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“Fluidity in Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*: its effects on the subject and the urban landscape”

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1. INTRODUCTION

The modern quest for identity in the course of History has been a major issue for literary critics and writers during the last centuries. Particularly, what is most appealing about this is the fact that there was a period in the history of literature, between the nineteen twenties and the thirties, in which the genre of the personal diary took a strong position. This has called my attention, as the record of intimate experiences and points of view are in line with the lack of, as Walter Benjamin would say, an 'authentic' experience of individuality. A very recognizable generation of American writers, called 'The Lost Generation' developed this style in addition to the experience of the voyage in search for the American Dream.

Although not precisely in the form of a diary, Henry Miller portrays this new scenario in his novel *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) giving an account of his own picture of Paris, which is presented as a dirty and decadent city, filled with images of fluids and bodily experiences. At the same time, this city will allow him to acknowledge his condition as a fragmented and detached modern subject. Starting from this point, the general topic that gives birth to the object of study in this work is the narrator's quest for identity through the exaltation of the bodily organs and fluids, and the fact that they work as representatives of the degrading condition the modern degrading conditions. Furthermore, I propose that the city has made a significant impact on the narrator of 'Tropic of Cancer' in ways of sickness, chaotic perceptions, hallucinations, among others, due to the rapid pace the city acquires. In an attempt to explain this singular experience I will make use of the concept of flux, a very recurrent topic throughout the novel by means of, on the one hand, a metaphorical/ symbolic approach (flux in writing, in the way people move in the city) and in the other hand, an organic approach (body fluids).

The purpose of this work is to reveal as to what extent the sick body is a reflection of the sick city and how these two spheres overlap, sometimes melting and merging into one. In accordance to this point, the body is presented as constantly falling into this sickness, or into a sort of mechanization of the quotidian in the figure of the individual as a proper machine. The city goes through the very same processes and it is compared in numerous occasions to a body that collapses over itself; that stops making sense because it has lost its harmonic arrangement. Therefore, in the novel, it is a fact that modern society turns the body sick, transforming the urban subject into a receptacle that absorbs the city's fluidity and, at the same time, the delirium and the sickness of the world. The narrator will not establish a particular destination, conveying his aimless condition, as an expatriate and as a modern individual surrounded by the chaotic city

landscape. This figure of the body does not only provide a parallel with the structure of society, but also with its inner composition and processes. It is important to study the sick body in the context of the modern city, because its fluid display would reveal us relevant aspects about the conformation of the narrator's subjectivity. This individual experience is constantly paralleled with that of the city through liquid images associated with sickness, the loss of authenticity and health. Therefore, I propose that individual experience as such does not exist anymore, in the sense that it melts under the dominant and chaotic fluxes displayed by the urban landscape.

In parallel, this particular work will be strictly concerned with the concept of 'space' in Miller's novel and not with the plot or the characters inside it. The latter will only serve for the purpose of contextualization and for insights into their relationship with the narrator's specific perception of the city. In addition to this, the distribution and the fluidity of this 'space' –which is the city-, will reveal important aspects regarding its connection with the subject's body and identity as part of the same continuum. In the analysis of the novel, several traces of this phenomenon will be recognizable inside a plot which is, broadly speaking, associated to the quotidian life of a man living in Paris as a voluntary expatriate who stays at different places while at the same time interacts with unknown people. He will live day by day without any expectations about his future, being forged by the modern world; annulling his past along with any trace of identity or authenticity.

Regarding the works consulted, Deleuze's essay 'On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature' will be useful precisely because its use of the concept of 'flux', which is going to be central in this paper. It also gives an interesting account on the figure of the *voyage* carried out by the 'expatriate' that somehow relates to the idea of fluidity, which is travelling and looking a way out to the protagonist's modern condition. Also Guy Debord traces 'the development of a modern society in which authentic social life has been replaced with its 'representations' and 'shows' (5). This idea would be complemented with Benjamin's 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' which responds to the same modern experience of a lost 'authenticity', mainly instigated by city life. The narrator's linguistic choices to portray the city such as 'scenario', 'show', among others, would reveal his position in this matter.

Another idea to be discussed in this work is the meaning of the body in terms of its relationship with the urban landscape. For this purpose, Oliver Mongin provides an interesting insight in the conformation of the city life defining it as in constant flux, divided between hyper

mobility and stagnation. Here, the city is understood as a polyphonic experience, which refers to the unlimited possibilities of relations in a physically limited space, ‘una construcción y hasta una maquinaria, sometida de entrada a los flujos’ (32). Throughout *Tropic of Cancer*, the narrator will convey infinite experiences and events with a particular style that complements the notion of flux in the city.

The fact of choosing *Tropic of Cancer* over *Tropic of Capricorn* or *Black Spring* remits to the pivotal role of its portrayal of the city along with the crisis of the concept of self in modern times, in a much better way. It is Miller and his postmodern style in *Tropic of Cancer* which allows embracing and analyzing in a more evident way the problem of the urban subject in the city and his quest for identity. It presents, on the one hand, a perfect balance between descriptions of streets, cathedrals, cafés, landscapes, and, on the other hand, with the interpersonal relationships that he develops inside it. These above mentioned words will be consulted in order to enrich and support the perspectives surrounding the main themes such as the concept of ‘flux’ and the effects of Modernity on the urban subject’s identity.

The literary perspective to be used is going to be guided mainly by Ricoeur’s ideas presented in the essay “*The metaphor and the Symbol*”, from ‘Theory of Interpretation’. This essay will be essential to establish the backgrounds for the interpretation of metaphors as well as symbols inside the novel. Also, definitions of the metaphor and the symbol would be provided even though these figures will never be distinguished but considered to be part of a progression in terms of meaning. Ricoeur’s definition of the symbol will allow this work to interpret the notion of the city as it is manifested through the figurative use of human body parts.

According to Mongin, the first objective is to establish a parallel between the city and the notion of flux in Miller’s description of the city landscape. Fluidity is associated here with the rapid pace of the modern world which affects the urban subject not only in an organic-corporeal sense, but also in the conformation of his own subjectivity. This idea is expanded in its metaphorical sense, taking into account Ricoeur’s postulations, in regards with the narrator’s writing style and the symbolic use of language. The figure of the expatriate will be briefly commented, as well as the anti-heroic feeling that it awakens in the principal character.

The second objective is to relate the organic body and its symbols associated with the body conceived later on as a machine. For the analysis of these symbols and metaphors, Ricoeur’s approach would be highly pertinent as long as it provides an alternative road into the

understanding of literary figures. In this sense, the very same concept of 'symbol' would reveal to us something about a 'silent' display of power inside the city; avoiding the generic meaning usually accepted. A parallel between the city and the body is going to be proposed as well as its degradation till the point of transforming it into a machine. The narrator would be always immersed in the city which is grasped as an artificial stage, nevertheless, 'the machine attributed a new status to the fragmented' assuming throughout the novel that 'it is the privileged metaphor of what is alive' (Mandressi 321).

The third objective is to establish a comparison between the sick body and the sick city, analyzing processes of decay inside the urban landscape and how they affect the inner balance of the body and in reverse. This sickness is to be put in relation with the concept of flux, through the study of the narrator's writing style. This phenomenon is to be supported with the idea of the dissection of the body and the study of its parts through corporeal and linguistic deconstruction, besides its correlative effects on the image of the city that the narrator will provide. The ideas presented by Barthes will engage us in a discussion regarding linguistic signs and their mutability as well as their lack of a fixed meaning; they will represent elements in constant flux that are 'conditioned by their interaction with one another, more than by what they mean in isolation' (Mansfield 58). Therefore, assuming that language is nothing more than its interaction between signs, the body is not more than the interaction between its organs; if they cease to perform its function the body gets sick, provoking at some point an overall collapse; but, what is the role of the city in this process? That is what this work will attempt to discover.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To begin with, it is important to mention the main points and concepts that are going to be discussed in this paper, in relation to the representation of the urban landscape in Miller's narrative. First of all, the idea of 'flux' would be essential at the moment of analyzing Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. In order to explain it, Oliver Mongin's approach to the 'fluid city' will be highly pertinent, taking into account how the urban space goes under a deep transformation, changing and affecting its organization. He states that 'the perfect balance between places and fluxes has become completely illusory' (16). Mongin also emphasizes that before chaos, 'the city controlled these fluxes and now has become prisoner of those fluxes and networks', affirming that 'now, the city is condemned to connect to a limited space it does not control; that of fluxes and nets' (19).

Deleuze's approximation to the concept of flux in the context of North American Literature would be used as a philosophical complement to the analysis of this novel. Also, in accordance to the previous point, some approximations associated to the figure of the expatriate will be discussed, in order to explain the process of reformulation the narrator suffers regarding his own subjectivity. This trip or 'expatriation' is contextualized in the urban experience in connection with the fluid style of the novel. In this way, the metaphorical significance of the voyage is going to be seen, not as an escape but as 'the tracing of a line' (2); a complete detachment from the origin, without taking into account any points of beginning or end. Third, the idea of a sick body and its symbolic representations would be explained taking into account Mandressi's approach and Ricoeur's 'Theory of Interpretation'.

Mongin, as well as Ricoeur would understand the modern experience as containing multiple edges. Although they tackle it from different perspectives, they assume a similar position regarding the 'circular relationship between a center and a periphery' (Mongin 32). Similarly, Ricoeur identifies a moment in which there is a progression from the metaphor to the symbol, and also a point in which it is difficult to differentiate them, as long as they are part of the same continuum of signification. There are two types of metaphors: 'of substitution', that is to say, translatable, and 'of tension' which create their own sense or meaning and cannot be translated. Ricoeur states that 'metaphors tell us something new about reality, mainly immersed in the discursive interpretation and the symbol, considered to reflect 'recurrent figures in which a whole culture recognizes itself' (66). He also talks about the 'surplus of meaning' which assumes the importance of identifying the literal meaning in a progression to the symbolic meaning:

‘movimiento que lo transfiera de un nivel a otro y lo asimila a la segunda significación por medio del literal’ (68). The description about ‘the non-semantic moment of the symbol’ will also be useful for characterizing Miller’s figures inside the novel because figurative language “doubts between the dividing line of the ‘bios’ and the ‘logos’ ” and they ‘born where force and form coincide’ (72); where the metaphor is ‘a discursive invention; [the symbol] is attached to the cosmos’ (74).

‘Voyage’ in Deleuze’s thought has a pivotal role in the configuration of all those American writers who ‘escaped’ looking for artistic shelter in Europe, specifically Paris, France. In this manner, the voyage will be an essential figure in Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*, as well as the experience of the voluntary expatriate. This was the ‘image of the American resident in Paris as a cultural refugee, one whose exile is a repudiation of provincialism, censorship, prohibition and racism (Ophir 211). Regarding the experience of the voyage, Deleuze refers to ‘American writers [that] are not concerned about how things begin or end’ standing for the importance of the processes they live; the act[s] of ‘becoming’. In strict accordance to what happens in *Tropic of Cancer*, the author never establishes a clear progression of the events or his daily life experience, in that sense, the novel is always providing a lacking sense of belonging and it gives the impression that it does not matter the sense of permanence, but the transcendental quality of what is being described. Therefore, the city gradually becomes more and more ethereal, fluid, and difficult to apprehend.

In ‘The Superiority of Anglo American Literature’ (1977), the philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes the flux as ‘something intensive, mutant and instantaneous, between a creation and a destruction’ (4). In my opinion, behind the dichotomy -creating and destroying- there is an intrinsic allusion to what Paul Ricoeur advances in his ‘Theory of Interpretation’, where a conflict between the literal meaning of a word and its interpretation can be seen, always mutable, sometimes interchangeable and rich in signification. At this point the ambivalent quality of the flux proposes a sense of detachment –and the impossibility to attach to anything- that is going to be present not only in Miller’s narrative but throughout all American Literature. In regards to the previous point and the experience of disconnection, Deleuze refers to Miller as living in a ‘delirium’ precisely because of this back and forth movement in his voyage; he ‘jumps across intervals’ (28). Therefore, Deleuze is very conscious about the meaning of the voyage, and he

characterizes it differently from the common appreciation postulating that: ‘to flee is not to renounce action; nothing is more active than to put a system into flight’ (Deleuze 26).

‘Flights can happen at the spot, in motionless travel’ (37), that is why Miller’s highest experiences are moments of lucidity not necessarily happening in movement: “I sit on the bed in a daze, thinking about man before his birth. Suddenly bells begin to toll, a weird, unearthly music, *as if I had been translated* to the steppes of Central Asia’ (Miller 10). That’s the main reason why in Paris he feels like being more at home than in any other place. In fleeing away, we tend to reconstruct all we have learnt, power structures, everything we know; this is understood by Deleuze as a process of construction-deconstruction and ‘demolition’ (27), a constant questioning of the world that surrounds us, even the questioning of our own language.

To add to the definition of ‘flux’ extracted from Deleuze’s essay, a specific approximation to the physical fluids will be used according to Raphael Mandressi’s *History of the Body*, in which the ‘humoral thinking adapts to the quotidian experience’ (327). This is why the most evident feature in Miller’s writing becomes the fact that his physical and emotional experiences go hand in hand with the state of his ‘humors’, giving that ‘vitality is characterized by that which flows’ (327), and this experience is quite evident in his relationship with the city which is principally described through liquid images. Mandressi also explores the concept of ‘humoral equilibrium’, proposing that ‘illness occurred when one of these humors accumulated or went dry’ (326). Therefore, the body fluids play an important role in physiological terms, with their correspondent reverberations in the writer’s general stability. The importance of these flowing humors is associated with a chaotic perception of the world from the part of the narrator; nevertheless, it delivers him from collapse. He is permanently feeling sick, but more than ‘a state of sickness’ he is constantly ‘becoming sick’.

This idea can be easily related to what Mandressi states in ‘The History of the Body’: ‘Nuestro siglo XX ha diluído la enfermedad, en lugar de hacerla desaparecer, y ha modificado radicalmente su experiencia’; ‘ya no sabemos estar enfermos’. Thus, on the one hand, there is an evident relation between two apparently opposite events; sickness and the fact of not knowing how to deal with it. Nevertheless, that is one of the main mechanisms displayed by the modern era; to make an attempt to manage death, sickness, among others, without suppressing but hiding the symptoms that cause its degradation. The modern city, on the other hand, is the producer and, at the same time, the recipient of the degraded condition of urban subjects. In ‘The History of the

Body', 'sickness is what characterizes everything that is alive', because in its principles it 'attempts to reinforce the organism's biological defenses' (31) but it is also defined as a machine, as a body that has suffered the effects of automation. Decartes affirmed in the seventeenth century 'I guess the body is nothing more than a statue or an earth machine' (47);

Deleuze describes ideas as growing in the form of grass due to the fact that the English see thinking as a particular nervous system of grass: 'grass takes a line of flight and not a root'; just a horizontal net of connections between the texts, and more specifically, between the organs of the body. The image of the city provided by Miller is also connected to this idea, in the sense that there are horizontal and multiple connections between its constituents: streets, commerce, fluxes of people, among others. That is how grass grows and fortifies; the same happens with the body that is constantly converging with other bodies; 'to flee is not to escape from life into the imaginary, on the contrary, is to produce the real' (Deleuze, 35). Then, one of the functions of writing is that of taking the form of a flux which combines with other fluxes; within the text or as a result of the interaction between the writers's interior and outer world epitomized in the city.

For Deleuze, 'to write is to become, but not necessarily a writer' (29) he refers just to the experience of 'becoming' in itself. 'This becoming is an encounter between two reigns, where each of the parts overcome a process of 'deterritorialization'. Therefore, flux, in Deleuze's point of view, does not occur only in one direction. Under Ricoeur's perspectives, meaning neither will take just one trajectory, enriching signification in a constant flux between metaphors and symbols. This process is intimately related with how the urban subject performs inside the city and how he deals with anonymity. This could be related with what Barthes calls 'the death of the author', that is to say, the moment in which the author is 'suppressed for the sake of writing' (3). In addition, he states that 'the author is never anything more than the man who writes, just as *I* is no more than the man who says I; language knows a 'subject', not a 'person'. Again, this is intimately related with the notion that meaning does not resides in one single place, word, person, etc., but that is variable and mutable and in constant flux and reformulation.

The hyperbole as a literary device will frequently appear in Miller's novel, complemented with images of the body and the urban experience. To analyze these figures, Ricoeur's idea of the 'expansion of meaning' will be taken into account so as to extend the literal meaning of the narrator's lexical choices. Besides, the author deals with external and internal meaning, attributing to the first one a cognitive value and an emotional content to the second. Following

the same logic, the inner processes of the body –which are explained through the humoral theory- and its external counterpart, are crucial in understanding the narrator’s crafting of his own subjectivity. There is super-abundance, an inclination to trespass the limits, an enumeration of unconceivable extension, the accumulation of synonyms and endless enumeration of things, generally expressed in the form of a stream of consciousness. The subject is always in a state of construction in which he creates another body that absorbs the world and it is absorbed by the world.

Now, concerning Henry Miller’s style, it could be said that he adopts many of the central characteristics found in Dirty Realism writings, and although ‘many of the writers connected with dirty realism were born in the Nineteen Century’, indirectly, Miller also ‘experienced the aftermath of the impact of the Great Depression [and the marks of] two world wars’ (Debozy 24). He witnessed ‘the rapid proliferation of pop culture’ and although ‘the period known as postmodern roughly encapsulates [dirty realists’] period of writing’, Henry Miller had a highly marked postmodern style. Dirty realism is characterized by the ‘representation of poverty, jobless man and disenchantment political appraisal of capitalism and its effect upon the individual, explorations of human sexuality, the concern with commodity culture (manifestation of pop culture) and, most importantly; [...] characterized by the contradictory nature of texts, exceptions [and] negations as a way of continually undermining *their* impulse towards attempting, or claiming, consistency, or reifying *their* vision of the narrative into *the* vision’ (25). Dirty Realism makes reference to city life and to the urban subject as one who ‘wanders the streets of the city looking for employment [...] incapable of assuming a permanent place’ these very same experiences are going to be lived by Henry Miller who, after living every sort of disappointments and frustrations, will come to epitomize the figure of the anti-hero.

Deleuze, for example, talks about the anti-hero as ‘an absurd, strange and disoriented creature’. According to the same idea of the anti-hero prototype, De Certeau cites a refrain: ‘When one does not have what one wants, one must want what one has’ (The practice of everyday life, 22). In relation to this, we can see in the first page of *Tropic of Cancer*, the following line: ‘I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive’. As it could be inferred, this quote embodies the anti-heroic definition per excellence; a man that is lost but does not worry about his past or future, or what he has or not; he is just living through the act of ‘becoming’. In ‘La invención de lo cotidiano’, de Certeau refers to the ordinary –modern-

man, precisely as the one that ‘aparecía con las insignias de una infelicidad general que transforma en irrisión’, epitomized in Miller’s words, ‘I am the happiest man alive’ (1).

Now, regarding the treatment of the city in Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer*, the ideas presented by Guy Debord would be very pertinent, and will also be complemented with Walter Benjamin’s idea of representation in the essay ‘The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction’. Debord says that ‘the whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles; all that once was directly lived has become mere representation’ (5). He proposes that the images of the city are only ‘objects of contemplation’ where the ‘spectacle is part of society as a means of unification’ (5) and that there is nothing beyond representations.

Another interesting source for conducting this particular objective would be ‘The History of the Body’, in which, according to Mandressi, ‘the anatomy of the body permits the reading of a that body throughout a series of operations of cutting up the corpse, the times of action cover the times of exposure, starting from those of reading’, then, ‘the reading of a text becomes the reading of a body’ (320). These excisions are related in the text with the analysis of language where the writer somehow destroys the objects it apprehends; the poet restitutes them and forges a new identity from the scattered pieces of his experience. The fluidity of the poet’s existence is in line with the process behind his creative manners; at this price, he expects to find his own identity.

3. ANALYSIS

*“I’m an ever rollin’ wheel, without a destination real.
I’m an ever spinning top, whirling around till i drop”.*

-Going in Circles, Friends of Distinction.

3.1. Fluid city: its interconnection with the subject through a symbolic approach

To begin with, the concept of flux will be interpreted and contextualized in its relationship with the city and how the former characterizes and determines the configuration of the latter. This idea will be connected, at some point, with the theory of humors presented by Mandressi and how they become conditioned by ‘the quotidian experience’ -in this case- crossed by the urban space. In regards with this perception of the city, the act of writing in itself is going to be grasped ‘fluid’ as well and in constant movement. This will be understood by Deleuze as a process of ‘becoming’, imbued in a time where the city is also undergoing a process of transformation and ‘delirium’. This notion will be tackled by the very same narrator: ‘Up to the present, my idea in collaborating with myself has been to get off the gold standard of literature. My idea briefly has been to present a resurrection of the emotions, to depict the conduct of human being in the stratosphere of ideas, that is, in the grip of delirium’ (Miller 220).

Additionally, in Miller’s literature there is a constant sense of detachment, a desire to escape, or in Deleuze’s words, ‘to trace a line’ (2). Nevertheless, he would not simply travel from one place to another; he would incarnate the expatriate or the voluntary outcast and, it is in this ‘acquisition of [a] clandestinity by means of writing’ where Deleuze will identify Miller’s ‘becoming’, which has to do with a paradoxical desire to detach himself from language. In this case the metaphor, taking into consideration Ricoeur’s ideas, is going to fulfill an important role in the process of signification; attributing to the act of interpretation a sense of innovativeness and certainly a way out to the quotidian use of language that Miller criticizes. The act of ‘become capable of love without interpretation [and] let there just be fluxes’ (Deleuze 28) is what the author incarnates in *Tropic of Cancer*.

The narrator portrays the image of the flux in concrete images as well as in abstract ones. In the following quote, he uses it as a symbol –reflection- of the streaming of his thoughts: ‘My mind is occupied with these thoughts but [...] after I have crossed the Seine, after I have put

behind me the carnival of lights, that I allow my mind to play with these ideas [...] I am being stubbed by the miracle of these *waters that reflect a forgotten world*' (5-6). He makes a parallel between the flux of his thoughts and the flux of the waters in the Seine; as if the latter, somehow conditions the way his body works and behaves. This is intimately related to what Ricoeur advances in relation to the symbolic experience that is 'linked to the cosmos', when he refers that he is 'stubbed by the miracle of these waters', also following 'the logic of correspondences, which binds discourse with the universe of the Sacred' (75). The 'sacred', then, is epitomized in 'the miracle of these waters' because it represents a vision that cannot be put into words. Mongin would also refer to the flux of the Seine and how it reflects a forgotten history when he declares that 'the city plays cleverly with the historical periods' (68) regarding the very same disposition of the urban architecture which is cyclical and autonomous. In addition, it is important to mention that the city plays with these historical periods, precisely because of the fluid state it represents, in which no experience counts as permanent. Therefore, history will be managed by the city, always transmuting and intertwining different intervals of time. In this particular moment, the narrator would feel part of a bigger cycle than his own immediate experience as a subject; he will feel attached to a historic community.

The narrator also talks about the Seine River almost at the end of the novel, referring to its history, its immutable cycle of continuity alluding directly to its course 'running through his veins'. He is intimately connected with what is happening around him till the point of making difficult to separate his own self with his reflection. There is a similar passage in which he is 'wandering along the Seine at night, wandering and wandering, and going mad with the beauty of it, the trees leaning to, the broken images in the water, the rush of the current under the bloody lights of the bridges' (14). It is quite clear how the fluid status of the river is extended to that of blood through images of 'a rush' and 'a current'; two 'movements' that are likely to be connected as they share the characterization of blood as well as of rivers. Besides, it is significant to mention how, in this fashion, the natural land-mark interacts with the culturally shaped urban space through the relationship between the flux of the river and the city; the 'current' of the river resembles that of people in the city, in a 'rush' hour.

The fragments about the figure of the trees and their reflection as 'broken images' easily remind us of a poem by T.S. Eliot in the *Waste Land*, in which he talks to 'the son of man' who, in the city, is only capable of seeing 'broken images', that is to say, just distorted reflections of

reality¹. At this point, Mongin's theories about a 'polyphonic city' as well as the concept of 'polisemia' used by Ricoeur come into place. Although these concepts apply to different spheres, i.e.: the urban landscape and the display of discourse, they complement each other in the sense that they point to the very same phenomena: 'si bien la ciudad es un espacio singular, hace posible una experiencia urbana que se despliega según diversos registros y niveles de sentidos (Mongin 32).

The city of Paris, on the other hand, would permit the narrator to acknowledge his fragmented and detached condition as a modern subject because, in the novel, the very same image of the city is presented as 'an obstetric instrument that tears apart the alive embryo from the womb and puts it into the incubator' (Miller 26), that is to say, it takes the narrator back to his origins: 'It is not an accident that propels people like us to Paris. Paris is simply an artificial stage, a revolving stage that permits the spectator to glimpse all phases of the conflict', 'each one *slips back* into his soil: one dreams back to Berlin, New York, Chicago, Vienna. Vienna is never more Vienna than in Paris' (26). The city of Paris is, then, attributed with a sense of a timeless experience in which you can detach yourself from any restriction. It is considered as a place of transition, a fluid atmosphere, never to stay or die there. T.S. Eliot will refer the very same experience inside big Metropolises, through the image of the 'Unreal city' precisely because they are devoid of concreteness².

Again, this idea is associated with Mongin's approach to the city when he characterizes it as 'a venture of continuous foundation [that] does not have a beginning, a determined origin, or a definite end (65). This previous idea is also associated with Deleuze's perception of the voyage that Miller undertakes, and the 'English zero' which explains the null effects of time and space in this generation of American writers: 'I am one who was lost in the crowd, whom the fizzing lights made dizzy, a zero saw everything about him reduced to mockery' (Miller 226). In this quote, the narrator is characterizing his own experience as something to laugh about, with no strings attached or expectations.

However, in spite of the narrator's sarcastic mood, he will evidently feel lost, for which he will make a comparison between America and Paris: 'They say America is a country of

¹ T.S. Eliot makes reference to the river in *Four Quartets*: 'I do not know much about gods; but I think that the river / Is a strong brown god—sullen, untamed and intractable' (14)/ 'The river is within us, the sea is all about us' (14).

² "Falling towers/ Jerusalem Athens Alexandria Vienna London Unreal" (11).

extremes, and it is true that the thermometer registers degrees of cold which are practically unheard of here; but the cold of a Paris winter is a cold unknown to America, it is psychological, an inner as well as an outer cold' (Miller 217). It can be grasped in this passage a metaphorical connection with cold and a 'psychological cold' that the narrator undergoes while living in Paris, which detaches from the concrete cold that could be found anywhere else. This coldness is associated to the indifference of people and to the corresponding effects of Modernity that the subject identifies in his daily life.

As a consequence, the narrator established that 'everyone has his private tragedy: 'It is on the blood now- misfortune, ennui, grief, suicide. The atmosphere is saturated with disaster, frustration, futility [...] and actually assumes it as part of his body, localized in the perpetual flux of his blood. 'However, the effect upon me is exhilarating. Instead of being discouraged, or depressed, I enjoy it. I am crying for more and more disasters, for bigger calamities, for grander failures. I want the whole world to be out of whack; I want everyone to scratch himself to death' (11). This is related to the fact of reacting and waking up to the world and stop behaving as if we were blind to all that happens around us. The fact of being sick but ignoring it taking pills and tranquilizers is the clearest symptom that the world is on the brink of chaos: 'the age demands violence, but we are getting only abortive explosions' (10). Regarding this experience, Mandressi says that 'the development of preventive medicine has interfered in the experience of sickness' (32), referring to a non-authentic process that at some point in History was considered to be normal and part of everybody's life. Therefore, it could be broadly assumed that Modern society cuts with 'authenticity' by means of 'patches' that control the natural state of chaos of the world. However, in spite of the joyous tone that he displays in the descriptions, his style is marked by a grotesque approximation to the matter: 'How wonderful it would be if she had a hemorrhagia!' (98). This feeling is associated to the permanent state of 'normality' that characterizes the modern world, although everything is collapsing behind.

Mongin establishes that 'the city, due to the fact that it contains time, is replenished at the same time by continuity and discontinuity' and it is this idea precisely which is behind Miller's style and themes inside the novel, the constant back and forth between these two experiences: 'Still I can't get it out of my mind what a discrepancy there is between ideas and living. A permanent dislocation, though we try to cover the two with a bright awning. Ideas are related to living: liver ideas, kidney ideas, interstitial ideas, etc' (Miller 219). This has to do with the

narrator's style through which he aims to connect his bodily experiences in a grotesque fashion precisely because it has taken the structure of the body and its inner functioning as well. Deleuze talks about the very same idea of 'jump across intervals' which was related to the state of chaos and timeless disposition of the city that the narrator experiences and portrays in his writing.

To continue, the narrator provides a description of the city of Paris as a hostile but appealing place in which everybody experiences suffering. Besides, the narrator personifies the city, attributing it human qualities such as the capacity 'to hold' or 'to grab'. This is also related to the fact that the city and the subject have become one single entity where urban features are contained in the body and vice versa: 'He didn't really want to leave Paris, anymore than I did. Paris hadn't been good to him, any more than it had to me, or to anybody [...] Paris takes hold of you, grabs you by the balls' (Miller 155).

The narrator also identifies the city of Paris as, although indifferent, with the capacity to detach himself from the past and take him over into a 'flight', which Deleuze also identifies as the search for a pure identity:

'One can live in Paris –I discovered that! - On just grief and anguish. A bitter nourishment, I was flirting with disaster [...] the mystery of his pilgrimage, the flight which the poet makes over the face of the earth, the heroic descent to the very bowels of the earth, the body struggle to emerge clean of the past; the enigmas take on new meanings. One walks the streets knowing that he is mad, possessed, [filled with] these cold, indifferent faces' (164).

The last portion of this quote connects as well with the anti-heroic spirit previously mentioned. Besides, the narrator connects this feeling with the fragmented perception of the past, which makes his own body break into pieces: 'I wandered aimlessly through this muddy lane bespattered with blood, fragments of the past detached themselves and floated listlessly before my eyes, I saw my own blood being spilled' (165). We can draw a parallel with the subject's experience of fluidity in which the river mixes his perceptions till the point of confusing them with a dream: 'Rolling over the Seine [...] he looked around at the buildings as though he were seeing them in a dream' (Miller 155). This idea is explored by Mongin when he refers to the city as 'a place that exchanges fluxes of different nature associated to the potential of interactions inside it' (143).

Regarding the relationship the narrator develops with the fluid city, he ends up concluding the following:

‘I love everything that flows’, said the great blind Milton of our times [...] Yes, I said to myself, I too love everything that flows, rivers, sewers, lava, semen, blood, bile, words, sentences. I love the urine that pours out scalding, I love the words of hysterics and sentences that flow on like dysentery and mirror all the sick images of the soul [...] I love everything that flows, even the menstrual flow that carries away the seed unfecund. I love everything that flows, everything that has time in it and becoming, that brings us back to the beginning where there is never end [...] all that is fluid, melting, dissolute and dissolvent, all the pus and dirt that in flowing is purified, that loses its sense of origin, that makes the great circuit toward death and dissolution’ (Miller 233).

In this passage the metaphorical expressions of ‘everything that flows’ come to represent the different approaches to the idea of flux in this work. First of all, the narrator acknowledges the physical fluidity of ‘rivers, semen, lava’, among others, as well as the figurative fluidity contained in language: ‘words, sentences’. Second of all, he refers to the futility of language acting just as a ‘mirror’ of reality as well as to the ‘unfecund’ quality of the fluid city due to its constant reformulation, opposed to the idea of permanence and firmness needed for something to grow. Third, he refers to the concept of ‘becoming’ as a process of ‘purification’ ‘where there is never end’ and a ‘sense of origin’ is lost, connecting immediately with Deleuze’s ‘becoming’ and its final connection to the ‘dissolution’ of the subject into the never-ending fluids of the city. Concerning the metaphors that could be found inside –and in relation to– the city, Mongin remarks that ‘La ciudad es una mezcla de lo mental y lo edificado, de lo imaginario y lo físico’ (24). In that sense, the novel portrays the very same mixture between the narrator’s body and emotions: ‘all those yearning looks bestowed on the buildings and statues, I had looked at them so hungrily, so desperately, that by now my thoughts must have become a part of the very buildings and statues, they must be saturated with my anguish’ (Miller 161). The mixture between the ‘mental’ and the ‘built-up’ is evidently expressed in these melting emotions over the very architecture of the city, both becoming inseparable due to the very same circular organization of the city.

Almost the same idea could be seen in the following quote: ‘I find myself in a world so natural, so complete, that I am lost. I have the sensation of being immersed in the very plexus of life, local from whatever place, position or attitude I take my stance’ (Miller 146), nevertheless,

the narrator would establish now a relationship with space as if he was in the centre of something bigger than what he could possibly embrace. This could be associated to what Mongin describes as a limited relationship with space which always points outwards –centrifugal nature- but that is in balance with a ‘centripetal force’ that points inwards (55). As a consequence of these forces in action, the urban subject feels at the centre in every position, because the fluid disposition of the currents inside the city soaks the individual with an overwhelming uncertainty and displacement. Regarding the literary interpretation it could be said that, as well as there is a contraposition of forces inside the city, the very linguistic expression is blurry and undefined, as Ricoeur will point out: ‘Todas las fronteras están borrosas entre las cosas, lo mismo que entre las cosas y nosotros mismos’ (69).

Regarding the previously mentioned forces in contact inside the city the narrator will declare: ‘Even as the world goes to smash there is one man who remains at the core, who becomes more solidly fixed and anchored, more *centrifugal* as the process of dissolution quickens’ (Miller 148), suggesting that the world is not totally lost, opposing the moment of dissolution to a ‘solid’ disposition that remains in the center of the city. Moreover, the passage adds the variable of time, which seems to trigger an outward movement together with the rapid and fluid pace of the city’s degeneration (54). In addition, the narrator poses the problem of space in a different but complementary fashion: ‘The earth is moving out of its orbit, the axis has shifted (Miller 148), referring to the subverting quality of the inner fluid disposition of the city, which makes the ‘solidly fixed and anchored man’ question himself about his true center and his real identity.

When he strolls through the city, the narrator frequently talks about people of other countries, remarking on the multicultural quality of Paris in those days. One group is the Germans: ‘Ah, the Germans! They take you all over like an omnibus. They give you indigestion’. (23) At this point, he is referring to them as if they could cause him a physical impact; this reveals how much the author is going to connect his feelings with his bodily experiences, or the effect of his emotions in his own body.

He will make connections between Paris and parts of the body and refer to it as a ‘physical Paris’:

‘It was only this morning that I became conscious again of this physical Paris of which I have been unaware for weeks. Perhaps it is because the book has begun to grow inside me. I walk through the streets big with child and the cops escort me across the street. Women get up to offer me their seats. Nobody pushes me rudely anymore. I am pregnant [...] mi big stomach pressed against the weight of the world’ (23).

In this quote the narrator develops the symbol of the book growing inside him and the way it prevents him from moving freely through the streets as he usually does. Although it seems an obstacle, it allows him to enjoy all the facilities of the city and gains the respect of the people around him. Besides, the book is the representation of his own identity and experience as an urban subject, as well as the weight of language; the only thing that is left for him to fight against the world. This metaphor of the book as a baby can be also associated to what Bakhtin states in ‘the grotesque body’, and the figure of the ‘stammerer’ who has to let the words get out from his abdomen.

In relation to this use of metaphorical language, Mongin would state that: ‘La superposición y la imbricación de los espacios interiores desembocan en un espacio público concebido como su prolongación’ (153). The previous statement defines very accurately the relationship the narrator will establish between himself and the universe, at the moment in which he explains the multiple relationships between the objects and experiences found in the city: ‘The fragment works into unity and the astral influences dominate the movements of human fluids as they control terrestrial liquids’ (Mandressi 327). This episode helps to round off the discussion about fluidity inside the city and how one influences the other and vice versa.

3.2. The sick body: the accumulation of fluxes, their projection over the city and the concept of authenticity.

As a consequence of the excessive flux found in the urban landscape, in his novel, Miller characterizes the world that surrounds him as something in process of disintegration, which loses its harmonic and organic arrangement. This operation would be tackled in this work through the image of the flux –of rivers, blood, urine- and the function of the organs indeed, fragmented, but

not separated from those of nature and the city: 'I can feel the city palpitating, as if it were a heart just removed from a warm body' (Miller 83).

Nevertheless, 'terms such as "net" and "flux" articulate since long time ago the urban language [...] marked by continuity and not any more by discontinuity' (Mongin 196). The style of Miller's writing also follows the pattern of a liquid display of events as a symptom of modern life's rhythm: 'behind the words there is chaos' (Miller 9). This problem with language is also reflected in the imminent symptoms of the sick body and the missing of its organic functioning along with the very same processes mirrored in the fluid quality of the city. Taking into account Ricoeur's definition of the symbol, what the narrator is doing by making a comparison between 'the city' and 'a heart' does not necessarily point to a substitution of meaning but to the possibility of these two meanings to transmit a whole new sense, in which the heart and the city can be impregnated with a lifeless characterization.

Therefore, the proper organization of the body is impossible when it is sick, precisely because 'the concerning about health is imposed tacitly over the preoccupation about sickness' defining it as 'a state of complete mental and social welfare' (Mandressi 31). Under these conditions the body starts to acquire mechanic features and, the organs that before worked together and harmonically, end up transforming into replaceable pieces of machinery or only fragments. This process results in a body that works artificially: 'Here there are no bad odors, just the smell of cast lead' (Miller 72). In this quote, Miller is even recognizing that he has been forged as any other mechanic device, expelling the smell of lead after his manufacture. However, he is not yet assuming that everything is lost and impressively maintains a particular style which seems to celebrate life. According to this idea, Mandressi would state that 'health and sickness are not opposed entities anymore, actually, they combine in different degrees in each individual; sickness is an inevitable proof that pretends to strengthen the organism's biological defenses [...] It is not a stigma, is what characterized that which is alive' (31). Therefore, it is not strange that the narrator exalts his illness in order to reinforce the idea that he is still vigorous.

Following the same line of thought, the narrator portrays the world as cancerous several times, or as a cancer in itself: 'The world is a cancer eating itself away; when into the womb of time everything is again withdrawn chaos will be restored and chaos is the score upon which reality is *written*' (2). Chaos, in this quote, is reflected in the act of writing; therefore, it acquires a style that resembles a stream of consciousness, totally impregnated with the fluid

characteristics of the city. Nevertheless, sickness is treated here as a state of order that does not respond to the natural state of frenzy that characterizes the world. Therefore, sickness is treated here paradoxically, because what it generally means is a break of the status quo by means of the alteration of the bodily functions, which in this case, are expressed literally through the symbolic use of a cancer as a proper entity. Although in this case, the narrator suggests that nothing is more tranquil and predictable than sickness in the context of Modernity. In these circumstances, Mongin refers to the city as ‘completely formed by stratifications of accumulated time and space, of orders made and unmade’ (64), alluding to the possible causes that produce a sick world in an established hierarchy of accumulated time and space. Deleuze will also point to the causes of illness in the writer, proposing the following: “Why does one write? It may be that the writer has a delicate health, a weak constitution’ he is ‘too weak for the life which runs in him or for the affects which pass in him’ (Deleuze 33), establishing the hypothesis that the writer chooses to liberate the weight of his experiences –sickness- through the use of language.

According to the act of writing, the feeling of chaos is inseparable and permanent. As a consequence, the body feels the effects of sickness, but now in the form of disorganization. This state produces a sense of self-protection and fragmentation of society, which is going to be expressed more clearly in the following quote:

“When I see the figures of men and women moving listlessly behind their prison walls, sheltered, secluded for a few brief hours, I am appalled by the potentialities for drama that are still contained in these feeble bodies. Behind the walls there are human sparks, and yet never a conflagration. Are these men and women, I ask myself, or are these shadows, shadows of puppets dangled by invisible strings? They move in freedom apparently, but they have nowhere to go” (Miller 222).

Here the figure of the ‘puppet’ reveals how the narrator feels inside the city with a certain degree of liberty of movement, nevertheless always coming back to the same starting point, or even worse, with no clear destination. Also, the image of the walls as shelter can remit us to the limits of the body and the way they paradoxically protect us from the outer world while at the same time they hinder our complete integration with the fluid city. In this respect, the narrator talks about a world ‘which is peculiar to the big cities, the world of men and women whose last drop of juice has been squeezed out by the machine- the martyrs of modern progress: ‘It is this mass of bones and collar buttons which the painter finds so difficult to put flesh on’ (146). This

quote refers explicitly to the humoral theory of the body that has been, figuratively, liquidated by the machine which is the epitome of the modern city. And because the humors “suggested likely relationships between constitutive inner states and external physical manifestations [...]; sickness occurred when one of those humors accumulated or went dry (Mandressi 326)”. Therefore, this ‘last drop of juice’ metaphorically takes away the last vital element, the drop that makes the difference between the human and the machine.

In addition, the humoral changes of the body are markedly present in the novel, as long as they portray to what extent the urban subject suffers the effects of the city in his own organism: ‘And the more substantial, the more solid the core of me became, the more delicate and extravagant appeared the close, palpable reality out of which I was being squeezed; in the measure that I became more and more metallic’ (87). Although the body is going under the process of mechanization, ‘in Paris, the urban body is organic’ (Mongin 47), in the sense that it possesses a centre from which the whole body of the city expands. Therefore, ‘Paris is perceived according to a singular spatial dynamic of progressive expansion [where] the center cannot but refer to itself and it does not conceive exterior spaces’ (47).

Furthermore, the narrator realizes about the fragmented condition of the body by making analogies with the fragmented condition of the city as well:

‘The city sprouts out like a huge organism diseased in every part [...] low passageways that flank the old arteries of Paris. In the middle of the court is a clump of decrepit buildings which have so rotted away that they have collapsed on one another and formed a sort of intestinal embrace [...] the colors die. They shift from purple to dried blood [...] a fetid odor seeps from the walls, the odor of a mildewed mattress; Europe-medieval, grotesque, monstrous’. (37)

Miller’s narration could be related here with Ricoeur’s theory in relation to the perception of the symbol and the connection between the ‘bios’ of the world expressed in metaphorical language with a fertile symbolic content: ‘It’s as though I had no clothes on and every pore of my body was a window and all the windows open and the light flooding my gizzards. I can feel the light curving under the vault of my ribs and my ribs hang there over a hollow nave trembling with reverberations [...] (68). Some inferences could be made from the previous quote in relation to the link between a physical experience and the absorption of the city fluxes because “la experiencia poética de la ciudad, indisociable de una experiencia física y mental, corre pareja con la experiencia de la libertad [...] la ciudad ha dejado de ser uno de los canales de irrigación”

(Mongin 157); then, the figure of the metaphor comes up, associated to circulation, and its effects on the planning of urban spaces; it fulfills not only a medical function but also social. Harvey, for example, was interested in the reasons why blood cannot circulate appropriately arriving at the conclusion that there are urban dysfunctions. For the first time, the idea of a bad circulation in urban planning could be thought to produce equivalent problems in the body. Mongin will also notice this when he states that 'fluxes triumphed over the places that privileged circulation' (151). The metaphor of circulation will be displaced to that of blood and later on into the flux of work forces, financial circulation, urban transport, and finally, the flux of information: 'A new day is dawning, a metallurgical day, the form of the world grows blurred, osmosis there still is, and here and there articulation, but at the periphery the veins are all varicose' (Miller 148).' The previous extract refers to a parallel between the natural embrace of the city and its mechanic counterpart that has provoked an organic collapse, destroying the body as it should be.

In association to this point, the narrator is not even capable of providing a characterization of the city, precisely because it is falling into pieces:

'I suddenly realized the impossibility of ever revealing to her that Paris which I had gotten to know, a Paris that has never existed except by virtue of my loneliness, such a huge Paris! [...] it is a Paris that has to be lived, that has to be experienced each day in a thousand different forms of torture, a Paris that grows inside you like a cancer, and grows and grows until you are eaten away by it' (Miller 162).

The main topic present in these lines is that of a limited space where infinite movements can be done. This closed space produces the state of sickness in the narrator, which is also reflected through his portrayal of the city as cancerous. Because of the same reason, he goes in circles, never finding its centre.

Accordingly, Miller acknowledges that 'for a hundred years or more the world, *our* world, has been dying. And not one man, in these last hundred years or so, has been crazy enough to put a bomb up the asshole of creation and set it off' (24). This quotation refers to the need for something real, something that actually generates a change in a moribund and unaware city. Very similar to the passage in which he claims for a world of violence, which is only getting 'abortive explosions' (10). 'The world is rotting away, dying piecemeal. But it needs the *coup de grace*, it needs to be blown to the smithereens' [...] this world has died out but has not been buried'. The author is clearly going through a feeling of impotence in which he cannot do anything because the symptoms of a sick world were not heard in time. The world is dead now

and the causes of this death need to be explored and redeemed. In this respect, the narrator would refer to the procedures or actions to take in order to 'dismantle' the bizarre city: 'To fathom the new reality it is first necessary to dismantle the drains, to lay open the gangrened ducts which compose the genitourinary system that supplies the excreta of art. The odor of the day is permanganate and formaldehyde. The drains are clogged with strangled embryos' (Miller 149).

At some point, the image of the city of Paris acquires the characteristics of a show, a spectacle, or a simple representation: 'The Rue Amélie is one of my favorite streets; it is one of those streets which by good fortune the municipality has forgotten to pave' (60). A desire to come back to more authentic and past experiences is present. This is associated also with a Romantic approach to the city. 'It's good occasionally to see a modest little church. Paris is full of pompous cathedrals' (60). This last quote is directly pointing to the narrator's necessity for authentic, original experiences. The fact that cathedrals are described as 'pompous' responds to the modern phenomenon of making a show out of every quotidian experience, even out of religious icons. Guy Debord would repair in this modern phenomenon, associating it to 'a fluid state' in order to 'possess it as a congealed form' (11), and Benjamin's reproduction argues about the same; where the experience of the 'modest little church' immediately connects with the idea of a more honest interaction with the place, while, later one, it has been replaced by almost the pure contemplation of a supposedly sacred place. The same happens with the image that Miller provides immediately after: 'Sleep, Napoleon! It was not your ideas what they wanted; it was only your corpse! (60)'.

3.3. The subject and the machine: a symbolic approach to the mechanized individual experience.

As a result of the world being sick and in a constant decadence, the modern subject is gradually converting into a machine. The fact that Mongin considers Paris as organic, does not exclude –in fact, strengthens- the scenery of a sick city where the organs of the body are not any more essential for its appropriate functioning. Miller projects this idea into the following quote: 'The dramatist is sick and from above his scalp looks more scabrous tan ever'; 'What need have I for money? I am a writing machine. The last screw has been added. The thing flows. Between

me and the machine there is no estrangement. I am the machine...' (25). Here the narrator assumes that he has transformed his nature and that now he is a mechanical construction. The very fact of being immersed in the city changes his human quality and also makes him dependent on the system; he does not even need to eat, because he is already –essentially- a machine: 'With all that lead in your veins and your clothes saturated with sweat and patchouli [...] little things like geography, costume, speech, architecture don't mean a goddamn thing' (Miller 160). The narrator is proposing not a metaphorical parallel between the machine and the modern body but a concrete mixture of fluids and the city itself. In the following quote, the process of crafting machines out of men and women ends up the framing of the scene; 'passed me men and women ignited with sulfur, porters in calcium livery opening the jaws of hell, fame walking on crutches, dwindled by the sky-scrappers, chewed to a frazzle by the spiked mouth of the machines' (Miller 226).

Furthermore, the narrator is going to see a mechanical disposal of the world in every situation and every person he meets:

'The girl is lying on the edge of the bed [...] It's like watching one of those crazy machines which throw the newspaper out, millions and billions and trillions of them with their meaningless headlines. The machine seems more sensible, crazy as it is, and more fascinating to watch than the human beings and the events which produce it [...] I wouldn't be able to differentiate between this phenomenon and the rain falling or a volcano eruption' (130).

Here the narrator makes a parallel between human activities and how the processes produced mechanically are more appealing for him, precisely because the body has acquired a mechanic arrangement as a replacement of the organic body. Besides, there is an interesting parallelism of concepts between this 'crazy machine' and the eruption of a volcano, expressing that he sees no longer a difference between the chaos of the city and a natural disaster. This is associated with Ricoeur's ideas on 'the non-semantic moment of the symbol' in which he states that 'the symbol is connected to the cosmos' (74) and that 'it is an irreducible element which expresses a correspondence between natural appearances and human activities (75)'. If we take further this idea, it could be proposed that at some point, there will be no distinction between nature and the city: 'The future belongs to the machine, to the robots. He was the Poet of the Body and the Soul, Whitman. The first and the last poet, [...] there is no equivalent in the

languages of Europe for the spirit he immortalize. Europe is saturated with art and her soil is full of dead bones' (Miller 217). Besides, the objective of mentioning Whitman is made in order to preserve the idea of a 'body' that contains a 'soul' and not the painful traces of 'war'. Such ideas are central in Whitman's book *Leaves of Grass*, where the poet builds up a hymn to Nature and War; "Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more, The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them" (471). What Whitman identifies as a complete blending between Nature and manhood is also felt by the narrator in *Tropic of Cancer*; although with a different –in fact, pessimistic- tone: 'I felt the wars inside me, I felt the crimes, I felt the misery' (88).

It is in these states of illumination in which the narrator can open his mind and think with more clarity. Miller compares it with the clarity of the epileptic experiences, in order to illustrate the spasms of his body and probably all the symptoms of illumination that are not necessarily identified with a divine experience. The sense of clairvoyance is associated always to a bodily affair where the senses of the modern subject collapse or alter, entering into a sort of communion with the outer world: 'It is as though I had no clothes on and every pore of my body was a window and all the windows open and the light flooding my gizzards. I can feel the light curving under the vault of my ribs and my ribs hang there over a hollow nave trembling with reverberations [...] (68).

To support the previous idea, in this quote extracted from the *Tropic of Capricorn*, a reference to the mechanic city could be found and the sense of detachment that characterizes the anti-heroic experience:

"Again the night, the cold, mechanical night of New York in which there is no peace, no refuge, no intimacy. The immense, frozen solitude [...] to walk meaningless and unfecundated through the bright glitter of the calcimined streets, to think aloud in full solitude on the edge of madness, to be of a city and feel no part of it, is to become oneself a city, a world of dead stone, of waste light, of unintelligible motion, of imponderables and incalculables" (120).

In this extract, the experience of the 'cold mechanical night', of 'no refuge' and 'no intimacy' are interrelated as one being the consequence of the other. The subject is no longer feeling the warm of a vital body but instead, he is receiving the coldness of a mechanical world. The 'unfecundated' is equally relevant -and compared- to that of the dead city and its symbolic

meaning, pointing to the impossibility to create anything out of it; a city that has lost its organic functioning in which nothing can grow. Inside this passage, an anti-heroic feeling can be perceived as well, mainly through the experience of solitude and how this makes him feel 'on the edge of madness'. Besides, he makes reference to the idea of himself becoming a city in which motion is now 'unintelligible' and, as Mongin will state, build upon 'incalculable' arrangements of the space.

Another point to be discussed is the resistance of the body into becoming a machine through the rejection of all the constructs invented by humanity: 'Today, I am proud to say that I am *inhuman*, that I belong not to men and governments that I have nothing to do with the creeds and principles. I have nothing to do with the creaking machinery of humanity- I belong to the earth!' (Miller 229). In this respect, Deleuze will refer to a state in which the urban subject feels that he does not belong anywhere: 'We must define a special function which is identical neither with health nor illness; always at the frontier on the border of a band or a multiplicity; it is the outsider' (42). The 'outsider' here comes to incarnate the machine that has lost its connection with its origins. The narrator in *Tropic of Cancer* will allude to a necessary sense of affiliation to society, as well as to nature: 'I want a world of men and women, of rivers that carry you to places, that put you in touch with other men and women, with architecture, religion, plants, animals- rivers in which men drown, drown not in myth and legend and books and dust of the past, but in time and space and history' (Miller 231). In fact, he refers to an intimate desire which is rooted in the lost authenticity of the world and its gradual automation.

The narrator explains that there is "nothing better between five and seven than to be pushed around in that throng, to move along the tide and everything whirling in your brain" (14), as if the external movement of the city fluxes were pushing him to think through the same means. In connection with the previous point, the narrator describes a scene in which 'everything [is] soft and enchanting as we walk over the bridge; smoke coming up between our legs, the tracks creaking, semaphores in our blood [...] everything around us is crumbling, crumbling' (17). Here the narrator is melting with the elements he sees inside the city; he is becoming another instrument of the machinery of the world and he acknowledges that whatever happens to the city it would happen to him. At this point, the natures of these experiences tend to match and satisfy an almost inseparable construction -in spite of their contrary origins. Similarly, Ricoeur

states that 'literary criticism is a process that comes and goes from the text to the critic, in an endless operation' (11), making an immediate connection between the text and the critic as well as the narrator will do between the city and himself. The narrator is constantly providing the reader with different images of the city, which adds to the very same conceptual reconfiguration of the city and viceversa: 'the poetic project is to destroy the world as usually taken for granted' (Ricoeur 72), and the very same author of *Tropic of Cancer* will support this idea: "the task which the artist implicitly sets himself is to overthrow existing values, to make of the chaos about him an order which is his own' (Miller 228).

The references to the city as a sick body are clear; the 'old arteries of Paris', 'walls that collapse on one another in a sort of intestinal embrace' 'the odor the walls expel', 'the colors as dry blood'. Besides, across the street, a cinema offers the movie '*Metropolis*', which works as the perfect prototype of the modern modality, along with the ironic parallel between these two episodes which coexist in the same street. To add to the subject experience in the city, Miller assumes the importance of the machine and the needs it develops in him: 'Ideas [are] pouring from me like sweat [...] my best thoughts always come when I am away from the machine' 'In Europe you get contaminated. You rot'. (45) He feels that he has grown a relationship with the machine that somehow curtails his creation and, under this assumption, the narrator attributes the machine the characteristics of a repressor that does not let imagination flow freely. Therefore, the 'sick body' comes to represent the primary stage of a process of disintegration in which the 'machine' is the final product. This phenomenon reveals Miller's perception of the city which is intimately coupled with the degradation of his own body.

The narrator establishes that he has lost something as a human which is part of the new mechanism of the world. This mechanism 'added a new status to the fragment, making a piece out of it, a gear of a mechanism that makes the machine, the privileged metaphor of what is alive' (Mandressi 321). This quote offers an alternative insight into the way the narrator feels about himself when he utters 'I am a machine', in the sense that he does not consider him as stamped by the system, but full of energy and rebelliousness. Therefore, should we consider the machine-being as the new epitome of the urban subject's configuration? The narrator has even acquired a life-style in which his feelings and memories are treated as machines:

‘My brain opens up, all the images and memories that had been laboriously or absent-mindedly assorted, labeled, documented, filed, sealed and stamped break forth pell-mell like ants pouring out of a crack in the sidewalk; the world ceases to revolve, time stops, the very nexus of my dreams is broken and dissolved and my guts spill out in a grand schizophrenic rush, an evacuation that leaves me face to face with the Absolute’ (Miller 223).

In this quote, the narrator makes a comparison between his ‘mechanized’ memories and the movement of ‘ants pouring’, establishing the center of this discussion precisely in the rapid pace of urban life and the ‘schizophrenic rush’ that makes him connect with this superior vision. In this sense, it can be said that fluidity –as a partner of celerity- opens up a particular stage between the concrete world and the narrator’s imagination, in which he can meet the Absolute, intended here as the characterization of lucidity.

3.4 Body and Language: chaotic organisms under examination

On account of the fact that the mechanic constitution of the urban landscape affects the subject, it is important to consider as well, the effects of language in the configuration of space and also in the layout of the narrator’s identity. In regards to the relationship between body and language and the excess of ‘codes’, in *Tropic of Cancer* a particular passage can be found to support the argument: ‘The lions are disappointed. They expected blood, bones gristle, sinews. They chew and chew, but the words are gum and gum is indigestible. [...] they brought up with them an algebraic language [...] their language was lost’. Here the author refers to his disillusioned awareness of language and how difficult it is to trust it, since it only provides us with incomprehensible signs; ‘algebraic’ expressions of what should be understood and ‘digestible’. In this problem, the role of the city is to provide the urban subject with endless pieces of irrelevant information, to bombard him with publicity and to reinforce the idea that language serves only for the management of form rather than supply us with significant meaning.

To extend the previous idea, it could be said that language is chaotic in the sense that it does not direct to any specific point. At this moment, we can recall Melville’s *Bartleby*, and what Deleuze explains about the phrase ‘I would prefer not to’ which paradoxically points to a ‘preference’ that does not exist. In that sense, the phrase will never come back to the same

meaning and will, instead, point to infinite signifiers where the word 'prefer' would be empty, with no preferences. The narrator adds to this idea saying that 'behind the word is chaos. Each word a stripe, a bar, but there are not and never will be enough bars to make the mesh' (9), referring to the never ending cycle of significance and also to the construction of an element of the city. Words are not there anymore to produce signification, they do not respond to an established order as it is supposed to be. They could be considered concrete codes by which we communicate, as well as the 'bars' that the narrator uses to build up his own language, nevertheless, they never end up producing a satisfactory result. These 'bars' are symbolically used as concrete elements for the construction of the city as well as for the construction of a language; therefore, the narrator attributes to the city the same qualities that he would transfer to the configuration of language.

In the novel, the body is sometimes recognized to have features of a text and a basic assumption about the parallel structure between the two is made in advance. Mandressi and Barthes will refer to the same experience of how the text can be decomposed as an open body. In this respect, the narrator provides a relevant scene for this purpose: 'I don't mean just a piece of introspective analysis... I mean that I'll lay myself down on the operating table and I'll expose all my guts... every goddamned thing' (Miller 119). In this episode, the narrator is clearly establishing a connection between his own guts and his thoughts, putting the latter in a physical relation beyond what should be contained in their basic meaning. In this respect, Ricoeur talks about a 'variance' which the metaphor accomplishes to soften in the 'expansion of meaning' (65). Taking this into consideration, Miller is proposing that he is almost disintegrated and liquidated, with no fear for his body to be opened and analyzed.

Referring now to the city of Paris, there is an important role played by language in the final configuration of the city as such. In this section I propose a relationship between the language characterized as 'apocalyptic' with the city identified as 'eternal' regarding the endless cycles of interpretation that language -in joint with the city- produce:

'The air is chill and stagnant, the language apocalyptic. Not an exit sign anywhere, no issue save death; an eternal city, Paris! More eternal than Rome, more splendid than Nineveh. And like a cork that has drifted to the dead center of the ocean, one floats here in the scum and wrack of the seas, listless, hopeless' (Miller 164).

The figure of the 'ocean' connects as well with the characterization of the city as fluid, the fact that he 'floats' in the 'wrack of the seas' correspond also to metaphors of the city flux in which he feels isolated and with no salvation. Further, the narrator refers to language as chaotic in several instances, generally associated to the collapsing display of space and the rapid pace of time: 'Behind the minutae, the chaos, the mockery of life, he detects the invisible pattern; No searching for formulae, no crucifixion of ideas, no compulsion other than to create' (Miller 147).

Around the previous extract, a feeling of frenzy can be detected, which is connected with the modern experience of sickness: 'in former times, 'la crisis se resolvía con un despliegue sudorífico y urinario, seguido de una defervescencia rápida [...] el enfermo, eufórico y agotado, se duerme' (Mandressi 30), nevertheless, the current paradigm sets the basis for a world without sickness and without sleep. Therefore, the narrator is constantly moving from one place to another, with 'no more compulsion than to create'. Further, a paradoxical relationship arises in the attempt to diminish the impact of sickness because, at the same time, it promotes a kind of health which lays its foundations in the relief of pain but not its complete removal. For that reason, the narrator is going to write tirelessly and energetically, but still reflecting on his sickness.

Also, the narrator talks about disease establishing a parallel with delirium and how it relates symbolically with the uselessness of language: 'You are cancer and delirium [...] she's got it now, the cancer and delirium, and soon you'll have to pick the scabs. Her veins are bursting, I tell you, and your talk is sawdust. No matter how much you piss away you'll never plug up the holes [...] *Words are loneliness*' (53-54). In this quote the narrator is connecting the state of insanity with the futile linguistic interventions, precisely because language cannot cover the intensity of delirium or of any other really authentic experience. In the end, 'words are loneliness' because of two reasons; first of all, because they are empty and no meaning can be attributed to them except in their differentiation from other words, and second, because they are volatile and perishable. Therefore, nothing permanent or consistent can be expected from them, starting from the point that language configures itself uniquely as a result of the interaction between codes, that is to say, that promotes infinite possibilities regarding the process of signification. This idea can be extrapolated to what happens inside the city, where the spaces are limited, but the trajectories are infinite as well.

3.5. Common v/s individual body and the anti-heroic sensibility

As for the experience of individuality inside a collective picture the narrator talks about the 'splendor of those miserable days when [he] first arrived in Paris: a bewildered, poverty-stricken individual who haunted the streets like a ghost at a banquet [...] the feeling of suffocation [...], dancing the streets on an empty belly and now and then calling in strange people' (14). This is intimately related with the assumptions of the theory presented by Dirty Realism, which basically gives rise to the anti-heroic figure, victim of the contradictions and paradoxes of the modern world, where there is a lot of 'splendor' but also 'miserable' states. This feeling is not separated from the cruel image of the city of Paris, characterized here as poor and indifferent to the narrator's suffering: 'A weird sort of contentment in those days. No appointments, no invitations for dinner, no program, no dough' (14). In this quote it is particularly curious the paradoxical relationship between those 'miserable days' and 'a sort of contentment' that he lives under these conditions. He is clearly providing an anti heroic description of himself, which basically consists in not being afflicted by his current state and assuming it with resignation.

Therefore, the narrator proposes the construction of 'a cathedral, a veritable cathedral, in the building of which everybody will assist who has lost his identity', where 'you can pray in any language you choose' (24). In this passage he, first of all, detaches the institution from its sacred conception at the moment of inviting any people to participate in its construction, as well as he breaks up with the monopoly of just one language to be spoken. 'We will build a town around it and set up a free commune. We have need for strong hands, for spirits who are willing to give up the ghost and put on flesh...' (25). In this case, the aim is to set the focus of attention in the body, in something real, showing some sort of boredom or resignation regarding the spiritual world and the necessity to recover a solid community life. At this point, the body can also be seen as the possible conformation of a community. If we take into consideration the 'Body Church', topical idea inside Christianity, in which "Christ is the head", a body without the imposition of a language could be a headless body. On top of that, the relationship with other characters will also affect in the narrator's overall perception of the city.

In broad terms he described people around him as generally not to be trusted, extremely preoccupied about money and social status, especially Jews. On the other hand, women seem to just fulfill a sexual need in him, although sometimes incarnating his desire to come into touch with chaos, which is grasped as the only real and true experience: ‘chaos is the score upon which reality is written; you, Tania, are my chaos’ (2). Therefore, the role that characters have inside the novel is to reinforce Miller’s perception of the city since they work as projections of the very same Paris. In fact, they are also described as being immersed in their fluid routines, thinking about ‘what to eat’ or ‘what to wear’.

Associated to the omnipresent figure of the flux and its parallels in the city, the narrator in the novel *Black Spring* refers to the concept of fragmentation: ‘the oceans of blood which drowned the sleep of our youth [...] we drink and drink with an insatiable thirst. We are never whole again, but living in fragments, and all our parts separated by thinnest membrane’ (12). Here the notion of fragment is associated to a solid state which could recall a communal experience as well as the feeling of completeness. Mongin would refer to this contraposition between the individual and the collective sphere: ‘Las palabras evocan directamente la dimensión corporal y responden a una pregunta: ‘¿qué hacer con mi cuerpo?’, pero sobre todo, qué hacer con mi cuerpo dentro de un cuerpo colectivo?’ (Mongin 45) This is related with the very same idea of fluidity inside the city together with this sense of an endless cycle of interpretation proposed by Ricoeur and a ‘double dimension’ found in the metaphorical expression. This double dimension in Deleuze is going to be epitomized in the form of the ‘outsider’ who is ‘identical neither with health nor illness; always at the frontier on the border of a band or a multiplicity (42), and Miller knew about this marginal feeling: ‘My world of human beings had perished; I was utterly alone in the world and for friends I had the streets, and the streets spoke to me in that sad, bitter language, compounded of human misery, yearning, regret, failure, wasted effort’ (Miller 166). This idea of community is mainly expressed in a ‘metaphor of tension’ as expressed by Ricoeur, because it cannot be translated while at the same time it produces its own sense; therefore, the streets become personalized elements that produce their own language which is the accumulation –murmur- of human failures.

Additionally, this image of the anti-hero is strong enough in Miller’s narration to appear in almost every section of the novel:

‘It is that sort of cruelty which is embedded in the streets; it is that which stares out from the walls and terrifies us when suddenly we respond to a nameless fear [...] It is that sort of thing, written into the human physiognomy of the streets which makes me flee [...] wherever there are walls, there are posters with bright venomous crabs heralding the approach of cancer. No matter where you go, no matter what you touch, there is cancer and syphilis’ (Miller 167).

This stance is deeply connected with the arguments of Dirty Realism theory, in the allusion to publicity and the expansion of ‘pop culture’, along with a careless attitude towards sickness. That is why ‘posters’ that should point to publicity, are also catalogued as ‘cancerous’.

‘I have no money, no resources, no hopes. I am the happiest man alive” (1) is the main passage that embodies the anti-heroic definition per excellence; a man that is lost but does not worry about his past or future, or what he has or not; he is just living through the act of ‘becoming’. In connection with the anti-heroic feature of the modern subject, the narrator in *Tropic of Cancer* would refer to the hypothetical situation in which the exteriorization of subjectivity could be of relevance:

‘If any man ever dared to translate all that is in his heart, to put down what is really his experience, what is really his truth, I think then the world would go to smash, that it would be blown to smithereens and no god, no accident, no will could ever again assemble the pieces, the atoms, the indestructible elements that have gone to make up the world’ (Miller 225).

In this quote the power of the symbol could be appreciated, mainly highlighting the process of disintegration of the world caused by the expression of subjects’ emotions. The author would emphasize his new body and configuration through this anti-heroic feeling of resignation: ‘If I am inhuman it is because my world has slopped over its human bounds, because to be human seems like poor, sorry, miserable affair, limited by the senses, restricted by moralities and codes, defined by platitudes and isms.’ (Miller 231). However, the narrator’s experience will not be limited to his own human condition, in fact, the way in which he perceives the city will produce a direct impact on how he sees himself and vice versa. Under this supposition, the city of Paris can be sometimes acquire anti-heroic features or become commonplace, devoid of a quest for ideals associated to his ‘heroic’ stability. In that sense, the principles given by Dirty Realism’s theory and the way Miller describes his own personal experience are finally projected in the city, conferring it with an anti-heroic sensibility as well. As a consequence, Paris is not

more 'communal' but a 'modern' city, in which the narrator identifies the decadence of the world, a lack of authenticity, solitude, misery, among others.

This lack of authenticity was perceived by Dirty Realists, precisely through an anti-heroic feeling which is also associated with a deep disenchantment of the figure of God, who looks this whole scene from above:

'And God knows, when spring comes to Paris the humblest mortal alive must feel that he dwells in paradise. A man does not need to be rich nor even a citizen, to feel this way about Paris. "Paris is filled with poor people- the proudest and filthiest lot of beggars that ever walked the earth, it seems to me. And yet they give the illusion of being at home". (61).

Associated to the present depiction of the city of Paris, the narrator describes his connection to the 'circuit' of the city as if they were those of his own 'flesh': "I join my madness, my ecstasy to the great circuit which flows through the subterranean vaults of the flesh. All this unbidden, unwanted, drunken vomit will flow on endlessly through the minds of those to come in the inexhaustible vessel that contains the history of the race' (Miller 229). Again, the connection to a common history is marked through the exaltation of the body and its fluids but necessarily paralleled and connected with the flux of the city and its history as a projection of the narrator's inner self over the urban landscape.

4. CONCLUSIONS

After the analysis of *Tropic of Cancer*, along with a complementary use of secondary sources, several issues arise regarding the individual's subjectivity and its configuration under the urban light. First of all, the body –and its projection inside the city- was understood in this context as a dysfunctional expression of the city landscape, nevertheless, the concept of flux acquired an almost independent and omnipresent role throughout the novel, making difficult to clearly define if the sick body was a projection of the sick city or vice versa. Be that as it may, the concept of flux went throughout all the sections of this work, representing the principal symbolic approach to city life and the implications it had in the subject's own configuration of identity. The interpretation of sickness gave us interesting insights too, especially regarding the different approaches to it through History. The modern era, for example, attempted to 'cure' illness without suppressing, but hiding the symptoms that cause its degradation. Therefore, to be healthy required, paradoxically, a perpetual immersion into a surreptitious sickness.

In respect of meaning and its possibilities contained in the metaphor and the symbol, neither will take just one trajectory, enriching signification in a constant flux between the two of them. Also, the natural landmark interacted with the culturally shaped urban space through the relationship between the flux of the river and the city, in which the 'current' of the river resembled that of people in the city, in a 'rush' hour. Here, the mixture the narrator feels between himself and the city becomes manifest.

In this particular point, the fluid characterization of the city plus the sensation of celerity triggered the subject's enlightenment –encountering with the Absolute- but at the same time he discovered that his personal identity had been merged and dissolute with the fluxes of the city through the acknowledgement of a chaotic disorganization of the urban landscape. At this time, the narrator develops a symbolic relationship between the city elements and the human body, a connection that threw a light into the interdependent, at times blurry, relationship between the two of them. They got affiliated till the point of becoming undistinguishable; this means that the fluid disposition of the city was projected in the narrator, causing his liquidation.

Another outcome to be mentioned is the fact that the idea of flux was never well framed precisely due to its intrinsic unbounded quality. The organization of the city landscape, as described by Mongin, was given a centripetal force, opposed to that centrifugal desire

epitomized in the protagonist. This experience of always wishing something else -which is directed outwards-, makes the subject go around in circles, driven away by the centrifugal force of the structural configuration of the city. What this generated was a constant feeling of disorientation from the part of the protagonist, which had to look for an inner balance while the exterior reality was always transforming and flowing. Therefore, the subject got mixed up with his emotions, confusing them with the fluidity of the masses and the constituents of the city, understood symbolically as extensions of his body.

This was linked as well with the idea of a bad circulation in urban planning and how it actually produced a bad circulation inside the narrator's body, arriving at the conclusion that he saw no longer a difference, for example, between the chaos found inside the city and a natural disaster. Taking into account the idea of urban configuration and its effects on the individual, it could be said that these 'incalculable' arrangements of spaces can be extrapolated to the arrangement of the body parts, creating a whole new mechanism that comes to replace the organic functions of it. On the other hand, the narrator, consciously or not, presents dirty realism's principles reflected in the city as well as in the subject. The displacement of the body and the subject's identity is going to happen in a common and shared space; nevertheless, the narrator will anyways feel the effects of solitude.

On the one hand, a distinction between metaphors and symbols was needed since a literary image of the city was created through the use of figurative language, in this case, following the concepts provided by Paul Ricoeur. Particularly, it was important to understand the progression established between the metaphor and the symbol as part of a continuum in the configuration of new meaningful expressions. On the other hand, a distinction was marked between the 'logos' and the 'bios' contained in the metaphor and the symbol respectively. Regarding the symbolic approach to Miller's figurative language, the concept of 'bios' was more appropriate since it provided us with the basic theory for the approximation to nature and the sometimes ineffable quality of 'the sacred' images inside the narrative.

Additionally, it was necessary to delineate different moments in which the novel acquired a metaphorical language, although with highly concrete aims. This phenomenon, somehow points back to the 'non-semantic moment of the symbol' in which language is limited and cannot

ascribe but to a called ‘pre-linguistic’ experience. For example, it was essential to differentiate between physical and psychological sickness –cold, fluidity-, in order to produce a new meaning regarding the concrete and the abstract approaches to the same experience, in this case, the conjunction of individual’s subjectivity and the space that surrounds it. As a result, this psychological space melted into one the subject’s experience with the quotidian unfolding of the city mechanisms –fluidity-, while at the same time it projected over the individual certain rhythms and perceptions that affected his interiority.

It was also necessary to consider, how the way we perceive the urban landscape affected our own insights about the display of modern episodes in the novel. The analysis of this text was motivated and marked by a particular way of understanding reality in the context of the twentieth century which seems to have not changed significantly. At this point, we as readers are almost inevitably drawn to create a reciprocal relationship with the novel, which at the same time allows for a totally unique approach to the modern experience of city life, in personal and literary terms.

Regarding the ways in which this literary work represents the urban landscape, it could be said that it portrays a liquid city in which the subject has been merged with other identities forging a series of experiences that do not come into contact but that coexist in the same space. This produces the sense of not belonging to anywhere and a sense of detachment regarding personal identification. Nevertheless, the projections are not that pessimistic, in the sense that, other spaces could be analyzed in order to identify whether the experience of personal identity or intimacy is totally lost or not. Personally, I think that cities such as Paris, London or New York, popularly known as big metropolises, produce mechanisms inside them in order to work tirelessly while leaving aside the subject and treat him just as another cog; another piece that is there just in favor of its proper functioning.

For an alternative development of the topic, I propose the analysis of the house as a space in which individuals –family- usually come over and establish strong ties linked to tradition and a delimited past that helps them to construct identity. This theme has not been explored in the novel, therefore, it will be stimulating to know if different spaces influence the subject differently or if the modern condition trespass all the limits of action and movement.

Other questions arose while analyzing this novel. For example: Could we suppose that all modern societies are shaped by the same experience of fluidity? Has the urban subject already merged with the city, losing all the possible instances to talk of a modern identity? Probably these questions could be catalogued as pessimistic, or some of them as not even answerable, nevertheless, this could be considered as a motivation for further investigation on the field, and how this topic evolves in the oncoming literary works of the current century and beyond. Besides, a richer analysis can be done taking into consideration other disciplines such as architecture -more precisely urban planning-, sciences associated to the study of the body's anatomy and its inner composition, among others.

From these ideas we could propose that the concept of fluidity developed in *Tropic of Cancer*, in regards to its distribution inside the city, can be used to re-understand modern or post-modern works. Similarly, the idea of flux allows for a new appreciation of the city as having an active role in literature, in this case, under the light of philosophical and literary perspectives that have been placed into play. As a consequence, this study could be complemented through the integration of varied disciplines or through its analysis under different literary perspectives, in order to see to what extent the fluid state of the city is degrading the modern subject or is maintaining him, as this work proposes, in the threshold of the heroic and the anti-heroic, the real and the unreal, the communal and the individual, the solid and the fluid experience.

This study can shed light on conclusions regarding the future of the modern subject inside literature, which is immersed in a system that has forgotten and confused him with the rapid pace of time and space, annulling his personal identity but at the same time, allowing him to encounter with the Absolute. The latter experience will be found after the display of chaos through writing, which is recognized by the author as the only truth and the principal path for the release of all the accumulated fluxes inside him and inside the city. Nevertheless, he will not solely use this moment to let go but also to apprehend what is inside the city dynamics, that mainly refer to their capacity to collect and assemble a sense of history that helps the narrator to reconstruct only for a moment, an earlier experience of community and, if possible, of identity.

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