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“The Multiple Urban Subject in Paul Auster’s *City of Glass*”

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INTRODUCTION

The urban subject has been a matter of frequent discussion among writers from different ages and origins. In the present, we cannot conceive an exploration of human subjectivity without taking into account the urban experience. The contemporary self is, in fact, an urban self. Under that vein, "the city and the urban subject" is the main object of study of the seminar that frames this thesis.

The work that has been chosen for the exploration of the urban experience is Paul Auster's novel, *City of Glass* written in 1985, and part of *The New York Trilogy*. The reason behind this choice is that the novel posits a search for identity in an urban context, specifically in New York City. This well known metropolis can be said to be an icon of the American tradition, it has inscribed their history in it, and it is, at the same time, a tissue of experiences and perceptions that continually interweave through time. Naturally, as time goes on, people change, perceptions change, and the urban environment also changes. But in spite of this obvious transformation that affects almost everything, New York included, some people prefer consistency, regularity and uniformity, like the main character of *City of Glass*.

From that understanding, Auster's novel poses the conflict of how different our perception of reality can be, compared with reality itself. In other words, even though the main character perceives a world and himself in a determined way, that view does not correspond with his actual reality. This lack of correspondence is associated with a resistance of Quinn, the main character, to acknowledge his state of being. In this light, this study will focus on the tension between these two forces, reality and the perception of reality that seem to be linked with the notions of Postmodernism and Modernism respectively. In short, while an examination of Quinn's city and selfness shows us a postmodern instability, fragmentation and changeability, we can identify attitudes and beliefs that prove him as an entity begging for a modern order, stability and unification, resisting by all means change.

The question that arises from this conflicting scene is concerned with the vision that prevails from this clash, and how this vision is expressed in the novel. Is it the Modern view predominant?, or is it the Postmodern view?, and how we can determine that.

The assumption is that the perspective that prevails in the novel is the postmodern, and what supports its prevalence is the presence of plurality at different levels of the writing, at the level of the city, the subject, and the text. Plurality, as opposed to unity, is a concept used to represent the fragmentation of the solid modern grand narratives of totality, reason, and order. This phenomenon can be better expressed through the notion of the multiple urban subject, that opposes an unified delineated subject that modernity used to envision. The prevalence of a multiple subject in the city comes from the comprehension that it is the very urban context the place that promotes change and dynamism. In this way, these features are embodied in the entity that inhabits this environment, the urban dweller. From this rationale, the main focus of this thesis will be the multiple urban subject as it stands for the representation of the dominance of a postmodern reality.

In order to confirm the dominance of the postmodern stance in Paul Auster's novel, we must explore three main aspects in relation to the multiple urban subject: his emergence, his perception, and finally, his representation through intertextuality. The emergence of the multiple subject has to do with the context that nurtures it, the city. The urban landscape contributes to the materialization of the fragmented subject, even though this is, as it will be explained later on, natural and inherent to existence. The perception of the multiple subject is related to his actual acknowledgment through the postmodern paradigm. What postmodernism does is to unveil a reality that was always in the core of our existence, and that previous movements had it out of their range of vision, not even avoiding it, but ignoring it. Notwithstanding this fact, in *City of Glass*, Quinn fails at recognizing his own fragmentation, sticking to a modern perception of reality. This tension between reality and the perception of it is expressed through the presence of intertextuality in the novel, that as we will analyze, subverts the modern grand narratives.

Among other novels by Auster, the choice of working with *City of Glass*, comes mainly from the fact that it illustrates accurately and explicitly the fragmentation of the self, which is the inevitable condition of the urban entity. Also, what is attractive about the novel is the subject's reticence to recognize his state, which in spite of being a recurrent conflict in the Auster's novels, in *City of Glass* is particularly telling. The reluctance of the character to accept

his reality shows a contemporary plea to recover stability in a world where, reason, order, and utopias are not longer to trust. This state has as a result a crisis of the self that is accurately revealed in Auster`s narrative.

Auster has been viewed as a postmodernist writer. In this light, It is likely to see that it is precisely the very postmodernism the movement that successfully acknowledges what had been a fact ever since: the plurality of the self in the city. This plurality is, in fact, addressed in many of Auster`s novels. And it is through this acknowledgment that we can, as readers, realize the actual nature of identity. Another way to put it is that if we were to explore our identity, we need to be aware of our multiplicity first. In that way, a postmodernist approach is of great help when exploring identity.

Since the city plays a pivotal role in the understanding of the concept of multiple subject, we will have to study the mechanisms that make it act as an intensifier that propels the process of fragmentation, and that helps to visualize the multiplicity of the subject. In order to go deep into this idea, we will examine a number of authors that go through the city from different views. There will be considered the impressions in the work titled *Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) by the sociologist Georg Simmel, who comments on the difference between a pre modern community as opposed to a modern one. The philosopher, Oliver Mongin and his *La condición urbana* (2006), will be also revised. Finally, Gardiner and Lefebvre`s accounts on the subject of everyday life will be helpful to develop an understanding of the processes that the urban subject undergoes in the city. Overall, the ambition is to draw our attention to the importance of the context itself, and how it continually influences the subject.

In relation to the very conflict of the novel, that lies on the tension between Modernism and Postmodernism , it will be necessary to point out the perspective that will be considered in the present work, particularly because their comprehension has been highly controversial and has led to a variety of different approaches. Succinctly, Postmodernism will be understood here as a consequence of and as a reaction to Modernism. In that regard, the authors that will support this idea will be Terry Eagleton and his *Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996) and Jean-François Lyotard and his *Postmodern Condition* (1979).

In order to advance in the postmodern paradigm, we will also work with *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (1977), an essay written by Michel Foucault in which the French scholar, based on the Nietzsche's works, argues in favor of the idea of genealogical history, that

envisions man as a historical result that needs to be considered in terms of contingencies, provisionality and discontinuity. This appreciation of a relatively new way of perceiving the world will allow us to understand the very concept of the fragmented identity, and the way in which it began to materialize itself in theory, since as Eagleton affirms, "postmodernism was true even before it got started" (29).

The contribution of Derrida will be also relevant in this study, since his conception of language will be important to advance in the perception of the subject itself. Taking into account the strong relationship between language and identity, his ideas, from a postmodern approach, will allow us to go deeper in the concept of multiplicity and intertextuality.

Finally, regarding intertextuality as an element that will allow the subversion of the modern grand narratives on the one hand, and the prevalence of plurality on the other, Barthes ideas will be illuminating. In the same vein, the literary theory that will be used in order to analyze Auster's novel will be the Reader Response Theory. For that, the insights present in *Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics* (1970) by Stanley Fish will be considered.

In sum, the main objective of this thesis will be to explore and advocate for the prevalence of the multiple subject in the urban landscape in the novel by Paul Auster, *City of Glass*. For that purpose, we will go first through the key concepts that will help us advance, later on, in the development of the analysis of the work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main purpose of this section will be to explore, clarify, and delimit relevant concepts for this thesis. It is important to note that the focus will be on the notion of the "multiple urban subject". In order to achieve that, the plan is to tackle its emergence, perception and representation from a theoretical view, that is, supported by authors that have already gone through these topics over their work. But in spite of this apparent fixed structure that considers these three key elements in relation to the plural metropolitan subject, the first difficulty arises from the attempt to differentiate or separate them from each other. Rather than isolated terms, these labels are connected notions that will overlap each other as the thesis is articulated.

(i) THE CITY: CRADLE OF THE MULTIPLE SUBJECT

In order to understand the concept of multiple subject, we may think about the multiple facets that we have over our existence in the world. The dependence that we have on time and space makes us have various facets or masks. These masks are related to different stages of life as well as the different people we encounter and the relationship that we establish with them. From a biological representation, we physically experience the pass of time, we change through ages. From a social perspective, we have different roles depending on our temporal occupations, for example there are teachers, students, workers, clients, doctors, patients, producers and buyers, etc. These roles are in flow on a daily basis, we are all workers and clients at some point. This flow that the self experiences can be compared with the materiality of the fluids as Bauman explains. "Los fluidos no se fijan al espacio ni se atan al tiempo (...) no conservan una forma durante mucho tiempo y están constantemente dispuestos (y proclives) a cambiarla. (...) En la descripción de los fluidos, se cometería un error grave si el tiempo se dejara de lado. (...) La extraordinaria movilidad de los fluidos es lo que los asocia con la idea de "levedad"" (Bauman 8). This levity, as the author states, is precisely associated with the instability of the subject and his adaptation to a number of contexts or recipients in which he

oscillates. Opposed to that levity, the solids resist change. In *City of Glass*, as we will see later on in depth, while the liquidity of the character is seen as he has multiple identities or facets, his solidity remains as he tries to look for stability.

The idea of the self acquiring multiple identities is a recurrent subject in Auster's narrative. In *The Country of the Last Things* (1987), for instance, there is a character, Boris, who might be the most explicit representation of this conception of fragmentation of subjectivity or multiple identities. He puts on hats and takes on different personalities for different purposes. In Anna's words: "He took the roles of clown and scoundrel and philosopher, but the better I got to know him, the more I saw them as aspects of a single personality"(152). This plurality that Anna sees as aspects of a single personality is, as a matter of fact, the central topic in *City of Glass*.

The truth is that Boris and his hat collection is not that dissimilar from any ordinary person in an ordinary life, or an actor. We are indeed plural and liquid. The multiplicity of the self is inherent to all human beings, because we all are time and space dependant. The masks that we use are a result of a particular context that includes the time you are living, the personal stage you are experiencing, the people to whom you are connected, the place where you are, the purpose that you have, etc. From that view, our number of drastically different identities will be determined by the number of contexts we are exposed to, which in the city as we will see, can be infinite. According to Foucault, trying "to support and unify [an identity] under a mask, is in itself only a parody", instead we should make a "systematic dissociation of identity", since "it is plural" (Foucault 161). Foucault, as a postmodernist, advocates for the fluidity of the self, "rejecting the solid identities of the past" which are only weak illusions that promote empty prototypes. These prototypes categorize people in a way that their identity depends strictly on that category, so that the hero for instance is a flawless figure that has to be maintained over time. But actually, as the French critic says, and as reality has proven, the unification of the self can only take place in fantasy.

At this point, I would like to note that the terms multiple, plural and fragmentary would be used as synonyms in as much as a fragmentation produces multiplicity or plurality, and vice versa; plurality and multiplicity generates lack of unity or fragmentation.

Even though, as we have discussed, the multiplicity of the subject is a natural feature of all human beings since we are all contextually bound, it is the city the place that encourages and

materializes the plurality of identities. Strictly speaking, the immensity of contexts and relationships that the urban landscape entails, makes its inhabitants respond to varying stimuli, making them acquire many contrastive masks. In that way, the city functions as the cradle and as a permanent supporter of the multiplicity of the subject. The urban place, as opposed to the countryside, or a pre modern community, is the site where things are meant to happen. That is, where mobility takes place. In a pre modern community, stratification of society did not allow people to have access to progress, or development, contrary to that, what the city offers is change. In Simmel's words, in the city "the multiplicity and concentration of economic exchange gives an importance to the means of exchange which the scantiness of rural commerce would not have allowed." (2). It is precisely this exchange the factor that allows mobility in all its dimensions.

Even though the city is physically circumscribed and delimited, it provides bottomless potential trajectories. The trajectories are choices the individuals decide to make that permit them to oscillate among a range of realities. Basically, ever since you choose to take a particular path, your reality will change. Of course this is common to the countryside too, but the huge difference with the city is that the latter authorizes a much wider, or even limitless range of circumstances compared to the countryside.

As the city allows the subject to choose to some extent among realities, this choice will obviously determine the configuration of his identity. In that way, as the city contains divergent realities, the subject can be viewed as a possibility among a range of options that are given by his or her own elections and also by the nature of chance. Even the slightest movement will direct your life to a peculiar path. Hence, the urban subject at the same time that is fragmented himself, is also a possibility, a becoming, or simply, another fragment. Plainly, the self is constantly taking place, evolving and also having influence on others.

The possibilities that the city offers translate into a myriad of realities, a place where divergent sensibilities commute. As De Certau states in *La invención de lo cotidiano* (1990), the city is a "variedad de texturas donde coinciden los extremos de la ambición y de la degradación, las oposiciones brutales de razas y estilos" (103). The different contingencies of the subjects make of them a continuous flow represented in the crowd. There, paradoxically, we find the heterogeneous becoming homogenous.

It might be probably in the image of the crowd that we can observe the unfavorable results that the urban landscape, together with its seek for progress, have brought to the individual. Although the city grants the manifestation of the multiple subject in depth and with that the opening of possibilities of being, the urban life has its costs. It requires the establishment of a number of social relationships that in the countryside were not even imaginable. In the stratified community, the number of relationships was limited and stable. The city antagonistically detonates an explosion of roles. As Gardiner states:

"In premodern societies, everyday life was fully integrated into a relatively undifferentiated totality of human practices, but with the consolidation of capitalism and bourgeois society, this state of affairs changes dramatically. Social activities became highly differentiated, and ceased to be consolidated into a unified whole. Labor is increasingly fragmented, regimented and specialized"(76).

This fragmentation of the self draws him to a deep and destructive isolation that can be depicted in the very crowd: "One never feels as lonely and deserted as in this metropolitan crush of persons" (Simmel 16). In the same vein, Mongin suggests that due to the urban experience, the subject has to face "una exterioridad que llega a ser una miríada de máscaras y de impresiones, una galería de imágenes (92). This new experience gives rise to "la ciudad teatro", where "el yo se manifiesta enmascarado", led mostly by a utilitarian purpose. Like the city, the crowd is the place where people gathers, but in which depth in relationships is scarce. The fact that producers and purchasers in the city appear variable and transitory, has as a result that people become totally unknown to each other. The constant flow in the metropolis, prevents its inhabitants from having a committed relationship, instead, it stimulates a constant variation of mental impressions.

Due to the fact that, in the city, the subjects constantly fight for self preservation, the urban environment grows hostile. The reason for that is that self preservation leads to an increasing frivolity, individualism and alienation. In *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903), Simmel analyzes the way in which the city entails a particular attitude of the subjects. He calls this attitude the "blasé outlook", or an indifferent mood, that is "the consequence of those rapidly shifting stimulations"(14) of the metropolitan life. In other words, to succeed, the city dweller must ignore the overwhelming stimulations that the city presupposes and work for

securing his own subjectivity. But such unconcerned attitude promoted by the city becomes eventually a burden not only for those driven by the monetary pursue, but also by those begging to be found, as it is the case of Hawthorne's Wakefield.

As we have seen throughout this section, the existence of the multiple subject cannot be detached from the urban experience, it is in this place where the subject is forced to fragmentation. But even though the urban experience has been a common issue for writers throughout the last two centuries, the perceptions of the generations in relation to the city have changed. The difference between a modern writer and a postmodern one is that while the former looked at the process of fragmentation from a pessimistic angle, trying to return the unity of the self, the latter celebrates multiplicity. Both nevertheless agree on the calamitous effects of the increasing isolation and profound depression in which the urban subject lives.

The following section will focus on the perception of the multiple subject, because even though the Earth was thought to be flat, it was always round. Essentially, despite we can perceive a reality, that perception does not always correspond with reality itself. In the case of the multiplicity of the subject, even though it is natural and unavoidable in an urban context, its acknowledgment came long time after its emergence in the city.

(ii) PERCEPTION OF THE MULTIPLE URBAN SUBJECT

Although, as we have seen, the subject suffers a kind of substantiation through the urban experience, the recognition of this plural identity would not be acknowledged until the emergence of the postmodern movement. In that way, in spite of the fact that the rise of the city and its evolution takes place long ago, the paradigm that developed and prevailed at that time was a modern one. This paradigm installed an ideal of unity, certainty and stability that goes against the multiplicity of the urban subject. What Postmodernism does, is to unveil the self's unstable actual condition.

As stated earlier, the main objective of this thesis is to argue in favor of the prevalence of the multiplicity of the subject framed in an urban context, notwithstanding the subject's resistance to acknowledge that plurality. For that, it becomes mandatory to delimit some concepts that will help us to advance in the analysis of the novel. Those notions are Modernism and Postmodernism. The modern view is associated with the main character's resistance to

instability or lack of certainty, and the postmodern appreciation goes in relation to the actual urban plurality that we can prove present in the narrative.

A. MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism has been defined from radically different views. From Lyotard's position, postmodernism is the end of modernity as it implies the demolition of the modern grand narratives, which "tried to provide an overarching unity in which the abstract and the concrete would be perfectly coordinated and in which meaning would be readily available and communicable" (Fuery and Mansfield 109). In that sense, Eagleton defines postmodernism as "a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation" (1997: viii). This style of thought to which postmodernism is suspicious of, in Lyotard words, are the grand narratives. For Calinescu, differently from Lyotard, postmodernism is a new incarnation of modernity: "Postmodernism, as I see it, is not a new name for a new "reality", or "mental structure", or world view, but a perspective from which one can ask certain questions about modernity in its several incarnations" (279). But in spite of their divergent views, there is an agreement that there is a reaction that comes from the very development of modernity. Even though Calinescu calls it a stage of Modernity, and Lyotard says it is the abolition of Modernity, both coincide on the fact that Postmodernism reacts to "higher monistic discourses" (Bertens and Fokkema 34). From that appreciation, the idea that there is no postmodernism without modernism, is common to both authors. In other words, since Postmodernism comes as a reaction to Modernism and its grand narratives, there will always be a necessary mutual interdependence between the two.

Let us now examine how authors such as Lyotard and Eagleton differ when it comes to value the ideology behind postmodernism. First, Lyotard sees this notion of dissolution of grand narratives from a highly positive perspective. In his words, these are "verdad(es) unitaria(s) y totalizadora(s) que se presta(n) a la práctica unitaria y totalizante de los gerentes del sistema" (Lyotard 14). These grand narratives are usually optimistic visions of humanity and some even utopian. Some examples are the Enlightenment, Marxism and Christianity. The reason for his approval respecting the demolition of these metanarratives is that, for him, Postmodernism "Hace más útil nuestra sensibilidad ante las diferencias, y fortalece nuestra

capacidad de soportar lo inconmensurable."(Lyotard 5). Eagleton, distant from Lyotard, explicitly addresses his negativity in regard to this idea since from his Marxist perspective "postmodernist culture has produced in the same breath an invigorating and a paralyzing skepticism (...) by means of a full-blooded cultural relativism"(Eagleton, 27). The present thesis benefits from both appreciations since, even though postmodernism, theoretically speaking, makes us face the incommensurability of life, this admission puts us in a pretty frail position in reality, where it seems that we naturally tend to seek order and unity. This tendency for order and unity is as we will examine later on the resistance of Quinn to accept his fragmentation and instability.

B. UNVEILING THE MULTIPLE SUBJECT

The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, represents the first criticism of Modernity. In Bauman's terminology, Nietzsche invited us to liquidize the solids. These solids are "the Enlightenment's faith in reason and universal principles of human value and rights" (Mansfield 56). In that sense, the German philosopher understood the "idea of a fixed and knowable, autonomous subjectivity" as an hallucination (Mansfield 51), advocating for an individual as a social construct.

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1977), Foucault, supported by Nietzsche's ideas, claims for the necessity of envisaging history from a genealogical view, as opposed to a metaphysical perspective. On the one hand, the metaphysical insight would view history as transcendental, that is, as a meaningful process with a purpose, and with the man as a stable phenomenon about whom universal truth can be formulated. Thus, from this contemplation, metaphysical history is made out of a consistent thread of development that has as a major aim to understand the human being. On the other hand, Nietzsche and Foucault reject an ultimate essence of things, or of subjects. They see history as unstable, obscure and contingent, and therefore, the individual as a sum of historical accidents. The subject is in that regard "an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers" (Foucault 146), and "the body (of the subject) is the inscribed surface of events, the locus of a dissociated Self, and a volume of perpetual disintegration" (Foucault 148).

In the same path, Derrida's deconstruction takes action against the former language arbitrariness proposed by Saussure. Saussure's structuralist ideas regarding language consisted

in the arbitrary relationship of the sign components. In the presence of this fixed relationship that lead to a stable meaning and put the reader in the position of "decoder", Derrida says that it is not possible to determine a hierarchy for signs, that the completeness and self sufficiency of the linguistic sign is an illusion, and that the different is part of the same. From that realization, meaning becomes slippery, and as the text becomes immediately dependant on other texts, the subject becomes dependant of its circumstances.

As briefly explained, the so called "postmodern thought" is mainly oriented towards destabilize former beliefs regarding language, history, and the subject. The theory of intertextuality developed from the same understanding is the textual representation of the multiplicity of the subject in the city.

(iv) REPRESENTATION OF THE MULTIPLE URBAN SUBJECT

Intertextuality sees the text as one "made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering in mutual relations of dialogue, parody and contestation"(Barthes 148). For Barthes, "words never simply transmit a single indisputable meaning. Every communication is open to a variety of interpretations" (63). This openness is associated with a postmodern understanding of reality that opposes the modern thought of absolute truth. Under such perspective, the text can be compared with the city, and also with the subject.

For Barthes the place where the multiplicity of the text is focused on is the reader (148). Under a modern view, "reading was just a matter of recreating in our own mind the mental condition of the author" (Eagleton 41). Postmodernism challenges this perspective, giving the reader an importance that was until then ignored. The death of the author gives rise to the birth of the reader as Barthes argues. Barthes negates a unity of the text, and proposes a wider range of significance which is being continually built as there are readers who establish new connections among texts.

But since language "predates its users" the plurality of meaning is also related to tradition. "Every phrase we choose, every sentence-structure or convention has a history" (Barthes 67). The text is consequently considered for Barthes "a tissue, a woven fabric, woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages, antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony" (Barthes 160). This antecedent

allows an expansion of meaning, where each text "is defined by its interdependence on and correspondence to other texts" (Fuery and Mansfield 65).

Since the text is a matter of plurality and transformation that keeps the reading alive affecting not only the new-born but also the antecessor, it can be compared with our appreciation of the city. The city, similarly to the text, can be read from different perspectives, but all those perspectives will be detached neither from the personal background, nor from the city's history or tradition. In that way, the reader as well as the city dweller share a dialogue that considers the interior and the exterior. The multiplicity of dialogues will make that the text's present and the city's present "se invent[en] hora tras hora" (De Certeau 103). From this comprehension of the similarity between the city and the text, the presence of intertextuality will contribute to the enhancement of the multiplicity of the urban subject in the novel. Through its presence, I will develop and confirm the notion of multiple urban subject in *City of Glass*.

(v) LITERARY THEORY

The theory that will be used in order to analyze Auster's novel *City of Glass* is the "Reader Response Theory" (RR Theory from now on). As we have advanced, we cannot consider the text as an objectivity that needs to be decoded. Instead, this theory allows us to endorse the multiplicity of the text. For this theory, as well as for the phenomenon of intertextuality, the reader is "an actively mediating presence" (Fish 1970: 70), who affects the text in as much as the text affects him. In other words, both text and reader are in a constant interaction, where "the information an utterance gives is a constituent of, but certainly not to be identified with, its meaning. It is the experience of an utterance that is its meaning"(Fish1970: 78). Meaning therefore, as Fish states, is an event, something happening between the words and the reader (1970: 75).

But more than talking of an infinity of significations of a text we should rather talk of a plurality of the text based upon the literary institution. According to Fish, this "does not mean that the rules and the practices they authorize are either monolithic or stable. Within the literary community there are sub-communities, and within any community the boundaries of the acceptable are continually redrawn" (Fish 1980: 343). In other words, Fish suggests that readings are restricted by the interpretative community to which a reader belongs to. This

notion of interpretative community or literary community is necessarily associated with the socially constraint nature of language. In that way, as intertextuality, the response of a reader will be unquestionably attached to a shared language and culture that will certainly restrict the experience of meaning.

The main reason for the preference of this theory is that its understanding allows us to look at the readings of a text from a postmodern angle, that is as a possibility and also as a multiplicity, just as we will look at the subject and the city. Meaning for the RR Theory is dynamic and fluid, in the same way as the subject is in the city. And as the urban subject, the reader plays the "actualizing role of the observer"(Fish 1970: 83), continually transforming and ultimately, rewriting the text.

The interpretative community from which the novel emerges is a contemporary, postmodern North American community. As such, *City of Glass* is permeated with the American tradition and history. But the allusions made to the modern American writers, and to the modern writers in general in the text, point to a subversion of their discourses and beliefs, advocating for a postmodern understanding of reality. In that way, a previous literary community is being reformulated through a contemporary postmodern community. Yet, in order to account for the subversion of the modern ideas shown in the novel, it is important to consider Fish's notion of the "informed reader". Such reader has to have a literary competence that allows him to recognize a literary tradition that frames the work of art. On that basis, the appreciation of intertextuality must be necessarily backed up by a previous literary knowledge.

As a student of the program of English Language and Literature, my literary knowledge is, in effect, centered on the British and North American traditions. Throughout the seminar that frames this thesis, we went through a number of works that, in fact, correspond to the ones alluded in *City of Glass*. Without such knowledge, I would have been able neither to account for the intertextual references present in the novel, nor to comprehend the purpose of those references. Nonetheless, as a non native speaker of English, and as a university student that belongs to a significantly different community, the Latin American, my understanding of the novel would be probably distant from an interpretation bred in Auster's community.

From a Latin American tradition that entails a strikingly different reality, the reading of *City of Glass* that is displayed here emerges as an alien interpretation of a process that we, from the south pole, have not yet embraced.

ANALYSIS

In order to account for the interpretative community from which the following analysis emerges, it is essential to briefly comment first on the difference between the context in which *City of Glass* was written, and the context in which it is being read now.

When the novel was written, in the 1980's, the postmodern ideas were beginning to spread at various levels and in a number of disciplines of knowledge within the western world. Nowadays, almost thirty years from that panorama, those ideas can be said to be accepted or naturalized among the European and North American picture. However, such naturalization does not account for the Latin American 21st century scene from where the reading that is presented here comes from. Instead, Latin America can be said to have had a late modernity. In *Tradicionalismo y modernidad en la cultura Latino americana* (1996), the Chilean scholar, José Joaquín Brunner, confirms this fact postulating that "las culturas de América Latina, en su desarrollo contemporáneo, no expresan un orden, sino que reflejan en su organización los procesos contradictorios y heterogéneos de una modernidad tardía, construida en condiciones de acelerada internacionalización de los mercados simbólicos a nivel mundial" (302).

The fact that Latin America has gone through a different path influences the worldview of its inhabitants. This worldview might be compared with Quinn's ideas in *City of Glass*. The reason for that comparison is that, while the novel displays a multilayered subject in search of his subjectivity, Latin America symbolizes a huge collage of subjectivities (Brunner 1996: 304), still in search of an identity. Both Quinn and Latin America seem to be looking for the illusion of unity in the mirror, when they should be celebrating their fragmented nature. In that way, a Latin American reader, as Quinn, would probably look for meaning and stability in the text. But as Brunner states: "el espejo está irremediabilmente trizado por las innumerables formas e infinitos contenidos "(Brunner 1988: 16). And of course the unification of this fragmented glass is not possible (17). Taking into account this point of convergence between the contemporary Latin American reality and Quinn's reality in *City of Glass*, we can now explore the conflict between the modern and postmodern paradigm posed in the novel itself.

(i) THE MULTIPLE SUBJECT IN CITY OF GLASS

"Everybody is Daniel!", "That's right," said Quinn. "I am you, and you're me." (Auster 1985:122)

City of Glass, first of all, is about a man who has lost his family in an accident years ago. The name of this man is Daniel Quinn. Quinn used to be a known and successful writer, but ever since his wife and boy died, he started to write mystery novels using a pseudonym. He is a lonely person who practically lives only through his main character, a detective. One day, he receives a phone call which is not meant to be for him. He decides to take on the role of a private eye that is asked to follow an old man, Peter Stillman. Throughout the search and chase of the old man, Quinn undergoes a self exploration, which is the main topic of the novel.

The conflict in the novel arises as the main character resists himself to face the lack of order, stability and rationality that postmodernism acknowledges. Of course Quinn's refusal to accept a postmodern reality goes in conjunction with the influences that he has had throughout his life. In other words, he cannot recognize what he does not really see. Nevertheless, in spite of his resistance or lack of acknowledgement, it is possible to confirm the fact that he is a multiple urban subject. The argumentation for this appreciation is that, besides all his attempts to be in control of reality, Quinn lives in a changeable urban environment that is governed by chance. Due to his context Quinn undergoes a process of fragmentation of his own self, becoming a possibility of being in the city rather than a fully defined entity.

City of Glass stands for an amalgamation of multiplicities at different levels. The embodiment of pluralities can be better observed in the urban subject, which is the main character of the novel. Due to the fact that some characters share common experiences, occupations, ideas, and even names, they can be considered echoes, images, or representations of one body, Quinn's body. Such echoes might be either possibilities of his existence, or actual time-related stages of his own life. From that appreciation, Quinn can be considered a multiple subject himself.

The fissure that the narrative presents in terms of the presence of a metanarrative, points also to the reassurance of the multiple subject. As fiction and reality merge, the limits of these worlds are blurred, and with that, the notion of a unified subject. The presence of intertextuality also contributes to the suppression of the boundaries of a consolidated text. This phenomenon

opens up the connections and future interpretations of the text, allowing a plurality that is similar to the contingencies and history of any subject. Due to all these reasons, Quinn represents the actual multiplicity that the urban subject lives on a daily basis. But in spite of the fact that we can observe his multiplicity, this does not necessarily imply that Quinn himself will be able to recognize it in the end.

The interpretation of the novel is closely associated with the concept of crystal image conceived by Deleuze. The crystal represents the amalgamation of states of temporality, thus, the crystal image is a "multilayered and infinite register of realities"(Colman 60). This infinite register of realities can be compared with the city, the urban subject and the phenomenon of intertextuality. All of them can be seen as tissues where a number of different realities and temporalities commute. These tissues are constantly evolving configurations that involve active and dynamic processes of interrelations and transformation. The urban subject's body is the locus of inconsistencies and discontinuities, as Foucault understands it. The urban subjectivities have different rhythms and masks as they go through the urban setting, they are pierced by a number of contexts and realities that surround them. They, as the text or the city, are eternal potentialities, always fluctuating or changing depending on the circumstances. These three phenomena are unities that contain pluralities, as Deleuze's crystal image. From that view, *City of Glass* represents the multiple layers of the text, the city, and the urban subject. It is, overall, a convergence of states.

The title of the novel itself can be seen as a representation of the interpretation we advance here. The reason for that is that the image of the "city of glass" is quite telling when we try to visualize the multiple or fragmented urban subject. If we think of a city made out of glass entirely, we will have to imagine the thousand different reflections it will generate. "Let two mirrors reflect each other; then Satan plays his favorite crick and opens here in his way the perspective on infinity" (Benjamin 538). As Benjamin suggests, our body would have infinite representations and constantly evolving projections as the pieces of glass reflect each other. This image can be linked with the idea of the kaleidoscope, which due to its mirrors, projects a form in its dynamic state. The kaleidoscope has often been compared with the fractal image that, as Colodro describes in his *Reflexiones sobre el caos*, is "la forma nunca presupuesta y siempre destello de una deriva contingente" que deja de manifiesto que "no hay singularidad que no tenga sus formas" (Colodro 61-62). From that comparison, we can understand the body

in the city as an experience of dynamism and multiplicity, whose reflections emerge on the glass in a constant flow that can be linked with the movement of the kaleidoscope, or the zooming up of the fractal. Each of these projections would be a fragmented and incomplete picture of us that will be context dependant. Accordingly, Quinn, in the novel is a body with multiple projections. In that respect, the concepts of crystal image and the kaleidoscope represent synonyms for the city of glass, since they contain the fluidity of a phenomenon and encapsulate the changes that that phenomenon entails.

(ii) NEW YORK CITY IN AUSTER'S FICTION

"La ciudad y el libro se asemejan", tells us Oliver Mongin. "Nos instalamos en él, lo recorreremos, de diversas maneras, y le entregamos una parte de nuestra vida"(Mongin 51), just like we do in the city. The city is the place where multiplicity gains weight. It represents the assemblage of diverse realities, realities that are in continual interaction and change, in the same way that the crystal image. Like the work of art too, the city can be looked at from several views, having several trajectories, or mental images. The city is "la conjunción de elementos heterogéneos de los cuales se hace el eco de una toponimia" (Mongin 58). New York is the name of Quinn's city, the city of glass.

New York, it is important to note, is par excellence the place where a huge number of realities merge. New York is not only a U.S. city nowadays, it is a world city where diversity is its main adjective. From its very foundation, it has represented the location that gathers people from different origins under a common goal, the aim of finding a new opportunity. That is why, the big apple, as it is known, besides being an icon of heterogeneity, is the symbol of modern progress and economic development, being the portrait of the capitalistic system.

Let us examine in detail how these key aspects, New York's heterogeneity and economic system, are expressed in the novel in question.

A. THE CITY AND THE TEXT: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

"There were men and women, children and old people, teenagers and babies, rich people and poor people, black men and white women, white man and black women, Orientals and Arabs, men in brown and gray and blue and green, women

in red and white and yellow and pink, children in sneakers, children in shoes, children in cowboy boots, fat people and thin people, tall people and short people, each one different from all the others, each one irreducibly himself" (Auster 1985: 66).

As the former quote demonstrates, the city in which Quinn lives enjoys great diversity, which leads to disparate configurations of reality. Each of those realities will depend on the former experiences and influences that subjectivities may have had in their past. An illustration of how perceptions vary can be seen when the narrative mentions that: "Quinn looked out the window and wondered if these were the same trees that Peter Stillman saw (...). He wondered if Peter saw the same things he did, or whether the world was a different place for him"(Auster1985: 43). From a postmodern understanding, even though Quinn and Stillman Junior might be observing the same object, their grip will vary based upon a number of aspects such as culture, their own experiences in relation to the object, or their purpose. For that reason, when Quinn follows the elder Peter Stillman, he realizes he is not able to see what the old man does, because the motivations and rationales that led each were different.

Taking that into account, since New York City is undoubtedly the assemblage of diverse realities in continual interaction and transformation, it is not possible to consider just one version of this city, but incalculable perceptions. From that view, even though there are facts that cannot be eluded and that will affect anyone's point of view in relation to the city, each individual would see this place under their own subjectivity. For example, most writers would agree that New York is a symbol of progress and plurality, but depending on their own experiences in the metropolis, their mental image of it will vary.

From Whitman's position, New York represented a shared experience. *Crossing the Brooklyn Ferry* (1856), is a good illustration of his relationship with the city. There, the poet celebrates the communion of different realities saying "I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,/ I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters around it" (Whitman 55). Such a romantic view of the city is an attempt to rescue the pre modern sense of community that the arrival of the city has somehow replaced for an increasing feeling of isolation. In Auster's *New York Trilogy* this sense of community is lost, instead, we can observe that the overwhelming movement of the city prevents the subject from any meaningful

connection or interaction leading him towards an inevitable alienation. The crowd for Quinn is not as romantic as seen in Whitman's poetry. In the crowd, Quinn is "Lost, not only in the city, but within himself as well" (Auster 1985:4).

In *City of Glass*, the one moment that can count as a brotherly experience is when Quinn meets Paul Auster and confesses him his enterprise. "These words came as a great relief for Quinn, as if, at long last, the burden was not his alone. He felt like taking Auster in his arms and declaring his friendship for life" (113). The reassurance of this unique moment of communion is the meal that they share. After this event, Quinn, who had long ago forgotten the experience of eating accompanied, feels suddenly moved: "tears lurked mysteriously behind his eyes, and his voice seemed to tremble as he spoke, but somehow he managed to hold his own" (116).

Coming back to the city's subjectivities, as briefly accounted, there are as many narratives of a place as people going through it, New York being the best example. And as New York is constantly evolving and becoming, the urban subject is influenced by those changes. He affects and changes the perception of the place from his own individuality also. In that sense, while Whitman left a mark on this city's global perception envisioning it as the location for intimacy and brotherhood that allowed the subject to associate his identity as part of a whole, Quinn, from a contemporary view, sees New York as the site where more than finding oneself, one loses his identity. In spite of this clashing views, in *City of Glass* we can still identify traces of Whitman's signature. Underlying that presentation is the idea that the city, as the text, represents a "narrative tissue" (Mongin 63) that is constantly been woven and unwoven by its inhabitants. "Si bien tiene un nombre propio que la identifica y la singulariza, la ciudad es al mismo tiempo plural, atravesada como está por ritmos diferenciados" (Mongin 64).

B. UTILITARIAN SOCIAL INTERACTION AND FRAGMENTATION

From a capitalistic understanding, tangible achievements are proof of progress and success. The Brooklyn Bridge, Wall Street, the Empire States and the World Trade Center are some examples of New York's materialization of modern progress. As a matter of fact, New York represents, more than any other city of the world, the modern capitalistic pursue. From this fact, it is possible to observe that the relationships that we establish in the city are mostly at the service of utilitarian aims. A utilitarian society, as Gardiner points out, is "overshadowed by the logic of the commodity-form and an ethos of productivism" (15). It envisions the worker

also as an object that can be treated as a commodity, where money is a leveler. In that way, the relationships in a utilitarian society are led by personal interests that provoke an increasing self estrangement and continually progressing isolation.

An example of the former situation in *City of Glass* is the relationship that Quinn establishes with Virginia Stillman, Peter Stillman junior's wife, who in order to make Quinn work in their case, seduces him, but then she rapidly adopts her employer's position. After passionately kissing Quinn Virginia says: "That was to prove that Peter wasn't telling the truth. It's very important that you believe me" (37). But then, even though this episode had stimulated Quinn's thoughts: "his employer had rapidly retreated behind the mask of business and not one had referred to that isolated moment of passion" (77). Another example takes place when Quinn goes to visit Paul Auster with the aim of finding some help for the resolution of the Stillman case. Quinn does not really care about Auster, he is there for his own convenience, and we can tell that, as he confesses, he needs to make an effort to show interest for his interlocutor: "To prove that he was not a self obsessed ingrate, he began to question Auster about his writing" (116). But in spite of Quinn's effort, he is still a self obsessed ingrate, as most people in the city who look for the solution to their own issues.

Probably because we establish transitory relationships based on individual pursues, the urban dweller tends to generate a distance that prevents him from having deep meaningful human bonds. These continually fluctuating ties lead the subject to develop multiple identities that may lack intensity, specially compared to a pre modern community in which a consolidated group of people with integrated labor saw the individual as a unified essence.

C. BLASE OUTLOOK

The urban experience that aims to reach progress through mobility also encourages a self-preservation reflected in the urban subjects' attitude. This attitude comes as a reaction to the immensity of impressions that the city generates. In the face of this changeable reality, the urban subject develops a kind of defense mechanism in order to avoid a constant "disruption with which the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu threaten" him (Simmel 12). This attitude of indifference is common to any big metropolis in which if one pays attention to all stimuli, one takes the risk of ending up dramatically overwhelmed.

In the very beginning of the novel we can observe how New York is an insufferable place in which the urban stroller is not longer capable of staring due to the rapid rhythm of the city. "The speed with which [the world] kept changing made it impossible for him to dwell on any one thing for very long"(Auster 4). In answer to this state of the city, the subject acquires a blasé outlook, as Simmel calls it. This posture can be shown through Peter Stillman senior's absorption: "he had never seen anyone so lost in his own thoughts. Even if he stood directly in front of him, he doubted that Stillman would be able to see him". (69). The same reaction is described in resemblance of the ordinary citizens: "even though they seem to be there, they cannot be counted as present (...) there are women with their shopping bags and the men with their cardboard boxes, hauling their possessions from one place to the next, forever on the move, as if it mattered they were" (131). In face of this common state, the narrator reacts critically and we can observe this criticism through the contrast between Quinn as an ordinary dweller, who cannot dwell on anything for very long, and Quinn the detective, who "becomes awake to the things around him" (9).

The contrast between the image of absorption and the awakening is quite similar to a representative scene of Hawthorne story *Wakefield*, whose main character, under the same name, meets his wife in a crowd after several years they had not seen each other: "the pressure of the crowd forces her bosom against his shoulder; they stand, face to face, staring into each other's eyes. After a ten years' separation, thus Wakefield meets his wife! (...) She passes in, however, opening her prayer-book as she goes"(3). This indifference allows people to focus on their own concerns, but also prevents them from engaging with others. That is why within a crowd the common inhabitant will not recognize even her closest relative, as Wakefield's wife, or the shadow of his pursuer, as the old Stillman.

Up to this point we have seen how hostile the urban landscape becomes for the subject. New York is a place of isolation where people crave for human contact. And despite having several trajectories, such trajectories seem alienated from the rest, as if each individuality were living in their own New York.

(iii) A MODERN SUBJECT

Quinn can be said to be a postmodern subject with a modern stance. We can observe that there is no consistency between the way in which he behaves (modern) and the way he

actually is (postmodern). In other words, it would be possible to state that Quinn's interpretation of reality corresponds to a currently exhausted paradigm that gave shape to a modern literary community. Quinn's ideas are subverted in *City of Glass* in as much as the novel presents a new approach to reality that takes into account a contemporary postmodern literary community.

Yet, it is important to note that the character's modern view of life is necessarily influenced by his own literary background. In what follows, we will explore and explain why Quinn's attitude tends towards a modern paradigm, and then we will see why is it that his reality seems to be associated, oppositely, with a postmodern scene.

A. A MODERN LANGUAGE

Quinn's relation with language is one of the most important aspects as it reflects his modern approach to reality. Opposed to the multiple perspectives that a city can have, Quinn's attitudes points to a single and actual truth about language, and therefore about any object. In that way, the city or the text, as objects, can be read from a natural and truthful perspective according to the main character.

Quinn's structuralist idea of language is associated with the modern stance. The structuralist view believes in a concluding, definite and fixed meaning that must be decoded by the listener, reader, or observer. Nevertheless, differently from Quinn's appreciation, what we can observe throughout the novel is that meaning is slippery, context dependant and involves an active participation of those involved in the communicative act. Such view, opposed to the modern realization, is a poststructuralist vision of language, that better represents postmodern tendencies.

The change from the modern to a postmodern conception of meaning can be compared with the liquidation of the solids, or of the grand narratives that sustained the modern paradigm. But if we liquidize language, we make liquid the world itself. Such liquidation can be compared with the postmodern notion of the city, where flow, change and instability predominate. Good examples of the postmodern urban landscape are Quinn's outer world and Anna Blume's country. In *City of Glass* we can see that "Motion was of the essence" (4), and in *In the Country of the Last Things* we can observe that motion translates into change and destruction: " a house is there one day, and the next day is gone. A street you walked yesterday is not longer there

today (...) Nothing lasts" (1). Against such external liquidation, both characters find stability through language.

Quinn's red notebook is the clearest effort to comprise and record experiences, and thus construct knowledge and understanding. But as we can see through his drawings of Stillman's wanderings, Quinn attempts lead him to confusion and a final failure. The possibility of writing in the red notebook gives Quinn the stability of life that he pursues (Barone 16). That is why, in his last days, his existence becomes attached to the pages left to write: The last sentence of the red notebook reads: "what would happen when there are no more pages in the red notebook?" (157). The final scene of *City of Glass* seems quite similar to Anna's last attempt to fight her imminent destruction in *In the Country of the Last Things*: "the words get smaller and smaller, so small that perhaps they are not even legible anymore" (183). For both characters, writing represents a way of pausing time and fighting a volatile reality. However, despite their pursue for persistence, their words will be filled with the reader's thoughts, bypassing an original message.

B. A MODERN FLANEUR AND DETECTIVE

"What if, in the course of trying to figure [things] out, you just unveil more mysteries?" (Auster 1987: 109)

As previously stated, from Quinn's viewpoint, the city is a place where more than finding oneself, one loses one's own identity. But in fact, the idea of losing one's identity emerges from the understanding that identity is stable and fixed. From a postmodern understanding, identity is dynamic and changeable, therefore one cannot just lose one's identity but have different versions or facets of oneself. Quinn, however, is blind to this appreciation of reality, he thinks the city as a place that prevents him from finding his true self.

The feeling of loss that Quinn faces in the city is associated with the image of the city as a labyrinth. Indeed, the character actually thinks of New York as a labyrinth: "an exhaustible space, a labyrinth of endless steps (...). Each time he took a walk, he felt as though he were living himself behind" (4). The notion of the labyrinth has been commonly present throughout literature. It can be taken from two broad perspectives, from a modern or a postmodern view. First, we shall analyze Quinn's modern position in relation to the labyrinthic city, and after that, we shall observe this concept from a postmodern palpability, a reality that cannot be embraced by Quinn.

From a modern stance, the labyrinth represents a challenge to return to the essence, to reach the ultimate truth, the centre, reestablishing order. From this view, the city as a modern labyrinth enacts a rational and controlled trajectory that subjects must follow in order to find their perfectly delineated identities.

This modern view of the city can be compared with Baudelaire's sketches. Those particular kind of writings, that consisted of snapshots of the modern city, showed the urban landscape as the place where one could find one's own selfness through the gaze. The gaze allowed the lyric speaker to go, for a few seconds, into the others' subjectivity, bringing the realization of otherness. In that way, by being in the multitude, the stroller sees differences that allow him to arrive at a self delineation.

The idea of otherness can be also examined from two different angles, a rather modernist angle that would visualize otherness as the location to "stabilize one's place in the world"(Mansfield 133) recognizing one's final essence, and a postmodernist view that would see otherness as a celebration of "the relativisation of all identities in a carnivalesque and cosmopolitan dream of human reconfiguration and reinvention"(133). Baudelaire's modern stance that envisions difference as an exploration of subjectivity can be compared to Quinn's approach to reality. The search for a modern utopian identity can be observed in the following words by Baudelaire: "a land exists resembling you, where everything is beautiful, rich, calm, and decent" (37). The attempt to find an essence throughout a voyage or a walk is a modern invitation to find a "prodigious revelation" (Baudelaire 83). Like Baudelaire's flaneur, Quinn instead of looking at the possibilities of the existence outside, looks for a definite answer.

The French poet's modern flaneur can be said to be the antecedent of the also modern character of the detective. By "reducing himself to a seeing eye" (4), Quinn, under a modern outlook towards reality, becomes a detective. This figure might be said to be the problem-solver character that can better decipher the city as a modern labyrinth. But a detective, as we shall see, cannot respond to the city as a postmodern labyrinth, a constantly changeable place that does not lead to the center, but that conveys a distressing chaos for the modern stroller.

We can find some episodes in the novel that seem to point to a modern flaneur, however, it is not possible to say that this character survives the postmodern city. Some quotes that point to Quinn's flanerie along with his interest to wander and to be among the crowd are the following: "he peered into the throng"; "immobile among the moving crowd, he stood there and

watched" (67). But in spite of these scenes, we are told in the very first pages that: "The world was outside of him, around him, before him, and the speed with which it kept changing made it impossible for him to dwell on any one thing very long" (4). From this quote it is possible to understand that the character of the flaneur in a place like Quinn's New York is simply unimaginable. The gaze cannot permeate subjectivities any longer. In a city that is in eternal motion, the stare is unachievable.

Quinn's predilection for mystery novels also shows his inclination for a modern comprehension of reality. Throughout them he finds all he looks for, logical procedures, explanations and solutions. "What he liked about these books was their sense of plenitude and economy. In the good mystery there is nothing wasted, no sentence no word that is not significant, it has the potential to be so (...) nothing must be overlooked. Everything becomes essence" (9). This confirms the character's obsession with meaning as an immutable truth. While the sense of plenitude has to do with the intense sublimation of the spirits through meaningful awareness, the sense of economy is closely associated with the ubiquity of order and structure that lead to a perfectly rational solution. As Poe says in his *Philosophy of Composition* (1846): "the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem" (1), Quinn's resemblance with Poe's understanding is evident, and we can further confirm Quinn's admiration for Poe through the following words: "what is it that Dupin says in Poe?" (Auster 48).

When Quinn accepts to take the case of the Stillmans, he begins showing the first traces of a detective. And as his investigation develops, we learn that his actual search is interior. The detective fiction is at the service of Quinn's seek for identity. As the detective fiction he is so fond of, Quinn believes that he will be able to arrive at a definite conclusion not only about the case but also about himself. "There could not be two answers. It was either this or that" (133). But as we will see later on, even though he might follow Dupin's advice identifying himself with his opponent (48), he is able neither to solve the case nor to solve his case.

Poe's Dupin is the problem solver figure per excellence in the mystery novel. He as a detective is in charge of revealing a transcendental truth that can always be proved by empirical facts. In that way, Dupin always ends up with rational explanations for apparently impossible supernatural events. But despite Quinn's admiration for the famous detective, and even with the

careful procedure that he has attempted, Quinn is not as successful as Dupin at finding logical explanations for Stillman's mystery:

"Quinn always imagined that the key to good detective work was a close observation to details. The more accurate the scrutiny, the more successful the results. The implication was that human behavior could be understood, that beneath the infinite facade of gestures, tics, and silences, there was finally a coherence, an order, a source of motivation. But after struggling to take in all these surface effects, Quinn felt no closer to Stillman than when he first started to following him"(Auster 1985: 80).

The realization that the human inner self is ungraspable is the ultimate understanding that Quinn resists to accept. Like Poe's the *Man of the Crowd* (1840), the endeavor to get to a solution leads Quinn to an obsessed search. Instead of accepting an unreachable subjectivity, Quinn prefers to believe that there is a logical solution that can be grasped through a methodological investigation. But notwithstanding that apparent calculated way of proceeding, before the first trouble he faces, he reacts from a totally instinctive manner. The trouble referred to is the choice of following one of the two Stillmans who arrived at the train station. After that election Quinn impersonating Auster finds out that the old man did nothing but wander through the neighborhood, going anywhere in particular. In the presence of such panorama, he is unable to understand what Stillman's purpose is:

"What Stillman did on these walks remained something of a mystery to Quinn. He could of course, see with his own eyes what happened, and all these things he dutifully recorded in his notebook. But the meaning of these things continue to elude him" (71).

In sum, even though Quinn loves reading mystery novels, writes mystery novels, and impersonates a detective, he cannot arrive at a definite and logical conclusion. In other words, although he acts and thinks under modern ideals, those ideals are broken by a postmodern city, a developing, changeable and infinite reality.

The figure of the detective can be easily compared with the flaneur. Both detective and flaneur follow unknown people, scrutinizing them and taking their identities. These are the

urban characters who linger hidden in the flow of the crowd watching the other's faces as if they were just a distant mirror for themselves. From such appreciation, they also represent a reaction to the blasé outlook that Simmel recognizes in the metropolis, attitude that entails indifference or even aversion. Like the detective and the flaneur, the writer explores others subjectivities. Quinn as a matter of fact is a flaneur, a detective and a writer, an entity that by emptying himself and acquiring others' identities, is in a search for his own identity. Through the following quote, we can observe Quinn's modern vision:

"Private eye. The term held triple meaning for Quinn. Not only was it the letter "i", standing for investigator, it was "I" in the upper case, the tiny life-bud buried in the body of the breathing self. At the same time, it was also the physical eye of the writer, the eye of the man who looks out from himself into the world and demands that the world reveal itself to him" (Auster1985: 9).

The quote above confirms that through the role of the investigator, or the writer, Quinn believes that he will be able to attain selfhood. But Quinn's modern effort to get answers fails, and more than significant revelations, what he finds is a world of questions and possibilities. In that way, the modern labyrinth that should have one correct pathway and an orientation to the center is not existent. Instead, we can see a postmodern labyrinth that unfolds at the time that we make decisions and are subjects of external events. There is no core in the postmodern labyrinth, there are just possibilities, that is why, a detective who is in search of truth will not be successful in the postmodern reality in which Quinn lives.

The concept of adventure is also one of Quinn's mechanism to reach an ultimate truth and understanding. Once we had explored such mechanism, we can analyze how the external forces of the city, that point to a postmodern labyrinth, prevent Quinn from his attempt to reach an essence, or how his attitude does not correlate with his surroundings.

C. A MODERN ADVENTURE

As we know, Quinn undergoes a process of search for identity through the adventure of becoming a detective. The concept of adventure is closely associated with the modern understanding of self evolution. In a concrete manner, many modern literary works based their search for identity through a revealing experience which was frequently called adventure. This

enterprise, which was a break from the quotidian, necessarily meant an ultimate realization about some fundamental truth of life. The adventure, as Simmel says "is defined by its capacity, in spite of being isolated and accidental, to have necessity and meaning" (Simmel 1911: 3). Differently from the gambler who "has abandoned himself to the meaningless of chance"(8), the adventurer looks for transcendence of life. Quinn's goal is, as Simmel says, to find an "unifying core of existence from which meaning flows" (9). But his modern attempt to achieve success is not useful.

Like the famous Don Alonso Quijano, Daniel Quinn embarks on an adventure taking the role of a character that he admires (Chénétier 40). While Quijano calls himself Don Quixote a knight-errantry, Quinn on his part becomes Paul Auster, a detective. Both characters, before going on the adventure, had been obsessed with chivalry novels and detective fiction respectively. Quinn believes that through the adventure, his life will acquire more sense, but he does not realize that it is the very adventure that leads him to ruin. He, unlike Don Quixote, does not achieve glory. For Cervantes's character, the return to the quotidian brings his complete decadence, but for Quinn it is the adventure the one that guides him to collapse in the end of the novel.

It is also interesting to note that there is a clear resemblance between Quinn's experience and Poe's tale *The Man of the Crowd* (1840). Even though Poe can be considered a writer from a modern tradition in many of his works, there is no need to classify him as definitely modern. As a matter of fact, this story is part of those in which Poe gave an open ending, or not a definite solution. So, besides other quite substantial similarities, it is the unsolved project of both protagonists the one that makes us think of a dying grand narrative of reason. The failure of the attempt of the modern man to find logical explanations for apparent mysteries is the postmodern reaction against those metanarratives that pointed to reason as the major problem solver. In that way, even though Quinn, following Dupin's suggestions, becomes the shadow of the chased:

"Quinn felt no closer to Stillman than when he first started to following him. He had lived Stillman's life, walked at his pace [and] seen what he had seen" , he only gets "the man's impenetrability"(Auster 1985: 80).

As Poe writes ": "er lasst sich nicht lesen"- it does not permit itself to be read. There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told"(Poe 1840: 1). The parallel between the

works seems to highlight the aversion against monolithic or unilateral interpretations. Albeit such understanding, Quinn keeps on thinking from a modern angle.

Quinn as modern subject within a postmodern city employs a number of techniques that point to the stabilization of reality. The modern conception of language, the modern characters of the flaneur and the detective, and finally the modern understanding of the adventure are appreciations that come from a former literary community, the community that included Baudelaire, Poe and Miguel de Cervantes. The lack of accomplishment in Quinn's modern plans suggests that such community is being undoubtedly questioned.

(iv) A POSTMODERN CITY

As we have discussed, the modern notion of the labyrinth points to a center, where the modern subject is supposed to get to in the urban setting. In a postmodern city, on the contrary, the labyrinth has neither a center nor a periphery, in Mongin's words, it "no se caracteriza por una articulación jerárquica y piramidal que se atenga a un centro y una periferia", privileging a horizontality "que crea continuidades, rupturas, discordancias de una índole inédita" (177). The postmodern urban experience is, as Mongin states, "difícil de captar y hasta caótica" (176) because it is swamped with constantly changing flows. From that understanding, the city as a modern labyrinth is liquidized.

In *City of Glass*, we can observe different ways in which Quinn's city becomes a postmodern labyrinth where instead of chartered streets that would lead Quinn to a final understanding or an essence, there are flows that can lead our main character only to possibilities of existence. In that way, despite Quinn's attempts to reach a modern ideal of definiteness, he is surrounded by the presence of uncertainties and possibilities, being a "multifaceted becoming" (Mongin 176), a fluctuating entity that contains several realities as he moves in the flux and is led by the it.

In that way, at the same time that the city becomes a liquid under the postmodern realm, the subject and the text experience the same process. In *City of Glass*, these three phenomena, the city, the text, and the subject represent evolving multiplicities, all of which are crossed by a number of trajectories that are in constant flow depending on the circumstances and contexts that surround them. Because they are constantly being reconstructed, they cannot be thoroughly

defined or delineated, they cannot be deciphered as the modern subject, city or text, and as Quinn would desire.

A. CHANCE IN THE CITY

“Bit by bit. The city robs you of certainty.” (Auster 1987: 6)

The confluence of unintentional and intentional movement in the postmodern city is related to Nietzsche's notion of will in spite of the contingencies of life. Although Nietzsche defends the idea of will as a transforming process, he also realizes that even our own decisions are constantly held to unexpected events, events that might be seen as insignificant as the fly of a butterfly. From that perspective, Quinn's city, is a place where the body that goes over it is lead to and directs himself somewhere at the same time. Opposed to such appreciation, the modern grand narratives envisioned the city as the cradle of reason and advancement, a place in which human beings were in control of their lives and were able to overcome the forces of nature and chance. That is why the detective or the scientist, figures that look for truths, are raised in the modern urban landscape. It is there that they can unveil mysteries that were formerly attributed to myths or religion. It is there where, as Baudelaire's flaneur, they can get to the core of existence, to the center of the labyrinth.

Under a postmodern lens, chance becomes a major aspect of reality, particularly in the urban landscape in which thousands of events continually ravel. On this basis, history is attached to random and discontinuous events that form a combination of plural accidents. As Mansfield agrees: "To theorists of the postmodern, our experience is more conditioned by chance and accident than by older, predictable and obsolete rhetorics" (167). In other words, neither the modern paradigm of cause and effect, nor the pre modern ideas of rational celestial forces are considered valid for postmodernism, instead, what it proposes is the predominance of chance, and that is accurately demonstrated in Auster's narrative.

The action in *City of Glass* is actually moved by a matter of coincidence. When Quinn is introduced to us, we can observe a solitary man who has decided to cut off all meaningful relationships of friends or relatives: "He had an agent but they had never met. Their contacts were confined to the mail", "he no longer had any friends"(5). Notwithstanding the fact that for a man like him there are no many opportunities of being affected by other people, due to a

random event, he is moved towards a search that has as a result the story that we read. The very first sentences of the novel confirm the significance of chance for Quinn's story:

"it was a wrong number that started it, the telephone ringing three times in the dead of night, and the voice on the other end asking for someone he was not. Much later, when he was able to think about the things that happened to him, he would conclude that nothing was real except chance." (Auster 3).

As Quinn last concludes, the effects of random, unplanned behaviors or events end up building history. Although this realization only comes under the emergence of a postmodern understanding, this has always been that way. Chance has always been a significant part of our existence, even in a pre modern community. The city though generates an incomparable number of possibilities that in the countryside were more scarce. The city is, as a matter of fact, the place of possibilities, of change, but also of accidents. For Quinn, the accident that changed his life was the death of his wife and son, due to which his roles of husband, father, and ambitious writer were killed abruptly: "A part of him had died" (4).

In the novel, we can see in a number of episodes that Quinn's actions are led only by hunches or casual impulses that go against a rational behavior. Nevertheless, those random attitudes will have as a result the main character's present condition. An example of those performances is Quinn's decision of chasing one of the two Stillmans he sees in the train station: "whatever choice he made- and he had to make a choice- would be arbitrary, a submission to chance. Uncertainty would haunt him to the end" (68). Another example is Quinn's decision of buying the red notebook:

"For reasons that were never made clear to him, he suddenly felt and irresistible urge for a particular red notebook at the bottom. (...) he was at loss to explain to himself why he found it so appealing"(46).

Through these quotes it is possible to observe that in the city that Quinn lives, he is surrounded by options. Options that can be represented in the market, where customers from an urban location will find a larger range of commodities compared to the countryside. As the market, the city offers a range of options and opportunities.

An illustration of a random event in the city that can generate something in one's subjectivity is Quinn's experience of finding a chalk musician: "the longer I listen the harder I found it to leave" (130). Ever since the urban dweller encounters someone, or makes a decision, in spite of being random and senseless like Quinn's, his present takes a different path in the labyrinth of his life. In that sense, the map of one's existence could be said to be a continually muting labyrinth, where there is no center, but a number of trajectories that form one's life.

Auster's collection of stories under the title of *The Red Notebook* (1995) is a good example of the postmodern labyrinth that has no center. In this autobiographical work, Auster recalls accidental episodes of his life that have determined his life profoundly. *The Red Notebook* is similar to Quinn's red notebook since they are both books in which chance prevails and rational explanations are out of reach. Life in the city then becomes an infinite board with infinite movements and unforeseeable possibilities, in spite of all our attempts to organize and prevent things. *The Red Notebook*, by Auster, together with Quinn's red notebook are both "about living permanently on the brink of catastrophe, about fortuitous chance and odd, barely credible coincidence" (Baronne 3).

Like the sky, life in the postmodern city is in eternal motion, it is a combination of layers, and it is, above everything, unpredictable. Although Quinn witnesses such nature, he keeps on resisting a postmodern understanding. In the following quote, we can compare the movements of the sky with the city motion, and we can also realize Quinn's rejection towards the instability that both phenomena contain. The word that summarizes his modern view is "decipher":

"the sky was never still (...) there were constant little shifts, gradual disturbances (...) clouds complicated the picture, and Quinn spent many afternoons studying them. He became familiar with the cirrus, the cumulus, the stratus, the nimbus, and all the various combinations, watching for each one in its turn, and seeing how the sky would change under its influence. Clouds too introduces the matter of color, and there was a wide range to contend with (...). These all had to be investigated, measured, and deciphered" (140)

In spite of the rational modern attempts to forecast the weather, it keeps on being unpredictable, like Anna Blume recognizes:

"I have wasted much time looking for signs in the air, trying to study the atmosphere for hints of what is going to follow (...) But nothing has ever helped me." (Auster 1987: 24) .

The lack of control over reality dominated by a myriad of connected events in which human kind is a tiny grain leads humanity to a state of anguish and hopelessness. That is why a postmodern urban landscape is generally perceived as a decadent place in which reason does not longer prevail, and the formerly chartered and clean streets have become rubbish dumps. This would be a modern reaction to a postmodern reality, or alternatively, a critique to the postmodern paradigm (Eagleton 1996: 200). Since reason is no longer the ultimate source of knowledge, and present has become a tissue of imponderables, the pursue for success and development are just utopias. In face of this image, the formerly rational subject surrenders himself to his luck and to the contingencies of life. In *City of Glass*, Quinn's rational world crumbles until he becomes an indigent, similarly to Anna Blume in *In the Country of the Last Things*.

"Beggars and performers are the elite of the fallen (...) they shuffle through the streets as though in chains. Asleep in doorways, staggering insane through traffic, collapsing on sidewalks- they seem to be everywhere the moment you look for them" (Auster 1985: 130).

For Quinn, these fallen souls embody the devastation of a modern city. They opposed to the modern analytical self, have surrendered to a daily survival. Although Quinn becomes an indigent too, he is nothing like those wandering souls he sees in the streets. He keeps on adhering to a modern understanding unconditionally, planning everything with utmost detail: " his ambition was to eat as little as possible, and in this way to stave off his hunger. In the best of all worlds, he might have been able to approach absolute zero" (136). The natural human processes of eating, defecating, and sleeping were carefully plotted by Quinn, but regardless his attentively planned schedule, our character is not a modern hero, he cannot solve the case.

B. POSSIBILITIES OF BEING IN THE CITY

“All men contain several men inside them, and most of us bounce from one self to another without ever knowing who we are.” (Auster 2006: 111)

As we have discussed, under a postmodern understanding, the city is a "conmutación de redes múltiples, un enmarañamiento gigantesco de flujos" (Mongin 226), where there is a "borramiento de los límites" (Mongin 173). In other words, the city labyrinth becomes a multidimensional experience in which the subjects unfold themselves as they take different paths or are led to take them. The idea of a multiple subject emerges from the understanding that there is no ultimate identity in the city. So at the same time that we acquire masks throughout the day, we are also fragments or possibilities. There is no essential identity, a body that gathers a pile of random events. Although Quinn in the novel is reticent to accept his own multiplicity, we can see his possibilities of being through the other characters.

One of the characters that seems to be one of Quinn's reflections is Stillman senior, the old man Quinn is supposed to watch. Stillman keeps an important resemblance with Quinn. Even though the man's surname is Stillman, he is a wanderer, he goes through the city, he is in constant motion, unlike a still man. But in spite of being a moving entity, he, as Quinn, is psychologically stuck to modern solid grand narratives. From that view, Stillman, as one of Quinn's reflections is a fluid entity that envisions reality from a fixed view. Acknowledging postmodern fluidity would be to recognize instability of life, and that would lead them to collapse.

Stillman does the same as Quinn throughout his investigation. He records his own research results in a little red notebook. His project consists of "put[ing] [the world] back together again" (91), since it is in fragments, as he says. He believes that "we have lost our sense of purpose, we have lost the language whereby we can speak of it" (92). The way in which he intends to solidify the world is to create a new language, a language "that will at last say what we have to say. For our words no longer correspond to the world" (92). Stillman's thoughts about language are clearly related to a modern tradition as we can see, and can be associated with Quinn's ideas concerning the interpretation of reality.

Stillman believes that the project of postmodernism has been that of dismantling modern certainties that provided security and confidence, which for him are essential. Under that idea, the old man arrives at New York, since "it is the most forlorn of places, the most abject"(94).

This city is for him the utter representation of the postmodern project that has led to the devastation of human progress. As we commented above, this appreciation of a collapsed world that is moved by chance might be said to be a critique to the postmodern acceptance of history as a set of contingencies. In that way, Stillman continues looking at the ravages in which New York has fallen: "The brokenness is everywhere, the disarray is universal. The broken people, the broken things, the broken thoughts. The whole city is a junk heap" (94). For Stillman streets are "an endless source of material, an inexhaustible storehouse of shattered things. Each day I go out and collect objects that seem worthy of investigation" (94). This image looks quite similar to Anna Blume's country, in which "Shit and garbage have become crucial resources" (Auster 1987:30), or simply to the image of an indigent trying to survive a strongly volatile world. Although the old man advocates for an ultimate essence, one of his reflections might be telling, since it points to the representation of the urban subject as a constantly developing being. He says: "All men are eggs in a matter of speaking. We are pure potential" (98). Of course from his modern view he considers there must be a destiny or a definite arrival, something that postmodernism fully criticizes. Still, the image of the egg is useful to acknowledge the individual, history, or the text as a work in process.

Another character that can be treated as one of Quinn's reflections is Paul Auster, a writer that was supposed to be the detective that was intended to take the Stillmans' case. The reason why Auster may represent one of Quinn's possibilities of being is the similarities among them. They are both writers, and as Quinn used to, Auster has a pleasant family that is made up of his wife and his son. Under such consideration, Quinn is probably right at feeling that Auster seemed to be "taunting him with the things he had lost" (121).

The presence of Paul Auster as a character in the novel represents in itself a threat for the stability and determinacy of the very novel since this breaks the limits between reality and fiction. His presence in the novel is a metafiction that has as a purpose dissolving the solid metanarratives, making them liquid, so that the characters, the text, and the author intermingle in a continuous movement. In fact, the character of Auster does oppose to Quinn in the sense that he subverts the traditional view between reality and fiction through his own reading of Don Quixote. Auster's hypothesis intends to "dismantle the intimidating aura of high modernist culture with a more demotic, user friendly art, suspecting all hierarchies of value as privileged and elitist" (Eagleton 1996: 202).

Auster's appearance represents a fissure in the surface that separates the worlds of fiction and reality. The amalgamation of these worlds makes the reader skeptical of any essential truth or origin. As Lefebvre states, "the meaning of truth fractures (...) or explodes"(Lefebvre 1970: 121). In that way, Auster's presence, as well as his perceptions, contribute to the idea of the multiple urban subject as a virtual entity, or an eternal crease. The city, under that idea is a "generator of a virtual object, the urban, the encounter and assembly of all objects and subjects, existing or possible, that must be explored. (Lefebvre 1970: 122). As the city, the text experiences an overflowing, assuming "cosmic significance", being globalized (Lefebvre 1970: 123). It is interesting to note that in the novel, when Quinn goes to look for Auster, a downpour starts, as if an actual liquidation took place.

After Quinn's interview with Auster, the character feels in a state of loss, since he realizes he has lost his pray and there is no way to find him, therefore there is no possible solution to his task. "Quinn was nowhere now. He had nothing, he knew nothing, he knew that he knew nothing" (124). This emptiness is related to the lack of solution in face of the failure to solve the case. Such situation leads him to collapse. We can observe that, as the old Stillman, Quinn associates the lack of solutions to a total devastation of him and of his surroundings. It is here when he starts to notice the devastation of the city, and with that, the decay of its inhabitants: The paint becomes exhausted, the city encroaches with its soot, the plaster crumbles within. Changes, then more changes" (125). But in spite of his anguish Quinn decides "he had to go through with it" (133), resisting until his last breath the illogical, changeable reality.

In general, Quinn stands for a multiple subject in a postmodern labyrinth, an entity crisscrossed by a number of threads. This character can be considered an intertextuality himself as he acts like a modern Dupin, or a Don Quixote, since he has been influenced by that literary community. But at the same time, like Ana Blume, knows that his project is fruitless and incongruent in relation to a contemporary state. Auster's novel in that sense, subverts the modern grand narratives by rejecting the accomplishment of Quinn project. And although Quinn could be taken as a mentally fixed man (as Stillman), he is actually an evolving character, constantly becoming.

CONCLUSION

In *City of Glass*, the urban place, the text, and the subject are physically circumscribed phenomena that, under a postmodern look, represent multiplicities. Such multiplicities can be compared with the molecules of a liquid that join to generate a flow. In the same way that molecules agglutinate themselves to form a liquid, the letters of a word, and of the text also blend so as to produce a slippery meaning.

The urban subject is plural since he, as the city and the text, is crisscrossed by a number of contexts and circumstances. Depending on their surroundings, subjectivities will react differently, acquiring different masks. The multiplicity of the urban subject is also associated with the fact that he is constantly becoming, and his selfhood is a possibility among a number of potentialities. In that way, as the urban subject is being woven by genes and experiences, the city and the text are continually evolving tissues that are intersected by tradition and transforming practices. Such is the case of the city that was formerly seen from a modern angle and now is observed from a postmodern view.

Perceptions therefore, will be subjected to particular viewpoints and to specific backgrounds. Quinn's New York for example is nothing like Whitman's New York, or Poe's New York, and probably different from my own New York, experienced only through fiction and from a Latin American perspective. Each of those New Yorks have contributed to the conformation of a toponymy that, as the text and the subject contains a stream of subjectivities. In the same way that the urban dweller goes through the city, the contemporary reader goes through the text.

As we noted throughout the analysis, the city and the text can be compared with a postmodern labyrinth that, unlike Quinn's modern labyrinth, has no center, and in which there is not just one correct path. In the postmodern labyrinth that we proposed, the roads that the subject finds are constantly moving, changing and flowing, and so it does the configuration of the subject. The dynamism of the urban life has as a result the dynamism and multiplicity of an urban subject that is constantly becoming, adapting to a number of surfaces, and fluctuating

among a range of realities. The city as a postmodern labyrinth is a chaotic place where the individual cannot reach ultimate understanding.

In face of this panorama, subjects should, according to Lyotard, accept the incommensurability of life and abandon the search for ultimate meaning, as the reader should do. Notwithstanding this suggestion, as we could appreciate, although Quinn can be observed as a fragmentary entity, he fights for recovering the modern grand narratives that provided him with reason, unification and stability. For such goal, Quinn adopts a number of modern mechanism to get to a definite understanding, but in front of a postmodern environment, his attempts are unsuccessful.

The examination of this conflict that includes the city and the perception of the city, underlies the clash between modern and postmodern ideals. Such collision leads us to two possible comprehensions of the conflict in the novel.

The first possible comprehension is that the state of contest that emerges from Quinn's lack of resilience to face his instable world can be related to the contemporary case of Latin America. This part of the world to which I belong cannot be said to have already gone through a thorough change of paradigm from modernism to postmodernism like the Western world has. If, as the Chilean professor states, "los grandes relatos nunca terminaron de arribar a nuestras costas" (Brunner 1996: 332), it is almost impossible to think of a Latin American postmodernism as such. The modern discourse that comes to confirm an identity through its history is still taking place in Latin America, but such discourse is continually broken by the postmodern foreign influence that can be matched with a reduced academic sphere. In practice, whereas Latin American's strong relationship with the catholic church permeates the states' decisions and people's ideologies, we can observe how the very religious rituals are merged with an untraceable number of other customs and beliefs. Similarly to Quinn, Latin American is a multiplicity that desires to be a unity.

The second potential appreciation in relation to the conflict between modernism and postmodernism presented in *City of Glass*, is that, by opposing the postmodern world, the contemporary subject, broadly speaking, attempts to criticize the postmodern paradigm, as Eagleton does from his Marxist point of view. From a critical perspective, Eagleton states that "Postmodernism is radical in so far as it challenges a system which still needs absolute values, metaphysical foundations and self-identical subjects: against these it mobilizes multiplicity,

non-identity, transgression, anti-foundationalism and cultural relativism" (1997:132). This consideration might be associated with the fact that postmodernism, although accepted as a theoretical model, does not respond to a subject that has been nurtured in the search for reason and progress. In other words, even though Lyottard encourages us to accept chaos, we, as ordinary subjects in general might not be yet prepared. In our solitude, we secretly wish to live in a better world, to discover who we are, to know our destiny and to achieve illumination. But these are utopias that the postmodern entity should not even imagine.

The postmodern aspects of Auster's *City of Glass* have been accounted in a number of studies, yet the interpretation and analysis that were presented in this thesis have contributed to the advancement of a concept that had not earlier been tackled. The very pioneering notion of the multiple urban subject is advantageous since this conception can bring to our understanding the relationship established between the subject and the city under a postmodern frame. That is, a subject nurtured and raised in the city, the place in which multiplicity is materialized.

Further studies regarding the multiple urban subject in *City of Glass* should include a broad set of discussions. Among them, it is suggested that they include the representation of language generated from a multiple metropolitan entity, or in other words, how the fragmentation of the urban subject is reflected in language. Also, the study of how locations such as the park or the train station imply a peculiar attitude of the one who inhabits them is recommended. Following studies may also account for the differences that we can find between a multiple subject from New York, and one from Santiago. Is the inhabitant from Santiago also resisting to a postmodern reality? Is Santiago a city made out of glass? In face of these questions, my opinion is that, as always, we are living a process of change, but this change seems to be particularly associated with the hesitation of taking a currently naturalized western postmodern path.

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