>Flâneuse</i>	40
3.1.1. Upper and Lower Class Female Strollers.....	46
3.1.2. The <i>Flâneuse</i> in Literature.....	49
3.2. Lily Bart's Choice to Stroll in Edith Wharton's <i>The House of Mirth</i>	50
3.3. Maggie: the Stroller on the Street in Stephen Crane's Novel.....	57
4. Strolling post 9/11: Trauma, Loss and Deracination.....	64
4.1. Literature post 9/11.....	64
4.1.1. Immigrant, Traumatized Strollers.....	68
4.1.2. Post 9/11 <i>Flâneurs</i>	71
4.2. Jonathan Foer's Traumatic Wandering.....	72
4.3. Teju Cole's Deracinated Stroller in Contemporary New York.....	81
4.3.1. Julius, a Contemporary Baudelairian <i>Flâneur</i>	93
Conclusion.....	96
References.....	99

Introduction

Few cities have inspired as much great writing as New York. (Lopate, 1998: 17)

One of the main goals of literature is to dramatize history through the creation of characters that represent different realities through the dynamics of specific plots. In this thesis I would like to explore urban walking and its literary representation through the characters who can be described as *flâneurs*. We will examine these characters as they roam the streets of New York City and witness the city's changes, becoming some of the best interpreters and also symbols of the city's history.

This thesis can be considered as a literary journey through the salient moments of New York City's history and development, filtered through the eyes of the *flâneur*. The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first is dedicated to the definition of urban walking, its literary representation, and to the discussion of the figure of the *flâneur* as defined by its two main "creators", Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin. Their interpretations, both similar and yet very different, will help us understand the outline of this figure in general, providing us with the tools necessary to analyze the characters in the following chapters. This will also enable us to understand the different evolutions of the *flâneur* in both the European and American contexts.

In the second chapter, I will specifically focus on New York City, explaining its relevance in reference to the American *flâneur*. I will show that New York, due to its openness, intensity and the sheer variety of its urban landscape, inevitably produces figures that, in order to observe its reality, roam its streets as idle *flâneurs*. I will then re-read New York City's history using exemplary *flâneurs* from the 19th century and their particular perceptions of the city.

In the third chapter, I will concentrate on four New York City novels, considering them as "case studies" on the figure of the American *flâneur* in two distinct historical periods, the 1800s and the 21st century. The comparison and analysis of these historical moments will provide evidence of the *flâneur*'s ability to mirror different events in the history of New York City during the period in which he lives and through which he walks.

In conclusion, I will go back to discussing the evolution of the *flâneur* in the city, further reflecting on the fact that each age generates *flâneurs* that mirror the reality of each given moment in history. One peculiarity of New York City's literary strollers is their ability to become the harbingers of history through their intimate and thus attentive observation of the city and its urban landscape.

This thesis comes from my passion for both America and its literature and from my personal experience of living in New York City. On my first days in the city, I immediately understood that the best way to know New York is to walk New York. The true essence of the city is in its streets. The street is the place for the elaboration of the innumerable sensations lived that make New York different, inspiring and open, and its streets help us to perceive the particular energy of this alluring city.

1. *Flânerism*

1.1. Urban Walking

Honoré de Balzac once wrote, “Isn’t it really extraordinary to see that, since man took his first steps, no one has asked himself why he walks, how he walks, if he has ever walked, if he could walk better, what he achieves in walking?” (Balzac in Amato, 2004: 1). Balzac described the act of walking as the primary human means of locomotion and pondered its significance. It is an act that somehow links man to the soil, establishing a continuous dialogue between foot and earth. “For millions of years, our proximate and distant ancestors moved across history on foot, rendering truth to the notion that we have walked our way to our being” (Amato, 2004:19). Profound transformations in human walking took place in the vast period of our prehistory. The specialization in tool-making, storage and the utilization of the wheel, were all factors that shaped how, why and where we went on foot. Our direct ancestor, *Homo erectus*, was the first to start the activity of walking in an upright position.

In the dawn of our human history, walking was a necessity. Our forefathers walked in search of food, discovering new places and environments. In other words, they were nomads. They were incessant wanderers and explorers of landscapes. However, primitive people lacked places to walk. In other words, it was rather difficult to think of the activity of strolling as we do today. So, the first experience on foot was enormously influenced by the landscape. Walking was a consequence of the quest for food or weather changing and seasons determined migrations to new, more pleasant environments.

Another interesting act that stimulated human locomotion on foot was hunting. The quest for food led primitives to walk on foot in the mere need for survival. However, the usage of animals as the first means of locomotion remarkably reduced the activity of walking on foot. Time was reduced by speed, riding for long distances hunting and gathering food were now supported by new and faster means of transportation- horses.

The history of travel on foot substantially changed with the construction of trails, paths and roads. Yet, “roads are different from paths and trails as they are wider, longer, straighter, smoother” (Amato, 2004: 29), thus providing a better quality of travel. If trails and paths belonged to our biology and primitive habits, the origin of roads lies in the “quest of highly organized societies for speed and dominance” (Amato, 2004: 29). Roads meant efficiency: they were the means through which kings and soldiers crossed prairies and vast landscapes. From their origin, roads served merchants, pilgrims, adventurers and wanderers.

Despite the widespread usage of carriages and horses, in both the Roman and the Medieval eras, nothing was accomplished without walking. The Medieval period was characterized by a wide range of peregrinations on foot, and these pilgrims proved to be the age's first and foremost emblematic strollers. Differently than today where, as we will see, walking is a mere act of pleasure, the desire to be forgiven led to peregrinations and a sense of wandering for readmission into churches and villages.

However, it was the Medieval city that defined new ways of walking. Thanks to the development of trade, roads expanded, since this new activity required efficient roads for the transportation of raw materials. In the so-called "Commercial Revolution", between 1100 and 1348, cities such as Venice, Milan, London and Florence determined the increase of commerce and thus the development of walking in urban environments. Consequently, people started to migrate from the countryside to the city. Although the city seemed to be a pleasant landscape, the conditions were not favorable for walking. Unpaved paths, lanes and alleys were only a few of the consequences of the traffic and congestion of roads that made it rather difficult to walk through a Medieval city. Despite the uncomfortable situation of roads, cities represented a new environment for walkers. Cities provided a kind of freedom that allowed walkers to deal with the vastness of landscape and the vitality of the streets. All these elements made city walking far more entertaining.

During the Renaissance and then the age of Enlightenment, walking was an act of display and cities were a place for promenades. The act of walking was purposefully used to display fancy clothing and precious fabrics throughout the city streets. The rise of the upper class and the transformation of public life led the aristocracy to begin an opulent display of privilege on foot. The development of the high aristocracy, from the Renaissance to the closing decades of the nineteenth century, persisted for more than three centuries. As Fashion historian Alicia Annas wrote,

The motion of walking was so admired in the eighteenth century that all fashionable people spent a portion of each day publicly promenading in parks where, nonchalantly strolling and conversing they could display themselves and observe others displaying themselves to the best advantage (in Amato, 2004: 81).

In the Age of Enlightenment people travelled more, intensifying the popularity of the act of strolling. However, the difficult conditions of carriage travel often reduced those who rode to having to walk part of their journey. The élite started the transformation of walking into strolling, discovering the pleasure of going on foot. The construction of parks and gardens implemented the origin of "recreational footing". Walking moved from indoor to outdoor thus leading to a sense of discovery of the urban environment.

The two following centuries, the 18th and 19th, became the ages of walking par excellence. Even though the final development of city strolling took place in the second half of the 1800s, at the beginning of the 19th century strategic strolling through a landscape was still a necessity. Soldiers in the American Revolutionary war, for example, were incessant strollers who wandered through prairies and woods in search of battlefields. More specifically, walking in the past was significant in man's simple need for survival. In the 1800s, the closing of the frontier posed an end to the age of hunting and wandering, creating a final shift in the act of walking into a new landscape.

The age of pedestrianism officially elevated the act of walking from the realm of necessity to that of choice. With the development of technology and the diffusion of new different means of transportation, walking finally became a mere act of pleasure. This new, modern way of walking took place in what is considered to be man's most modern environment: the city. The growth of population and the development of urban travellers was a key factor in the development of city strollers. This is the reason why this new contemporary way of wandering in the city is generally defined as urban walking.

Once this premise has been made clear, it is necessary to pose a few questions: Why do people walk in the cities? What is it that forces them to use their feet, wandering through the urban landscape? What is the role of the city in the act of walking?

In the first place, "walking undeniably allows a person to negotiate and read urban spaces in a unique and effective manner" (Bairner; 2011: 372). Secondly, the concept of urban walking is generally used for those people who stroll and explore the city on foot. The reason for this choice lies in the goal of strolling in the urban environment. In other words, its motive is found in what man achieves by walking. For instance, if in the past the connection between man and landscape was immediate, nowadays most people live in a series of interiors, such as home or office, that makes them desire to explore the outdoor city's urban scenery. In this way, walking is the means through which humans create a close contact with the landscape. It is then evident how the passage through a landscape, more specifically the city, stimulates a series of thoughts and sensations. Given this, there is somehow a connection between the act of walking and the path of the mind. Strolling through a city landscape allows people to ponder freely and thus be influenced by the city's modern surroundings. Urban walking is a continuous observation of both the walker's mind and the landscape he moves through. Hence, the city creates new kinds of walkers, pedestrians, who while walking within the urban environment achieve a deep, intimate relationship with their own thoughts.

However, there is a specific characteristic that turns the city into a pleasant as well as an intimate place for its strollers. The city is anonymous and varied, and all of its characteristics can be conveyed by walking. It is through incessant walks in the city that urban strollers come into contact with the world and somehow find themselves. Another interesting aspect conveyed by the city is its ability to turn the act of walking into a journey. Walkers are travelers, people who walk, wander and ponder about both the city and themselves, defining new identities or new realities. The urban setting is the place where one's own personal microcosm of the mind blends with the public. Walking in the city is a way of sharing one's own personal condition in a public urban space.

Walking has always been of primary interest for both writers and the characters they create. Writers wandered through cities in search of identity, inspiration and above all, at the beginning of the 19th century, glimpses of modernity.

In this section of my thesis I will specifically focus on the urban stroller as represented in literature: the figure of the *flâneur*, and the origin of its literary genre, flâneurism.

1.2. Roots of the *Flâneur*: Baudelaire and Benjamin

I will now focus on the figure of the urban walker, the solitary spectator of urban life or, as we will call him from now on, the *flâneur* (Figure 1). In this thesis we will refer to this character as stroller and urban walker, terms that interchangeably refer to the figure of the literary stroller or *flâneur*. Despite its popularization, it is not easy to define the literary traits of a character, which remain rather elusive. Even today, the *flâneur* remains one of the most contemporary and enigmatic of literary figures. Before offering an accurate and more specific analysis of this character, primarily in the context of American literature, it is essential to discuss and thus draw the profile of the figure of the *flâneur* by looking back at the historical context of its creation.

Casual observer, witness of urban life and reporter of street life, the origin of the literary *flâneur* dates back to the beginning of the 19th century. At the dawn of modernity, when cities were expanding and absorbing changes and innovations, there was one character who witnessed the innumerable aspects of urban life, becoming its modern observer par excellence. This is the reason why, by walking in solitude, the *flâneur* creates an intimate relationship between the city and his own psyche. Yet the city is a mere landscape for the *flâneur*. There is no doubt that the urban landscape is a psychological space for exploiting and testing the emotions of both the self and the metropolis. At the beginning of the 19th century, this character was a dandy or an esthete,

a gentlemen, a bohemian who enjoyed the company of the city as a context for analyzing his thoughts. In other words, at the beginning of the 1900s, the *flâneur* wanders in the city as a stroller who looks at the kaleidoscopic changes of urban modernity. “He is the spectator of city life” (Brand; 1993: 41). He is the casual observer who captures the evolution of the city through his observation of the urban landscape. The connection with both the urban environment and the changes of modernity stimulate a production of thoughts that produce an exploration of the inner self.

First, it is important to examine the historical, geographical context in which the literary *flâneur* originated, the city of Paris. At the beginning of the 19th century, Paris was the capital of European modernization. It is no wonder then that the *flâneur*, who is per se a product of modern times, was born in this context. In the 1880s, Paris was chosen for the Exposition Universelle that took place in 1889. This event had an enormous impact on the city’s growth and contributed to the creation of a new landscape that turned Paris into the gem of modern Europe. The World’s Fair brought more people to the city and one consequence was the creation of the biggest and first European metro system. The most important of all the changes was the construction of the new modern buildings, an architecture that changed forever the aspect of the city. The embellishment of Paris with the new style of Art Déco, with its curved lines and flowery forms, gave birth to Paris’ architectural modernity. The most common examples of Art Déco are Guimad’s entrances to the Metro that still exist today and represent one of Paris’ picturesque and characteristic symbols (Figure 3).

Even more prominent, as a representation of the new modernization of the city, is its most iconic symbol, the Tour Eiffel. The Tour Eiffel, erected in 1889 at the entrance to the World’s Fair, changed forever the aspect of the city and contributed to providing a touch of modernity to its traditional, classical landscape.

Another interesting example of the modernization of Paris was the creation of the so-called Arcades, inner boulevards with luxurious corridors (Figure 2). “Lining both sides on these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the arcade is a city, a world in miniature” (Benjamin, 1999: 31). Here is where the *flâneur* walks, in close contact with that world of pure consumption. Traffic in the streets, both motorcars and carriages forced urban strollers to look for a protected sidewalk in the city, and this is the reason why walking took place mainly in the arcades.

Paris was the ideal city for the *flâneur*. “The city of arcades is a dream that will charm the fancy of the Parisians well into the second half of the century. Here the city assumes a structure that makes it, with its shops and apartments, the ideal backdrop for the *flâneur*” (Benjamin,

1999: 17). In this way, people started to dissociate from the modern chaos of the streets by finding new, tranquil walking spots such as the glass Art Déco structure of the arcades or parks, which were built specifically to create opportunities to stroll in natural parts of the cityscape. There was a new need to go outside, abandoning the interior of home, in order to blend with modernity.

This is the main reason for which the *flâneur* originated in Paris, the cradle of European modernity. As a witness to these changes, the urban walker needed an environment that forced him to wander in those cities that represented modernity, a stimulus for his sense of self and solitude.

The creator and first experimenter with this literary figure was the poet Charles Baudelaire. As previously noted, the urban landscape of this new literary character was the metropolis of Paris with its striking modernity. First glimpses of the *flâneur* can be found in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), and, even more prominently, in the section of the *Parisian Landscapes*. Here, the poet explains how the growth of Paris as a capitalist metropolis needs the figure of an outcast, a spectator and a reporter who aims at witnessing the development of the city as well as its relationship to modernity. Baudelaire states, "The flâneur is looking for that quality which you must allow me to call "modernity" (1964: 12). The Baudelairian stroller is an outsider, a nomad that observes the city from the outside, being somehow dissociated, looking at the modernization of Paris from a detached position. In his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), Baudelaire focuses prominently on the description of the bohemian attitude of the *flâneur*, emphasizing his solitude and his affinity with the crowd. Baudelaire affirms that, "his passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd" (1964: 9). Despite his position of isolation as an outcast in the metropolis, this lone walker finds pleasure in the confusion and chaos of the city. As Baudelaire explains of the *flâneur*,

"He gazes upon the landscapes of the great city-landscapes of stone, caressed by the mist of the mist or buffeted by the sun. He delights in fine carriages and proud horses, the dazzling smartness of the grooms, the expertness of the footmen, the sinuous gait of the women, the beauty of the children, happy to be dressed- in a word he delights in universal life" (1965: 11).

The exploration of the urban becomes a real profession for him. He is confident in the modernity of Paris and eventually finds a way to read its changes. Baudelaire then continues,

"For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of the movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet remain hidden from the world- such are a few of the slightest pleasures of the flâneur" (1964: 9).

Baudelaire defines this spectator as a citizen of the world, a man whose home is in fact the city and he, as a man of the crowd, belongs to the urban space. He is a “self-proclaimed and self-believing monarch of the crowd” (Tester; 1994: 146). The crowd is in fact what moves the *flâneur*, what forces him to hide in the masses, finding a way out of the monotonous life of the household. Given this, the crowd is the place in which to blend with the city’s versatility. Yet, the *flâneur* is the man of the crowd as opposed to the man in the crowd. Baudelaire in fact declares, “The lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness” (1964: 9).

From a Baudelairian perspective, the man who lives in a box or a closed space is somehow incomplete and finds his completion in contact with the multitudes. This explains the *flâneristic* choice of wandering and hiding in the crowd, despite his non-identification with it. In this way, the bohemian voyeur finds anonymity. He does not identify with people, but his detached position enables him to observe life and the world from his own perspective. Simply put, Baudelaire enhances the qualities of the *flâneur* as a positive character, a street reporter who happily hides in the masses capturing the spirit and the essence of the city just for himself.

Moreover, there is another peculiarity of the Baudelairian *flâneur* that characterizes his spirit of interpreter of city life his identification with the artist. Baudelaire himself enjoyed long walks in the city and found pleasure in the discovery of Paris’ most hidden corners. At the turn of the century, the city of Paris was populated of artists and bohemians who strolled through the city in order to gain experience for their art. Painters and writers found pleasure in the discovery of the city that was stimulus for the development of their art. Impressionist painters captured images of the city painting outdoors, while poets and writers found pleasure by walking in the city, producing thoughts from the city’s modern changes. It is no doubt then that the bohemian observer is an artist himself, a poet.

The aim of the Baudelairian stroller is to reach some kind of freedom, both as an artist and as a citizen. From his perspective, the *flâneur* is the hero of modernity, the quintessential kaleidoscopic poet and voyeur whose strolling finds completion in both his self-definition and in the acknowledgment of modernity as well as in his art itself. Here, then,

“Baudelaire’s poet inspires much of the pleasure and delight of the spectacle of the public. Crucially, for Baudelaire, the poet is he who knows he is a face in the crowd. And, as such, by virtue of that very knowing, the poet is a man apart even though he might well appear to be a man like any other” (Tester, 1994: 130).

Thus it is evident how Baudelaire's *flâneristic* view is both positive and optimistic. In his worldview, we need *flâneurs* to be the witnesses of city life and interpreters of its changes.

The identification with other mundane and not so optimistic kinds of *flânerie* has been widely discussed by another important writer and sociologist in the modern panorama of the city at the beginning of the 20th century: Walter Benjamin. In his work *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940), Benjamin re-confirms Baudelaire's image of the *flâneur* as "the pioneer of modern times" (in Hanssen, 2006: 91). Nevertheless, in *The return of the Flâneur*, Benjamin offers a different view of the urban voyeur. His vision of *flânerie* is mainly affected by the modernization of Paris' public spaces at the turn of the century.

Benjamin draws more attention to the capitalistic entourage that surrounds the urban observer who perceives a man-made alien city, transfigured by the new economic consumption. His *flâneristic* image is that of a passer-by, someone who takes mental notes on leisurely city walks, due to the new commodities at the turn of the century. If in the past, the *flâneur* created a way of managing the chaotic and frenetic changes of the city, later on the figure became a means of mirroring instead of controlling. That is to say that, as Benjamin argued, the *flâneur* finds himself in an overwhelming situation where he is no longer capable of controlling the urban environment and he eventually gets lost in it. For him "the flâneur was detached from the city he walked" (Benjamin in Amato, 2004, 174), so that his strolling has no identity. The instability of the observer, according to Benjamin, can be traced to his relationship to capitalism. It is the new society of economic consumption that shapes the *flâneur*. For Benjamin the stroller is both producer and consumer, subjected to the new contradictions of a society full of economic changes. Benjamin explains, "In the flâneur the intelligentsia sets foot in the marketplace-ostensibly to look around but in truth to find a buyer" (in Hanssen, 2006: 91). The pleasure of walking in the city is now affected by money, so that the urban stroller becomes part of an economic tension. For Benjamin, the crowd and the city are elements associated with the department store, where *flânerie* is used to sell goods. In the act of walking through the city, *flâneurs* stroll through the representation of economic consumption, the Arcades with their shops and windows. The Arcades reveal the social evolution from a society based on mutual concern to one based on commodities and material wealth. The Arcades are the temples of modern *flânerie*.

In this way, the *flâneur* stepped into the marketplace for himself and his ideas. As Benjamin asserts, "the department store is the last promenade for the flâneur" (1999: 10). He continues, "the flâneur stands on the threshold of the metropolis and neither has him in its power yet. In neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd and from a mitigating nimbus perceives the

desolation of the city” (1999: 10). Thus the new crowd of the urban stroller is the marketplace. Furthermore Benjamin, looking at the Baudelairean *flâneristic* interpretation, distinguishes the man of the crowd (detective and observer), from the man in the crowd (attracted and fascinated by the city). In other words, he sees the *flâneur* as the alienated passerby in the crowd or both the shopper and the stroller of the emerging society of commerce.

As previously mentioned, this kind of *flâneur* is exposed to the shock of alienation. With this alienation, *flânerie* produces nostalgia for the past. As Benjamin clearly affirms, “the endless spectacle of *flânerie* had been finally relegated to the past” (1999: 263). Benjamin sees the walker as overwhelmed by some kind of melancholy, for what was before, and what the observer could have been if he had not lost spirit in the new modern galleries of Paris, the arcades. Benjamin’s *flâneur* is exposed to a world of commodities and is overwhelmed by the new economy of the city. His main difference from the Baudelairean stroller lies in the fact that if earlier the observer felt himself at home in the urban chaotic life of the streets; now the new *flâneur* gets lost in the urban labyrinth of capitalism. However, this observer, influenced by the capitalist consumption of department stores, preferably chooses to stroll among the symbols of modernity: the arcades and shops of Paris.

Despite his alienated condition, Benjamin’s *flâneur* is an icon per se. Another interesting aspect of this new kind of *flânerie* lies in its vision of the city. For Benjamin, the new economy contributed to the de-familiarization of landscape, making it foreign and turning it into an exotic spectacle. The *flâneur* is a savage, an alienated character in the spectacle of the city’s wilderness.

To conclude, Benjamin believed that the city needed an allegory, someone who was capable of witnessing its changes from a detached perspective. This concept found its synthesis in the creation of the *flâneur*.

Baudelaire and Benjamin present two different kinds of walkers. The first strolls for pleasure. For him, the city is a mere landscape in which he finds a new way of interpreting reality, reading its urban changes. The second struggles with the new economy and is enormously shaped by the market that represents the new crowd. In both Baudelaire and Benjamin, the figure of the *flâneur* is that of an outcast, an isolated character who looks at the city through a glass, eventually becoming part of the picture, but always keeping himself in a detached position. These are the two primary and most important examples of the figure of the *flâneur* which help us to understand its origins, leading us to the focus of my analysis.

In the context of American Literature, the figure of the *flâneur* was first represented by another important writer of that age of Baudelaire and Benjamin, Edgar Allan Poe. Yet the

elusive references make it rather difficult to define Poe's character as a real *flâneur*, although the voyeurism implied by the narrator of his story resembles the activity of the *flâneur*. Both Baudelaire and Benjamin drew particular attention to Poe's description of the crowd. In 1840, Poe initiates the genre of detective fiction with the short story, *The Man of the Crowd* (1840), in which an enigmatic nameless narrator sits behind a window in a café in London contemplating the crowd passing by on the street. Suddenly, attracted by an intriguing man in the crowd, the narrator starts chasing him in the city streets. The old man, as Poe defines him, wanders with no apparent reason and this is what strikes the narrator and starts the chase. The narration is well described by Baudelaire in *The Painter of Modern Life*,

“In the window of a coffee-house there sits a convalescent, pleasurably absorbed in gazing at the crowd, and mingling through the medium of thought that surrounds him...Finally he hurls himself headlong into the midst of the throng, in pursuit of an unknown, half-glimpsed countenance that has, in an instant, bewitched him. Curiosity has become a fatal, irresistible passion!” (1964: 7).

We already understand the incongruity of this character with the traditional *flâneur*, who does not stroll in quest for someone, but instead, his solitude is a constant in the pursuit of his activity as a spectator of city life as he purposefully hides in the masses. As Baudelaire clearly affirms, strolling in Poe becomes an “irresistible passion”, more than an intentional act. Yet Baudelaire uses Poe's story as a paradigm of the modern artist, thus introducing the figure of the urban stroller being immersed in the crowd and being able to transcend it. Baudelaire states, “The artist is an I with an irresistible appetite for non-I” (2014: 9). As Poe clearly represents in the narrator's longing to follow the crowd, the artist-*flâneur* has a tendency to blend with the crowd achieving anonymity.

If Baudelaire somehow supports Poe's concept of “man in the crowd”, Benjamin focuses on the elusive nature of this character. According to Benjamin, “what is needed is someone who can harness the *flâneur's* special abilities to blend in with the crowd and observe, decode and categorize” (in Nicol, 2012, 9). In other words, Benjamin refers to the figure of a detective who should be able to help the *flâneur* in his wandering. Yet for Benjamin, the “man of the crowd” is no *flâneur*, since he describes the urban walker as someone who seeks the crowd instead of being in the crowd.

Despite the apparent references to the *flâneur* by Baudelaire and Benjamin, it is rather difficult to read Poe's character as a real *flâneur*. His observation of street life and presence within the crowd does not belong to the traditional canons of *flânerie*. On the one hand, Poe's narrator is overwhelmed by the masses, on the other he is incongruous with the activity of the *flâneur* who finds pleasure hiding in the crowd. Finally yet importantly, Poe's walker is not fully

immersed in the city landscape and his quest is rather aimless. The ending shows no recognition as the narrator ends up pondering, thus discovering that his wandering was vain. As Poe's narrator clearly explains about his final quest, "The old man, I said at length is the type and genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He is the man of the crowd. It will be in vain to follow" (Poe 1978: 515). In other words, the real man of the crowd is the old man not the narrator whose curiosity predominates and forces him to wander in the street.

Even though Poe's story does not truly belong to the genre of *flânerie*, it is still essential to bear in mind the importance of this figure as the first example of urban walker in American Literature. Poe's story is usually regarded as the first American walk narrative. To conclude, the *flâneur* is the observer of modernity and changes through the activity of strolling through the urban landscape. The more modern the city is, the more strolling takes place in it. This is the reason why we will now draw our attention to the world's most modern city par excellence, New York. New York is a city of walkers and in the following chapter we will analyze the way in which *flânerie* developed in this city, focusing on its geographical assets and the historical changes that have brought the figure of the American *flâneur* up to the present day.



Figure 1: Paul Gavarni, *Le Flâneur*, 1842



Figure 2: The Arcades of Paris



Figure 3: Metropolitan entrance of *Porte Dauphine* designed by Hector Gimaud

2. Walking New York

2.1. New York; a City like No Other



Figure 3: View of Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center

In 1988, the French historian Michel De Certeau, provided an aerial description of Manhattan that well represents the exceptionality of the urban geography of the city.

“Beneath the haze stirred up by the winds, the urban island, a sea in the middle of the sea, lifts up the skyscrapers over Wall Street, sinks down at Greenwich, then rises again to the crests of Midtown, quietly passes over Central Park and finally undulates off into the distance beyond Harlem. A wave of verticals. Its agitation is momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology in which extremes coincide- extremes of ambition and degradation brutal oppositions of races and styles, contrasts between yesterday’s buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today’s urban eruptions that block out its space” (De Certeau, 1988: 91).

This outstanding description of Manhattan from the 110th floor of The World Trade Center (Figure 3) conveys the idea of an overwhelming and almost discomfoting view. Any observer would remain breathless and astonished by the innumerable contrasts of this city. It is then evident how New York distinguishes itself from every other city in the world through its verticality and uniqueness. If Paris was the capital of European modernity at the turn of the century, New York City is now the essence of modernity par excellence. It is the city that “overwhelms the imagination and numbs the mind” (Miller, 2015: 2). This view of Manhattan from above draws our attention to our main subject: urban walking and *flânerie*. As De Certeau

clearly explains, spectators try to find a detached connection with the city by looking at its landscape from above, “ordinary practitioners live down below, they walk” (De Certeau, 1998: 93). We understand the importance of New York as a city of strollers. It is no doubt then that if *flânerie* has its roots in Paris, in the contemporary age it has found an ideal setting on the island of Manhattan. From the 1800s onward, New York was rich in urban walkers, writers and characters who found pleasure in the discovery of the city’s impressive diversity by walking through its vertical narrow streets.

Before analyzing those aspects that characterize New York’s distinctiveness, it is essential to look at the origin and history of Manhattan itself as it is also part of the city’s exceptionality. Historians have argued that New York’s diversity and heterogeneity lie in its original founding made by the Dutch in 1664. The first inhabitants of the area, the Arloquins, chose the name that would characterize the city. The name Manhattan comes from the union of two words Man-Hatta that literally mean “land of many hills”. The first discovery of the island and its first white settlement happened by chance. In 1609, Henry Hudson was searching for a Northwest passage to the straits of Asia and the Orient. His quest miserably failed and he finally made landfall in New York’s harbour on September 3rd of that year. Hudson immediately understood the uniqueness of the island’s position, whose harbour would soon become its main economic strength. New York was finally colonized by the first Dutch settlement in 1624.

The “company town” of New Amsterdam- this was the name given to New York by its first Dutch settlers- was not as profitable as expected. In 1653 Dutch Law finally proclaimed the independence of the island of New Amsterdam. The end of Dutch colonization dates back to 1664 when another country drew its attention to the island of Manhattan, the British Empire. The English were also responsible for the final end of Dutch colonizers who were subdued in their rivalry with the British and thus left the supremacy to England. The second half of the 17th century marks the beginning of the British dominion of the city of New Amsterdam, finally renamed New York as an affiliate colony of the British city of York. At the time, New York was already ranked among the most important commercial colonies in the world in both size and importance. Despite its heterogeneity and vastness in the 1700s, New York was a difficult city. “Political power and the economy were concentrated in the hands of the few” (Jackson & Dunbar, 2002: 17). However, there was one peculiarity that emerged at the time and, as we will see, still today is one of New York’s most important characteristics: its multiculturalism. Since the second half of the 18th century, an intense multicultural mix of people, due to the presence of racial and ethnical communities, populated the city. In 1760, New York had the largest

concentration of slaves among the Northern colonies and more than seventeen per cent of its residents were blacks.

At the end of the colonial period, New York extended into the vast area at the North of Manhattan and the Southeast part of the island was made up of separate communities. The city's lifeblood was its trade, which extended to the sea's edge in the Hudson harbour. Then English leaders in 1776 discovered the strategic importance of New York as the pivotal spot on the Atlantic coast. First, thanks to its magnificent harbour that would become the ideal place to organize the Royal Navy and secondly, New York was equally distant from two other important British colonies, Massachusetts and Virginia.

Grasping the meaning of a possible definitive supremacy of the British Empire, George Washington fought the British army. The American resistance caused a period of bloody battles at the margins of Manhattan in areas such as Brooklyn. In 1777 the British were finally confined to a few areas outside New York with small outposts in New Jersey. The conclusion of the war with the proclamation of the American Independence posed an end to the British dominion and New York was chosen as the new nation's capital in 1785. Its national importance ceased only five years later in 1790 when Washington D.C was chosen as the nation's capital city. In the period between the American Revolution and the Civil War, New York urban greatness increased enormously. In 1830 Gotham, as Washington Irving called it, was characterized by a varied and dense population that grew extensively throughout the century and its extensive immigration persists even today. Since then, "New York State burst forward to become the largest, most populous and most industrial of American States" (Jackson and Dunbar, 2002: 102). Later on, the city started its ever-changing metamorphosis that inevitably led to the expansion of the metropolis. Tracing the roots of New York's origin by looking at the evolution of Manhattan from Natural Wonder to Urban Island, we can understand the importance of this city and its point of contention for dominion. New York has always been unique in its strategic position, its wide extension and its ability to become the centre for the new ethnicities that arrived in the new land.

So what are the characteristics of New York? What is the secret of its exceptionality? What are the secrets of its magnetism and the reason for its attractiveness in the field of American *flânerie*?

First, there is diversity and heterogeneity. Kenneth Jackson and David Dunbar consider diversity one of the fundamental traits that makes New York exceptional. They state, "New York has always been incredibly diverse, it has become multiracial, multicultural and multireligious" (2002: 1). Since its main growth at the beginning of the 20th century, New York

has always been a city of immigrants, a melting pot of ethnicities that blended different races and religions. Even today, there is no doubt that every ethnic, racial and religious group has established its community in New York City. That is to say that the city is a place where cultures are intertwined and influence one another. As Jacob Riis noted in the late 1800s in reference to the city's heterogeneity and cultural mixture, "a map of the city, colored to designate nationalities, would show more stripes than on the skin of a zebra, and more colours than any rainbow" (in Jackson and Dunbar, 2002: 2).

Another example of the city's multiculturalism is the variety of languages spoken in New York. Even today, we hear people speaking all sorts of languages and it is also common to see advertisements in other languages, such as Spanish, or even to see supporting ads in favour of other ethnicities. In the late 1640s, eighteen languages were already spoken in the city. Since then, New York's cultural mixture has grown enormously and its multiculturalism is one of its strong points. Because of its cultural diversity, the city asks its residents to switch back and forth between essential issues of identity. As Jackson and Dunbar assert,

"New York doesn't really celebrate difference as much as it demands a constant questioning and remaking across lines of class, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. New York always holds the possibility of the reinvention of the self to achieve one's own aspirations; it allows you to plumb the depths of your most authentic being, to see both the city itself and your own self in new original ways" (2002: 1-2).

The city's close contact with diverse races and cultures enables its residents to question their own self. The city's residents discover new selves as they are also able to grasp the meaning of difference. In other words, they see themselves and the city from a new perspective.

Second, there is tolerance. "Diversity has led to a grudging acceptance of difference. Residents control and subdue their prejudices. Cultures manage to coexist in peace" (2002: 2). Thanks to its multiculturalism, New York accepts people of different ethnicities, religion and skin colours with no discrimination. In New York, more than in any other city, there is an acceptance of "otherness". New Yorkers live, work and walk with multicultural people, being somehow indifferent to the city's ethnic variety. "Unlike most places that demand a certain elapsed time period before one is considered a native, New York is democratic. If you can walk the walk and talk the talk you are a New Yorker" (2002: 12).

In New York City tolerance is always necessary. As American writer and New Yorker E.B. White once explained, "the citizens of New York are tolerant not only from disposition but from necessity. The city has to be tolerant, otherwise it would explode in a radioactive cloud of hate and rancour and bigotry" (White, 2000: 349). The coexistence of diverse groups, led to the formation of specific ghettos or neighbourhoods that still today represent one of the main

characteristics of the variety of this city. Some examples are the Lower East Side, which was home to a flourishing community of Jews and Harlem, home of the African-Americans. As a consequence of this diversity, there was the creation of specific areas shaped by and built for different cultures. In New York's multicultural neighbourhoods, visitors have the feeling of being suddenly transported into another country. Chinatown and Little Italy are two of the best examples of the tolerance of different cultures in the city. Even New York's landscape has been adapted and changed in order to dedicate part of its "Americaness" to other ethnicities. Compared to rest of the city, both neighbourhoods are architecturally shaped by different cultures. In both, Chinatown and Little Italy, the city abandons the geometrical verticality of skyscrapers and it is organized into narrower streets and smaller buildings.

The acceptance of difference brought an enormous sense of freedom to those communities that felt the need and the right to freely express themselves. This openness to diversity and freedom of expression led to the emergence of important cultural phenomena such as the Harlem Renaissance for African-American literature or the popularization of Jazz music. Both genres were in fact born in New York. The city's circumstances force residents to eliminate and avoid their prejudices. As a consequence to this openness Jackson and Dunbar affirm that,

"The real beauty of New York is that it has also kept alive a part of the national mythology. Individualism, the land of the free, rags to riches, and the melting pot were all characteristics that demanded a frontier stage to enact their dramas. If we are to look to a city that most realistically maintains an yet questions fundamental American traits... it is New York" (2002: 12-13).

This quote explains how New York maintains the American creed, respecting important values such as individualism, freedom, equality and tolerance. Yet, "More than any other city, New York is about the promise and possibility of what the particular American destiny and multiculturalism might be" (2002: 12).

A third important characteristic is the city's tempo. Everything is faster and tougher in New York, "if you can make it here, you'll make it anywhere" sang Frank Sinatra. "People in New York walk faster, eat later, work harder and compete more than most other Americans" (2002: 1). It is a city where everyone is constantly put to the test and pushed to be more. Living in New York is to learn to "walk" at the same fast and chaotic rhythm as the other people on the street. This also explains foreigners feeling of being overwhelmed when walking through the endless avenues of New York for the first time and learning to adapt to the city's frenetic rhythm.

The fourth important element is its iconic landscape. Because of its popularization and appearance in movies and pictures, the skyline of New York is impossible to confuse with any other. The famous iconicity of the city makes it familiar everywhere. New York's singularity is

mainly due to the creation of its well-known buildings, impressed upon the mind of every visitor. In the middle of the 20th century, the city was a concentration of famous buildings such as the Brooklyn Bridge, the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building and later on, the World Trade Center, which were among the tallest buildings in the world. The fact of being diverse but accepted while strolling through the familiar and iconic landscape of Manhattan makes people feel at home and everyone easily finds his own place in the city.

The fifth element is New York's density.. From the first immigrations and settlements, the city has always been overcrowded. "Relative to other American cities, New York has been overcrowded ever since the Dutch settlers huddled together below Wall Street for protection" (2002: 3). The most astonishing consequence of its density is the regularly concentration of people in the neighbourhoods, the streets and the subway. The density of people per square mile in Manhattan is enormous, approximately 65,000 per square mile. Consequently, more than any in other city in the world, New York is the city of the crowd. Thanks to its density and concentration of people, the city offers anonymity and loneliness simultaneously.

The sixth element is New York's shopping avenues. The city is generally regarded as the capital of shopping for its prestigious boutiques and long avenues. Each year dozens of people come to New York to stroll through the vitality of the world's most famous shopping street, Fifth Avenue. In this way, tourists suddenly come to enjoy long walks in the city, thus being able to appreciate its commercial popularity.

The seventh is the evolution and distribution of social classes in the city. Because of its density and multiculturalism, the city has been divided into dense neighbourhoods in order to organize its residents. Most importantly, the evolution of the city saw an interesting distribution of social classes; the rich used to live on the edges and the poor were concentrated in the middle. As a consequence of this re-organization, New York was the first city to pioneer the evolution and gentrification of its suburbs. With the conglomeration of the five boroughs in 1898, New York's population expanded into neighbourhoods that became some of the city's favourite residential areas. The example par excellence is Park Slope in Brooklyn, a widely gentrified neighbourhood that is now overcrowded like most of the city, but still represents the aspiration for many who want to live in a quiet, but fancy area at the margins of the metropolis.

The eighth interesting peculiarity of the city is its successful public housing. In 1937, authorities decided to create an act to help sell homes to the needy. Once again, New York is the exception all over the world; many housing projects are still successful and exist today. This phenomenon also contributed to shaping New York's iconic landscape with the creation of

tenements and brownstones that together with skyscrapers add to the city's iconicity implementing the contrast of its architectural aspect.

Finally, we consider one of New York's most important characteristics, its grid system. With the Commissioners Plan of 1811, Manhattan was redesigned and reorganized with the creation of a schematic grid that changed forever the city's aspect and still represents one its most important peculiarities. "The development of the grid was a means by which to simplify, or rationalize, the landscape through the process of spatially reorganizing the world to fit the logic of geometrical regularity" (Redwood, 2002: 3). This rationalization and geometrical reorganization of landscape is fundamental in the act of walking since it establishes coordinates. Phillip Lopate states, "the grid acts as a compass always ready to orient you" (2004: 325). In this way, New York is a city designed for walking and is one of the most walkable cities in the world. Thanks to its geometrical vertical structure, Manhattan is a long island possible for walkers to cross it vertically, strolling from the margins of Washington Heights to the far end of Downtown.

Despite its extension and long distances one of the preferable activities in the city is in fact walking. Everyone creates his own New York path through its variety of neighborhoods, discovering its amazing corners and above all finding a place to call home. Because of its sheer variety, the city offers neighborhoods that mirror different environments. It is almost impossible to dislike New York, since everyone finds glimpses of his own culture in the city. As is well explained by Phillip Lopate, "in New York because it is so polyglot and international, the walker-writer can turn a corner and imagine being in Prague, say, or in Montevideo" (2004: 321). Walking has a central role in the city. In New York walking has also turned into some kind of spectacle. The example par excellence can be found in the many customers of Starbucks coffee, where most New Yorkers decide to spend their day working, but also gazing outside watching strollers on sidewalks. We can easily say that to know New York is to walk New York. Walking is the ability to discover something greater and deeper about the city and one's own self. New York demands a lot from its residents, but walking gives back so much more. In other words, walking is a way of achieving a deeper relationship with the self, finding a place in the city's chaotic reality.

The primary aim of the *flâneur* is to stroll in solitude to achieve an intimate contact with both the city and himself. Loneliness is what allows the activity of the city stroller, whose solitude determines his relationship with the urban environment as well as his connection with his own self and psyche. Strolling in solitude inevitably produces emotions that enable city strollers to analyze both the city and themselves. In this way, the activity of roaming the city in isolation

enables strollers to elaborate thoughts and ponder their significance through mindful meditations of their inner self. As E.B. White once wrote: “On any who desires such queer prizes, New York will bestow the gift of loneliness and the gift of privacy” (2000: 116). New York certainly offers loneliness and anonymity, two characteristics that are necessary to the *flâneur*. He may not exist without the ability of being anonymous in the frenetic environment of the metropolis. As we have already discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, anonymity is one of the essential qualities that define the *flâneur*. His capacity to blend with the crowd to seek loneliness is essential for an accurate observation of the city. Because of its density and multiculturalism, it is common to feel lonely in New York. There is some kind of indifference in the city where, mainly because of its diversity and tolerance, people can be careless of others. Nobody asks himself how people walk, where they walk or how they behave: everyone lives his own reality in the city. Strolling on New York’s sidewalks is to manifest disinterest for “otherness” and the city’s wide diversity is the main consequence of this characteristic. New York is the ideal place for the *flâneur* who strolls unnoticed and wanders with no interruptions.

Another important aspect of New York that stimulates the production of *flânerie* is the crowd. From a Baudelairian *flâneristic* perspective, the urban stroller hides in the masses to capture the frenetic changes of the city. As previously noted, New York is the city of the crowd. One ability of the city streets is to absorb the most varied mixture of people of heterogeneous ethnicities. In this way, in New York the crowd is not only a constant presence within the city, but it also offers a variety of people that serves as a stimulus to the *flâneur*. Consequently, because of the high range of difference and the mixture of races, urban walkers discover a sense of “otherness” facing diversity while strolling on sidewalks. In other words, the *flâneur* in New York becomes “the man in the crowd”.

The third and most important aspect of *flânerie*, well represented in New York, is the concept of change. The *flâneur* is the street reporter who reads the changes of the metropolis in order to understand its modernity and produce an understanding of it for himself. New York is the city of change par excellence. The city is in constant change; people change and the landscape is in continuous modification. Buildings are frequently demolished and rebuilt; shops and restaurants open and rapidly close, leaving space for something new. Yet, the changing of the city’s aspect increases its modernity. In this way, “to a New Yorker the city is both changeless and changeling” (White, 2000: 349). The extraordinary mutability of the city is also influenced by seasons. Every New Yorker or stroller learns to read the changes of the city from one season to the other. For example the moment that best represents the winter season is Christmas, when the city is transformed into a breathtaking spectacle of lights and decorations.

In this way, walking is a recollection of emotions and feelings and the *flâneur* is influenced by the constant changes of Manhattan.

Then there is certainly the landscape. The environment of the metropolis is what defines and eventually influences the *flâneur*. As Benjamin explained, landscape is what the city is for the *flâneur*. New York's landscape has two main peculiarities: iconicity and modernity. The former is fundamental to the *flâneur* whose walks in New York find completion through the familiarity of its landscape. The latter is essential to the main goal of the *flâneur*: the more modern the city is, the more strolling takes place in it and this is certainly the case of New York. Considering the characteristics of this landscape, the *flâneur*, strolling through the streets of Manhattan, finds anonymity in the multitude and variety of the masses.

It is revealing to note how New York is the city that best represents the activity of the city strollers. Furthermore, thanks to the aspects that shape the *flâneur*, New York stimulates the production of *flânerie*. If we want to frame New York in the spectrum of urban walking, we might look at the city as a theatre for the stroller. Outdoor places represent the performance of the *flâneur* in the city, whereas being in indoor spaces is like occupying the balcony of a theatre watching others move within the city.

Let us now consider examples of famous New York *flâneurs*, following their footsteps within the city, re-iterating their changes from the past up to the present. In doing so, we will also analyze their changes in the historical moment of their strolling.

2.2. City strollers: Wandering New York from the 1800s to the Present

2.2.1. Whitman, Johnson, Kazin

Let us first look back at the city's aspect in the late 1800s at the moment of the first city strollers. As I did previously for Paris, I will now bring to light the differences and the social context that gave birth to the New York *flâneur*.

Between 1890 and the 1900s, New York grew enormously both in terms of population and architectural changes. Some of the primary consequences of this expansion were: immigration, the creation of tenement housing and the construction of the skyline. In the 19th century, America represented the land of independence and opportunity and New York City was the gateway of that freedom that was denied in other countries. Despite the persistent preoccupation with immigration and the problems with accommodating immigrants, New York soon became

an open city that offered a varied mixture of cultures. To foreign eyes, America was a country of opportunity and New York City became the cradle of cross culturalism, freedom and tolerance. The arrival of immigrants was welcomed in New York City by the main symbol of freedom and democracy: the Statue of Liberty. This openness represented the chance for the new immigrants to build communities within the city, joining people from their country of origin. If today New York's multiculturalism feels natural, in the late 1800s, New Yorkers learned to adapt to that mixed population that soon became its best quality as a tolerant and modern city.

The first examples of *flâneurs* in this period are different from the strollers of Paris. Paris was a city that offered a standard society of non-ethnic people. The first strollers in New York in the 1800s lived a different situation, constantly coming into contact with "difference", a concept that was much less common in Paris at the time. Moreover, the biggest improvements that led to the creation of a modernist and avant-garde city took place at the beginning of the 1900s. In 1904, for example, New York saw the opening of what soon became its most important means of transportation: the subway system. At the beginning of the 1900s, this innovation changed the city and its residents. The extensive subway system reduced the traffic problem and soon became the best way to move in the city.

The importance of the 1900s for New York is mainly due to the architectural planning of the modern metropolis. From 1910, New York started an expansion that continues even today and shapes its modern aspect. The construction of important buildings and the re-organization of Park Avenue defined New York as the architectural heart of the Western world in the 20th century. As previously mentioned, its architectural asset is in constant change. A recent example is the construction of the One World Trade Center, built after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a new skyscraper that recently changed the skyline of lower Manhattan.

Immigration, the conglomeration of boroughs, the origin of communities and the improvement of the skyline are the elements in which the *flâneur* originated in New York in the late 1800s. The modernity of New York at that time was impossible to compare with any other city in the world. Those people who strolled in the city at the time walked on the sidewalks of its long avenues, huge parks, crowded streets and multicultural neighbourhoods. If the *flâneur* originates in this urban modernity, New York is the essence of this modernity and the city that best represents the spirit of the stroller. The New York *flâneur* faithfully mirrored the changes of the city through time as an attentive observer of the endless evolution of Manhattan and its society.

The historian Lewis Mumford once remarked, "Whenever one goes in New York, whether one knows it or not, one walks in the steps of Walt Whitman" (Mumford in Miller, 2014: 38).

Walt Whitman is generally regarded as the first and foremost example of *flâneur* in the 19th century America. At the time in which he dedicated his works to New York, the city was a mixture of races and it saw the formation of new communities.

Between 1820 and 1830, more than seven thousand immigrants entered the United States. The immigrations of the 1800s tripled the city's population. In 1835, an intense fire damaged the area of Lower Manhattan and wood buildings were substituted by the new brick architecture. In the 1800s New York was an innovative city characterized by the fast rhythm of its changes and the construction of new buildings. Great accomplishments of this age took place at the end of the 19th century, even more prominently, with the inauguration of symbolic monuments such as the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883 and the Statue of Liberty in 1886. In 1853, Manhattan's skyline was first altered with the construction of the first avant-garde modernist building, the Crystal Palace, built in the current area of Bryant Park right behind Fifth Avenue. This building was a response to a similar structure erected in London to host the Great Exhibition in 1851. In this way, the sky became New York's new modern limit of construction and the aspect of Manhattan would soon be altered forever. Strolling through the crowd's exhibition was Walt Whitman who tried to capture the frenetic spirit of modern New York.

Whitman's vision of New York, in the 1850s, is that of a magnetic and energetic city that inspires both its residents and strollers. He related to the city as a spectator or an observer, thus becoming the example of a natural American *flâneur*. Whitman officially moved to New York at the age of four, when his family settled in Brooklyn where he attended public school in the 1830s. The multiculturalism and diversity forced Whitman to express ambivalent feelings about the city. In Whitman's own words describing New York,

“Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week, the mechanics of the city/ The parades, processions, buglers playing, flags flying, drums beating; a million people- manners free and superb-open voices-hospitality-the most courageous young men/ the free city! No slaves! No owners of slaves! The beautiful city! the city of hurried and sparkling waters! the city of spires and masts! the city nested in bays! my city!” (in Homberger, 2002: 4-5).

In this section of the poem “Manhatta”, Whitman praises Manhattan as the land of energy and hospitality. On the one hand, for him the frenetic and fast rhythm of life was an energetic impulse to its residents; on the other, he criticized the terrible condition of slums and tenements that produced a squalid image of a city swamped by its poor and unhealthy conditions. However, the image of Whitman's *flâneur* belongs to the classic tradition of *flânerism*, well described by Baudelaire in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857). If Paris was the place of emotions and feelings for the Baudelairean stroller where he created an intimate and profound relationship with his self and the city, the same could be said for Whitman and the New York *flâneur*. In other words, “just as

Paris is a mirror of Baudelaire's psyche, so is New York for Whitman" (Miller, 2015: 23). To trace the history of the American *flâneur* is to follow Baudelaire's footsteps through the strolling of Walt Whitman, since he is Baudelaire's equivalent stroller in America.

Another interesting trait of Whitman's *flâneur* that faithfully mirrors the stroller described by Baudelaire is the importance given to the crowd. Whitman also praises Manhattan as the city of the crowd par excellence that overwhelmingly creates a mixture of different people. This variety is far more prominent in New York's ethnic masses and it is in fact this variety that moves the *flâneur* representing a fundamental impulse to the accomplishment of his activity. He describes Manhattan crowds as filled with a "turbulent musical chorus" (Whitman in Miller, 2014: 32).

But despite their similarities as *flâneurs*, Baudelaire and Whitman's *flâneristic* image changes in the diversity of the two cities of Paris and New York. Baudelaire considers Paris as a gloomy city of loneliness, whereas Whitman sees New York as the energetic city that affects the *flâneur*. In this way, the image differs in the contrast of these diverse urban landscapes, since the *flâneur* is enormously influenced by the city's urban environment. In 1835, Whitman moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan and there is where his life as a *flâneur* began. In his years in Brooklyn, Walt Whitman used to take regular walks as he recalled in his first essays. Despite his life as city stroller, which took place in various different angles of the five boroughs, Whitman's *flâneur* found its synthesis in Manhattan or, as Whitman calls it, "Manhatta". To paraphrase Whitman, he loved to walk in New York more than in any other city in the world. "Through Manhattan streets I Walking" (Whitman in Miller, 2014: 27), as he says in the poem *Our Feuilletage*.

The activity of walking is very well described in what is considered to be Whitman's most important work, *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1855. In this collection of poems, in which Whitman sings and foretells the values of American culture, most poems reflect the life and activity of strolling in New York. Walking in the city is for Whitman a way of witnessing the frenetic changes of life in the city, thus creating a connection with his inner self. The psychological aspect of Whitman's stroller is essential in order to trace a profile of the modern American *flâneur*. Whitman preferred to stroll in the crowded spaces of the metropolis where he could easily blend into the crowd. The most crowded heterogeneous place in New York at the time was Broadway, the first shopping avenue of the late 19th century. In doing so, Whitman strolls among the expression of the economic consumption of the time, thus being a faithful reporter of the city and its economy. In his ability to stroll through shops he reminds us of Benjamin's *flâneur*, whose main aim was to capture the new usage of money by strolling among the symbols of the new economy in the Arcades of Paris. Whitman himself believed that

walking was connected to the economic business of the time. “New York was an exhilarating place in large part because of its commercial bent” (Miller, 2014: 34) and Whitman is the exception among American writers as he praises commerce in the city.

We understand the importance of Whitman as the quintessential pioneer of *flânerie* in America and the first to start the genre of urban walking in New York City. His *flâneur* mirrors its roots in the French tradition of Baudelaire and Benjamin. Walt Whitman is the harbinger and the initiator of the tradition of *flânerie* in New York in the 1800s.

The 1900s shaped a particular kind of stroller that uniquely pertains to New York, the immigrant. In other words, “foreigners” are the *flâneurs* at the beginning of the 20th century. As previously mentioned, immigration was the event of the century that certainly contributed to expanding the city’s cultural aspect. As a consequence of this new amalgamation, even foreigners felt the need to stroll in the city at the beginning of the 20th century. However, if we want to define this kind of strolling, we can easily say that for immigrants walking was mainly a necessity.

The first example of an immigrant *flâneur* in New York is the Danish journalist and photographer Jacob Riis. Riis came to New York at the age of twenty-one when he migrated from Denmark. Like the majority of immigrants, Riis came to New York poor and with no prospects of home or work, living the “American dream” as he came in quest for the freedom he was denied in his own country. As Riis wrote, looking at New York’s harbour, “My hopes rose high that somewhere in this teeming hive there would be a place for me” (Riis in Miller, 2015:78). He was expressing his quest for liberty.

At the moment of his arrival, Jacob Riis was extremely poor and in search of a job. The reason for his contribution to *flânerie* lies in his later career as a writer and journalist, when he described his experience as urban stroller and immigrant in the city. As we will later see, mostly in the case of New York, some of the *flâneurs* simply chose to wander randomly, others to stroll in a specific area of the city. This is certainly the case for strollers in the years between 1910 and 1930, when some of them felt the need to capture the reality of foreignness.

For Jacob Riis, the centre of his wanderings was the Lower East Side and the slums where he strolled in search of food and shelter. In this way, Riis became a *flâneur* by necessity; the literary observation of his strolling only came a few years later with the recollection of his wanderings in his first biography. However, his walks were not simply a mere quest for something, but instead strolling in such miserable conditions helped the immigrant stroller to give more attention to the landscape. Besides walking in the street, Riis used to walk in slums and tenements. His attentive

observation as a *flâneur* mirrors the misery of New York in the areas of the city affected by the wide phenomenon of immigration, which was part of the city's multicultural expansion.

After rough times and several humble jobs, Riis recollected his biographical experience of his perpetual strolling in the city in *The Making of the American* published in 1901. In this work, Riis denounced the terrible conditions of immigrants as well as the unhealthy situation of New York's poor neighbourhoods overcrowded by homelessness and poverty. In doing so, Riis was showing for the first time the perspective of the foreigner portraying "otherness" in the act of urban walking. His observation of the immigrant communities belongs to the classic tradition of *flânerie*, as it is an impartial observation of reality. As Riis' biographer observed, "Riis spent more time painting positive portraits of the other" (Miller, 2014: 83).

Riis certainly succeeded in his observation and description of New York slums, providing a vivid portrayal of the city, thus outlining the problem of assimilation and amalgamation. In his description of slums, Riis was concerned with tenements, the new residential solution that caused problems of illnesses and health. He states, "In the tenements all the influences make for evil... They are hot-beds of the epidemics that carry death to rich and poor alike, the nurseries of pauperism and crime that fill our jails and police courts" (Riis in Miller, 2014: 85).

His preoccupation for people and his observation of the modernity of New York makes Jacob Riis an attentive observer of the condition of the immigrant community at the beginning of the 20th century. Yet, there is another interesting aspect that classifies Riis as an immigrant *flâneur*, his role as a photographer. He became a photographer by choice, but even today we experience the reality of the slums through his portraits. Furthermore, the *flâneur* and the photographer have much in common, as they both capture and observe the changes of the city. Riis was in search of scenes to capture and this is one of the peculiarities of *flânerie*.

Given this, Riis was not only an immigrant; he was also an atypical kind of *flâneur*. Firstly, he was a foreigner and this represents a novelty in the concept of urban walking that was mainly characterized by strollers who were extremely confident with the urban reality. Secondly, his condition forced him to choose strolling as the only activity to survive and consequently led him to the recollection of his observations as a real *flâneur*. In the case of Riis, his strolling is no more an impartial observation of the city as it is faithfully shaped by the social situation analyzed through the eyes of a poor immigrant.

This is, as we will later see, another interesting aspect of New York that creates *flâneurs* who stroll for necessity or find a way to read the changes of the city through their own condition. Despite his difference from the traditional canons of *flânerie*, where strollers consciously choose to stroll in the city, Riis involuntarily, by necessity, mirrored the reality of his condition. His role

in New York is that of an atypical *flâneur* and the first foreigner that observed the city's changes in the reality of immigration, one of the symbols of New York at the dawn of the 20th century.

In the 1930s, the history of *flânerie* in New York extended to the black neighbourhood of Harlem. We have primarily talked about New York as a mixture of cultural heterogeneity that blends people of different cultures. As a consequence of this mixture and difference, *flâneurs* in the 1920s started to deal with the issue of diversity and race in the city. Once the amalgamation of residents and foreigners was completed, immigrants had the necessity to create an identity, claiming their voice within their community in the city.

The most prominent of these communities was that of African-Americans. The abolition of slavery in December of 1865 and the end of the American Civil war in April of the same year led to an intense racist reaction in the South. Consequently, at the turn of the century, African-Americans migrated to the North in what is widely known as "The Great Migration". They moved to the North in search of freedom, equality and liberalism. A large number of people of African-American descent settled in New York, which represented to them the cradle of that liberalism that was still lacking in the South.

With the origin of their own communities in New York, African-Americans resided in what soon became the Mecca of their culture, Harlem. The concentration of African-Americans in Harlem led to the origin of a culture per se entirely dedicated to black society. The "New Negro", this is the name given to the black community, aimed at the creation of a new unified creed that would have uplifted the race. The consequence of this independence was the creation of the first African-American literature, well known as the literature of the Harlem Renaissance. Black writers and artists at the time solidified their ideals in Harlem in order to prove equality among their own society. The Harlem Renaissance discussed issues such as the influence and the experience of slavery, the dilemma of being accepted by the white élite thus providing the experience of the black racism in the North. Evidence of the problem of diversity and race is central within the African-American society.

In order to depict the intense spirit of Harlem's street life, in the 1930s the *flâneur* strolls through the streets of Harlem in search of a unification of his identity among his counterparts. However, "walking was a dangerous activity for immigrants as well as for blacks at the turn of the century" (Miller, 2015: 148). The episode of the first Race Riot that took place in New York City on August 15, 1900 where a white policeman was stabbed by a black man during a fight, led to a sense of danger for African-Americans who were segregated in Harlem. The Race Riot suggested that it could be dangerous even for blacks to walk outside of their ghetto in

Manhattan. Yet walking is a matter of diversity, and Negroes strolled in fear of difference, looking for their own identity.

The essence of the 1930s African-American *flâneur* is well described by one of the major representatives of the Harlem Renaissance: James Weldon Johnson. Born in Florida from parents of African-American descent, Johnson moved to New York with his brother at a very young age. After his first years as a composer and contributor to the upcoming birth of Jazz music, also born in New York, Johnson settled in Harlem where he dedicated himself to the production of a literature that would enhance the new black community. With his early production of poetry written in black vernacular English, Johnson aimed at supporting the Negro community. His later work brought to light the issue of intolerance of the black society of Harlem. His poetics and ideals are well explained in his masterpiece, “Black Manhattan”, published in 1930. In this work in favour of the new blacks, Johnson exemplifies the figure of the African-American stroller. Strolling was an integral part of life in Harlem, but as Johnson explains, the aim of the *flâneur* in Harlem was strolling for the purpose of joining others finding unity in the street. Johnson says,

“Strolling is almost a lost art in New York, at least in the manner in which it is practised in Harlem. Strolling in Harlem does not mean merely walking along Lennox or upper Seventh Avenue or One-Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Street; it means that those streets are places for socializing” (1930: 162).

Walking is a way to socialize or, as Johnson states, “Strolling in Harlem was not simply going out for a walk; it was more like going out for an adventure” (Johnson in Herringshow, 1962:34). Strolling becomes important and essential in the 1930s as a way of unifying the mixed society of New York and, in the case of African-Americans, the *flâneur* strolls to find his own place within his community. Other important black writers, such as Claude McKay, well exemplified the nature of the 1930s *flâneur*, whose primary aim was walking toward equality.

2.2.2. Kazin, Hardwick, Auster and Whitehead

In the 1950s and 1960s, the New York *flâneur* faces the trauma of post-war loneliness. For almost a decade, New York was a decaying metropolis. Like many cities after the war, New York had to be renewed, so the city dealt with an urban reorganization after the phenomenon of immigration. New York was a city of bad health conditions that saw the suburbanization of Manhattan and the development of the greater metropolitan area. Furthermore, in the 1950s New York’s aspect changed again, and Midtown was fully renovated and redesigned with the construction of new buildings. Another interesting area that was reorganized at the time was the

East Village, whose borders saw the construction of the new parkway, the FDR Drive. Its construction started in 1955 and was finally completed at the end of the 1960s.

Yet renewal inevitably leads to destruction, and buildings were torn down and substituted by new ones. In the second half of the 1950s, New York was a construction site. These were also years of residential architectural improvement. In the 1960s, New York approved the construction of public housing in substitution of traditional apartment blocks. In the following years, the city faced an age of protest. The first gay movement started a riot in 1969 and the great Garbage Strike of 1968 profoundly hit the city. For almost a week, New York streets were overflowing with trash and sidewalks were occupied by the innumerable bags of garbage left fetid on the sidewalks. In the 1950s and 1960s New York had a terrible quality of life. It was a city in architectural change filled with immigrants and terrible healthy conditions due to the overcrowded situation of many neighbourhoods.

This is the context in which the *flâneur* strolls in New York in the 1950s and 60s. New York's *flânerie* at the time was well represented by the stroller par excellence of this age, Alfred Kazin. Kazin spent all his life in New York and his literary work was entirely dedicated to his long promenades in the city. In his masterpiece *A Walker in the City* (1951), Kazin expressed the importance of being a New Yorker by strolling in its streets. He states, "Walking in the street as usual, between boredom and fatalism, I nevertheless realize to the depths of my being something I have so rarely admitted to myself- that I am grounded in this city, these streets, among these people..." (Kazin in Miller, 2014: 162). It is evident how Kazin acknowledges the importance of New York as his city and, most importantly, a city of strollers. Yet if we want to define Kazin's attitude as a *flâneur* in New York, we can easily relate his strolling to a melancholic sense of solitude. As he said, he was "mad with loneliness" (Kazin in Miller, 2014: 164). Kazin believed that, despite the heterogeneity of its overcrowded streets, New Yorkers were lonely. He asserts, "I see them in the gateways of the city, in cheap cafeterias, in subways... I became, for all practical purposes, one of them. I mean those who are essentially by their present constitution of life, homeless, intellectual, and desperate" (Kazin in Miller, 2014: 164). As previously mentioned, loneliness is one of the main characteristics of the *flâneur* whose wanderings must take place in solitude. For Kazin the solitude of the urban stroller is mainly a consequence of decay and multiculturalism. If in the 1930s strollers were looking for unification in the streets, in the 1950s the metropolis was growing and New Yorkers easily got lost in the heterogeneity of the crowd feeling lonely and eventually looking for private spaces. Kazin himself was profoundly moved by the decaying of New York and was somehow overwhelmed by its cultural mixture. Recounting his encounter with two Negroes, during one his promenades, Kazin said,

“Walked down to 72nd. St. subway this morning, just in front of the subway entrance, a miserable looking young Negro. The city is full of these miserable faces, miserable people” (Kazin in Miller, 2014: 166).

In this way, we perceive the difficulty of the *flâneur* in blending in with the diversity of New York’s crowd in the 50s, when amalgamation was a new phenomenon. This loneliness allows the urban stroller to establish an intimate relationship with his inner self. New York’s urban context in the 1950s, led to an intense relationship between strolling and psychology. Even for Kazin, strolling was a way to achieve an intimate relationship with the mind, finding peace in his own thoughts. The consequence of this sense of solitude, emphasizing the *flâneur*’s psychological mood, is the decaying image of the city. As Kazin said describing New York at the time, “New York is dying” (Kazin in Miller, 2014: 173). Riots, graffiti, slums, the extensive homelessness, multicultural racism are only some of the characteristics that make the *flâneur* a disoriented and thus lonely spectator of city life in the 1950s and 60s.

If the 1960s were a period of decay for New York, the 1970s opened a decade of decline that persisted for almost for twenty years. In 1970 New York was hit by an economic crisis that spread all over the United States. New York filed for bankruptcy and financial disorders led the city’s powerful economy to an intense collapse that consequently created massive problems of unemployment. In an attempt to lift up the city, a plan for architectural improvements was implemented in the financial district of Lower Manhattan. Evidence of New York’s grandeur led to the construction of The World Trade Center, built as a symbol of modernity and possible economic growth. This event marked New York’s architectural history, not only in the modification of its skyline, but by being the new symbol of New York’s modernity, the newest and tallest skyscraper in lower Manhattan.

Fiscal stagnation and persistent extensive homelessness were just a few of the consequences that brought a period of crime and violence to the city. In the second half of the 1970s, New York was a dangerous city with an extensive abuse of heroin trade, crime and prostitution. The crisis also hit New York’s Police Department, which was accused of corruption. It eventually saw proceedings against many policemen who were responsible for aiding the drug trade. In this way, New York was a dangerous city, as it was poorly defended by a corrupted Police Department.

Considering this period of decline and crime, the streets of New York were definitely unsafe places to walk. The case that illustrated the danger of the streets at the end of the 1970s was the famous disappearance of Ethan Patz, a six-year-old boy who disappeared during a two-minute walk from his home to the bus stop. The case contributed to aliment the state of violence and

terror of the streets at the time. The story became so popular in the United States that the boy's name and picture was printed on milk cartons to help his possible identification. The case was so incisive that President Reagan in 1983 declared the day of Ethan's disappearance, May 25th, as National Missing Children's Day.

Despite the crime and violence all over the city, the highest rate of crimes took place in New York's subway system. The city's metropolitan subway system in the 1970s was one of the most dangerous in the world. Yet, the majority of crimes were a consequence of racial disputes in ethnic areas of the city. In the 1970s, New York streets were a gloomy and dark place where it was dangerous to walk.

The feminist writer and New Yorker Elisabeth Hardwick best represents the *flâneur* in this decaying decade. Hardwick's ability was in portraying the overwhelming reality of New York through the steps of urban walkers. Her most *flâneristic* novel is set in the second half of the 1970s, and most of Hardwick's previous works deals with disoriented characters who face the preoccupation of wandering in the city. In her first short story, *The Temptations of Dr. Hoffman* (1946), the narrator finds pleasure by walking in the streets of New York at night, being classified as a classical *flâneur*, thus observing the reality of the city. The same could be said for the following narrative, *Oak and the Axe* (1956), in which the elusive protagonist wanders in the streets, strolling incessantly.

Even though her *flâneristic* interpretations spanned over time, Hardwick's best example of *flâneur* is that of the feminine protagonist of the acclaimed "Sleepless Nights", published in 1979. The *flâneristic* importance of this novel is in the originality of its main character, a woman, whose strolling recollects the memory of her past as well as that of other wanderers in the city. In this way, Hardwick was able to portray the decaying reality of the urban walker through the vulnerable figure of a woman strolling through the violence and crime of New York in the 1970s. This is one of the rare examples of feminine *flâneurs*, but certainly no one better than Hardwick could represent the fear of strolling and the agony of urban walking in decaying New York.

The danger of the streets is well described by the narrator looking at Harlem through the window of her hotel in Midtown Manhattan. She states, "It is Midtown Manhattan within walking distance of all those places one never walked to" (Hardwick in Miller, 2014: 180). This quote clearly manifests the fear of strolling in a few areas of the city that were considered dangerous for the high rate of crime in the 1970s. The fear of "otherness" and diversity was also persistent. Walking on Broadway the protagonist, Miss Cramer, approaches a black woman in fear of her presence in the subway. She notes,

“An appealing wreck of great individuality, a black woman who wanders in and out of the neighbourhood, covers the street with purposeful speed... The whole part of her lower face is always bound tight with a sort of turban or woollen cloth. Fear of germs, disfigurement, or symbol of silence?” (Hardwick in Miller, 2014: 182).

As she ponders the black woman, Miss Cramer’s *flâneristic* perspective is that of a woman strolling in fear of “otherness” in New York at the end of the decaying age. The protagonist observes the disorder and failure on the streets of New York. Yet, the story itself is the representation of failure in the city, failure to have enough money to lead a decent life and failure of relationships, as the protagonist ponders throughout the novel. However, the atmosphere of fear and danger is very well described in one of the innumerable strolling sequences of the protagonist *flâneur*. As she strolls through the subway, she described the vaguely menacing atmosphere in the street. She says,

“We passed open bars and closed shops. One corner would be deserted, as if an entire side of the street had turned off its lights and closed its eyes. Another would be filled with people standing in groups, alert, sleepless, looking about for the next stop at night that had just began... Whistling noises fill the air suddenly and die down once more” (Hardwick in Miller, 2014: 183).

As Hardwick explains through her female urban stroller, it was dangerous for a woman to walk by herself at night. Yet, through her strolling Miss Cramer is also trying to understand what New York means to her in relation to her past.

Even though the female protagonist subverts the canons of traditional *flânerie* that mainly saw the presence of masculine strollers, Hardwick’s protagonist in “Sleepless Nights” is an objective observer of the decaying reality of New York in the decade of the 1970s. Her reflections about the past are also a way of looking at herself in the disorienting reality of New York as a traditional *flâneur*.

In the late 1980s, Paul Auster shaped a new kind of *flâneur*, designated to become the new contemporary stroller that will populate the 21st century. The new urban stroller was less interested in the city’s changes, still disoriented but in quest for an identity. Starting in 1980 and continuing for almost a decade, New York finally enjoyed a period of moderate optimism. Unemployment was extremely reduced and the boom on Wall Street and its financial market gave a new life to the city. In 1990, Mayor David Dinkins asked for a new reform to “fight fear” with the expansion and intensification of the number of officers in the Police Department, and with more controls all over the city. Even though it was reduced, in the 1980s and 1990s, crime was not fully abolished in the city. There were the murders of African-Americans in white neighbourhoods and New York’s subway system kept its notoriety as the most dangerous in the world.

The most important crime at the time took place in Central Park, where a twenty-eight year-old woman was raped and nearly killed by four African-Americans and a man of Hispanic descent. The Central Park Jogger case, as it was called, was one of the most widely publicized crimes in the United States. This event led to a period of violence and terror in New York. In 1993, a bomb was detonated at the World Trade Center, which was intended to tear down both towers. Even though the attack was reduced, six people were killed and the explosion injured more than a thousand.

Here then, we see a different New York: more modern and shaped by terror and violence. This is the city that animates Paul Auster's *flâneristic* novels. In his works, Auster creates the image of a surreal and mystical New York that represents the city's reality in the 1980s and 1990s. Examples of *flânerie* can be found in Auster's first book, *The New York Trilogy*, published in 1985, which narrates three detective stories set in a phantasmagorical and magical New York. Auster's *flâneur* has a split personality: he is both Paul Auster the writer and the protagonist of the first story, Quinn, in *City of Glass*. This first narrative is the story of a private investigator who mistakenly assumes the identity of Paul Auster, strolling in the streets of New York in search of his own identity. In this way, Auster analyzes the multiple facets of human identity through the activity of *flânerie*.

Another interesting aspect of the new *flâneur*, well represented by Auster, is his relationship with the city's landscape. In *City of Glass* Auster and Quinn stroll as *flâneurs*, but they somehow feel overwhelmed by the city's itself. As Auster says, describing Quinn's strolling through the city, "The fear of an identity collapse comes along with the apparent collapse of the cityscape" (Auster in Gonsior, 2006: 1). Quinn is watching the urban environment from a certain distance. This description of the city illustrates the modern situation of a city that needs to be interpreted and reorganized.

We see a *flâneur* obsessed by his split personality. In other words, "all of Auster's characters show multiple identities. They are either split personalities from the very beginning or they undergo the process of splitting during the search" (Holzapfel in Gonsior, 2006: 2). Quinn's identity problems are closely connected to his strolls in the city. He re-discovers himself in an alien New York. In this way, *flâning* turns into a necessary activity for Quinn. The quest for the self and his disorientation, in the mystical landscape of New York, inevitably lead him to a sense of loss. Yet, in Auster's *flâneur*, the loss is dual. On the one hand he perceives the solitude of the self: on the other, he is lost in a city that overwhelms his strolling. Auster says about Quinn, "No matter how far he walked, no matter how well he came to know its neighbourhoods and streets, it always left him the feeling of being lost" (Auster in Gonsior, 2006:4). Given this, Paul Auster

develops the new contemporary *flâneur* as a disoriented character whose quest for the self and sense of loss faithfully mirror the loss of stability and security in the 1980s and 1990s. In other words, “Quinn as a *flâneur* walks through postmodern New York watching muddled people everywhere and a city in total decay” (Gonsior, 2006: 15). As we will see, the quest for an identity will become the primary characteristic of contemporary American strollers. In the case of Paul Auster and his contemporaries, the figure of the *flâneur* is re-adapted to post-modern New York.

As the last and thus contemporary example of New York’s history of *flânerie*, I will look at the 21st century *flâneur* in the works of African-American writer and New Yorker, Colson Whitehead. As previously mentioned, modern urban strollers feel disoriented among the city’s innumerable changes. More precisely, the new modernity generates what Tamar Katz defines as “urban nostalgia”. The city is no more a place of inspiration to the *flâneur*, whose goal was the ability to read urban changes, but it is instead a place of grief, trauma and melancholia. New York’s energetic spirit, defined by Whitman as “Magnetic Manhatta”, is now a mere symbol of the past. Consequently, the contemporary *flâneur* seeks refuge in a fantasized past. In doing so, the city carries a sense of loss. It could be the loss of its urban aspect or the loss of an identity. This concept inevitably evokes the catastrophic loss of 9/11 in the fatal terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center. September 11th has been considered the tragedy of the 21st century. New York, chosen as the main target of Islamic terrorism, was enormously hit by the attacks. It took more than a year to clean up the area after the collapse of the Twin Towers, and one of the main consequences was an exodus of business in Lower Manhattan as well as the tragedy that left the city in decay. Most offices have been shifted uptown in other areas of the city such as Midtown, or to New Jersey or Brooklyn, thus moving into other parts of the city.

Another major problem after the collapse were the health problems caused by the pollution and spread of toxic debris near the area of Ground Zero. For the following years, New York lived in a state of terror that still today reverberates among people. Once more the city’s skyline changed forever its aspect losing one of the most iconic symbols of the Empire City. This tragic event is seared into America’s National memory, and people craved the image of a city that was never the same.

Even today, New York is a city under incessant control, due to the fear of further terrorist attacks. The city is on constant alert as it still represents one of the major targets of Islamic terrorism. However, from 2010, the economic situation in New York improved enormously and the city finally reemerged after the economic consequences of 9/11. In 2012 the city faced a period of large reconstruction with the boom of the housing system and the construction of

luxurious residential skyscrapers. Today, New York has established its equilibrium as a huge varied city in continuous change, carrying its image of decay even as it is well represented by suburban areas of Manhattan or close boroughs such as Queens and the Bronx.

Colson Whitehead's "The Colossus of New York", published in 2003, faithfully portrays the image of decay and the sense of loss in the 21st century New York of disoriented strollers. Whitehead's *flâneristic* protagonist is a tour guide who leads us on a daily journey through Manhattan. However, his *flâneur* is profoundly different from the traditional image of Baudelaire and Whitman. Whitehead's character is an urban stroller who harbours disenchanted surrealist thoughts. His chapter on Broadway well exemplifies the nature of his *flâneur*,

"There can be no destination. No map. Live here long enough and you have a compass. Who among them can complain, unanimous weather speaks the same phrases downtown and up: Nice out, isn't it. Borough to borough. So he walks. He will ask no questions this day. The street will not scheme this day. Let it happen" (Whitehead, 2003: 73).

Here then the urban stroller has no destination. His attitude is that of a disenchanted stroller who moves in some kind of daze in his wanderings and in his perception of the city. Eventually, New York is disorienting for Whitehead, as he states, "In this city you always end up where you began. Settle for extending the radius bit by bit, give up on more" (Whitehead in Miller, 2014: 196). More than realistic walks, Whitehead's strolling is a dream-like reality made up of the perspective of an ideal walk that is no more possible in contemporary New York. In other words, "Life in New York is a solipsistic blur in which random people enter and exit one's life" (Miller, 2014: 197). Very little is said about the urban landscape where the *flâneur* is more interested in the dream of wandering in the innermost reality of his thoughts. The disinterest for the landscape is well exemplified by Whitehead in the chapter dedicated to the "Brooklyn Bridge" where he clearly criticizes New York's skyline. He says, "Let's pause a sec to be cowed by this magnificent skyline. So many arrogant edifices, it's like walking into a jerk festival. Maybe you recognize it from posters and television. Looks like a movie set, a false front of industry" (Whitehead, 2003: 101). He concludes by stating that New York is a phantasmagoria, it is a bad dream for the contemporary *flâneur*. The urban stroller of Whitehead's narration experiences some kind of trauma provided by the quest for his self, the sense of loss in the urban context and the reflection on his own thoughts. His *flâning* undeniably carries the idea of disorientation where the city and its landscape are mere symbols in the environment.

2.2.3. Conclusion

To conclude, we have seen how the *flâneur* in New York has changed through time. In the late 1800s, the nature of the first acts of urban strolling portrayed the image of an attentive reporter of street life who faithfully captured the energetic spirit of New York. The 1910s and 1930s saw the emerging need to mirror the cohesion of immigrant communities whose acts of *flânerie* aimed at unifying and uplifting their self-confidence more than portraying the changes of the metropolis and the poor condition of the immigrant areas. Later on, the urban stroller experiences a condition of melancholic solitude because of his initial inability to cope with the new multiracial community, feeling disoriented in the upcoming reality of a modern New York. Then, the contemporary American *flâneur* shifts from the perception of urban changes to the ability to find his identity through a surreal cityscape. In this way, the city becomes a disenchanting reality for the urban walker whose strolling is animated by a sense of loss, trauma, grief and incompleteness.

In the following chapters, I will provide a closer analysis of four novels, ranging from the time of the *flâneur*'s literary origin, the 1800s, to our contemporary age, post 9/11. In this way, I will be able to prove that urban strolling varies depending on social changes in the city's social fabric at any given moment.

3. 19th and Early 20th Century New York: Female Strollers on the Market

3.1. The Female *Flâneuse*

New York has produced different kinds of literary figures of strollers whose natures have been widely affected by the city's historical changes and events. After having discussed the roots of the *flâneur* in 19th century Paris, and its American versions, we have seen how literary walkers across the Atlantic only partially adhere to the traditional canons of *flânerie*. Considering that the figure of the *flâneur* originates in Europe, the diversity and geographical influence of the American landscape produces specific kinds of urban walkers that uniquely pertain to the American context. New York sketches different kinds of strollers whose characteristics remind us of the literary *flâneur*, but their attitudes vary, eventually emerging as elusive *flâneurs*. In this way, New York's literary walkers are uniquely American and atypical. As Dana Brand suggests, the relocation of the *flâneur* in 19th century America is complex and thus his nature becomes extremely debatable.

In this chapter we will keep the figure of the literary *flâneur* at the basis of our first case study, looking at the context of New York City and its literary walkers who reflect the tradition of *flânerie* while also providing an "American touch" to their strolling. In this way, we will be able to describe literary walkers who, despite their elusive nature, historically define American *flânerie* in New York City.

The American literature of the late nineteenth century produced an equivocal literary *flâneur*, the woman. So far in this thesis, we have predominantly referred to men as *flâneurs*, almost excluding women from the literary panorama of urban walking. It is essential to bear in mind that the practice of *flânerie* is prominently associated with male authors and protagonists. Consequently, the female *flâneur* or, as we will call her from now on the *flâneuse* is often excluded from examinations of descriptions of *flânerie*.

The practice of *flânerie* was associated with male figures who were undeniably free to roam in the city streets in a condition of isolationism with no convention or stereotype. Looking back at the roots of *flânerie*, both Baudelaire and Benjamin acknowledged the feminine presence in the street, but eventually excluded women from the realm of literary *flâneurs*. The French stroller admits the presence of the woman in the street who becomes part of his gaze in his meticulous observation of street life, but the female as *flâneur* herself is a non-existent figure in

the French literature of the 19th century. However, both Baudelaire and Benjamin, the two most prominent theorists of *flânerie*, do briefly discuss the role of the woman in the street.

In his essay *The Return of the Flaneur* (1929), Benjamin acknowledges the presence of feminine strollers who populate the streets of Paris as prostitutes. The first image of feminine walker was associated with the prostitute, seen as a deviant outsider. Benjamin in fact claimed, “the city or industrial capitalism masculinises those who come into contact with it” (in Hanssen, 2006: 100). Considering Benjamin’s definition of the *flâneur* as the direct product of the new capitalism, it is then evident how and why the *flâneur* is a purely masculine figure. The identification of the female stroller as prostitute lies in her relation to commodity, as she becomes an object of the new economy. Benjamin affirms, “In the form taken by prostitution in the big cities, the woman appears not only as commodity, but in a precise sense a mass-produced article” (Benjamin in Hanssen, 2006: 103). Benjamin recognizes what Hanssen defines as “the erotics of capitalism” (Hanssen, 2006), in which the prostitute becomes the symbol of commodity representing the new economy. In Benjamin’s interpretation of the female walker, we are far from the idle *flâneur* who strolls in search of urban changes and modernity. In 19th century Paris women belong to the urban landscape only marginally, representing a symbol of sexuality and attractiveness for the *flâneur*.

In the same way, Baudelaire provided a definition of the courtesan as the unique feminine presence in the metropolis. Even Baudelaire referred to the female prostitute and her presence in the city streets. Speaking of the prostitute he states, “they come and go, pass and repass, their eyes wide and astonished like the eyes of animals; they have an air of seeing nothing, but they scrutinize everything” (Baudelaire in Parsons, 2000: 27). From this description, Baudelaire expresses the nature of the prostitute, whose observatory wandering resembles that of a natural *flâneur*.

Simply put, the female stroller in the 19th century is the image of a woman on the street market, whose wandering and observing activity is only elusively similar to that of the idle masculine stroller. Yet neither Baudelaire nor Benjamin provided a traditional and standardized representation of the *flâneur* as this literary figure varies in both. Hence, the non-existence of a traditional and definitive *flâneur* includes women in the realm of urban walking in the 1800s as they encompass some of the characteristics that uniquely define the masculine stroller.

If the figure of the female stroller in the 1800s was only briefly mentioned by the French theorists of *flânerie*, across the Atlantic the “woman on sale” or “woman object” becomes the quintessential female *flâneur* of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the urban reality of New York City. As we did previously in our description of urban walkers, outlining the historical

events that enable the creation of the *flâneur*, let us first frame the cultural events that led to the development of the female American stroller.

The early 19th century is widely recognized as a period of gender inequality for women, whose life was ruled by rigid moral restrictions such as: limited occupational choices, restraint of legal rights, and total dependency on rigid moral rules. Women were firmly ensconced in the domestic sphere. Their goal was to raise children, taking care of both the house and the family. Work outside the home was a typical male practice, as was education, which was only open to men. The wife was the woman of the century, the essence of an age where the woman was seen as “the Angel in the house”. The term coined by the English poet and critic, Coventry Patmore, is one of the best ways to define women’s confinement to the house in the late 1800s. It is then evident how the idea of roaming in the street was a mere illusion for women, who could not easily leave their households. The life of women in America was regulated by the income of their husbands, and marriage was seen as an economic arrangement. Simply put, women were not only confined in their domestic roles, but they often sought marriage only for pure economic reasons. The confinement to the household permanently excluded women from the city, which was seen as the strolling place of men at the beginning of the 1800s in America. It was inconceivable for a woman to walk alone in the city, as her role was relegated to the running of the household and her main goal was to sell herself in matrimony and then start a life entirely dedicated to both the family and the house.

However, the adherence to rigid moral duties was subverted at the end of the 19th century with industrialization, which brought novelties even in its re-definition of gender roles. The economic input of new industrial cities in the 1860s led to the emergence of a new lifestyle for women. In the period of the Civil War, women discovered their capacities as they realized that they could work in the same way as men. In the late 1880s, women began to subvert the idea of a purely male work force as they began to populate the city, running shops and businesses. Marriage increased also among the middle-classes, and it was no longer considered an exclusive privilege of the upper class. If before female education was minimal, with the new industrial innovation women started to attend schools and universities in America in order to transfer their knowledge to their children, as mothers were responsible for children’s education at home. This process led to the opening of colleges exclusively reserved to women, such as Vassar College, founded in 1861 as one of the first female colleges of the United States. The sense of empowerment found in education and instruction gave birth to the first feminist movements, whose purpose was to raise the voice of women claiming their rights and equality in the United States. The National Suffrage Movement, started in 1869 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan

Anthony, consequently opened the era of suffragettes and female rights manifestations. The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution finally gave women the right to vote in 1919.

The opening of universities for women and the increase in woman-run businesses finally allowed women to approach the city. At the end of the 1880s, the presence of women in American cities expanded, as they became both consumers and workers. Consumerism was vital to urbanization and, as a result of women's new economic empowerment, cities saw the opening of department stores, cafés and amusement parks that attracted women, thus bringing them into the city streets.

Commerce hinged on the difficult relationship between the woman and the city. As Swanson affirms, "Women's problematic relationship with the city is thereby enhanced as they enter the city through the route of commerce and consumption" (Swanson in McDowell and Dreyer, 2012: 6). In other words, in the late 19th century, women who belonged to the upper class entered the city as female shoppers or even more prominently, they strolled to display their wealth. As Maureen E. Montgomery explains in reference to the upper class, "In the late 19th century the leisure that women displayed was no longer restricted at home...Women had to work hard at displaying leisure and making sure that the display was noticed" (in Reus and Jsandizaga, 2008: 110).

The improvement of instruction, the attendance of universities, and the birth of consumerism with the opening of department stores were all developments that led to the presence of the first female walkers in American cities in the late 1800s. Despite their presence in the urban context, in the 19th century women were not allowed to roam the city streets freely, as they were still subdued by the rigid opposition of men who were threatened by the feminine emancipated stroller. The city saw the development of what Dreyer and McDowell define as the "gendering of space". In other words, the urban landscape became a gendered stereotype at the turn of the century, since women were previously associated with the indoor space of the house and men with the outdoor urban environment of the city. The presence of women in the streets and the consequent disempowerment of men led to the identification of the woman as an object of desire in the street, as she was subjected to the male gaze and her economic consumption thus became identified as marketable. As a consequence of the objectification of the female walker, American literature at the turn of the century aimed to represent the anxiety toward strolling women, who were defined as female streetwalkers, prostitutes or objects. The role of the woman was to roam for economic purposes, consequently becoming an object of the market.

Despite the controversial nature of the female stroller, critics such as Elisabeth Wilson argued, "prostitution is the female version of *flânerie*" (in Malone, 2012: 2). An analysis of the

shared traits between the *flâneur* and his female counterpart is necessary before contextualizing this character in 19th century New York. We define the *flâneur* as dandy, artist or “man of the crowd”- a literary walker who does not occupy a specific place in society and roams the city streets with an aura of isolation (Parsons, 2000: 20). This can be said of the prostitute, somehow definable as an artist whose isolated condition separates her from bourgeois society, placing her in the lower strata of society. From Baudelaire’s perspective, the traditional *flâneur* is an artist who sells his art, poetry, through the perception of the city’s changes, which can be said as well of the female streetwalker in the late 1800s. The prostitute is the woman who sells her art, the body, in the urban landscape. As Parsons clearly explained,

“The prostitute corresponds to the narrator-poet himself, a metaphor for the role of the artist as she walks the streets for the material of her profession and offers her constructed body as a commodity in the same way Baudelaire regarded the artist as prostituting his work in publication” (2000: 25).

Another shared trait between the male observer and the marketable *flâneuse*, is the fact that as Benjamin’s *flâneur* represented the new capitalist culture, and the objectified woman does as well, as a character who commodifies her femininity. She represents evil in the new commercial culture, as she is submitted to commerce and capitalism. Her art is sold as a commodity in the changing economy of the city. In this context, the concept of commodity mainly referred to women, as they were the first ones to walk in the city as an approach to the world of consumerism.

Another shared trait of the *flâneur* and the prostitute is certainly their relationship to the crowd. We have seen how the *flâneur* is “the man of the crowd”, the walker who blends with it in the act of understanding the city’s changes. But the crowd is feminine per se and the woman undeniably belongs to the crowd, which is purely feminine. If the *flâneur* has been regarded as “the man of the crowd”, the same can be said for the female streetwalkers who gather en masse in search of anonymity and loneliness in the city. She purposefully blends with the crowd, avoiding being victimized by a masculine society.

The practice of *flânerie* has often been associated with anonymity and independence and the same can be said for the *flâneuse*, whose choice to roam in the city streets certainly represents her independence and desire for anonymity. In this way, in the late 1800s, there was a new, gendered crowd, that of female streetwalker or the upper class woman on display that gathered either to shop in department stores or simply roaming the city streets to sell their bodies or their beauty, earning money as an economic necessity.

However, if both the *flâneur* and the *flâneuse* belong to the city streets and somehow share similar characteristics, only the woman, however, is subjected to the male gaze. In her activity of

selling her art in the city, the female *flâneuse* becomes part of the spectacle of the *flâneur*. Unlike the *flâneur*, the prostitute makes an effort to interact with city dwellers that represent the source of her income. Her body is a social threat, seen as unhealthy and often associated with disease and illness. She is seen with scorn, whereas the *flâneur* is almost invisible to the masses. She still adopts a certain isolation, but her presence certainly emerges in the city streets.

Once this premise has been made clear, it is then easy to understand the negative representation of the walking woman. The female streetwalker is seen negatively as she roams the city streets. Even though she enters the metropolis as an emancipated character, the *flâneuse* is an object of scorn as she strays from rigid moral rules. As previously discussed, the reason for this association lies in the menacing presence of women who represented a threat to men who felt disempowered by the independent woman, or as they were defined, the “New Woman”.

But despite the controversial nature of the female streetwalker, the prostitute and the *flâneur* are undeniably similar. “They are social deviants who are extremely familiar with the geography and inner workings of the city, they were at once observers and members of the visual spectacle that comprised the 19th century metropolis” (Malone, 2012: 100). The feminine lone urban walker was also defined as the “Public Woman”, a figure that, in terms of *flânerie*, corresponded to the prostitute, shopper or streetwalker. As we will see, even “in department stores, women were to become like prostitutes in their active commodified self-display” (Parsons, 2000: 51). Therefore, the female streetwalker has been often associated with the passerby, also attributable to the *flâneur*. This figure is significant in the identification of the *flâneuse*. The confidence of the female stroller or passerby in the city street equates that of the dandy *flâneur*.

The object woman in the street became a literary caricature at the turn of the century, as literary feminine walkers faithfully mirrored the gendered cultural stereotype and the economic condition of women in the American metropolis. Women stroll, observing the city, even as they are the sexually available objects of male walkers. As they enter the city, they become objects of desire and the *flâneur* is certainly attracted by what the city offers and, among its streets, he inevitably encounters the *flâneuse*. The literary representation of the *flâneuse* as a character on the market is an attempt to disempower and hide the independence of women in the urban landscape. Because of her definition as a symbol of upheaval, the feminine streetwalker shifted the concept of household, finally roaming into the metropolis, bringing to light her isolated condition as well as her need to be equal to men in the realm of the city.

3.1.1. Upper and Lower Class Female Strollers

Let us now consider the historical condition of women in New York City, distinguishing between upper and lower class female strollers. As far as concerns the lower strata of society, New York's female stroller is associated with the prostitute. In the 19th century, prostitution was fully accepted in American cities, even though its nature was contradictory. People knew of its existence, acknowledging the role of prostitute as the woman on sale, but they disagreed about its practice as they purposefully avoided the topic in conversation. One of the main reasons for the attitude of distain toward prostitution was the argument that this activity was an inevitable stimulus for other crimes such as drug and alcohol abuse. In expanding cities such as New York, the act of prostitution led to violence and murders, subsequently increasing the high rate of crime already present in most parts of the city.

The first and most renowned case of violence and prostitution in New York was the murder of the twenty-three year-old prostitute, Helen Jewett. Jewett was found dead in a brothel. Once the aggressor inflicted the lethal blow, her body was set on fire. This murder marked New York City's history and prostitution was seen as a dangerous extension of crime. Furthermore, the crime generated a public outcry in the United States. The press publicised the case, creating a daily inquest in the newspapers, and the case became one of the most famous in America. In this way, prostitution was seen an act of scorn and shame for women who had previously been considered pure. "Critics have argued that the main consequence of American prostitution lies in the exclusion of women from public affairs" (Riegel, 1968: 442).

Thanks to its openness to diversity and vast melting pot of cultures and activities, New York City in the late 1880s and 1890s was undeniably open to the practice of prostitution and women for sale in the city. As immigrants were divided into different areas of the city, the same was true for prostitution, which was relegated to an area known as the Five Points in Lower Manhattan. This part of the city was constructed at the beginning of the 1800s and it was dedicated to the selling of sexual practices. This neighbourhood was widely known as a diseased and crime-ridden slum characterized by prostitution, and a high-rate of child mortality.

At the beginning of the 19th century, New York's Five Points had the highest murder-rate of any slum in the world. In the 1830s, New York saw the establishment of activities of reformation for prostitutes with the creation of the "Five Points Mission", a group that helped women avoid roaming in the city streets and fought prostitution and other dangerous activities. In 1831, the area of Five Points saw the formation of the Magdalen Society, whose goal was to sensitize people to its causes and avoid acts of violence and prostitution in the city. This female

group became New York's first female reform society. The society aimed at reducing the chances of females becoming prostitutes, providing homes for the repentant women. This new reformation was also reinforced by the establishment of legal punishments in New York, as a deterrent to persuade women to reform. New York's attitude towards women and prostitution slightly changed in the 1890s, when prostitution was a huge business in the city. Hence, when we refer to the New York prostitute in that era, we see her strolling in the slums of the Bowery area of Lower Manhattan.

The condition of women in the street was undeniably different in New York's High Society. In the *élite*, women obeyed codes and rules and their strolling in the city had a specific goal: displaying wealth and economic stability. Opulent dress was in fact the expression of the feminine cultural capital, and women's wanderings in the streets were purposefully dependent on male consumption and its moral codes. In other words, "women in the High Society were the bearers of cultural capital that set them apart" (Bibby, 2009: 8).

In the late 1800s, newspapers such as the New York Times dedicated articles and essays to the strolling women of New York's High Society, displaying wealth by wearing fashionable clothes. Women belonging to the upper class were defined as the leaders of fashion in America. Their privileged role was emphasized by their presence in articles, advertisements and newspapers discussing the essential presence of leisure-class women in the streets as harbingers of politeness, etiquette and fashionable standards in the metropolis.

This was also the period of the development of etiquette manuals, written by famous rich socialites such as Emily Post, whose treatises on beauty and fashion aimed at displaying feminine clothes and consumption in New York's fashionable streets. The manuals were intended to be a guideline for the middle class, as the *élite* was the social class that inspired lower classes. In 1883, wealthy women collaborated on the improvement and construction of important buildings in the city, such as the Metropolitan Opera House, whose construction was the result of the accumulation of funds from New York's famous socialites whose primary aim was to gain access to places of amusement. Society women "stepped beyond the boundaries of exclusivity and traversed outdoor spaces such as streets, shops and restaurants" (Bibby, 2009: 16). In this way, society women used the street as a display of wealth to maintain exclusivity.

As we have previously classified Lower Manhattan as the walking area of the female prostitute in the slums, in the 1870s, New York's High Society was located in the area of Fourteenth Street and its thoroughfares. Upper class women in New York strolled in Midtown as well as in the spaces between Fourteenth Street and Fifth Avenue that featured fashionable shops and fancy boutiques. In the late afternoons upper class women strolled up Fifth Avenue and

roamed in the city streets, displaying their beauty and social wealth. Another area for social display was the theatre. Women of the élite used the Opera as a social activity and the theatre saw the construction of the opera box, which was exclusively reserved for the upper class as a balcony for public display. The opera box aimed at perpetuating the elevated social status of its occupants as the street was the public space of display for upper class women. However, because of their multiculturalism and heterogeneous population, there was no distinction of the society women in the streets as they inevitably blended with the crowd.

Despite the division of social classes into different areas of the city, upper class women could be easily mistaken for streetwalkers as they were seen to stroll in dangerous neighbourhoods at specific daytimes. For example, in the late 1800s, the area of Canal Street was a dangerous place for women as a woman could be easily mistaken as a prostitute wandering in this area. Emiline Bibby explained the fact that American society of the Gilded Age, as Mark Twain defined the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as a period of intricate social problems, categorized urban spaces as respectable or disreputable and classified women according to the place they occupied as pure ornaments or products of scorn. “The woman who traversed disreputable spaces left herself vulnerable to harassment from men who mistook her as prostitute or at any rate cheap” (Bibby, 2009: 42).

Any woman of New York City wandering in the period of the Gilded Age, no matter her socioeconomic position, potentially dealt with disrepute and loss of social acceptability if she strolled in dangerous areas of the city. Despite the clear differentiation of social classes and their relocation to specific neighbourhoods, New York was a city where space differentiation was not so static. As previously mentioned, brothels had their neighbourhoods, but on sidewalks prostitutes strolled alongside other women. By the 1900s, sex districts blended with the Fashion areas of the city, expanding to the area of Washington Square Park and Fourteenth Street where the High Society lived and strolled. Consequently, New York published manuals that warned upper class women about how to safeguard their reputation roaming in the city streets. According to writer and upper class New Yorker Edith Wharton, access to the city space was consequent to the feminine desire for social liberty. In other words, leisure class women strolled displaying wealth while trying to establish their independence, thus abandoning the indoor space of the house and entering the city streets as free women.

The streetwalker or prostitute became a popular euphemism for objectified woman, and her identification as a marketable issue predominates at the end of the 19th century in American literature. Department stores, instruction and industrialization dissociated women from the domestic sphere, allowing them to suddenly become part of the urban spectacle. The

objectification became an inevitable choice for women as they often found themselves wandering in the city streets as a consequence of economic issues. New York society of the late 19th and early 20th century proved that everything had a price. Women were extremely dependent on strict social rules and submitted to their husband's economic position. Marriage was the economic way out to avoid total exclusion from the economic patrimony. In other words, women could not support themselves economically without a solid marriage that would have guaranteed economic stability. They were selling themselves to suitable husbands or potential lovers.

In this way, the activity of roaming in the city streets was either a social imposition for display or an inevitable choice as a consequence of a difficult economic position. The female's choice in a case of lack of economic support was to enter urban life on her own, strolling in anonymity, either selling or displaying herself in the city.

3.1.2. The *Flâneuse* in Literature

To define the New York *flâneuse* at the end of the 19th century, is to refer to the figure of the object woman, who became the literary character par excellence, characterized as female streetwalker. Literature portrayed the figure of walking women with the exhibition of their downfall in the economic realm of the city at the end of the 19th century. As Riegel states: "The prostitute was explained as the slave of a conscienceless, profit-making organization or as the victim of economic necessity, and it was argued that novelists and dramatists tended to romanticize her" (1968: 450). In this way, we consider the city as the place of display for the female walker. On the one hand, the prostitute displays herself, selling her art in the city, and on the other, leisure class women roamed the city streets as purely ornamental characters that sold themselves in matrimony as objects of leisure.

If before American literature had been dominated by male authors, from the 1890s onward women felt the need to claim their voice through literature, which aimed at expressing the problem of gender, thus staging their emancipated situation in the urban reality of the city. Female strolling experience predominates in the literature at the turn of the century. The street is a fundamental part of women's literary dynamics. The new feminine literature faithfully reflected the stereotypes and economic situation of women. Female characters stroll to be observed either as prostitutes, symbols of scorn and shame in the lower classes or as victims of economic leisure in the upper class, becoming both heroines and victims. Leisure class women are heroines as they attempt to subvert the rigid moral canons of a society that marginalizes them

and victimizes their condition as they are inevitably drawn to poverty and scorn. New York's literature of the late 1800s, proved the emerging need to bring to light the rigid gendered classism as well as the economic position of women in the city. The primary consequence of the economic downfall of women enabled the feminine heroine to roam in the city as a victim of a society that rejected her in her attempt to subvert the moral rules of a gendered masculine predominance. In this way, the strolling object woman becomes the quintessential American *flâneur* at the end of the 19th century.

Once again, New York mirrors the condition of women, portraying the wandering *flâneuse* as a victim of the economic arrangements of the metropolis. As we will see in the following analysis of our first case study, New York in the 1890s and 1900s displays the figure of the feminine streetwalker as the woman on the market, victim of the new economy; not strolling for pleasure, but as a representation of the rigid moral society regulated by strict gender rules.

3.2. Lily Bart's Choice to Stroll in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*

One of the first examples in literature of a female stroller can be found in Edith Wharton's tragic heroine, Lily Bart, in her famous portrayal of New York's upper class society in *The House of Mirth* (1905). Edith Wharton certainly followed Henry James' advice when he famously suggested "Do New York" as she started writing one of her most recognized works. Henry James' suggestion was to provide a faithful and vivid portrayal of New York's High Society, representing the entourage and social classes that Wharton habitually frequented. In this way, *The House of Mirth* is the feminist novel par excellence that well represents the rigid moral rules of New York's wealthy society and the weaker sex, women, at the dawn of the 20th century. Wharton's narrative is in fact populated by feminine figures who are victimized by the domestic aesthetics of the leisure class. We have previously classified the female *flâneuse* as the predominant literary figure of the late 1800s defined as object woman on the market. As previously mentioned, the woman on display, sold in matrimony, uniquely pertains to the upper class.

In the case of Edith Wharton, we will analyze the figure of the female stroller as the beautiful tragic victim of New York's leisure class society. The main characteristic of Wharton's novel, together with her portrayal of New York's mannerist hierarchy, lies in the innumerable walking moments of the female protagonist, whose vicissitudes mainly revolve around her strolling in the

city. This portrayal of a feminine stroller undeniably offers a faithful portrayal of New York's High society at the turn of the 20th century.

As previously discussed, New York City streets at the beginning of the 20th century were places of social engagements, display and economic activity. In his treatise on economics in the high society, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen explains the social rules of the leisure class as a complex social hierarchy based on strict principles that aimed at displaying wealth. Women were the symbol of economic consumption and their role was to "make more of a show of leisure" (Veblen, 1994: 110), thus being regarded as "chief ornaments". In Veblenesque terms, the leisure wife is defined as an "ornament", an object of display whose virtue is sold in matrimony and whose beauty serves as a representation of her social wealth. A woman's only option to maintain social status was the choice of a good marriage that would have let her into the rich society of New York City following its rigid principles. As Veblen clearly suggested, "the woman is still, in theory, the economic dependent of the man" (1994: 111). New York City was the public stage of the intricate consumption of the time. Wharton's *Manhattan* highlights the destructive impact of consumerism upon cultural life and the female desire for emancipation. The public space of the street in Wharton's novel represents the place to put to the test women who followed the rigid moral rules of the Gilded Age. The New York of Wharton's female protagonist is a city of extremes of wealth and poverty, where the economic élite is competing for social power and her wellborn female protagonist is victimized by the society that produced her.

The tragic female stroller of Wharton's novel, Lily Bart, is a beautiful young woman of the New York élite who struggles to find a suitable husband who would enable her to keep her social status in New York's upper class. Lily Bart is in fact the product of a society, the leisure class, which sees her beauty as a symbol of wealth and economic power. Yet walking has a specific goal: exhibiting money and beauty. Ammons suggested that the leisure class *flâneuse* "experiences herself as others must see her" (in Bach, 2000: 7). In other words, the female stroller is under the male gaze and her role of feminine beauty roaming in the city street is purely ornamental. Women have to become attractive objects for an increasingly lascivious male audience. It was a pleasure for a man to walk in the company of a beautiful woman who put herself on display on the street. Moreover, the importance and the complexity of Wharton's heroine lie in her downfall in New York society. As we will see, the character of Lily Bart encompasses both the displaying condition to the upper class walking *flâneuse* and the poor marginalized female stroller in her inevitable decline toward the poor working class.

From the very beginning, Wharton identifies Lily's strolling as a mere act of display. As the scene opens, Lily Bart is waiting for a train at Grand Central Station and she clearly is objectified and observed by the masses. As she blends with the crowd, she stands out from among other people as Lawrence Selden suddenly notices her. His recognition of Lily's function as a woman on display is well explained by his reaction when the sight of her strikes him as she is wandering in the crowded turmoil of Grand Central.

“In the afternoon rush of the Grand Central Station his eyes had been refreshed by the sight of Miss Lily Bart. She stood apart from the crowd, letting it drift by her to the platform or the street, and wearing an air of irresolution which might, as he surmised, be the mask of a very definite purpose. It struck him at once that she was waiting for some one, but he hardly knew why the idea arrested him. There was nothing new about Lily Bart yet he could not see her without a faint movement of interest.” (Wharton, 1990: 5)

This quote expresses the idea that Lily plays the role of authentic object subjected to the male gaze and Lawrence Selden plays the role of a detached masculine spectator. At the beginning of the novel, the role of the *flâneur* is subverted by the fact that the woman is still regarded as a strolling character, object of society, whereas the man represents the spectator. In this case, Lily can be identified as a *flâneuse* since, as the Baudelairian stroller wandered selling his art, poetry, Lily Bart is selling her beauty through a mere act of display, which finds its synthesis as she roams in the city streets. If we want to define the initial relationship between Lily Bart and Lawrence Selden, at the beginning of the novel, the man is identified as the spectator and the woman as the performer. The objectification of the *flâneuse* persists as Lily struggles to keep up her role in New York's high society. The function of her strolling as an ornamental object, dependent on the masculine gaze, is also confirmed as she purposefully pauses, while walking toward the church, in the hope that she will be noticed. Wharton describes well her intention to pause as she waits to become the performer admired by the masculine observer.

“She fell into a gait hardly likely to carry her to church before the sermon, and at length, having passed from the gardens to the wood-path beyond, so far forgot her intention as to sink into a rustic seat at a bend of the walk. The spot was charming, and Lily was not insensible to the charm, or to the fact that her presence enhanced it: but she was not accustomed to taste the joys of a handsome girl and a romantic scene struck her as too good to be wasted. No one, however, appeared to profit by the opportunity; and after a half hour of fruitless waiting she rose and wandered on.” (1990: 49-50)

In this way, identifying the female *flâneuse* as the ornamental performer of the street, her role inevitably changes, eventually influencing the urban space. As Reus and Jsandizaga affirm in their criticism of the female appropriation and negotiation of public space, “Lily changes the space around her, transforming each area into a platform for sexualized public performance”

(2008: 108). As the prostitute represents the American *flâneuse* of the working class, the same can be said for Lily Bart in the upper class *élite*. Despite their different social context, the upper class stroller and the prostitute both use the street as a stage for the mere display of their bodies. In other words, their social reality changes, but they both reinforce the concept of the object woman on the street.

In the case of Wharton's doomed heroine, her strolling is conditioned by both the landscape and the social hierarchies of New York society. The role of Lily Bart as wanderer in the public space of the city is key to understanding the dynamics in *The House of Mirth*, as "she experiences herself as others must see her" (Ammons in Bach, 2000: 7). Her appearance inevitably transforms the urban landscape and "her body is an extension of the public space" (Reus and Jsandizaga, 2008: 108). Considering her female presence in the street as an ornamental object of the New York *élite*, Lily Bart exists in the street as a social spectacle even though her existence as ornamental object shifts back and forth between public and private spaces, where the private interior inevitably recreates her public urban objectification.

Another important moment of her identification as woman of display shifts the scene from the outdoor space of the city to the private domain of the house. Once Lily has apparently integrated herself in the upper-class society, despite the rumours and vicissitudes that make her position vacillate, at a party she features in a *tableau vivant*, a tradition among the *élite* that aimed at the re-creation of famous art scenes in which members of the leisure class personified art subjects. The image of the *tableaux vivants*, which were recreated in private house parties, can be read as a metaphor of the urban.

In the first part of the story, Lily Bart can be constantly read as a *tableau vivant* herself, representing a spectacle to be observed. Lily's personification of Mrs. Lloyd in Joshua Reynold's painting positions her as an object inevitably subjected to the male gaze and a marketable issue for visual consumption. Once more, the choice of featuring such a beautiful subject serves as a way to exhibit Lily on the market, as she has to be included among the high society to be "sold" in matrimony. In this way Lily plays an idealized version of her artistic self. Personifying her image she becomes her own artist. "Her strategy to seize the masculine power through her artistic intelligence, employing her gaze upon the audience, can be read as an attempt to be an artist and thus a female version of the *flâneur*" (Reus and Jsandizaga, 2000: 85). Purposefully putting herself in the position to be observed, Lily becomes both an artist and a spectacle like the idle Baudelairian *flâneur* who observed and was observed as an artist roaming in the city. Lily confirms her position in the upper class as she presents herself, featuring in the *tableau vivant*, as a mere spectacle for the crowd. Even though the scene takes place indoor and

not in the outdoor space of the city, she reminds us of an idle *flâneur* as she sells her art becoming an artist herself in the crowded domain of the élite.

However, the identification of Lily Bart as female streetwalker and idle *flâneuse* predominates in the second half of the novel in Wharton's portrayal of her social decline. The economic downfall of Lily Bart provides a different and thus more vivid perspective of her role as urban walker. Once she attempts to escape from the social rules of marriage, refusing important marriage proposals and thus being accused of a potential adulterous relationship, her role in the city suddenly changes. She shifts from being an ornamental spectacle to being an object of scorn. Her attempt to remove herself from the market place, thus avoiding being considered as a marketable issue, ends tragically and Lily Bart suddenly becomes a lone walker being marginated from the upper class urban realities she had previously walked through. Her wanderings are confined at the margins of the poor working class neighbourhoods of New York. If before her mere aim was to stand out from the crowd and be noticed, now she is suddenly ignored by the crowd that barely accepts her as part of New York's working class since her high standards alienate her from the working class society and make her life even harder once she admits her lack of capability at manual jobs.

Lily Bart's final strolling in New York mirrors the tragic condition of poor working women in the city at the turn of the century. We consider the accomplishment of Lily Bart's identification as *flâneuse*, as she observes the urban landscape from a miserable condition, which enables her to establish a close contact with the landscape while also looking at the city as a detached observer. The beautiful scene in the second half of the novel in which she interrupts her strolling looking at the afternoon spectacle of Fifth Avenue, confirms her role as a detached urban spectator. The narrator reports,

“Lily, lingering for a moment on the corner, looked out on the afternoon spectacle of Fifth Avenue. It was a day late in April, and the sweetness of spring was in the air. It mitigated the ugliness of the long crowded thoroughfare, blurred the gaunt rooflines, threw a mauve veil over the discouraging perspective of the side streets, and gave a touch of poetry to the delicate haze of green that marked the entrance to the Park. As Lily stood there, she recognized several familiar faces in the passing carriages” (1990: 231).

The sense of nostalgia for her past life and her condition as poor stroller at the margins of society enables Lily to appreciate the urban spectacle from a different position. The recognition of her role as an object of scorn in society forces her to wander again with a melancholy regret for her disdain of social rules and her past of leisure. If in belonging to New York's high society Lily was classified as a city spectacle, now she suddenly has become the city's spectator. As the narrative progresses approaching the tragic end of the story, the innumerable strolling moments

of Lily Bart seem her only comfort in her tragic social downfall. Rejected from the society that produced her, Lily seems to find a place in the city by admiring the spectacular urban landscape as she was unable to before, when she was busy presenting herself as a mere spectacle. Inevitably her perception of the urban environment was different as she strolled in terms of display. In her attempt to be part of the landscape herself, she has lost the observatory nature as she adopts her miserable condition of wanderer and stroller at the end of the story.

Another moment of observation of the urban spectacle confirms Lily's role as a reporter of street life as she witnesses the crowded comings and goings on her way to see one of her admirers.

“The walk up Fifth Avenue, unfolding before her, in the brilliance of the hard winter sunlight, an interminable procession of fastidiously equipped carriages-giving her, through the little squares of brougham-windows, peeps of familiar profiles bent above visiting lists, of hurried hands dispensing notes and cards to attendant footmen-this glimpse of the ever-revolving wheels of the great social machine made Lily more than ever conscious of the steepness and narrowness of Gerty's stairs, and of the cramped blind-alley of life to which they led” (1990: 205).

In this way we understand how New York City streets in the late 1800s were regulated by intricate social problems and women were categorized by whether they strolled in the wrong street at the wrong time. If before Lily was free to roam in leisure class areas of the city, now her strolling is mainly regulated by her social status as she is seen with disdain wandering in neighbourhoods that uniquely pertain to the working class. As Lily strolls alone at night she feels herself in danger as she was used to roaming in different areas in the daytime.

Another interesting aspect of Lily's final wanderings is certainly portrayed by her quest for loneliness and anonymity. Strolling being marked with a sense of scorn influences Lily to avoid the public space of the street, looking for a refuge in indoor spaces. Her quest for isolation, avoiding the public disdain of the street forces Lily to sit in a restaurant. Unfortunately, she is not excluded from public shame as a crowded multitude of women stares at her. The narrator reports,

“Lily walked up Fifth Avenue toward the Park, hoping to find a sheltered nook where she might sit; but the wind chilled her, and after an hour's wandering under the tossing boughs she yielded to her increasing weariness, and took refuge in a little restaurant in Fifty-ninth Street... The room was full of women and girls, all too much engaged in the rapid absorption of tea and pie to remark her entrance. A hum of shrill voices reverberated against the low ceiling, leaving Lily shut out in a little circle of silence. She felt a sudden pang of profound loneliness... Lily alone was stranded in a great waste of disoccupation” (1990: 235).

Her miserable fall to the lower strata of society overshadows her place in the street. If before her strolling was strictly regulated by the rules that forced her to objectify herself, now avoiding

disdain, the street becomes a threatening space. Furthermore, the decision to hide in private indoor spaces miserably fails, as she is not excluded from public observation. If before Lily succeeded in the public space and despaired in the private, being victimized by gossip and rumours, now she fails to protect herself in both realms.

In this way, the public space has a debilitating effect on Wharton's protagonist, who shifts back and forth between finding anonymity and hiding in loneliness. Strolling in such misery offers a unique portrayal of the condition of women roaming the streets of New York at the turn of the 20th century. As her miserable condition progresses, her wanderings cease to have the observatory nature that previously characterized her social status, as they are more and more regulated by long pauses that let Lily reveal her sadness, being somehow unconscious of her surroundings. In this way her social downfall progresses, and by the end of the novel, New York's landscape becomes an almost nonexistent environment whose characteristics contribute to increasing the misery of the female working class woman who roams through it. This concept is well explained in one of Lily's last moments in the city streets before her final enclosure in her apartment that will inevitably lead to her death. Wharton describes the decaying scene of her protagonist strolling through those areas that used to be her natural streets for display.

“The street-lamps were lit, but the rain had ceased, and there was a momentary revival of light in the upper sky. Lily walked on unconscious of her surroundings. She was still treading the buoyant ether which emanates from the high moments of life. But gradually it shrank away from her and she felt the dull pavement beneath her feet. The sense of weariness returned with accumulated force, and for a moment she felt that she could not walk farther. She had reached a corner of Forty-first Street and Fifth Avenue, and she remembered that in Bryant Park there were seats where she might rest. That melancholy pleasure-ground was almost deserted when she entered it, and she sank down on an empty bench in the glare of an electric street-lamp” (1990: 242).

This quote frames the identification of Lily Bart's miserable condition as no one notices her anymore on her strolling way home. The characterization of Lily Bart as female *flâneuse* thus changes as her strolling faithfully mirrors her place in New York society at the dawn of the 1900s. Through the multiple facets of Lily's strolling, we perceive her nature as the idle female stroller who roams the streets providing different ways of strolling through the urban landscape, constantly portraying the society that produced it.

Edith Wharton's female walker confirms the identification of the female stroller as the literary caricature par excellence of American Literature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, where the *flâneuse* was seen as an object of society. Lily is a product of the marketplace as men try to purchase her. She clearly represents the objectification of the woman at the turn of the century. Her objectification in New York society finds its completion in her affinity with the

upper class. First, she is sold in matrimony, then she loses her economic stability, becoming an object of scorn in the society that produced her. As Lily cannot seek marriage, which was her only potential vehicle for happiness she eventually experiences scorn and sadness as she refuses to adhere to the rules imposed by New York society. She represents some kind of emancipated woman as she refuses her position as an object. Strolling in *The House of Mirth* mirrors the social status and economic condition of the female protagonist. High society strolls displaying leisure, and the working class strolls in misery attracting disdain.

The third important quality encompassed by Lily as she faithfully mirrors an idle feminine stroller is the concept of the crowd. If at the beginning she stands apart from the crowd, later as a poor working class woman, Lily undeniably blends with it. In her identification with the crowd, once more Lily maintains vividly the connection between the *flâneur* and the crowd that represents the essential quality through which the *flâneur* form him or herself.

In other words, I read *The House of Mirth* as a characterization of the female streetwalker as a representative of New York society, thus expressing the figure of the female *flâneur*. The classification of Lily Bart as female urban stroller faithfully mirrors the hierarchy and intricate mechanisms of New York high society at the turn of the 20th century. She gives us glimpses of the city and that which helped shape New York's historical events and cultural changes.

3.3. Maggie: The stroller on the Street in Stephen Crane's Novel

If Wharton artfully portrayed the intricate hierarchies of New York's High society and its social relations victimizing her heroine, the same can be said of Stephen Crane and his famous portrayal of New York slum society in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). If Wharton classified the upper class as being strictly based on appearance and display, Crane's working class is a stage for violence and oppression. The opening line sets the tone of the novel as a young boy is throwing stones at a group of adults. The street is key in the dynamics of the New York slum and life in the tenements where, because of homelessness and economic unease, life takes place mainly in the street. Crane vividly portrays the decadence of the Lower East Side as he describes its urban reality,

“In all unhandy places there were buckets, brooms, rags and bottles. In the street, infants played or fought with other infants or sat stupidly in the way of vehicles. Formidable women, with uncombed hair and disordered dress, gossiped while leaning on railings, or screamed in frantic quarrels. Withered persons, in curious postures of submission to something, sat smoking pipes in obscure corners” (Crane, 2015: 5).

As seen in the quote, this gruesome image of the street provides a glimpse of life in the Bowery neighbourhood of New York's Lower East Side, where violent confrontations animate the life of its streets. Working class people are forced to wander in the city as a consequence of their condition of despair. This scene expresses the difference between values and reality, two inexistent qualities of the lower class, which simply relates to a reality based on struggle and misery. Crane describes the Bowery as both a prison and a battlefield, and the whole story revolves around the struggles of a working class family, affected by the social brutality of New York's slum district. Crane aims at expressing that home is not a safe place, it is more a place of turmoil and intricate social struggle. From the opening line, Crane expresses how honour is an inexistent value in the working class and it is somehow inappropriate to that kind of reality. As we will later see, no honour is used to classify Maggie, the female protagonist, as she wanders in the city as a scorned stroller. It will be this rough and violent society that will inevitably lead her to downfall and disdain. New York is described with such realism that this novel can easily be mistaken for a historical document of slum life. Crane's New York is the tragic urban reality of the poor, the desperate, and the drunkards that faithfully mirrors the extreme conditions of the metropolis as well as the squalid life in the tenements.

The men that populate the story are usually described as violent drunkards prowling the streets in search of physical scuffle. Brutality and drunkenness does not uniquely affect men as it also characterizes the feminine characters. Maggie's mother is an example of brutality and alcoholism. From her first appearance in the novel, Maggie stands out from this sordid society as Crane describes her as gentle, beautiful and pure, qualities that do not belong to her family as it is characterized by violence and alcoholism. Eventually, Maggie is submitted to a brutal family that sees her as an outcast. Her romantic hopes for a better life are inappropriate to her social standing. Her moral belief in honesty and truthfulness are two unacceptable qualities that do not belong to the lower class, who live a reality of economic difficulty and social problems. As she is sent wandering in the street, Maggie pays the price for her odd behaviour in a society of scorn that rejects her.

The relationship between Maggie and the street is inevitable, as it is a consequence of her naïve behaviour and consequent choice to abandon her home, going to live with her boyfriend. Eventually refused by him and rejected from her family, she suddenly becomes part of the street in absence of room and board. Desperately roaming in the streets of the Bowery, she is mistaken for a prostitute. In this way, the street becomes an unavoidable choice for Maggie, who is forced to wander in the city as a marginalized stroller. In her identification with the prostitute, undeniably the character of Maggie carries some of the female traits of the *flâneur*. Her

character mirrors the objectification of the woman as she is forced to sell herself in the street and strolling is her only option for survival. Crane's vivid realism portrays the downfall of a woman who is doomed to become part of the street at her own expense.

Much as Lily Bart tried to escape from the rigid moral rules of society, the relationship with her boyfriend, Pete, was Maggie's only option for escape from the harsh reality of the slums. What is more, social forces are beyond women's control and none of them can escape from that reality. As usual, the woman's strolling condition is tragically victimized as she is sent into the street as a marginalized sinner.

The contrast between Maggie's dreamingly optimistic perceptions of life, which will eventually lead her to streetwalking and then death, is juxtaposed with those of her brother Jimmy. Jimmy's concept of survival is that of emotional and physical toughness. He wanders and looks at the gentlemen he finds on the streets, dandies or aesthetes, whose looks of contempt judge Jimmy's miserable condition as they express their superiority to him. This exchange of gazes between social classes will eventually lead Jimmy to a sense of despair, increasing his use of violence. On the contrary, Maggie's benevolent and naïve attitude forces her to dream a reality she cannot live, aspiring to be one of the beautiful feminine strollers of New York's upper class. As she roams in the city streets with a sense of desperation after being abandoned by her boyfriend and consequently rejected by her family, Maggie, notes high society women in the streets with the same melancholic sense Lily Bart perceived while strolling in the city as a working class woman. Crane describes Maggie's observation of the crowd as a dreamy gaze,

“She began to note, with more interest, the well-dressed women she met on the avenues. She envied elegance and soft palms. She craved those adornments of person which she saw every day on the street, conceiving them to be allies of vast importance to women. Studying faces, she thought many of the women and girls she chanced to meet, smiled with serenity as though forever cherished and watched over by those they loved” (2015: 41).

If Maggie aims at strolling to observe the upper class as a detached spectator, her dreams of grandeur are a mere utopia. Imagining herself as part of that world, reality confirms her condition of feminine stroller as a victim of society.

Once the importance of the street as a fundamental part of slum reality has been made clear, let us now consider the role of Maggie as a streetwalker or female *flâneuse*. As previously discussed, her presence in the street is the consequence of societal disdain. Sent into the street by her mother, Maggie becomes, as Crane defines her, a “forlorn woman”. She strolls aimlessly in the streets of New York being inevitably mistaken for a prostitute. Crane realistically describes Maggie as victim of the male gaze in the street in her aimless strolling in the Bowery,

“Soon the girl discovered that if she walked with such apparent aimlessness, some men looked at her with calculating eyes. She quickened her step, frightened. As a protection, she adopted a demeanour of intentness as if going somewhere. After a time she left rattling avenues and passed between rows of houses with sternness and solidity stamped upon their features. She hung her head for she felt their eyes grimly upon her” (2015: 85).

As seen in the quote, Maggie is undeniably mistaken for a prostitute as her condition of random stroller turns her into an object of society inevitably submitted to the male gaze. In other words, she becomes “a girl of the painted cohorts of the city” (Crane in Miller, 2014:116). In the late 1800s, the prostitute was a predominant figure in the streets of New York and it was common for a man to be approached by prostitutes in the city, more prominently in the slum areas of Lower Manhattan. Consequently, in the lower class reality, “Voyeurism makes those who are being watched objects, while those who are in position to observe the others are the privileged ones” (Shätzle, 2000: 13). Considering this aspect, once more the feminine heroine is disadvantaged, as she inevitably becomes the object of a masculine voyeuristic crowd. As Russo clearly asserts, “Women and their bodies, certain bodies in certain public framings, in certain public spaces, are always already transgressive- dangerous and in danger” (in Irving, 1993: 30). This is certainly true for Maggie, whose body becomes the objectified symbol of her strolling and her new possible choice of economic independence. Maggie’s strolling and identification as urban walker and eventually *flâneuse*, is reduced to a short chapter, where Crane aims at emphasising her condition of solitude and disdain. The narrator reports her stroll,

“A forlorn woman went along a lighted avenue. The street was filled with people desperately bound on missions. An endless crowd darted at the elevated station stairs and the horse cars were thronged with owners of bundles. The pace of the forlorn woman was slow. She was apparently searching for some one. She loitered near the doors of saloons and watched men emerge from them. She scanned furtively the faces in the rushing stream of pedestrians.” (2015: 78).

The description of Maggie’s stroll through the decaying streets of the Bowery provides another example of a detached female observer. If before she had been used to looking at the dreamlike reality of the upper class, now she was involuntarily absorbed in the world she refused to be part of. She suddenly becomes a traumatized victim of the street as she represents purity against all odds in the rough social reality of the working class. Her strolling description as a prostitute continues,

“A girl of the painted cohorts of the city went along the street. She threw changing glances at men who passed her, giving smiling invitations to men of rural or untaught pattern and usually seeming sedately unconscious of the men with a metropolitan seal upon their faces. Crossing avenues, she went into the throng emerging from the places of forgetfulness. She hurried forward through the crowd as if intent upon reaching a

distant home, bending forward in her handsome cloak, daintily lifting her skirts and picking for her well-shod feet the dryer spots upon the pavements” (2015: 87).

Maggie is somehow unnoticed as she blends with the crowd, watching the urban reality as a detached voyeur, thus wandering as an isolated outsider. Maggie is a *flâneuse* per se as she is observer and thus observed, blending with the crowd representing the objectified voluntary stroller on sale on the market of the streets of New York City.

The prostitute is par excellence the symbol of a woman ruined by the city’s economy. As Stephen Marcus asserted: “The complex hostility of all classes of society is directed at the prostitute” (in Hapke, 1982: 1). This exemplifies the fact that the streetwalker encompasses all the aspects of a marginalized society as well as the world of hatred and violence that focused on the working class; all her misery was the result of one false step. As the upper class woman sought a husband for economic social purposes, the streetwalker or prostitute is economically dependent on a potential lover. As we learn from Maggie, the image of the prostitute as often innocent and victimized by her behaviour, wandering in the street, is a consequence of the social situation she is experiencing. In his image of the feminine stroller, Crane dramatized the societal cruelty toward the prostitute as his slum reality punishes both good and bad behaviours. Incapable of perceiving her downfall, Maggie clearly represents the idle feminine streetwalker that American literature portrayed at the turn of the century as one of the cruel realities of the metropolis. In this way, Maggie is a woman who tried to subvert the rules much as Lily Bart attempted to change the moral codes of the upper class.

Considering the role of Maggie and her relationship with the street, New York’s urban landscape plays an important role in the definition of the female streetwalker. Stephen Crane himself admitted that his novel was about the tragic overpowering effect of the environment on human lives. Maggie’s streetwalking and social condition are mainly influenced by the urban reality in which she lives. In her definition as a prostitute, she is strongly affected by New York slum life and its physical environment. Maggie functions as a symbol of the corrupted urban reality of New York City’s life in the Bowery. Her activity as a female stroller is widely affected by the empowering rules of the street, where a woman who strolls alone in decaying areas of the city, can be mistaken for a prostitute.

Crane’s novel vividly expresses a contemporary preoccupation with women and location. The urban reality of the metropolis is a threatening space for women who, in the late 1800s, could not roam the city streets freely without being judged by society’s rigid impositions. This novel is a clear representation of the “gendering of space”, where “Maggie’s body is the site where the separation between private and public disintegrate” (Irving, 2015: 30). As she loses

her virtue in the street, the prostitute penetrates the external space where she is a powerful signifier for the breakdown of order. The city plays a central role as it influences Maggie's perspective, leading her to her death. Her aspirations are finally destroyed by the urban social reality. In other words, "the cold indifference of the New York metropolis, and the penetrations of the inhabitants of the Bowery make up the necessary prerequisites for Maggie's destiny, which Crane uses in order to present a rather coherent vision of life in this peculiar part of the city" (Shätzle, 2000: 20). It is then evident how the role of New York is to shape moral values that inevitably influence female urban walkers. Crane's aim was to express how New York's environment influences the life of its residents, eventually expressing how characters symbolically represent their surroundings. The role of the woman as an urban stroller is to become part of the city and its social structure.

Now let us consider her role in the street as a marginalized prostitute female stroller. She sells her art in the street, observing reality and thus blending with the crowd. Her complicated relationship with the urban reality thus illustrates the problematic condition of women and the gendered definition of space in New York's urban reality of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The figure of the female stroller undeniably dominates American literature at the turn of the century. The woman and her relationship with the city became a literary caricature in the 1800s, hinging on the difficult gender issue and emphasizing the emerging problem of emancipation. Most importantly New York City, for its social contrasts and extensive urban reality, is chosen as a setting for women who roam the streets, mirroring the intricate social relations of their time. Prominent feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charlotte Gilman became literary examples in New York City, emblems of emancipation from which writers recreated their social rebellion victimizing literary heroines. As a consequence of this literary choice, the relationship between: woman and city and woman and the street, become an inevitable part of the life of female characters. The street became an essential factor in a woman's life, emphasizing the difference between the working class and the élite. However, societal problems make it rather unbearable to live in a society that aims at fitting women into roles that are not defined by them. In this sense, the tragic choice of suicide seems to be the only option to avoid an intolerable existence, escaping from a society that rejects women and sees them as symbols of scorn and/or marketable objects.

Both female *flâneuses*, Lily Bart and Maggie, well represent New York's female reality in the 1800s. Maggie and Lily Bart can both be defined as female urban walkers as they represent an example of the female objectification in the street. Despite their different social classes, both women sell themselves in the streets of the metropolis. They are also victims of the same reality

as they are forced to stroll in the city as a consequence to their attempt to subvert moral codes and social rules. Their *flâneristic* ability lies in their consequent identification as outsiders; undertaking solitary strolls while perceiving the city as detached observers. As female *flâneurs* these two feminine heroines are also artists. They sell their art: body and beauty in the urban reality of the city.

The feminine stroller symbolizes the self-righteousness of New York and its society respectively in the mechanisms of the upper and working classes. Wharton and Crane created female streetwalkers whose strolling activity well represents the destructiveness of moral codes in 19th century New York and the role of women in the city at the turn of the century. Representing New York through literature in the late 1800s is to defining the city through feminine heroines who roam the streets as marginalized outsiders in a society full of intricate social problems. The 19th century American *flâneuse* witnesses an important part of New York's history. We define the female streetwalker as the harbinger of New York's cultural patrimony in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

4. Strolling post 9/11: Trauma, Loss and Deracination

4.1. Literature post 9/11

The second and final part of this thesis analyzes trauma considering it as one of the main characteristics of contemporary urban walking. As I have noted in the previous chapter, each age inevitably produces historical consequences and events, which are taken up by literary walkers who then reflect upon them in their strolling through the city. If in the 1800s there was a literary necessity to represent women in the urban context, our contemporary age is characterized by the representation of types of characters strolling with a sense of trauma. Before any consideration of contemporary New York *flâneurs*, it is necessary to provide a short introduction to that part of American literature, commonly defined as post 9/11 fiction (including works, mostly novels, published after the fatal terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001).

This literature is represented by novels that stand out as a response to the Islamic terrorist attacks of September 11th. In this chapter we will divide literary production after 9/11 into two main threads: the literature of September 11th, and the literature of the immigrant. The former describes the tragic effects of the terrorist attacks, whereas the latter deals with immigrants and their problematic relationship with the city after 9/11. Both literary trends discuss the concept of trauma as the mark of our age. I will prove how city strollers in New York experience this issue by roaming in the city.

As Kensington and Quinn stated in their analysis of the 9/11 novel, “The tension between the symbolic suggestiveness of the World Trade Center and the fact of its destruction is central to many literary texts written in the wake of 9/11” (2008: 1). With immediate effect after 9/11, American literature felt the need to create novels that aimed at representing the effects of the tragedy. The increasing interest in the concept of trauma in contemporary literature can be seen as an effect of the tragedy at The World Trade Center, which produced what we define today as the “war on terror”. New York City is currently threatened by the fear of further terrorist attacks, as America after September 11th became one of the main targets of Islamic terrorism.

New York became the main setting of novels and stories whose dynamics reflected the tragedy in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, thus describing the tragedy of a city that was forever changed. Literature expresses portraits of grief and sadness as characters live and relive their traumatization and sorrow. The main goal of 9/11 literature is to “consistently use the literal to construct the symbolic” (Kensington & Quinn: 2008: 19). As well explained by American

novelist Philip Roth, literature was an attempt to compensate for the unbearable absence provoked by 9/11 itself (in Kensington & Quinn, 2008). That is to say that literature fills the void of absence and loneliness caused by the shock of this tragic event.

Freud explained the elaboration of trauma, introducing the definition of *Nachträglichkeit*, translated as “afterwardness”. Because of the difficulty of experiencing trauma at the moment of its original event that caused it, individuals live the sense of agony in the secondary moment that follows the tragic experience. The literary concept of trauma is expressed in the immediate succession of the catastrophe. Characters deal with the problematic issue of anxiety in the “afterwardness” described by Freud. They experience their grief in the aftermath of the tragedy. It is possible to define the main characteristics of 9/11 novels as: the central dialectic of trauma, the tension between nostalgia and rupture and the consequent loss and preoccupation with identity, which will later evolve into deracination for the immigrant stroller.

Yet this literature questions the difficult relationship between consciousness and experience. In order to supersede trauma, characters shift back and forth between imaginary temporal forms and places that allow them to mend the trauma. In this context, memory has a key role in the re-elaboration of trauma, as it is a way of repairing grief through a time shift. As Quinn and Kensington suggested, “Texts allegorize the United States struggle to its own timely traumas since 9/11” (2008: 67). To overcome grief, literature provides what Kensington and Quinn define as “healing forms of temporal existence”, creating moments and places at different times where characters are able to react to the tragic effect of September 11th.

Novels set in the context of 9/11, often elaborate unique temporal logics. Moreover, literature has the capacity to elaborate trauma, shifting the focus onto different kinds of subjects at different times. As we will later see, this will have an incisive effect on literary strollers, whose wanderings in New York are possible through the creation of special areas and temporal moments in the past in order to overcome grief. Characters aim at establishing their own place in a New York disoriented and hit by the tragedy. Considering the tragic impact of the events, the past offers a paradox of time and knowledge for life in the present. There is somehow a literary necessity to know and understand the traumatic effects of 9/11 in order to gain knowledge and thus live in tranquillity in the future.

Yet, one of the main consequences of 9/11 was the sense of loss caused by the destruction of the Twin Towers. The collapse of these skyscrapers, iconic symbols of a national identity, created a void not only in New York’s skyline, but also contributed to the increase in the sense of psychological loss in people experiencing loneliness and alienation. The fall of the Towers became a metaphor for other kinds of falls, even more prominently the psychological one. In

other words, as Neil Leach well explained, speaking of the identification of America into objects and symbols that represent its values, he stated: “The nation needs to read itself into objects in the environment in order to articulate its identity” (Leach in Kensington and Quinn, 2008: 113).

The unexpected absence of a symbolic object such as the World Trade Center generates a sense of psychological loss in literary strollers who roam the city, shifting through temporal spaces thus looking for their own selves. The landscape is deprived of symbols that had made it rather extraordinary. Consequently, the city is no longer a safe environment to walk through- it represents an uncomfortable place of self-delusion. Colson Whitehead emphasized the importance of the landscape in *The Colossus of New York*, in which he stressed how the city’s environment plays a fundamental part in the recognition of the self. He underlines New York’s architectural effect on the individual as he states,

“We see ourselves in this city every day when we walk down the sidewalk and catch our reflections in store windows, seeking ourselves in the city’s lack of time we reminiscence what was there ten, fifteen, forty years ago, because all our old places are proof that we were here. When buildings fall, we fall down too” (in Kensington and Quinn: 2008: 119-120).

New York’s architecture is key to the definition of the self of those who inhabit it. The loss of one of its main symbols, The World Trade Center, inevitably led to the collapse of one’s own self. The rediscovery of the self and the recovery from trauma is crucial in most post 9/11 novels. Despite its recent destruction, the landscape is still necessary to recover from the sense of loss. Through close contact with the landscape, characters are able to re-experience trauma, thus becoming able to elaborate it. As time and the elaboration of grief in different moments are necessary to repair the tragedy, the landscape carries a similar healing power for a realistic expression of sorrow. Most importantly, the landscape can help recall the memory of a specific trauma. The contact with the urban landscape serves as a way to re-elaborate loss and grief, providing the context in which to achieve this as well.

Another emerging trait, that is certainly part of trauma in contemporary literature, is the idea of “conflictedness” suggested by Arin Keeble. Contemporary literature after 9/11 emphasizes different ways of experiencing trauma and conflictedness, thus resulting in a divided response to the attacks. Conflictedness, trauma and trauma theory were the unique and inevitable literary responses in trying to understand the events of September 11th. Michael Balaev in his definition and understanding of trauma in contemporary American novels explained well that trauma is influenced by different perceptions placed on the individual. In other words, trauma is mainly caused by external or internal factors or events, while it is also influenced by one’s own personal

experience. Because of the loss of images of symbolic national importance, this leads to the destruction of the self and the loss of identity in every form of contemporary trauma.

However, the different perception of trauma has evolved into different forms of grief and despair. The first narratives, written in the aftermath of 9/11, were prominently dedicated to the attacks, whereas today the concept of trauma has evolved into other kinds of traumatisations still determined by 9/11 but evolved into different forms. Our age is certainly marked by trauma and damage. September 11th was the world's first disaster of the 21st century and it undeniably generated a sense of insecurity and vulnerability. If we want to define the sense of trauma, we can say that "trauma is a luminal experience of radical deracination and calamity that brings about a violent rupture of order of both personal and social level" (Hwangbo, 2004: 1).

Discontinuity and rupture also characterize the traumatized experience of contemporary literature, that is, discontinuity in its varied and heterogeneous reference to the past, and the rupture in the volunteer choice of looking at the past from a distant position. Nevertheless, the connection with the past is necessary in order to understand and elaborate trauma in the experience of the present. Characters who survived to the tragic events of 9/11 try to live the future by creating a rupture with the past. This sense of trauma for the past is usually defined as "collective trauma". America's sense of grief and self-destruction is heavily interwoven with its cultural values. Every American felt that he had been personally attacked by the terrorists. Everyone was walking around American cities thinking they had been personally and intimately hit by the attacks. American people felt personally involved in the destruction of the World Trade Center and this inevitably provoked a general sense of guilt, grief and despair.

It is then essential to look at the backdrop or target of trauma: New York City. The loss of identity and consequent sense of traumatisations find their expression in New York as it represents the urban context where the sense of trauma originates. The sense of collective identity of New Yorkers was threatened by the destruction of one of its most iconic symbols, which was also a representation of its powerful ideals, such as capitalism. The identification with New York well described by Whitehead is no longer possible and the city, hit by the attacks, represents a gloomy place of desolation, despair and loss of moral values.

Despite its sheer mutability, the condition of New Yorkers changes depending on the environment. In this case, the destruction of one of its most important symbols of self-awareness moves the city and its people to experience trauma even in a concrete and visual loss. The sense of disorientation provoked by the attacks after the destruction of the Twin Towers creates not only the fall of certainty and a consequent fall into a state of personal despair, but also the visual collapse of a symbol of iconicity that was part of New York's uniqueness. In this way the sense

of disorientation can be both literal and geographical. It is literal in the concrete collapse of truthfulness and moral values caused by the attacks, and geographical in the visual lack of the towers. Besides their representation of moral values, from a more urban perspective, the Twin Towers were an orientation point for walking through the grid of Manhattan. Their position at the margins of downtown constituted an orientation point within the city, as people's sense of the urban structure was somehow defined by the tallest skyscrapers of Manhattan. Given this, the image of New York in contemporary post-9/11 novels is that of a city characterized by an immense void. After the loss of one its greatest architectural symbols, its streets suddenly become gloomy places of sorrow and traumatic loss.

4.1.1. Immigrant Traumatized Strollers

In post 9/11 literature, the experience of trauma has often evolved in the figure of the foreigner or immigrant, who undeniably elaborates some kind of trauma. Well-known African-American novelist, Toni Morrison, affirmed that: "American literature, especially in the twentieth century, and notably, in the last twenty years, has been shaped by its encounter with the immigrant" (in Gray, 2011: 22). American fiction after World War II has often mirrored the figure of deracinated immigrants on American shores, describing their difficult struggle to adapt to a new country. Before narrowing down our analysis on traumatized immigrant strollers, let us first provide a general definition of the word deracination, which we will use in this chapter to define the second and contemporary example of post 9/11 *flâneur*. This term refers to those individuals who are alienated from their original culture and environment, coping with the trauma of difference in a new country. It is then evident how this term can be used to define the experience of the foreigner in any new city.

However, migrant literature represented the "American dream" of foreigners, whose arrival in the United States was seen as some kind of mystic pilgrimage toward the Promised Land. The "Strangers in Paradise", as Muller defined the first pilgrims, came on the Mayflower, hoping to live a reality of happiness and liberalism. This image is sealed in the history of immigration and still represents one of the main reasons we see America as the land of opportunities.

This had always been the literary representation of the immigrant until 9/11, which as we have seen, marks an important turning point in American Literature. If in the past, literature created fictional immigrants representing their struggle in New York City to master the New World and thus assimilate to the new landscape, nowadays, contemporary literature shapes

foreigners whose experience serves as a way to confront their culture and reality from a psychological point of view that is mainly possible through their encounter with the city. The first immigrants who came to New York found a city of contrasts in perpetual evolution. As we have seen in the second chapter of this thesis, in the first wave of immigration in the 1800s, New York was a city in evolution that had started to build itself. Nowadays, the contemporary immigrant encounters a widely known city that still overwhelms, but represents a dreamy reality of modernity that inevitably serves as a confrontation with its original culture. As suggested by Muller,

“The contemporary immigrant experience retains at its core, the mythology of the American Dream, but a dream that must contend with forces of psychic and cultural dislocation- with the reality that the new immigrants are “others” who because of race and ethnicity, caste and class, culture and religion, do not fit contemporarily into the traditional mythology of the melting pot” (1999: 2).

This quote explains that the contemporary immigrant experience is deeply rooted in the concept of the American dream, but it hardly adapts to the mythology of the melting pot as our modern world taught us to blend with different cultures and ethnicities. We know that New York is a city of varied cultures, heterogeneous races with no misconception of the other. In this case, contemporary literary foreigners do not need to adapt, but instead they perceive a sense of psychological disorientation that enables them to stroll through the city contrasting their reality with the American one. The figure of the immigrant in post-9/11 fiction reflects the National Myth, but the different culture inevitably alters the way in which both America and the immigrant’s identity are defined. This leads to problems with identity, a sense of disorientation, loss, isolation and certainly trauma. As for the literature that describes loss and trauma in the experience of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, the same can be said for the contemporary literature of the foreigner, whose sense of sorrow and despair faithfully mirror the mood of our contemporary age.

In this way, the sense of trauma of the immigrant or foreigner is due to his traumatic encounter with a new reality. The consequent struggle against loss and deracination, trauma for a lost self, or even more prominently, the trauma of difference, inevitably produce a shock. The main trauma of the foreigner lies in the contrast with the new reality that produces a sense of disorientation. In other words, the immigrant experiences trauma through personal and psychological reflections and the further preoccupation with private and personal feelings. This implication with the sense of traumatisation, living a new reality too different and too much in contrast with the original culture, generates a sense of loss of the self, which forces foreigners to look for a new identity in the urban reality of the city. The problem of identity is central in the

contemporary figure of the immigrant in literature post 9/11. This concept enables an intimate connection with the self, emphasising the psychological perception of the foreigner, whose wanderings in the city become more and more like psychological analyses of their inner world.

Moreover, the contemporary immigrant transforms the narrative with his inner and outer voyages in the urban reality of the city. Foreigners live contemporary American life as voyagers. What allows them overcome trauma is the relationship with the landscape that, because of its sheer variety and difference, provokes the creation of a sense of intimacy necessary for the elaboration of trauma and deracination. In this way, wandering through the urban landscape is key to the definition and understanding of the literary immigrant, an outcast and voyager whose connection to an observation of the city helps them lose their sense of dispersion and disorientation. The city becomes a stage for personal experience and the ideal landscape in which to create intimacy and ponder one's own culture and significance. Heterogeneous otherness and racial difference force to an interrogation of the American identity and its national forms, which find their completion in the reality of the city. The space between the immigrant and the cultural contrast of the new urban reality carries an inevitable re-definition of the foreigner. In this case, New York as a city of "otherness", difference and versatility adapts to the possibility of re-inventing the self within the reality of American culture. Consequently, the voyage of the immigrant does not merely serve as a redefinition of the inner self, but thanks to the heterogeneous reality of New York City, leads to the transformation of foreigners into American characters who define themselves within the American landscape.

The contemporary immigrant comes to America to redefine himself. We can read his path as a metaphorical voyage of traumatising that finally finds completion in the re-definition of new characters that are able to reconstruct a new reality in a foreign country. In *Imaginary Homelands* (2010), Salman Rushdie writes that "to migrate is to lose language and home, to be defined by others to become invisible, to experience deep changes of the soul" (in Muller, 2011: 20). The quote explains how the contemporary immigrant inevitably faces deracination and trauma, two of the central characteristics of post-9/11 fiction.

To sum up, the sense of trauma reflects our age in American literature that, as we have seen, mirrors traumatized experiences and their evolution through the intricate path of characters who struggle in the urban reality to redefine themselves and thus survive the shock of trauma.

4.1.2. Post 9/11 *Flâneurs*

Narrowing down our analysis into the spectrum of *flânerie*, urban walking is necessary in contemporary literature as a way of re-elaborating trauma and thus getting past grief. The city is the place to experience trauma, where strolling represents the best way for the suppression of sorrow as the urban landscape stimulates the perception of the self.

In the American literature set in the tragic aftermath of the attacks, we encounter *flâneurs* who roam the city streets in an attempt to elaborate their grief. Strolling is an integral part of their path as the contact with a depraved landscape, Manhattan after the loss of the World Trade Center, meets their craving for a destroyed city. The destruction of the urban landscape inevitably reflects in their strolling the traumatized experience of a void that is not only personal, but also visual in the collapse of certainties and the image of an unsafe city. The consequent shift of times and places in the urban reality of a destroyed city is possible only by wandering in the city, where literary walkers observe reality as detached spectators. It is thus possible to define the main characteristics of 9/11 novels as: the central dialectic of trauma, the tension between nostalgia and rupture and the consequent loss and preoccupation with identity which will later evolve into deracination for the immigrant stroller.

The importance of traumatic psychological strolling is further evident in the figure of the immigrant *flâneur*, whose strolling through the city represents the only way to define himself in the urban context. The immigrant's voyage for his self-definition is only possible through roaming in the city streets that constitute the place for self-awareness and psychological definition. Self-definition is key in the elaboration of trauma of difference and deracination. As for the stroller who roams after the shock of 9/11, the immigrant *flâneur* establishes a connection with the city that is necessary to the re-elaboration of trauma. Strolling is the literary way out to stage the problem of traumatising in different dimensions and different angles of the city, thus enabling characters to develop the shift through time and place.

In both the traumatized literary stroller of 9/11 and the immigrant literary walker, the essential characteristics of the *flâneur* are evident. First, isolation, which is the unavoidable response to trauma. Once the "afterwardness" described by Freud emerges, characters seek loneliness in order to elaborate trauma, grieving in private. The same can be said for the immigrant, isolated per se because of his difference. He purposefully perceives and seeks alienation as he isolates himself in the urban reality of the city. Contemporary strolling is achieved in solitude. Traumatized literary strollers roam the city streets in a condition of isolationism necessary to elaborate grief.

The second important *flâneristic* element is the observation of the urban reality. Through their solitary wanderings, contemporary literary strollers look at the city as detached spectators of a reality that represents the stage for their traumatized experience. This eventually enables characters to roam the city streets observing the urban reality as truthful detached observers. The detached observation of reality, constituted by a deep sense of loneliness is essential in the definition of the *flâneur*.

The third important concept is the crowd, which is a fundamental part of the *flâneur's* experience, and is also part of traumatized strollers whose intentional blending in with the crowd is essential in their self-definition and consequent processing of grief. There would be no possibility of getting past grief without intimate contact with the crowd, which is essential to the definition of the self. In the case of the immigrant, the contact with the crowd is essential to his confrontation with his own different culture. The union with the crowd represents the quality necessary for him to supersede his sense of difference and deracination.

In the following section of this chapter, I will compare two novels, both considered part of 9/11 fiction, that represent how trauma, loss and deracination develop, becoming essential to contemporary urban walking. I will consequently analyze the representation of the same factors in contemporary *flâneurs*.

4.2. Jonathan Foer's Traumatic Wandering

Jonathan Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005) is certainly one of the best literary examples written in the aftermath of September 11th. Foer's novel elaborates the sense of trauma and loss through the experience of a nine-year-old New Yorker whose life has been recently overturned by the death of his father in the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center. After the discovery of a mysterious key and a name among his father left behind, the young protagonist starts a quest on foot through the five boroughs of Manhattan in an attempt to solve the mystery of the name, looking for a response to his father's death.

Foer's protagonist, Oskar Schell, mends trauma through an extraordinary journey through the city in the aftermath of the attacks. The quest consists of following clues looking for people in the city tracing the secret, in the footsteps of his father. Those aspects that characterize the novel's sense of trauma are all possible through the experience of wandering in the city. Oskar roams the city streets of a New York shaken and almost destroyed by the attacks of September 11th.

As New York Times critic, Michiko Kakutani well explained: “Oskar wanders around New York City lonely, alienated and on the verge of a nervous breakdown... while commenting on the fearful state of the world around him” (in Keeble, 2014: 70). Given the sense of trauma, alienation and wanderlust expressed in the quote, we can easily classify Oskar as a natural contemporary *flâneur*. However, the identification of Foer’s young protagonist as an urban stroller is only possible through the understanding of his sense of trauma. The representation of trauma and trauma theory is essential to understanding the dynamics in *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, as trauma constitutes one of the main traits that make the novel part of the tradition of post-9/11 fiction.

In his theory of the re-elaboration of trauma, La Capra stated that we tend to overcome trauma through two inevitable paths, either “acting out” or “working through” trauma. In the choice of acting out trauma we find a way to keep our mind busy or to elaborate an occupation that serves as a way to forget and thus elaborate a traumatic experience. Working through trauma is the elaboration of an idea that serves to overcome the problem, eventually representing the healing choice in exceeding grief.

Foer’s attempt to describe trauma culminates in a literary pastiche of both acting out and working through trauma. That is to say that Oskar’s choice of elaborating his sense of traumatisation, after the loss of his father, becomes a *mise-en-scène* of his abilities through which he overcomes grief strolling in the city. Imagination and visuality are interwoven in the traumatic experience of a nine-year old boy who roams the city streets in a state of confusion. The visual image of trauma in the novel is seen through the eyes of a young boy whose elaboration of trauma finds its representation through visual expressions as “heavy boots”, which Oskar keeps repeating as long as he is reacting to what happens. His loss and loneliness increase throughout the story. From the very beginning of the novel, Oskar is isolated. He has no close friends and, once his sense of trauma becomes far more prominent, he decides to start a voyage through the city on his own. His intentional choice to start a lone quest through the city is highly influenced by Oskar’s sense of trauma, which is so internalized that it makes him an alienated and thus lone observer of the urban reality. He suddenly becomes a detached spectator, looking at the city in shock in a state of traumatisation and sorrow. Oskar’s need for isolationism is an inevitable choice in order to internalize his sorrow.

Trauma is mainly elaborated through a psychological path that is widely interwoven through Oskar’s experience in the city. His contacts with people wandering through the urban landscape reveal his inner conflict, as he is afraid to live the urban reality on his own. The city is a jungle of perils for Oskar, psychologically hit by both his father’s death and the terrorist attacks of

9/11. The choice of going on foot seems Oskar's only option to stroll through the city, even though he's afraid of both using public transportation and going on foot. As Oskar affirms, speaking about one of his first wanderings, "It took me four hours and forty-five minutes to walk...because public transportation makes me panicky, even though walking over bridges also makes me panicky" (Foer, 2005: 87). The quote frames Oskar's sense of trauma, well represented by New York's terrifying urban reality.

In this way, his path through the city unveiling the mysterious secret of his father is finally externalized. At the end of the novel, the healing power of his urban journey eliminates his sense of trauma, isolationism and sorrow. Certainly, trauma is more acute in this novel as it is represented through the experience of a nine-year-old boy. Even though Oskar is described as incredibly mature, he elaborates loss and trauma with a childish innocence. Furthermore, Oskar is an indirect victim of the attacks and his sense of trauma is caused by the death of his father, and then eventually influenced by the "sense of terror" after September 11th. Oskar undeniably encompasses the characteristics of a traumatized self in the aftermath of the attacks on the Twin Towers.

Given trauma as the basis from which to understand both the dynamics of Foer's story and the importance of his roaming choice, the novel can be classified as a truthful representation of the images and semantics of suffering as a consequence of our modern age and, in this case, of the tragic effects of 9/11. Ilka Saal suggested that in *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, trauma operates on two levels: composition and the character's perception. Composition makes reference to the structure of the novel, purposefully chosen to stage trauma and the protagonist's perception of a traumatic reality through his experience in the city. So to speak, Foer describes trauma as part of mirroring the reality of a child struck by traumatic facts in our modern world. In this way, Foer's sense of trauma is dual and the young city stroller lives a dualistic perception of his traumatic experience. Trauma for Oskar is the loss of his father and the sense of collective trauma caused by the attacks on September 11th. As we will later see, strolling and the urban landscape have a healing power for Oskar who, using La Capra's definition, acts out his sense of trauma through his quest in the city.

Another important element that is widely connected to trauma and is produced through the experience of urban walking, is Oskar's melancholy caused by the disappearance of certainties and the recent loss of his father. Melancholia is an important part of the elaboration of trauma and trauma theory, as it represents a passage from one state of mind to the other. In the case of Oskar's urban quest, healing is possible only in the immediate passage of his states of mind that are consequently elaborated through his strolling and observations of the city. Oskar's

melancholic mood follows him through the five boroughs of Manhattan as he realizes his condition as a traumatized nostalgic person. Given this, melancholia is part of Oskar's sense of trauma. Most of his symptoms such as, loneliness and despair, are eventually elaborated and represented by his nostalgic mood. Oskar feels the need to unravel his father's past in order to suppress his own sense of trauma. However, the elaboration of trauma would be impossible without the internalization of Oskar's sadness forcing him to look at the urban reality as a detached spectator.

Besides the nostalgic mood conveyed by trauma, Foer's novel hinges on the importance of memory. Oskar aims at revitalizing the memory of his father, recapturing the origin of trauma that is necessary in order to get beyond grief. Oskar's memory is essential to the accomplishment of his quest. He wanders through the city to recreate the memory of his father. Strolling through the city is an attempt for Oskar to recollect his father's memory in specific places at specific times in order to fill the void of the incommensurable loss. In the case of Foer's young city stroller, he encompasses the sense of "national loss" of America after September 11th and both New York and Oskar encompass the sense of visual loss of the Twin Towers as well as the loss that affects America's national memory.

In his representation of memory, Foer adopts the usage of visual images of the city that are necessary to the recollection of the emotions connected to September 11th. For example, the usage of images such as the "falling bodies" are necessary to suppress trauma and to emphasize the America's national memory, since this image is one of the most tragic visual representations of 9/11. The novel itself aims to memorialize people who suffered and fell or jumped from the World Trade Center towers. Defining visual memory and the usage of images of the city, is to identify photography as an important part of the recovery of trauma. Foer uses this image as a metaphorical choice to cherish the memory of a city destroyed by the attacks as well as that of a young boy who re-elaborates the memory of his father through the city streets.

Inevitably, the image of falling also represents the fall of certainty and values in our contemporary age. Oskar's attempt to reconstruct a puzzle through the five boroughs is deeply affected by visual memory and the usage of images and pictures that serve as a way to visualize grief in a more concrete sense. Yet visibility through memory is certainly a way of re-elaborating the past. Foer purposefully ends the novel with the repetitive image of the "falling body". As we turn the pages displacing the falling body, we have the feeling of seeing the body going backwards. The final photographs aim at representing the accomplishment of Oskar's healing quest. The reverse of images of the falling bodies expresses the fact that the past is resolved and the future is finally re-imagined.

Considering the visual references and the final reverse of images, the sense of collective memory described through the city is also stressed by the preoccupation with time. Time is essential for Oskar, from the repetitive recording of his father's last words in the voiceover four minutes before the attacks, to the tempo with which he strolls through the city at a specific time. In this way, time is an integral part of memory and trauma that accompanies Oskar's wanderings through New York. It is part of the elaboration of loss and the memory of his father. The repeated usage of the four minutes in which Oskar's father dies will be key in the understanding of his quest and the consequent re-elaboration of memory. The four minutes mark memory, absence and the sense of void. On the one hand, time recaptures the memory of Oskar's father in his last moments; on the other, it also determines the collapse of a one of New York's symbolic buildings.

The difference between the passing of time is essential in the understanding of Oskar's wanderlust. The passing of time elicits the shift from a building that is standing to a building that is collapsing and the passage from a living father to his unexpected death. In this way, Oskar is also free to elaborate his experience in his own time in the city. The voyeuristic perception of memory is conveyed through images, which increase his observatory perception of reality, helping him to mend his trauma. Once more, Oskar's healing experience is possible through the visualization of concrete images, which emphasize his sense of reality. This also explains Foer's choice to alternate pages of fiction with sections dedicated to photographic shots of the city, in order to represent the protagonist's visual memory and seal the collective memory of a country hit by the attacks of September 11th.

The urban reality that Oskar purposefully chooses to explore well describes another important characteristic also connected to trauma: the sense of loss and grief. Grief predominates in Oskar's perception of Manhattan in the aftermath of September 11th. Oskar inevitably experiences his sense of grief through the observation of a New York destroyed by the attacks. Grief is also what unites characters in the city. It is through grief that Oskar meets different people and interacts with different cultures to complete his quest. "Grief is extremely loud- though it is often the thing we silence or refuse to acknowledge- but is also what brings us incredibly close" (Brown and Penrad, 2011: 2). The achievement of the sense of loss as well as the final elaboration of trauma is possible mainly by strolling in the city, connecting to others, yet also grieving in private and elaborating one's own sense of loss. The grief of the urban stroller is also elaborated through struggle, which is also part of Oskar's ability to mend trauma. Considering the fact that the city represents the place to elaborate trauma, before analyzing the

role of the urban stroller, it is essential to look at the representation of New York City in the novel, as the backdrop of the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center.

New York after 9/11 as a city in shock, traumatized and wounded, inevitably effects its people and, in the case of Foer's narrative, it deeply influences the mind of a nine-year-old. The sense of fear and terror predominate in the New York that Oskar strolls through. Fear of speech, and the fear of terror are constant in the life of Foer's young protagonist, whose wanderings in the city are deeply affected by the tragic mood of the urban reality. In this sense Oskar's choice of becoming a city stroller is compelled by his fear of public transportation as well as skyscrapers, germs and Arabic people. Oskar well explains his problematic relationship with the city when he states,

“There was a lot of stuff that made me panicky, like suspension bridges, germs, airplanes, fireworks, Arab people on the subway (even though I'm not racist), Arab people in restaurants and coffee shops and other public places, scaffolding and sewers and subway gates, bags without owners, shoes, people with moustaches, smoke, knots, tall buildings, turbans. A lot of time I had the feeling I was in the middle of a huge black ocean, or in deep space, but not in the fascinating way. It's just that everything was incredibly far away from me” (2005: 36).

This quote frames the role of the urban stroller in the dangerous landscape of a traumatized New York. Despite his intentional choice to stroll through the five boroughs, his choice to roam though the urban landscape is mainly due to his fear of public transportation.

In this way, Oskar's choice to become a city stroller is somehow inevitable: he chooses to walk in order to accomplish his quest. To Foer's young urban walker, the city represents the mood of this character, and through its streets he perceives a reality that has been suddenly transformed by trauma and grief. New York City is key in the identification of Oskar's dynamics. As stated by Bruneel, “the streets we walk on, the parks we sit in, the buildings that draw our horizons are characteristic of a certain mentality” (2010: 38). As seen in the quote, the city defines who we are. In the case of Oskar, the streets and neighbourhoods he roams through are observed with his sense of trauma, grief and fear.

Despite his state of fear in his relationship with the city, Oskar is so attracted by the urban reality that the choice of wandering in New York soon becomes the best way to elaborate his father's memory, eventually suppressing trauma. As stated by Bruneel, “Oskar celebrates the diversity of New York” (2010: 47) through his voyeuristic perception of the city.

Despite the state of anguish and his reference to New York as a city of danger, for Oskar the city acquires a positive connotation. His wanderings through the five boroughs culminate in an interpretation of the city as an inspiring place, offering a varied and versatile reality. This

concept seems to represent a failure in its destruction, where New York wins over terrorism. Versluis clearly supports this concept, stating that,

“Thus Oskar’s travels over the five boroughs of New York are redemptive, they signify, if not a realization of the territory, at least its reoccupation, after it has been usurped by the 9/11 terrorists. In the upbeat spirit of his dead father, Oskar’s exploration of his native ground is an act of reconquest and reaffirmation: firsthand proof that the terrorists have failed to break the city’s stride” (in Bruneel, 2010: 48).

Considering this statement, Oskar’s ability as a literary walker has a dual aim: Firstly, it serves as a way to elaborate trauma, and secondly it helps suppress fear by wandering in the city. His choice to stroll can be defined as act of supremacy and empowerment over terrorism. Furthermore, September 11th had filled the nine-year-old protagonist with many questions for which he finds responses in his observations of the city. In this way, New York is the urban reality through which strolling assumes a healing connotation. New York is the physical space to stroll through and a place for the mental undertaking needed to elaborate the experience of trauma.

Furthermore, Oskar’s wanderings are metaphorically represented as a voyage or, as critics have argued, a healing journey. Oskar’s quest is a journey of both making paths and uniting people. In this way, Oskar is then able to undertake the path of trauma re-elaboration through his contact with the heterogeneous reality of New York City. His wanderlust also emphasizes the importance of boundaries, both literal and abstract. Strolling through neighbourhoods and places he had never been before, like Queens, Oskar ponders the urban reality of unexplored areas of the city. This concept explains how Oskar’s strolling is also regulated by invisible boundaries that somehow represent the unknown and the unexplored.

Boundaries in *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* exist between people and boroughs. Undoubtedly there is a figurative boundary between Oskar and his father, represented by their incommunicability due to his unforeseen death. Therefore, the concrete and visual boundary is characterized by boroughs that represent the unknown and unexplored reality that serves as a way to avoid trauma and recollect memory. It is precisely this unknown that forces Oskar to roam the city streets.

To sum up, the journey is thoroughly interwoven with the intricate web of trauma: it is the only option to heal the wounded self and thus let the protagonist become a detached spectator of life in the city. The journey through the city is both physical and emotional, private and public. Oskar’s voyage is the ability to search within ourselves to reach others, where the city is the backdrop for the elaboration of our traumatized self. In *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, Oskar mourns in private as he internalizes his emotions, thus elaborating his trauma by roaming

in the city. New York and its neighbourhoods convey the emotions necessary to elaborate and thus suppress trauma.

Considering this perspective and Oskar's emotional elaboration of trauma, he suddenly becomes a detached spectator. In other words, Oskar encompasses all the qualities of a modern contemporary *flâneur*. The city represents the starting point for his healing process, and it is Oskar's vivid imagination and initiative that helps him overcome his sense of grief.

Therefore, if we want to define Oskar's voyage through the city, we can easily consider Oskar as an urban stroller more than a simple walker. This reference is necessary to characterize Oskar as a traditional and detached spectator of the city as he does not merely stroll, but stops, ponders and observes the city's urban landscape. His *flâneristic* perception is that of a city deeply affected by the consequences of September 11th.

Oskar's first wandering begins in Queens, where he meticulously chooses to visit all the people named Black in the city in the attempt to find an answer to his father's last moments. His first stroll culminates in a brief observation of the urban landscape as he purposefully pauses, admiring the city streets and its neighbourhoods. The protagonist reports,

"I walked across Amsterdam Avenue, and Madison Avenue, and Park Avenue, and Lexington Avenue, and Third Avenue, and Second Avenue. When I was exactly halfway across the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge, I thought how a millimeter in front of me there was Queens. So what's the name of the parts of New York- exactly halfway through the Midtown Tunnel, exactly halfway over the Brooklyn Bridge, the exact middle of the Staten Island Ferry when it's exactly halfway between Manhattan and Staten Island that aren't in any borough? I took a step forward and it was my first time in Queens" (2005: 88).

Even though this might appear as a mere description of the urban surroundings, I consider it as a purely *flâneristic* observation of a nine-year-old observing areas of the city for the first time. We know that the *flâneur* is the character strolling, observing the street, and paying attention to the landscape, as Oskar does. The traditional observer looks at the urban reality shaping the historical moment through which he strolls, and the same can be said for Oskar in our contemporary age. It is also essential to bear in mind that Foer's choice to associate with trauma is that of a nine-year old detached spectator, who looks at the city with that sense of discovery that feeds his quest.

As Oskar proceeds in his observation of the landscape, what we perceive is his state of fear that comes from trauma. As he goes on in the description of his wandering through Queens he says, "I walked through Long Island City, Woodside, Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. I shook my tambourine the whole time, because it helped me remember that even as I was going through different neighbourhoods, I was still me" (2005: 88). The passage exemplifies how the

protagonist goes through a process of self-definition where he finds himself through the city's different neighbourhoods. So, the more he strolls through the streets, the more Oskar sees the city with an extraordinary voyeuristic perception. Another striking description of his observatory nature and admiration of the urban landscape lies in his description of the Bronx. Oskar says,

“Almost the whole ride to the Bronx was underground, which made me incredibly panicky, but once we got onto the poor parts, it went aboveground, which I preferred. A lot of the buildings in the Bronx were empty, which I could tell because they didn't have windows, and you could see right through them, even at high speeds. We got off the train and went down to the street.” (2005: 194).

The quote does not merely reconfirm Oskar's observatory nature of the urban landscape, but it also identifies the main aim of contemporary strollers and the sense of fear and trauma. To Foer's young stroller, the city is a labyrinth for personal experience whose observation leads to an intimate growth of the self, and allows urban observers to elaborate trauma and grief. When we read Oskar's descriptions of the city, we must look at it from the perspective of a natural *flâneur* who roams in the dramatic reality of a New York profoundly hit by the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

Toward the end of the novel, Oskar's detached observations of the city spectacle do not cease to exist. As De Certeau clearly explained, shifting his observation of the city from the World Trade Center, looking at the city from above, the same does Foer's young stroller does as well. Through his vivid imagination, Oskar observes New York's urban reality from the top of the Empire State Building, looking at urban walkers down below. He says,

“You can see the most beautiful things from the observatory deck of the Empire State Building. I read somewhere that people on the street are supposed to look like ants, but that's not true. They look like little people. And the cars look like cars. And even the buildings look little. It's like New York in a miniature replica of New York, which is nice because you can see what it's really like, instead of how it feels when you are in the middle of it. It's extremely lonely up there, and you feel far away from everything. Also it's scary, because there are so many ways to die. But it feels safe, too, because you are surrounded by so many people. I kept one hand touching the wall as I walked carefully around to each of the views.” (2005: 245).

Through his observations, Oskar constantly learns something about the city and himself. It is revealing to note how all of Oskar's observations described in this section carry that sense of fear and trauma that characterizes contemporary strollers. The importance of Oskar as a detached observer of urban reality lies in his ability to capture glimpses of the city, eventually elaborating his sense of trauma. We can easily say that the journey for Oskar is the destination, and strolling is a way for self-improvement and healing, where he constantly learns something about himself through his contact with the city. Another interesting *flâneristic* trait that emerges

in the quote, is the importance given to the crowd. Oskar blends with the crowd as he strolls unnoticed among the streets looking at the city as a detached voyeur.

The utility of considering Oskar Schell as one of the examples of contemporary urban stroller or modern *flâneur*, lies also in his sense of isolationism. The intentional choice of exploring New York alone, mourning in solitude, is key in the definition of the self as well as in the observation of the city, which through a personal perspective, enables Oskar to ponder the significance of the urban reality as a traditional *flâneur* engaging with the city. If alienation for the traditional *flâneur* corresponded to a mere choice for private elaboration of the perception of the city, Oskar's sense of loneliness has a dual aim. He experiences the sense of loss being lonely in the urban spectacle of the city, and his loneliness increases as he feels the absence of his father in his quest. In this way, the sense of loss is conveyed by his loneliness as he roams the streets as an isolated observer.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close mirrors the sense of fear, loss and trauma of our contemporary age through the eyes of a young *flâneur* who shows us a wounded New York with such depth that he makes us want to be part of his journey. Despite his sense of sadness, the protagonist offers clear and vivid observations of the city, leading us on a quest that somehow makes us live part of his traumatic experience in the city. We as readers, look at New York from the perspective of a nine-year old going through all the steps of a healing path. We stroll as he strolls, we mourn with Oskar the death of his father, and we experience the same sense of fear that he carries while roaming in the city. We also experience a Manhattan in shock after the tragedy.

The New York City of Foer's novel is an intricate web of traumatic experiences which, in forming identities, eventually becomes a place of transition, change and trauma. As Stefan Brant clearly affirmed, "the city in contemporary fiction illustrates the claustrophobic aspects of US society" (2009: 577). This is certainly true in Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, where a young stroller experience in the city echoes the tragic events of 9/11 and thus expresses the city's wounded spirit and the grief of the nation as well.

4.3. Teju Cole's Deracinated Stroller in Contemporary New York

The protagonist in the debut novel of Nigerian writer Teju Cole represents a more recent example of a contemporary natural *flâneur*. In Cole's *Open City* (2011) a Nigerian psychiatrist, Julius, strolls through the streets of Manhattan as a voyeur of our contemporary world. The

novel is set in the autumn of 2006, and the narrator is an immigrant living in New York, born in Nigeria from a German mother and a Nigerian father. Given his presence in the city as an immigrant and outsider, Julius does not merely observe New York, roaming its streets borough by borough, but he also ponders the significance of life, history and discrimination.

Considering the novel's main themes as race and identity and its affinity with 9/11, Cole's story offers another representation of the sense of the trauma that affects our contemporary age and eventually influences urban strollers. Cole's narrative represents trauma through the concept of deracination and disorientation. He portrays an immigrant *flâneur* strolling for identity who is put to the test of coping with the trauma of difference in contemporary New York.

From the opening lines, Cole immediately implies a connection with the narrator's present task, going on leisurely walks through Manhattan. The narrator reports, "New York City worked itself into my life at a walking pace" (Cole, 2012: 3). Even though we, as readers, follow Julius in his strolling at present, the past has an important task, as it is the way to define the spectator's point of view in the present, and it will eventually accompany most of the narrator's observations through the city. Julius wonders about the past feeling disoriented as a rootless *flâneur* in contemporary New York.

Moreover, Cole creates a narrator preoccupied with questions and the city is a stimulus for Julius' understanding of the world. For this purpose, Cole is more preoccupied with creating a narrator strolling and answering questions instead of offering him answers. In other words, Julius roams the city in a state of trauma caused by deracination and his desire to give answers to the world around him. As previously discussed, the sense of trauma can only be overcome by coming to terms with the urban reality. Once more, what helps the narrator cope with his sense of trauma is the city's contemporary reality that inevitably offers an insight into getting past grief.

However, what produces the traumatic experience of deracination is diversity as well as the fact that Julius has always considered himself as an outsider. He lives New York perceiving a perpetual sense of "otherness", trying to understand what it means to be different in Manhattan. Yet the diversity is not only that of Julius, but it is also represented by the diversity of people that offer an insight into understanding the interaction among cultures and races in the metropolis. As Julius explains during one of his first wanderings in reference to the varied mixture of New York's crowd, "Walking through busy parts of town meant I laid eyes on more people, hundreds more, thousands even, than I was accustomed to seeing in the course of the day" (2011:6). The diversity of the heterogeneous population of New York and the exchange of thoughts and ideas is necessary in the recovery and consequent suppression of trauma. For this

purpose, New York provides a multicultural reality, where cultures are intertwined and Cole's narrator strolls to make contact with diversity. The stories he hears and the people he encounters offer an interesting perspective to Julius' mind. Defining Julius' stroll through the city is referring to his wanderlust as a journey that adopts an acquisition of difference, pondering the significance of otherness. Difference is key in the understanding of Julius' path toward the city.

Despite his inevitable blend with the heterogeneity of the city, Julius suddenly becomes an anonymous stroller. He is almost invisible to the multicultural crowd while he roams the streets of the city. The sense of dislocation and deracination is emphasized more and more by Julius in the innumerable contrasts between past and present. He shifts back and forth between his past in Nigeria and his present reality in New York City. As he states, "The past, if there is such a thing, is mostly an empty space, great expanses of nothing in which significant persons and events float. Nigeria was like that for me..." (2012: 155). The past is for Julius "a mostly empty space, a great expectation of nothing" (Sundén, 2012: 155). This statement makes reference to the abolition of trauma, since as it was for Oskar, the memory of the past serves only as a way to recollect tranquillity in the present. The suppression of the past and the consequent elaboration of deracination is necessary in order to live the present. The past serves as a collage of different thoughts, as it serves to reconstruct Julius' self through the memories of his past while roaming in the city. In other words, Julius' past has not been properly solved and comes back to haunt him in the present. As it was for Jonathan Safran Foer and his young stroller, roaming the city is a way of processing trauma. In this case, grief comes from difference, dislocation and deracination. We can easily define Julius' urban experience through the city as a voyage undertaken in order to solve the past.

Furthermore, Julius' profession as a psychiatrist inevitably gives a psychological touch to his wanderings through the city. For this purpose, a psychological insight is key in the dynamics and understanding of Julius' voyage in the city. His observations and consequent reflections on the metropolis are certainly intertwined with his own psychology, and Julius defines his psychological strolling as a therapeutic choice. He states, "The walks met a need: they were a release from the tightly regulated mental environment of work, and once I discovered them as therapy, they became the normal thing, and I forgot what life had been before I started walking" (2012: 7). The character is suspended in psychological moments and spaces that persist throughout the novel. Being a psychiatrist certainly helps Julius to define and thus analyze his strolling in terms of psychological moments. Psychology is the concrete threshold through which the novel develops. On the one hand it is Julius' psychology of his inner thoughts, on the other it is the psychology of difference in the streets of the metropolis. It is only through the

psychological experience that strollers catch glimpses of the city and tend to reconstruct their lost selves. In this way, Cole's novel deals with the dramatization of objective and personal subjective experience. As we will later see, Julius is always torn between his personal feelings and the openness of the city that inevitably reflects his divided personality.

The main intricate thread that determines the sense of trauma and deracination that permeates the novel is certainly the problem with identity. As the opening of the second chapter reads, "I have searched myself" (2012: 147). This statement expresses the importance of strolling instead of walking, where to stroll is to achieve some deeper understanding of one's own self.

We know that "flâneurs take an acute interest in the world around them in order to enrich the self" (Vermeulen, 2013: 54). Cole's rootless/immigrant *flâneur* is in search of identity, which he finds not simply by roaming in the city, but above all by getting in contact with that difference that evokes deracination and a sense of otherness. New York City is fundamental even in the re-definition of the self for the immigrant *flâneur*. For Cole's stroller, his identity constantly changes as he strolls through different areas of the city, moving from one neighbourhood to the other, coming to terms with the diversity he encounters. As New York is a palimpsest in Cole's novel, the same can be said for Julius. He is, as Miller states, "a person with layers of identity" (2014: 196). The lack of identity implies an extended meditation on the landscape and the urban environment Julius strolls through. Describing his wanderlust, the narrator reports,

"Every decision where to turn left, how long to remain lost in thought in front of an abandoned building, whether to watch the sunset over New Jersey, or to lope in the shadows of the East Side looking across to Queens- was inconsequential, and was for that reason a reminder of freedom. I covered the city blocks as though measuring them with my stride, and the subway stations served as recurring motives in my aimless progress. The sight of large masses of people hurrying down into the underground chambers were perpetually strange to me, and I felt that all of the human race were rushing, pushed by a counterinstinctive death drive, into movable catacombs".

The urban landscape is necessary to understand the values of the self and the heterogeneous crowd of New York City as they contrast with the landscape of Nigeria that eventually provokes trauma and deracination in the metropolis.

As New York well encompasses the issues of our century such as trauma after 9/11, fear of difference and identity, the same occurs when Julius roams the streets dealing with all these contrasting feelings. Trauma, New York post-9/11 and the past are all intertwined with the quest for the self. The novel aims at reshaping or even creating a self in the urban reality of New York City, suppressing trauma and those boundaries that make Julius a rootless and disoriented stroller. For Cole's aimless literary walker, this quote from J.R.R. Tolkien is certainly true: "Not all those who wander are lost." Even though Julius seems to be an aimless stroller and his walks

seem to have no destination or path as he enjoys strolling leisurely in different areas of the city, he finally finds himself. Even though Julius' arrival in New York is for a business purpose, we can say that he went looking for America and found himself. Despite his initial sense of disorientation and the fact that the city evokes isolation, thus stimulating the production of questions about ourselves, Julius' journey is finally accomplished as he is ultimately able to elaborate a new self in another country. His psychological observations of the city produce an awareness of the self that is necessary to establish Julius' new American identity. As Hacking points out, speaking of Cole's novel, "The voyage is a metaphor for self-discovery" (in Sundén, 2012: 6).

Teju Cole portrays an immigrant stroller who roams the city in quest of his self-belonging as he ponders his race and identity, elaborating his sense of trauma. As Jensen and Christensen stated, "the relation between migration and belonging can be discussed as the relation between roots and routes" (2011: 147). In the case of Cole's protagonist, the connection between routes and roots is a close one, as they are fundamental to the understanding of one's own origins. Routes represent Julius' path toward the elaboration of his own roots through the city thus leading to the suppression of trauma and deracination and producing a new identity. These two concepts are fundamental to characterizing Julius' *flânerial* perception of the city. He is not only in quest for his own self but, perceiving the trauma of difference, he is also in quest for his own roots. In the case of Teju Cole, New York is the ideal place to trace a route in quest for one's own roots.

As previously discussed for Jonathan Foer and 9/11 fiction, memory has a key role in the elaboration of trauma. The awareness of the past is what allows us to come to terms with the present. Julius' stroll through the city is a recollection of his own memories. His memories are those of culture and the difference between Nigeria and America, and they are also those of history connected to the tragic events of 9/11 as well as the atrocities of the past such as slavery and discrimination. Igor Maver explains that, "Cole speaks about violence, trauma, war in a way, indirectly describing not the external events, but rather the consequences of suffering upon one's psyche, individual and collective memory" (2013: 4). Memories are also personal and intimate, evoked by the city as well as the collective memories of the people Julius encounters. We, as readers, follow his memories to create the mosaic of his identity, trying to understand his personality, which, remains rather ambiguous for most of the novel. The role of Cole's literary walker is rather difficult as he simultaneously represents a series of emotions, which make his personality far more complex and elusive. Furthermore, his psychological and intricate references to memory and his inner self make the meaning of his strolling difficult to grasp.

Therefore, references to Julius' memory are only possible through psychological insights into his inner self and intimate thoughts evoked by the city's urban reality. For this purpose Tim McDonough described contemporary *flâneurs* as belonging to the genres of psychologies provoked by memory and intimacy. In reference to the modern contemporary *flâneur*, he affirmed that, "confident in his capacity to rank and judge the strangers along the boulevard, he could be reassured that those strangers bore no ill will" (in Sundén, 2012: 2). This is precisely what Julius does by roaming in the city. The modern and heterogeneous crowd of New York serves Julius as it brings to light concepts such as difference, culture and race. In this way, through the variety of New York's crowd, Julius helps us to puzzle out his fragments of personality through his observation of the city's varied mixture.

Let us now consider the importance of Cole's title, the significance of which is part of the understanding of Julius *flâneristic* aim. In his interview with Kate Welsh, Cole explained the significance of "Open" in reference to the city. New York is referred to as open as in open-minded or open-hearted in contrast to the unseen or psychic distress of the narrator or even to the mental closeness of other cities. American cities have often been imagined as open spaces. Writers, in reference to New York City, often used concepts of "openness", in the description of American cities. The most famous stroller in the city, Walt Whitman, referred to "Manhatta" as an open city. In the 1840s and 1850s, New York assumed the image of open as it was deeply affected by the phenomenon of immigration. Its openness persisted throughout the 19th century as the city was still connected to the multi-facets of a heterogeneous society. In our contemporary age, the 20th and 21st century diversity and the sense of openness are mainly linked to the quest for the self, linked to the openness of the city.

Yet Stefan Brandt asserts that "the reference to the openness of American cities invites the *flâneur* to follow the multitudinous promises of urban life, but also erects new boundaries with the impression of being locked" (2010: 123). This is certainly true for Julius, where on the one hand the openness of New York City represents an inspiration necessary to suppress his sense of trauma, yet on the other it provokes some kind of loneliness and the protagonist finds himself entangled in a closed space. The openness of the city might refer to other cultures, on the level of interaction, or it can also evoke the isolation of trauma and deracination. In terms of discrimination and trauma from deracination this requires a sense of closeness. In this case, the immigrant stroller finds protection in the discovery of his lost self. Through its ambivalent closeness and openness, the city becomes for Julius a panorama of signs that must be decoded by the *flâneur*, and in the case of contemporary strollers, they are a way to suppress trauma. The

urban *flâneur* in the contemporary open city is both explorer and creator of the spaces that help him accomplish his quest for the self thus being able to cope with his sense of trauma.

Cole explains that New York is both open and closed. At the same time, it is tremendously liberating and inexplicably oppressive. New York is certainly a closed space for Julius. It is closed because of its sheer multiculturalism, which, while stimulating an acute observation of the city also enables the elaboration of trauma from deracination and difference. It is also closed as the elaboration of trauma causes a private closeness in the inner space of the self. In order to experience the entire openness and consequent privatization of the self, time is almost suspended as Julius roams the streets of New York in timeless moments in the city's sheer variety. This characteristic is fundamental to understanding Julius' role as traumatized stroller. Despite the positive connotation to the openness of New York as a city that offers insights of the multiculturalism necessary to the immigrant stroller, with its sense of closeness the city acquires a darker meaning.

Yet the sense of openness in reference to New York is much more emphasized in its contrast with other urban realities observed by Cole's faithful stroller, such as Brussels. When Julius leaves New York for Brussels in search of his roots, the contrast with the European reality and the different landscape of this city increases his image of New York as an open city. Brussels serves as a backdrop for the quest for his roots, while New York is the city whose overwhelming diversity and openness represents a stimulus to the voyeuristic perception of the stroller.

New York is for Julius a post-colonial metropolis. However, the openness of this city is quite problematic for the traumatic experience of the immigrant stroller. Julius like other immigrants finds the difficulty in adapting to this city. The openness of New York affects Julius' sense of trauma as it increases his difficulty in accepting the new urban environment of New York City, compared to the contrasting wilderness of Nigeria or the European rigour of Brussels. The consequence to this openness leads to the trauma of deracination and the struggle for its suppression. Concepts such as openness and globalization of the metropolis are closely connected to Julius' problematic and rather incomplete identity. The hybrid reality of New York and its openness certainly reflect that of Julius who is himself a mixture of different cultures: Nigerian, German, and now, American. The contrast of different urban realities and different environments predominates as Julius remembers the traumatic past of his childhood in Nigeria. Julius remembers the reality of his past in Nigeria as he states, "I had never been to Nigeria before, and its broad, desertified territory, with small trees and parched shrubs, might as well have been another continent, so different was it from the chaos of Lagos" (2012: 73-77). Even Lagos compared to other parts of Nigeria looks different. It is then evident how New York

serves as backdrop for openness and means of comparison with other urban realities. A similar contrast occurs when Julius visits Brussels and he observes the regularity of the city compared to the chaos and loudness of New York. He reports,

“Outside the hotel, I had noticed the order and grayness, the modesty and regularity of the houses, and the cool formality of the people, against which American life, my first contact with which came a few weeks later, had seemed lurid. It is easy to have the wrong idea about Brussels. The city is old...” (2012: 97).

The quote frames the difference with New York as Brussels is defined as an old European city. Unlike Brussels, New York is modern and, of course, open. The quote above explains how New York offers a different observation that other cities, in this case Brussels, cannot offer because of their lack of variety. This concept certainly affects the *flâneur* and his sense of trauma, which is far more acute and possible in the reality of New York City. It is not a coincidence that Julius’ voyage toward the city ends with his observation of the Statue of Liberty, symbolically referring to immigration and the sense of openness and freedom conveyed by New York.

Another important trait that represents New York’s openness in Cole’s narrative is certainly the city’s vastness. New York is a borderless open city. Its dimension and scale allow the stroller to move from one neighbourhood to another and the sheer variety of these areas is key in the recollection of Julius’ *flâneristic* experience and voyeuristic detached observation of the city. Cole explains the city’s openness in the opening metaphor where Julius is watching birds migrate. Julius describes his habit as he states,

“Not long before this aimless wandering began, I had fallen into the habit of watching migrations from my apartment, and I wonder now if the two are connected. On the days I was home early enough from the hospital, I used to look out the window like someone taking auspices, hoping to see the miracle of natural immigration... I wondered how their reality might be from their perspective” (2012: 3-4).

The statement above explains the comparison between bird migration and Julius’ migration to America. It is a metaphorical image of the openness of the city, compared to the vastness of the sky. As Julius strolls through the city, the same thing occurs when birds fly in the sky above the city. As a traditional, detached urban observer, Julius wonders how birds’ perspective might be from their position flying above the city. Igor Maver supported this interpretation explaining how the natural process of birds’ migration is opposed to the unnatural and vast migration that affected New York and led to its openness.

In all his observations of the city as an immigrant, Julius’ sense of trauma is mainly caused by his identity as a foreigner and consequent deracination provoked by his sense of difference in

the city. However, the openness of New York, thanks to its different neighbourhoods and cultural realities, enables Julius to ponder the significance of race and, in his case, its position among other communities in the city. “He finds the city interconnected with the rest of the world through pain and suffering” (Maver, 2013: 11).

Moreover, the openness of New York City is obviously generated by 9/11. The national openness produced by the event determined a sense of collective trauma that New York has never fully suppressed. Considering the importance of 9/11 as the main consequence to the evolution of contemporary strollers and its importance that produced a new form of literature, even Julius observes and ponders the effects of 9/11. Strolling near the site of 9/11, now Ground Zero, Julius evokes the atrocities of this event through his perception of the tragedy. He states,

“I walked up to a second overpass, the one that once connected the World Financial Center to the buildings that stood on the site... Just below the street level, I saw the sudden metallic green of a subway train hurtling by, exposed to the elements where it crossed the work site, a live vein drawn across the neck of 9/11... I felt conspicuous, the only person among the crowd who stopped to look out from the overpass at the site. Atrocity is nothing new, not to humans, not to animals. The site was a palimpsest, as well, as the city, written, erased and rewritten” (58-59).

Once more, this quote explains how strollers post 9/11 roam the city experiencing a perpetual sense of trauma. In Cole’s novel, trauma is also emphasized by Julius’ personal reflections on the tragedy of September 11th. His reflections as a traditional voyeur, well explain the sense of national trauma perceived also by the immigrant stroller.

Among his innumerable strolls through different areas of the city, Julius visits the sites of September 11th and ponders about the effects of this tragedy on America as well as its impact among other cultures. Despite his sense of “otherness”, Julius strolls well aware of the general terror provoked by 9/11. He inevitably experiences grief and sorrow as he visits Ground Zero.

The World Trade Center is for Julius a place of never-ending mourning where the sense of trauma has not been completed. In reference to the site of 9/11, the narrator reports, “There had been great heroism, of course, though, as the years passed, it had become clear that aspects of this heroism were overstated. But the mourning had not been completed, and the result had been the anxiety that cloaked the city” (209). This quote exemplifies the sense of national trauma generated by 9/11, which in post-9/11 fiction deeply affects the sense of trauma in its urban walkers.

In memorializing 9/11, the city goes far beyond the boundaries of American history for Ground Zero finds its place among all the other “*lieux de memoire*” representing the violence and nightmare of history. Through his acknowledgment of the tragic events of 9/11 and the observation of its memorial site, Julius is also a victim of 9/11. He is a foreign *flâneur*, lonely

and deracinated who perceives America's national grief as he strolls. To this purpose, Teju Cole well explained well his attempt to write a novel referring to the catastrophe of 9/11, even though he expressed the difficulty in discussing this topic. As previously explained, trauma seems to be the literary option to discuss the tragic effects of September 11th. Cole's reflections on 9/11 through the eyes of an immigrant psychiatrist roaming the streets of New York are the best choice for an indirect approach to the tragedy at the World Trade Center. We can easily categorize the novel as part of 9/11 fiction, not only for its literary collocation as it was published in the first decade after the tragedy, but also for the importance of trauma well expressed by Cole's *flâneur*. In this way, the sense of trauma is dual for Julius. On the one hand he perceives the sense of otherness, displacement and deracination: on the other he reverberates the national trauma generated by the tragic effects of 9/11.

Julius' observations of the city have a dual aim. He has the compulsive habit of strolling though the city and using public transportation in New York that generates an intense experience within the city's heterogeneous crowd. Julius' wanderings offer a detached perspective of the city as he strolls in solitude. His detachment with all the people he encounters generates what Wood defines as "a productive alienation" (in Vermeulen, 2013: 41). The narrator explains his sense of isolation as he affirms, "Aboveground I was with thousands of others in their solitude, but in the subway, standing close to strangers, jostling them and being jostled by them for space and breathing room, all of us re-enacting unacknowledged traumas, the solitude intensifies" (2013: 7). This isolation is necessary for Julius' identification with a modern *flâneur* as he blends with the multicultural crowd of New York, thus feeling alienated from it. As he clearly affirms in the above quote, alienation intensifies the sense of trauma perceived by Julius in the crowds of New York City.

The novel's attitude of cultural interaction and the image of its openness provide a touch of cosmopolitanism to the sense of trauma that Julius experiences in his stroll though the city. As Vermeulen suggests, "The novel's approach to multifarious realities is customarily read as an extremely cosmopolitan performance" (2013: 41). Cosmopolitanism is certainly one of the characteristics of contemporary literature and New York in this sense is so heterogeneous and animated by different cultures that Julius strolls through the cosmopolitan variety of its crowds. In this sense, our modern globalized world is characterized by cosmopolitanism and exchange of cultures in the metropolis. Considering the sense of general cosmopolitanism produced by New York City, Julius' alienation as a city stroller is key to the understanding of his perspective and consequent observation of the urban landscape. In other words, in Cole's novel cosmopolitanism comes from alienation.

The investment in what has been defined as “productive alienation” certainly drives us back to the concept of the *flâneur* in a more direct sense. Both Baudelaire and Benjamin, despite their different and opposite views of *flânerism* defined the *flâneur* as a “dialectical figure who presented himself as open to everything, but who actually saved himself from the chaos and randomness through his pretentious and epistemological control” (in Vermeulen, 2013: 41). This quote certainly applies to Julius whose approach to the city is that of a stroller who is extremely open to the heterogeneous reality he encounters that represents a stimulus for the suppression of trauma. This definition of the *flâneur* anticipates a cosmopolitan ethos, in the sense that, according to its two main theorists, Julius, should be open and cosmopolitan per se. Vermeulen also argued that, because of the city’s reality, “Julius evokes the dark counterparts of a cosmopolitan flâneur” (2013: 42). Yet the definition of cosmopolitanism identifies the commitment to a community. This statement makes reference to the values and human rights that led us to ponder the significance of cultures as well as the positions of foreigners in other cities. *Open City* celebrates the importance of cosmopolitanism in contemporary literature offering a portrayal of our globalized world.

Undoubtedly, the cosmopolitan stroller deals with issues such as human rights. His constant contact with diversity, blending with other ethnicities, also represents an inspiration and a way of analyzing his thoughts and his role in the city as a traditional, detached, immigrant observer. Julius deals with concepts such as race and the human rights issues. One example par excellence is portrayed in his thoughts on the prosecution of African Americans, a theme which returns over and over again in Julius’ wanderings and serves as a way to analyze the issue of race. Being a black Nigerian, Julius is more closely attached to the community of African-Americans. He ponders, “There are almost no Native Americans in New York City, and very few in all of the Northeast. Isn’t it right that people are not terrified by what has happened to a vast population. And it’s not in the past, it is still with us today; at least, it’s still with me” (2013: 27). This quote encompasses Julius’ sense of trauma as he, invoking the tragedies of African-Americans and Native Americans and wondering about race, increases his sense of discrimination.

Strolling in Harlem, he inevitably observes African Americans, and feels himself to be part of their community. Julius experiences the issue of race in New York City. Looking at two black men walking down the street in Harlem he reports his feelings and observations,

“At a light on a 124th were two men in their twenties, fragments of whose conversation floated around me as we crossed the street... They walked past me on either side without speaking to each other and as though they hadn’t seen me. Each appeared to be intent in his own thoughts. There had earlier been, it occurred to me, only the most tenuous of connections between us, looks on a street corner by strangers, a gesture of mutual respect on our being young, black, male; based, in other

words, on our being “brothers”... I know something of what life is like for you out here” (211-212).

This quote expresses how Julius copes with his sense of trauma through the observation of the city’s cosmopolitan aspect. Trauma of difference and dislocation is emphasized by the sense of brotherhood expressed by Julius, where he is isolated and feels alienated, eventually looking for a connection with African-American culture in the quest for his new identity and lost self. To define *Open City* is to affirm the fact that this novel “experiments with a flat, nearly unaffected tone in its depiction of Julius’ dissociated mind. It does so in order to find appropriate ways to think about people whose lives are geographically or culturally unrelated to one’s own” (Vermeulen, 2013: 45).

However, as Vermeulen clearly affirms as a consequence to the novel’s cosmopolitanism, Julius’ wanderings serve as a counterpoint. In other words, they are key in composing Julius’ life as a whole. The street instead of calming Julius from the monotony at home represents an incessant sense of loudness and confusion, which suddenly becomes fundamental in Julius’ discovery of his self throughout the city. Cole presents this sense of counterpoint from the first two chapters where, instead of trying to connect and elaborate a feeling of the collective in walking, the novel’s purpose is to evoke an intense experience of shared isolation.

Yet one of the first elements of counterpoint lies in the contradiction between Julius’ cosmopolitan interaction and his moments of loneliness and solitude. Another contradiction that is certainly part of Julius’ perspective in his observation of the city is conveyed by the contrast between Brussels and New York. These two cities certainly offer an example of counterpoint as the streets of Brussels recall the sense of culture, history and civilization, whereas the streets of New York echo the atrocities of 9/11 as well as the role of African-American culture. This contrast between Julius’ shifts from public heterogeneity and private mourning is also emphasized by the contrast between the streets and the subway, which represents a subterranean urban spectacle for its cultural crowd and concentration of people. The street is for Julius a place for the traumatized experience of solitude, whereas the subway is the place where traumas are re-enacted rather than acknowledged. Considering the counterpoints generated by the sense of cosmopolitanism, *Open City* converts traumatic suffering into a personal quest, adding a touch of cosmopolitanism determined by the heterogeneity of New York City.

To sum up, Cole’s frustrating, disorienting and striking novel represents the elusive and confused nature of an immigrant stroller who enjoys his wanderings in Manhattan as a therapeutic choice to get beyond the trauma of difference. Cole follows his stroller as he moves through different areas of the city from the mourning site of Ground Zero to the uptown reality of

Harlem. As Michiko Kakutami explains, most of the descriptions of Cole's New York are the image of a cacophonous and at times sad metropolis. Melancholy, sadness and sense of difference- these are the three qualities that accompany Julius and his strolling.

In this sense, Cole explains how in our contemporary world we need urban strollers to watch the city, providing an understanding through their observation of the urban reality. Yet among city strollers, Julius is a thus an elusive and complicated example. He is alienated, able to see with external eyes the importance of the city and its sheer diversity in order to adapt to its culture, compared to his tradition. As in most of 9/11 novels, he also experiences that sense of trauma itself in contemporary strollers caused, in this case, by deracination and dislocation produced by Julius' sense of otherness. In this sense, New York is open to people sharing their solitude, open to observation and thus open to difference.

In this second case study in reference to Teju Cole's *Open City*, I have often referred to Julius as a traditional *flâneur*. Once the analysis of this character as well as the meaning of his observations through the city have been made clear, let us now consider his role as a contemporary modern *flâneur*. Julius certainly is the modern contemporary example par excellence of traditional *flâneur* strolling through the streets of New York in the present.

4.3.1. Julius, a Contemporary Baudelairian *Flâneur*

Let us now conclude this thesis by re-tracing those aspects that make Cole's stroller/protagonist the example par excellence of a contemporary natural *flâneur*. Julius encompasses those qualities that characterized the *flâneur* described by Baudelaire and Benjamin. We have referred to Julius in this chapter as a city stroller, an observer of the modern changes of the city, qualities that belong to the traditional *flâneur*. Most of his wanderings are characterized by faithful observations of the landscape, which not only consists of mere observations, but also generates a series of thoughts. The following quote in which Julius strolls through the city is proof of a typical *flâneristic* observation,

“I entered the park at Seventy-Second Street and began to walk south, on Sheep Meadows. The wind picked up, and water poured down into the sodden ground in fine, incessant needles, obscuring lindens, elms and crab apples. The intensity of the rain blurred my sight, a phenomenon I had noticed before only with snowstorms, when a blizzard erased the most obvious signs of the times, leaving one unable to guess which century it was. The torrent had overlaid the park with a primeval feeling, as though a world ending flood were coming on, and Manhattan looked just then like it must have in the 1920s or even, if one was far enough away from the taller buildings, much more further in the past. The cluster of taxis at Fifth Avenue and Central Park South broke the illusion. After I had walked another quarter hour, by

then thoroughly drenched, I stood under the eaves of a building on Fifty-third Street” (35-36).

The passage shows the observation of a traditional *flâneur* who admires facets of the urban reality as a detached observer. The observation of the urban landscape is an inevitable stimulus for emotions and feelings that are only conveyed by the changes of the city and its environment. Furthermore, in this case, Julius’ *flâneristic* experience leads him to the ability to discover a new identity, finding his new American self. In this way, he strolls to achieve something and so does the *flâneur*, who strolls to acquire a profound sense of his inner self through the city’s urban landscape.

The second important characteristic that identifies the *flâneur* and it is also elaborated by Julius is the sense of isolation and loneliness. As the *flâneur* purposefully isolates himself in order to stroll in solitude, so does Cole’s faithful observer. He is alone in the urban spectacle of the metropolis. It is precisely this sense of loneliness that makes him far more confident about the outer landscape. Yet Julius’ sense of isolation is even more acute as he perceives alienation, feeling the trauma of difference, considering himself an outsider in the metropolis.

The importance given to the crowd certainly confirms Julius’ position as a traditional *flâneur*. The crowd is the fundamental element through which the *flâneur* observes, thus capturing the rapid changes of the city. He does not merely observe the city. It is through the observation of the people in the crowd that contemporary *flâneurs* study the changes of the crowd in terms of race, history and ethnicity. Cole’s novel is characterized by Julius’ innumerable observations of the crowd, which make his voyeuristic perception far more complete. Watching people passing by in the street much as Poe’s first American *flâneur* did, Julius reports his observation of the crowd,

“A woman’s voice shouted and a crowd responded. I could identify the crowd as mostly or entirely female...Then, as the crowd, all of them young women, passed under the streetlamps, their chanting became clearer...The crowd, several dozens strong but tightly packed, passed under my windows. I watched them, as their faces came in and out of the spot lights of the streetlamps” (22-23).

Julius is not a passive observer of this crowd; he also blends with it. He becomes almost invisible to the masses, thus being able to isolate himself, observing the city’s changes. He seeks that anonymity that is typical of a natural *flâneur*. Julius defines himself as part of the crowd as he states, “I, one of the still legible crowd” (2013: 59). The importance of the crowd in Cole’s *Open City* shapes that sense of cosmopolitanism and openness typical of New York City that deeply affect Julius’ sense of trauma and rootlessness.

I have purposefully chosen to end the second study of this thesis with the most complete example from among the *flâneurs* we have encountered. Julius certainly is the example par excellence of a modern *flâneur* who roams the streets of New York in the present with an extraordinary observational attitude encapsulating the problems of our modern world. He lives the city with the traumatic experience of difference, perceiving displacement and deracination, but he is finally able to overcome his sense of trauma through his observation of the city and its innumerable changes. New York is certainly a fundamental landscape that more than other cities is characterized by a multiculturalism that is essential for the entire process of self-definition of the modern immigrant *flâneur*, traumatized by his urban position as an outsider.

In this chapter, we have seen how both Oskar and Julius represent two examples of contemporary *flâneurs* strolling with a sense of trauma. The effects of 9/11, which left a void that is widely perceived by strolling in the city and mainly determined by trauma. It can be the trauma of a loss, the loss of the father for Oskar Schell and the loss of certainties caused by the consequences of September 11th; it can also be the trauma of difference for an immigrant like Julius in search of a new identity. New York is chosen as the backdrop of contemporary strollers for the sheer variety of its landscape and its intense multiculturalism. Contemporary *flâneurs* stroll in order to overcome trauma through observations within the city, thus achieving a deeper and more intimate sense of their inner self. We need contemporary strollers to elaborate that sense of fear generated by our modern age.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to discuss the figure of the American *flâneur* and his/her strolling through the streets of New York City, tracing his changes throughout history. Following his/her path, we have seen how this literary figure has well represented the city's history with observation, which acutely reflected its evolution and changes through time.

I have started by discussing the origins of the literary stroller, the *flâneur*, as conceived by its two main theorists, Baudelaire and Benjamin. I have then shifted my attention to its American counterpart, moving from Paris to New York City, which becomes the core of my analysis. New York City is closely linked to the figure of the literary walker or traditional *flâneur*, thanks to its geometrical structure and sheer variety. The city is a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities and their blending supports the claim that the *flâneur's* observation in New York is far more attentive and concrete than in any other city in the world. In addition, this city is designed for walking. The activity of strolling through its streets inevitably creates emotions that characterize the purely American figure of the *flâneur*.

By briefly outlining the city's salient historical moments, I have then been able to demonstrate how this American figure changes depending upon the moment of his creation. Despite the fact that his elusive nature is slightly different from the figure in the traditional French canon, we have been able to include the American *flâneur* in the realm of traditional *flânerie*. In this way, American *flâneurs* represent the reality of a city and a country, which is unique per se in values and ideals.

For this purpose we have been able to demonstrate that American *flâneurs* in New York City faithfully mirror the social changes and characteristics of specific historical periods. From Walt Whitman's attentive observation of Manhattan as a growing metropolis, to the African-Americans and their need for equality, to Alfred Kazin's sense of loneliness conveyed by the city's expansion and the heterogeneity of its crowds, city strollers have portrayed social and historical realities that have helped us trace the history of New York City.

This brief survey of New York's literary strollers through time, observing the city and depicting its social and historical changes, has brought us to the analysis of our two case studies, supporting the final claim of this thesis. Through the comparison of two contrasting historical periods, the 1800s and the 21st century, our analysis has proven that each age necessarily needs the creation of *flâneurs*. These two historical moments led to the creation of two different types of characters who walk both as social signifiers and symbols of a collective psychology, female *flâneuses* and traumatized, immigrant *flâneurs*. The 1800s met the need for the representation of

women in the urban context, while the mood of terror generated by the tragic nature of 9/11 generates *flâneurs* who roam the city as traumatized strollers. These more contemporary *flâneurs* are traumatized victims in the aftermath of the attacks and traumatized immigrants dealing with the effects of 9/11 coping with the trauma of difference in more recent times.

At the end of the 1800s, New York was the strolling place of women, who were discovering the city for the first time. The American *flâneuse* was the first example of a female stroller in the city. In fact, *flâneuses* of the late 1800s well represented New York society and its attitude toward the female presence in the street. In New York's high society, women's strolling was merely an act of display. They were ornamental examples of wealth and consumption, as has been widely discussed in our first case study, in the analysis of Edith Wharton's tragic female stroller in *The House of Mirth*. On the contrary, women in the working class, seen as deprived of moral values, were viewed as scorned sinners, their presence in the street mistaken for that of prostitutes. This second example was confirmed by our analysis of the protagonist of Stephen Crane's *Maggie*. In this way, New York's social change of female caste and class in the late 1800s was represented by the female *flâneuse*. Her presence in the streets confirms the role of women and their ability to mirror the intricate rules of the New York society of the late 1800s representing one of the first examples of women's emancipation in the urban landscape.

Our contemporary age, the 21st century, was marked by one of the world's biggest tragedies, the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It is thus inevitable that contemporary *flâneurs* stroll through a New York City in shock expressing the sense of trauma and deracination as a consequence of the fatal terrorist attacks of 9/11. The sense of terror generated by the horrific nature of this event shaped *flâneurs* strolling through trauma, a loss of moral values and in search of their own selves. As we previously noted in analyzing the *flâneuse* in two different social contexts, post 9/11 strollers express the concept of trauma in different moments. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the traumatic experience is caused by the tragic consequences of this horrid event as we have seen in narrowing down our study to Jonathan Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, the example par excellence of a young *flâneur's* stroll through a New York destroyed by the attacks. Looking at a more recent example, Teju Cole's *Open City*, published in 2011, the stroller/protagonist still wanders in a state of trauma certainly generated by our age, but he is also dominated by the perception of being different. Contemporary New York, post 9/11, is represented by *flâneurs* who stroll in that mood of the uncertainties generated by September 11th itself, and characteristic of our modern age, their reality is marked by terrorism and the threatening mood of New York City as the target of further terrorist attacks.

The analysis of these two case studies shows that the history of New York City is well represented by the *flâneurs* who roam its streets, each facing the reality of a specific historical moment. This concept lets us finally support the statement that American literary walkers, strollers, or using a more literary definition, *flâneurs*, sketch the history of New York City through their ability to encompass, symbolize and process social and historical changes in the moment of their strolling.

Works Cited

I. Primary Sources

Cole, Teju. *Open City*. London: Faber & Faber, 2011. Print.

Crane, Stephen. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Tustin, California: Xist Publishing, 2015. Kindle Edition.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005. Print.

Wharton, Edith. *The House of Mirth*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990. Print.

II. Secondary Sources

Amato, Joseph, A. *On Foot: A History of Walking*. New York: New York University Press, 2004. Print.

Ammons, Elisabeth. *Edith Wharton's Hard-Working Lily: The House of Mirth and the Marriage Market*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990. Print.

Bach, Kati. *The House of Mirth- Lily's Struggle with the New York Society*. Munich: Grin Verlag Publisher. 2013. Print.

Bairner, Alan. "Urban Walking and the Pedagogies of the Streets." *Taylor & Francis*, Vol. 16, No. 3. May 2011: 371-384. Web.

Balaev, Michelle. *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels*. Northwestern, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. 2012. Print.

Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. London: Phaidon Press, 1964. Print.

- Bibby, Emily, K. "Making the American Aristocracy: Women, Cultural Capital and High-Society in New York City, 1870-1900." Web *Virginia Tech Digital Library Archives*, 2009. 15 July 2015. <<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/>>
- Brandt, Stefan L. "Open City, Closed Space: Metropolitan Aesthetics in American Literature from Brown to DeLillo." *Transcultural Spaces: Challenges of Urbanity, Ecology, and the Environment*. Tübingen, Germany 2010: 121-144. Print. ---. "The City as Liminal Space: Urban Visuality and Aesthetic Experience in Postmodern Literature and Cinema." *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 4. 2009: 553-581. Web.
- Brand, Dana. *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print.
- Brown, Calianne, Penrod, Sienna. "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close: Concept Analysis." Web *Novelinks*, 2011. 15 August 2015. <<http://novelinks.org/>>
- Bruneel, Laura. *New York City Fiction as Trauma Literature*. Gent: University of Gent. 2010. Print.
- Burrows, Edwin G., Wallace, Mike. *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*. Oxford University Press: New York, 1999. Kindle Edition.
- Christensen, Ann D., Jensen, Sune. "Roots and Routes: Migration Belonging and Everyday Life." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*. 2011: 146-155. Print.
- De Certeau, Michel. "The Practice of Everyday Life." Web *Movement Research*. 14 June 2015. <<http://www.movementresearch.org/>>
- Dimock, Chee, W. "Debasing Exchange: Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*." *PMLA*, Vol. 100, No. 5. October 1985: 783-792. Web.
- Domosh, Mona. "Those Gorgeous Incongruities: Polite Politics and Public Space on the Streets of Nineteenth-Century New York City." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 88, No. 2. June 1998: 209-226. Web.

- Dreyer, Elfriede, McDowell, Estelle. "Imaging the Flâneur as a Woman." *Web Academia*, 10 May 2012. 11 August 2015. <<http://www.academia.edu/>>
- Duvall, John N., Marzec, Robert P. *Narrating 9/11. Fantasies of State, Security and Terrorism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2015. Print.
- Gibbs, Alan. *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2014. Print.
- Gilbert, Roger, Robins, Jeffrey, and Wallace, Anne. *The Walker's Literary Companion*. Halcottsville, New York: Breakway Books. 2000. Print.
- Gleber, Anke. *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flaneurie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1999. Print.
- Gonsior, Janette. "Walking Through Paul Auster's City of Glass." *Web Grin*, 2006. 10 July 2015. <<http://www.grin.com/>>
- Gray, Richard. *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11*. West Sussex, England: John Wiley and Sons Publication. 2011. Print.
- Hanssen, Beatrice. *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006. Print.
- Hapke, Laura. "Maggie's Sisters: Nineteenth-Century Literary Images of the American Streetwalker." *Journal of American Culture*, Vol.5, No. 2. Summer 1982: 29-35. Web. ---. *Girls Who Went Wrong. Prostitutes in American Fiction, 1885-1917*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press. 1989. Print.
- Haviland, Beverly. "After the Fact: Mourning, Melancholy, and Nächsttraglichkeit in Novels of 9/11." *American Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 3. September 2010: 429-449. Web.
- Herringshaw, Deanne. *The Harlem Renaissance*. Edina, Minnesota: Abdo Publishing, 2011. Print.
- Hombarger, Eric, Alice Hudson. *The Historical Atlas of New York City*. New York: Henry Holt and Company Publishing, 2005. Print.

- Homberger, Eric. *New York City: A Cultural and Literary Companion*. Oxford: Signal Books, 2002. Print.
- Hwangbo, Kyeong. *Trauma Narrative and the Marginal Self in Selected Contemporary American Novels*. Florida: University of Florida Press, 2004. Print.
- Irving, Katrina. "Gendered Space, Racialized Space: Nativism, the Immigrant Woman, and Stephen Crane's Maggie." *College Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 3. October 1993: 30-43. Web.
- Jackson, Kenneth T. & Dunbar David S. *Empire City. New York Through the Centuries*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Print.
- Kazin, Alfred. *A Walker in the City*. United States of America: Harcourt Books, 1979. Print.
- Kakutami, Michiko. "Roaming the Streets. Taking Surreal Turns". Rev. of *Open City*, by Teju Cole. New York Times 18 May 2011. Web. ---. "A Boy's Epic Quest Borough by Borough." Rev. of *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. New York Times 22 March 2005. Web.
- Keeble, Arin. *The 9/11 Novel. Trauma, Politics and Identity*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Publishers. 2014. Print.
- Kensington, Ann, Quinn, Jeanne F. *Literature After 9/11*. New York: Routledge. 2008. Print.
- Lopate, Phillip. *Writing New York*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008. Print.
- Mabbott, Ollive, T. *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978. Print.
- Malone, Meaghan. "Whoring the Flâneur: Re-Visioning the American Woman of the Town." *Web Memorial University Libraries- Electronic Journals*, 2012. 4 August 2015. <<http://journals.library.mun.ca/ate>>
- Maver, Igor. "Teju Cole's Nigeria and the Open Cities of New York and Brussels." Vol. 46, No. 1-2. 2013: 3-11. Web.
- Mihailescu, Dana, Oltean, Roxana, and Precup, Michaela. *Mapping Generations of*

- Traumatic Memory in American Narratives*. Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. Print.
- Miller, Stephen. *Walking New York. Reflections of American Writers from Walt Whitman to Teju Cole*. New York: Empire State Editions, 2015. Print.
- Muller, Gilbert H. *New Strangers in Paradise: the Immigrant Experience and Contemporary Literature*. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky. 1999. Print.
- Nicol, Bran. "Reading and Not Reading "The Man of the Crowd": Poe, the City and the Gothic Text." *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 91, No. 3. June 2012: 465-506. Web.
- Parsons, Deborah, L. *Streetwalking the Metropolis. Women, the City and Modernity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Kindle Edition.
- Petrovic, Paul. *Representing 9/11: Trauma, Ideology and Nationalism in Literature, Film, and Television*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015. Print.
- Pizer, Donald. "Stephen Crane's Maggie and American Naturalism." *Criticism*, Vol. 7, No. 2. Spring 1965: 168-175. Web.
- Redwood-Rose, Reuben, S. "Rationalizing the Landscape: Superimposing the Grid upon the Island of Manhattan." Web *Goetest Tamu.edu*, 2002. July 6 2015.
<<http://geotest.tamu.edu/userfiles>>
- Reus, Gomez, T., Usandizaga, Aránzazu. *Inside Out. Women Negotiating, Subverting, Appropriating Public and Private Space*. Netherlands: Rodopi Editions. 2008. Print.
- Riegel, Robert, E. "Changing American Attitudes Toward Prostitution (1800-1920)." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 29, No. 3. Jul-Sep 1968: 437-452. Web.
- Saal, Ilka. "Regarding the Pain of the Self and Other: Trauma Transfer and Narrative Framing in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*." *Journal of Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 3. Fall 2011: 451-476. Web.
- Schätzle, Jeanine. "The Reflection of the Metropolis in Stephen Crane's Maggie: A Girl of

the Streets.” Web *Grin.com*, 4 April. 2001. Web 16 July 2015.

<<http://www.grin.com/>>

Schereuen, Sascha. *Trauma in Jonathan Safran Foer’s Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Bonn. Web. June 2010. [http. academia.edu](http://academia.edu)

Siegel, Elisabeth. “Stuff That Happened to Me: Visual Memory in Jonathan Safran Foer’s Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close”. *Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies (COPAS)*, Vol. 10. 2009. Web.

Simon, Stephanie. “Disaster Pre-Emptive Security and Urban Space in the Post 9-11 New York City of Cloverfield and The Visitor.” *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*. 2011: 1-16. Web.

Sundén, Eva-Charlotta. *Fugue State- Memories Without Borders and the Fugueur as Flâneur in Teju Cole’s Open City*. Stockholm: Spring 2012. Bachelor Degree Project. Print.

Syjuco, Miguel. *These Crowded Streets*. Rev. of *Open City*, by Teju Cole. New York Times 25 February 2011. Web.

Tester, Keith. *The Flâneur*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Uytterschout, Sien, Versluyus, Kristiaan. “Melancholy and Mourning in Jonathan Safran Foer’s Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close.” *Orbis Litterarum*, Vol. 63, No. 3. June 2008: 216-236. Web.

Veblen, Thorstein. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Dover Publications. 1994. Print.

Vermeulen, Peter. “Flights of Memory: Teju Cole’s Open City and the Limits of Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism”. *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 37, No. 1. Fall 2013: 40-57. Web.

Weldon, Johnson, James. *Black Manhattan*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 1930. Print.

Welsh, Kate. "The Strangest of Islands." *Interview with Teju Cole*. *Oyster Review*. Oyster Review, 2015. Web. 8 Aug. 2015.

White, E.B. *Here is New York*. New York: New York Bound Books, 1999. Kindle Edition.

Whitehead, Colson. *The Colossus of New York*. New York: Random House, 2003. Print.

Wood, James. "The Arrival of Enigmas." Rev. of *Open City*, by Teju Cole. *New Yorker* 28 February 2011. Web.