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The Flaneûr in the Rye

A Reformulation of the flaneûr in Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*

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Introduction

The character of Holden Caulfield can be sincerely identified as an ornament. An ornament, such as a flower vase in an impeccable table, or a beautiful desk in the middle of a study room delicately decorated.
But for this purposes, Holden Caulfield is a ornament of a society that is not aware of its existence or his importance. An ornament within his family, that looks more like an award cabinet than a loving Christmas postcard.

But in New York, Holden transforms and becomes no longer an ornament, but an activist, a president, a prostitute, a drunk, a duck or anything he desires to become. Within the city of New York is where Holden takes form, and with Holden in it, New York shapes itself into this welcoming experience from the young years to adulthood. The Big Apple no longer stands a suitable name anymore, because is no stranger. It is a friend indeed.

Within the next work I will try to create a reformulation of the concept of flaneûr, created by Charles Baudelaire, in order to apply it to the character of Holden Caulfield, trying to adapt the concept, clearly modernist, to a postmodernist environment. In this line, I will also attempt to describe Holden's relationship with New York, and how the city becomes a part of the narration, not only a background for events.

The novel *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in 1951, during the aftermath of World War II. There was a differentiation among people, especially Americans whose reaction became variable and vulnerable. Although there are not direct mentions of the war, the ghost of it relies upon Holden's nature.

Phoniness, in my opinion, is closely related to the fact that Holden knows about War, knows about the effects that it caused, but people remain unchanged as if it never happened. Other factors that allude to this idea are for example the fact that D.B, Holden's older brother served in the Army, or the hypothesis of the name of his dead brother Allie is a reference to the "Allies" during War. Phoniness is the way how adults grow and forget to look beyond everyday life, how they forget the true importance of things

Holden fears war, as he fears and repulses phoniness. Indeed, he fears what war conveys within "I don't think I could stand it if I had to go to war […] He (D.B) once told Allie and I that if he'd had to shoot anybody, he wouldn't've known which direction to shoot in. He said the Army was practically as full of bastards as the Nazis were" (Salinger, 140). Here, Holden takes notice of war, and illustrates his opinion of it. But again, Holden is a young man, and as so, he is marveled by some of the wickedest of things "I'm sort of glad they've got the atomic bomb invented. If there's ever another war, I'm going to sit right the hell on top of it. I'll volunteer for it, I swear to God I will." (Salinger, 141)

This dichotomy is seen all through the book. Whether Holden is a growing man or still a child is yet to the reader's own judgment. What concerns us in this work is how the character uses different resources to absorb the reader into this alternative New York, the character's New York. Holden is not a tour guide. He will not lead the reader to a Times Square sightseeing or to Broadway for the latest trendy play. He will not go to South Street Seaport and take the ferry to Long Island. He does not care. He only shows places that have an intrinsic value for his story telling. He is the one in charge of what to tell and what not to.

The Catcher in the Rye

Jerome David Salinger, a Manhattan born himself, wrote first about Holden Caulfield in a short story named "Slight Rebellion off Madison" published in *The New Yorker* on December 21, 1941. The story told about a young boy, of about sixteen years old who is bored and nauseated by American society and desires to go away of New York and drop school, but finds himself unsupported by two people he actually considers, above every other person. The story served as ground for what Salinger planned to do next: create a novel about this character.

The novel itself is semi autobiographical, as he once recalled: "My boyhood was very much the same as that of the boy in the book ... [I]t was a great relief telling people about it."[1]

[1]If You Really Want to Hear About It: Writers on J.D. Salinger and His Work Crawford (2006) p.4

The Catcher in the Rye was first published in 1951, and caused great revolt due to the use of profanity and its liberal references to sex and alcohol. Since then it has became a literary classic not only in the U.S but around the world as well. It has influenced many writers and teenagers around the globe.

But the story is not the greatest appeal of the novel. The asset that concerns us is its main character, Holden Caulfield, a sixteen year old kid whose only desire is to protect kids from the phoniness of adulthood, and in the same way, survive growing up. And it is this, what will be the object of this study.

Holden serves as a vehicle for every person that read Salinger's book. Whether is and adult, that when reading, questions its own adulthood; or a child, who, like Holden is afraid of growing up and take up the many responsibilities that it conveys.

But, why to revisit a book that was written over 60 years ago? Simply because it continues to bring themes suitable for our society, alienation, the fear of becoming just a number, the fear of doing something "just because", these are all things that keep representing us as a society, and as individuals who are a part of one. We have all been Holden Caulfield at some point of our lives, or we wish we had been, but no matter how far-fetched his reality may seem to us, it is true that his fears are shared, and even though they represent the emotionality of a certain period, contemporary society has not got over those same issues. A new visit to the world of Holden Caulfield can help us to understand why we stay the same, why our fears haven't changed. It can also be helpful to remind certain things, things we have indeed forgotten, like the importance of children nowadays. How do we protect them? Do we do enough? Do we cherish them enough?

Today, the world is chaotic. We live in constant crisis, asking questions and looking for answers. We need to develop order, so we can be happy. Is all part of human nature, this questioning. Once we can grasp what the moments of crisis are about, we can extrapolate ideas that will allow us to continue in this never-ending quest of happiness. And that is what Holden does, to some extent. He questions himself the 'whys' of life, why growing up? Why to assume responsibilities? It's all part of human existentialism.

If we revisit the novel again we are not going to find answers, but we can go back to our first questionings and at least remember what our quest for happiness was all about.

A place for Adventure

Through the several readings we had to perform, we run into this essay by Georg Simmel, 'The Adventure'. Within this essay, Simmel intends to describe the process of adventure and to define who exactly will be the adventurer. He describes adventure as "independent of the "before" and "after"; its boundaries are defined regardless of them" (Simmel, 1). This means that the adventure itself is not measured by time, but measured by the experience, an out of the ordinary one.

He later develops on the idea of the adventurer, throwing lines between the subject that attracts us the most, the artist

> "(…) the basis of affinity between the adventurer and the artist attraction by adventure. For the essence of a work of art is after all, that it cuts out a piece of the endlessly continuous sequences of perceived experience, detaching it from all connections with one side or the other, giving it a self sufficient form as though defined and held together by an inner core"(Simmel, 2).

Simmel's theory can be adapted to the process of reading a novel, in this case, The Catcher in the Rye. The novel certainly takes up one piece of the reality, turning this into a different world, and through reading the novel, the reader adventures himself into a journey that will end just when it decides it is over. When reading literature, the notions of time and space disappear, only to give the mind and imagination complete power over the reasoning mechanism. Reading is an absorbing process, where, as the story unfolds, the reader becomes more and more not only an spectator of events but a participant as well.

The characters fulfill the purpose, as Simmel proposes

> "In contrast to those aspects of life which are related only peripherally—by mere fate—the adventure is defined by its capacity, in spite of its being isolated and accidental, to have necessity and meaning. Something becomes an adventure only by virtue of two conditions: that it itself s a specific organization of some significant meaning with a beginning and an end; and that, despite its accidental nature, its extraterritoriality with respect to the continuity of life, it nevertheless connects with the character and identity if the bearer of that life—that it does so in the widest sense, transcending, by a mysterious necessity, life's more narrowly aspects" (Simmel, 3)

When interpreting adventure as the process of reading, a correct meaning will indeed shape itself with the description given above. Reading a novel becomes an isolated fact in the everyday life of the reader. The adventurer or reader can develop a connection with the characters in the book.

The idea of reading the Catcher in the Rye once more, takes us to the edge of adventure again. The novel is a classic of American Literature and Holden Caulfield, our antihero and guide, is a wonderful companion through the journey one needs start when reading the novel. His charisma and charm can indeed trap the reader and enchant him, and through Holden eyes the reader has the chance to look things he know from a different perspective, a perspective he may have forgotten.

The Flaneûr.

The concept of *flanerie* was coined and made popular by Charles Baudelaire in his beautiful work "The Painter of Modern Life". He uses the term to refer to Constantin Guys, an artist whom he much admired.

> "I saw at once that it was nor precisely and *artist*, but rather a *man of the world* with whom I had to do. I ask you to understand the word *artist* in a very restricted sense, and *man of the world* in a very broad one. By the second I mean a man of the whole world, a man who understands the world and the mysterious and lawful reasons for all its uses; by the first, a specialist, a man wedded to his palette like the serf to the soil" (Baudelaire ,7)

Thanks to his portrait of Monsieur G., Baudelaire describes almost entirely what a flaneûr has became today, reaching a status of literary figure and icon of modernist portfolio.

He opposes the terms artist and man of the world because certainly to the date he wrote the essay, both entities seem very far away from each other. An artist was someone who "[A]part from one or two exceptions whom I need not name, it must be admitted that the majority of artists are no more than highly skilled animals, pure artisans, village intellects , cottage brains. Their conversation, which is necessarily limited to the narrowest of circles, becomes very quickly unbearable to the man of the world, to the spiritual citizen of the universe" (Baudelaire, 7).

The artist was someone so recluse to his own work, that it forgets how to be everything else. And for Baudelaire, it became unworthy of the title. Monsieur G., on the other hand was not solely an artist, but also someone who experienced other situations, outside his atelier, creating instances of learning.

But, why the creation of this *passante*? Walter Benjamin in his essay "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" develops on the phenomena produced in Paris and portrays events that occurred in the city given the new order established by the extension of commodities, the installment of arcades and the habit of strolling through the 19th century.

He refers to the flaneûr in terms closely associated with Charles Baudelaire, recognizing his contribution to the perspective of Paris as a new literary figure.

> "Baudelaire's genius, which drew its nourishment from melancholy, was an allegorical one. With Baudelaire, Paris for the first time became the subject of lyrical poetry. This poetry is no local folklore; the allegorist's gaze which falls upon the city is rather the gaze of alienated man. It is the gaze of the flaneûr whose way of living still played over the growing destitution of men in the great city with a conciliatory gleam. The flaneûr still stood at the margins, of the great as of the bourgeois class (…) he sought his asylum in the crowd (…) The crowd was the veil from behind which the familiar city as phantasmagoria beckoned to the flaneûr. In it the city was now landscape, now a room." (Benjamin, 84)

The flaneûr was a figure created for and because of Modernity. Thanks to the industrialization and the new ways of acquisition, people's ways had to be changed in order to adjust to the new modality. That is why the stroller of the city was created, the flaneûr.

But do we refer only to the man who walks the city, window shopping without a care? Indeed we don't. The flaneûr is not someone who merely strolls without purpose. He looks for beauty and novelty, he reflects on his findings in the city. "Novelty is a quality which does not depend on the use value of the commodity. It is the source of the illusion which belongs inalienably to the images which the collective unconscious engenders. It is the quintessence of false consciousness, of which fashion is the tireless agent." (Benjamin, 85)

The flaneûr is someone with such a relationship to urban landscape that he lives to experience it, and experience was the only way to find one's own universal truth, one of the purposes of the modern subject.

The flaneûr is "one who is carefully attentive to the world around him as he walks, a critical observer of the city and its people, and one who learns from them" (Tribunella, 64). This means that the flaneûr is someone who strolls and wanders around the city, quietly observing the ones who pass by, reading every face and every expression, an

unknown character that unfolds the world as he sees it, and looks for experiences that although unexplored, has certainty that are out there.

In another text of Benjamin, homonymous to the character of the flaneûr, the author again recurs to the Paris environment to understand the flaneûr. He describes the French landscapes around the time of the construction of the arcades: "Days of celebration and days of mourning, work and play, conjugal customs and bachelor's practices, the family, the home, children, school, society, the theater, types, professions (…) The leisurely quality of these descriptions fits the style of the flaneûr who goes botanizing on the asphalt" (Benjamin 1983, 36)

Benjamin states that the flaneûr's place is indeed the city, and provides the reader with its ways of life. He later states that the birthplace of the flaneûr where the arcades

> "(…) an arcade is a city, even a world, in miniature. It is in this world that the flaneûr is at home (…) The street becomes a dwelling for the flaneûr; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enameled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to bourgeois in his salon" (Benjamin 1983, 37)

Again, Benjamin states that the place of the flaneûr is the street and he feels at home. Holden Caulfield could fulfill the characteristics needed to become a flaneûr? Is his characterization, his motifs and drives, his fears and joys appealing to make the postmodern flaneûr a new literary figure?

The flaneûr, besides strolling and observing, looks for beauty, and is closely related to art in all its forms. The flaneûr is 'l'homme des foules', a man of crowds. And it is inside the crowd where it takes upon its real identity.

But, how to look for experiences, beauty and identity without being an unimpressionable adult? Can the flaneûr be modified, reformulated, and reborn in a different physical form? Can the flaneûr become a child? Or in this case, an adolescent?

Within the next work the primary goal will be to fathom out if Holden Caulfield can indeed portray a new kind of flaneûr, a mixture between an adult and a child flaneûr. Holden experiences the city in a new way, imprinting his own subjectivity. Secondly, a link between the city of New York and Holden will be portrayed and discussed in order to declare if indeed Holden can be determined as a flaneûr.

Theoretical Framework

I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot

Holden Caulfield.

In order to achieve the goals imposed to this work, we need a broader point of view that will allow us to develop the Holden character beyond the limits that mainstream theory regards. For this purposes we will resort to Reader Response Theory, more specifically, to the theories presented by Stanley Fish in the book *Understanding Contemporary Literary Theory* by Michael S. Spikes and the works collected by Raman Selden about Reader Response Theory in the book *Practising Theory and Reading Literature.*

Stanley Fish has always been a great supporter of the theory, he "rather than viewing texts as static repositories of meaning, he has argued that they are canvases upon which the reader works" (Spikes, 126). This association with canvases allows for the creation of a personal meaning of the text. Fish's ideas give quite an importance to the reader, giving it the right to become more than just a spectator of the events, but also an active participant. For the goals that we are trying to achieve in this work, the role of the reader must be an active one. Holden Caulfield cannot only be seen as the guide of the postmodern New York, but also has to take into account the way the reader sees Holden. We need to develop what the text provides, and enlarge it to whatever extent our minds can take it.

> "The text itself (…) does contain meaning: the meaning the author placed there. But this meaning in the text demands to be processed; it prompts the reader's participation. This participation, in turn, constitutes new, additional meaning, which completes the author's meaning. For Fish, then, the total meaning of the text is a combination of the author's meaning and the reader's meaning." (Spikes, 127)

Here, Spikes provides an exact idea of what is planned for the Holden character. The present work plans to determine whether the Holden character applies or not to the concept of flaneûr. In order to accomplish this, we are compelled to apply our own conceptions about the character, not only the information provided for the author in the book.

Fish further develops these ideas in his work *Is There a Text in This Class?*, where he develops the idea of "Interpretive Communities". This concept unravels the

idea that cultural meaning is highly associated with the personal viewpoint of the reader. The reader is inserted in a specific interpretive community, which influences the way he is supposed to interpret the characters meaning and the story meaning. He goes further stating that "readings are shared, not private. But now these readings are not shared by all who are "informed", but rather by like members of an Interpretive community" (Spikes, 132). Different members of different interpretive communities will differ on the meaning given to the text. The Interpretive communities are subjected to both social conventions and beliefs, whose action is to perform as filters when it comes to the understanding of a text.

Fish's theory can recall to Barthes' theory exposed in *The Death of the Author*, where it is claimed that as soon as the reader reads the work, the reader "dies". This means that as soon as the text acquires new meaning given by the reader, the author's point of view do not remains unaffected, but instead, it is replaced by the reader's vision.

Since The Catcher in the Rye was published in 1951, we can only have a grasp of the impact which the book provoked. We know it provided an edgy and new point of view, and introduced American culture to a new way of seeing the so longed "American Dream". But what interests us the most is how contemporary communities can interpret from the reading.

> "Fish contends that every community is 'an engine of change' (146), eager and able to colonize perspectives outside itself. More specifically, a change occurs in a given interpretive community- a change that will alter the reading of particular texts- when the community adopts an alien viewpoint that is sees as having the potential to expand its domain. "The community", says Fish, 'is always engaged in doing work the work of transforming the landscape into material for its own project' (150)" (Spikes quoting Fish, 140).

This means that, the reading this work provides will only portray what a contemporary reading in a selected topic can infer. Of course, attending to Fish's ideas, all communities are interrelated, as their interpretations, and this will not be the

exception; and it offers an ‘invitation’ to interpretation. It will be only one of the many truths that many communities can inspire.

When we think of Reader Response theory we cannot neglect its relation towards individual perception. Within a classroom, all students facing the same novel will not have the exact same thoughts about it. Some will collide, because - in search for the ‘informed reader”- they will all belong to the same interpretive community; but at the end we will find that individuality serves for the purpose of interpretation in Reader Response Criticism.

Modernist Subject and Postmodernism

Nicolás Casullo was a renowned Argentinean philosopher, novelist and professor. He dedicated most of his work to the debate of Modernism and Postmodernism. In his book “Itinerarios de la Modernidad”, Casullo refers to the conception of Modernity, why did it originated and how. But he pays close attention to the subjectiviy and the subject itself. He first starts by stating what is Modernity “La Modernidad es ese proceso de racionalización histórica que se da en Occidente, que conjuga y consuma el desencantamiento del mundo instituido por las imágenes religiosas, místicas y sagradas.” (Casullo,17). He states that Modernity plays a ground breaking role, where the subject has fallen out of love with the World, looking for comfort in reason “Racionalización del mundo a partir de saberes., de saberes autónomos que ya no van a responder a los dogmas, que ya no van a responder a la autoridad del rey o de la Iglesia, que van a dar cuenta de su propia esfera en lo que vayan logrando en términos de conocimiento y reflexión” (Casullo, 17).

Later on, Casullo describes how reason will allow the subject to ´objetvize’ history. This conception will be carried out by every individual “el periodista a su manera, el sociólogo a su manera y el dentista a su manera, pero indudablemente hay una necesidad de objetivizar la historia que este proceso de racionalización permite” (Casullo 19).

The modernity concerns us in these terms, the subject taking control over its own reality. Subjectivity is the weapon of the individual “La subjetividad es el lugar donde

el sujeto, donde el individuo realize infinitos intercambios simbólicos con el mundo" (Casullo, 20). It has to be noted the Word "lugar", place in English. The space takes over a major role in the individual's performance in this world and develops a special link wth it, in the case of the Catcher in the Rye, with the city " (…) una subjetividad moderna (…) comienza a vivir la metropolis de una manera definitoria. La historia moderna deha de pasar esencialmente por lo rural y va a pasar por la metrópolis." (Casullo, 20)

The modern subject will be facing the problems of the subjectivity itself "que plantea en la metropolis grandes problemas: el anonimato, la soledad, la marginación, la pérdida de identidad, la dinerización de todo vínculo" (Casullo, 21). Holden Caulfield suffers from every single one of these issues, which makes him very a good candidate as a Modern Subject, He indeed feels the loneliness and marginalization that the subjectivity in the metropolis offer, but as well, faces it and records it in order to deal with it.. His relationship with the crowd is a quiet one from a distance, but a problematic one in taken with a close look.

When discussing the debate modernity-postmodernity, Casullo. He makes a distinction between both "Modernidad, que remite a todo lo que fuimos viendo en este sigo XX, a aquel legado del Proyecto de la Razón Ilustrada del XVIII. Postmodernidad, como la noción conceptual que plantearía que estamos más allá, cronológicamente, de la modernidad" (Casullo, 202).

The modern subject is affected by all this external social factors, but still manages to create its own subjectivity. The modern subject will allow us to shape a postmodernist subject that will provide the tools for the postmodernist flaneûr.

Chapter One
Holden and the flaneûr

In his work *The Child Flaneûr*, Eric Tribunella starts by explaining what a flaneûr is, basing its main concept on the artistic figure created by Charles Baudelaire in his 1863 essay "The Painter of Modern Life". Tribunella explains that that the figure created by Baudelaire is someone who becomes one with the city, thus making the term

purely urban and modern. “While Baudelaire understands modernity as related to what is ‘fashionable’ in art—as opposed to what is ‘eternal’—and attributes to the city stroller a special role in ascertaining beauty, he connects the flaneûr with the broader conditions of modernity, including urban and industrial life” (Tribunella, 65) Modernity in this case refers to what is fashionable instead of what Tribunella refers to as “eternal”. The connection made by this idea is that the flaneûr consistently looks for beauty, which evolves and changes through time. If something is “in vogue” or “trendy” the flaneûr will look for it and will stare and marvel around it. He contradicts this later on when quoting Baudelaire’s idea of beauty “Beauty is made up of an eternal, invariable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severally or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions” (Tribunella quoting Baudelaire, 65). The terms fashionable and eternal collide in Tribunella’s interpretation and instead of being opposites; they become one when trying to describe the nature of the flaneûr.

But what really intrigues Tribunella about the flaneûr, is the similarities that can be drawn along with the figure of the child in literature. He closely associates Baudelaire’s ideas in “The Painter of Modern Life”. Within this text Baudelaire explains the nature of the flaneûr by describing an artist that he admires, Constantin Guys, who he simply calls Monsieur G. Baudelaire explains that Monsieur G. is always in a state of newness and recalls this as a childlike characteristic “The child sees everything in a state of newness; he is always drunk. Nothing more resembles what we call inspiration than the delight with which a child absorbs form and color” (Baudelaire, 8). The connection between a child and the flaneûr serves for both Tribunella’s and my own purposes. With the eyes of the child, there is no need for the flaneûr to be specifically an adult. In fact, if we take a child, or an adolescent, the state of newness will be inherently a part of them, thus, becoming the perfect suitor for the flaneûr title.

The child in this case is the perfect embodiment of what Tribunella need to make his hypothesis plausible. But what a flaneûr needs is a newness that is not so obvious. Through the eyes of the child everything is new, but at the same time, the child needs to have a keen sense of adventure and courage to face the crowd and the urban landscape in order to fully embrace it. That specific type of child is hard to find in literature, and, it could be hard to be fully cathartic. Instead, the adolescent is more prone to have a

sense of adventure and recklessness, thus, making the adolescent a far more real figure to associate with the flaneûr.

The adult and the child fuse in the adolescent. It has the sense of newness needed, but it also has lived enough to not be afraid of experience and adventure. The adolescent certainly has the rebellious attitude that drawn it to adventure, but without the burdens of adulthood weighing on its shoulders. The adolescent looks for a sense of belonging, which can be a factor helpful to the flaneûr's relationship with the crowd, as Baudelaire explains:

> "For the perfect flaneûr, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world" (Baudelaire, 9).

Holden Caulfield indeed fits within this description. Holden needs to be alone in order to fin himself. Not in the common sense that he needs solitude to think, but that he needs to be alone in the city and experience it in order to feel alive and real. The city becomes his escape from phoniness and adulthood. He feels safe in big crowds and observes and makes remarks about them. People are his target: "Ackley] took another look at my hat . . . "Up home we wear a hat like that to shoot deer in, for Chrissake," he said. "That's a deer shooting hat." "Like hell it is." I took it off and looked at it. I sort of closed one eye, like I was taking aim at it. "This is a people shooting hat," I said. "I shoot people in this hat." (Salinger, 22) The hunting hat, the most iconic garment of Holden Caulfield, represents his need to separate himself from the rest of the people. He knows he cannot escape from being a part of the society, but as every teenager, he needs to find his identity and become an individual. When he talks about "shooting people" with the hat, he is actually saying that the hat is a part of him, the part that judges, expresses his opinion and mostly denigrates people. By being opinionated, Holden

feels safe from phoniness, the phoniness of adulthood that stands for all that is wrong with the world.

Holden is a part of the crowd, he is a passer-by, like the one in Baudelaire's poem, but, at the same time, he does not wish to be a part of it. Holden is not only an observer, but an acute and opinionated examiner. He criticizes mostly everything that does not apply to his standards and repudiates people who follow the canons established by society. But not all what Holden sees in the world is bad. He also looks for beauty, in order to protect it, like Baudelaire's flaneûr " The idea of beauty which man creates for himself imprints on his whole attire, crumples or stiffens his dress, rounds off or squares his gesture, and in the long run even ends by subtly penetrating the very features of his face" (Baudelaire, 2). Holden sends a message through his attire, directly or indirectly, he is stating that he is different. The hunting hat is conveyed with uniqueness and prompt, and even with a hint of childish drive.

Here, Holden will be presented as the 'Catcher in the Rye' that he proposes to be, a sort of guardian of innocence. He is in the stage where he is no more a child, no less an adult. That is why he feels the urge to protect his sister Phoebe, and every kid that resembles her. This is reflected in his own losing childhood, which he so desperately holds on to. He refuses to acquire the mentality of an adult, with an obnoxious Peter Pan complex, even though he already acts like one (or tries). His loss of innocence haunts him, but 'while shooting the bull' he tries to get the best of it.

Holden Caulfield has similarities with the flaneûr Baudelaire describes; he is a man of the crowd, someone who enjoys gazing at the multitude, fusing with it. The anonymity that the city of New York offers to Holden comes up perfectly timed with the need of Holden to become invisible. He loves being anonymous because it provides him with the necessary distance needed in order to gaze his surrounding and perfectly describe it. We may or may not believe him, but the veracity of his tale is not what moves us, but his vision. The book is all about Holden's vision of things, events, places and people and although maybe his approach is not completely reliable, if things were actually different, we would not have a story at all. So now, in a reformulation of the flaneûr, he is not only a stroller, a passer by, but a story teller. The flaneûr in the Catcher in the Rye becomes more than a man looking for beauty within the crowd, it

becomes a narrator, a person who feels the city, walks into it, experience it but creates a story to tell while doing so.

But what is Holden Caulfield without alienation? Holden knows better than anyone how lonesome he is, and he declares how he prefers it that way, but through the book we see how desperately he is for the need of company. That's what makes him a man of crowds. If we parallel both Baudelaire's flaneûr and Holden as a flaneûr, we see similarities, but if we take a close look to them, their motifs are completely different.

The flaneûr is an icon of modernity, of the man with no concerns that strolls around the city looking for experiences. It sounds too easy to relate it to the complex nature of a sixteen-going-on-seventeen year old boy. Holden is too self-absorbed to be Baudelaire's flaneûr. That is why we need to reformulate the concept in order to adapt it, and update it.

The flaneûr of postmodernist settings, of our era will be someone who strolls around the city looking for understanding. The times require it so. The subject has lost all sense of belonging and looks to find its own individuality now and the subject flaneûr will find it attached to the urban landscape. Why, you may ask.

The relationship between the postmodern subject and the city is explained thanks to the reality we now live. People do no longer seek for comfort within green areas, away from the urbanity, but inside the urbanity itself.

Given the rise of secular beliefs, the mysticism provided by the country and the religious belief long held outside the urban landscape, the subject no longer recurs to those places looking for answers; instead, lock himself in its individuality knowing that all answers are inside it. So far, our subject is not far from the modernist one, given that the modernist subject was the one to take absence from the country and move towards the city looking for experiences.

The flaneûr we need to sustain goes beyond finding itself within the boundaries of the city; it needs to become one with the city. Baudelaire's flaneûr strolls around the city, but the flaneûr Holden represents *becomes* the city. The city stands for Holden's emotionality, every time he feels sad the reader sees it reflected in the place he visits.

Another thing that the postmodernist flaneûr needs to be is a reporter, a reporter of the city; not just an observer. Holden gives his own perspectives of facts, landscapes and people. Even though the reader chooses to believe him or not, he displays his thoughts with words, which are the weapon for the postmodernist subject. This is one of the key differences with Baudelaire's flaneûr: the importance of the flaneûr's own voice. The idea of no universal truth, but only the one every single individual sees. Both language and truth fuse within the individual, and Holden portrays to perfection this ideals.

Finally, the fact that Holden is neither a child nor an adult allows him to move between both worlds, getting the best of them. Adulthood conveys a single train of thought that serves as an impediment to see beyond boundaries. Children do not have these constraints, so that is why Holden can perform discourse with a unique sense of humor, and a rather different approach than that of an adult.

The new flaneûr is not so far from the one Baudelaire described, but rather a version that adapts to the necessities of a society more and more self-centered. The idea of unity that was influenced by the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx does no longer appeal to the threads society is moved. Now, instead, the subject submerges into the individuality of the self, describing it and giving it voice. It does not matter whether Holden stories are true or false; within the story, everything he says becomes true.

Chapter Two

Holden loves New York

> *"Stories are part of the human identity and allow them to deal with the aspects of time other than the instant present. It provides a tool to communicate, express or invent activities beyond the here and now. This activity is directly linked with the construction of memory and eventually leads to the creation of personality. Architecture might not be the most obvious field to relay on stories but it actually does and has always done, even in the context of modernist doctrines of absolute objectivity. Recently the topic has become more trendily again and the narrative emerges as a new term to portray processes and creations*"[2]

The city is not only a setting anymore. Through Salinger's novel, the city of New York becomes a canvas for Holden to paint. Everything Holden goes through the book can be seen reflected directly on the settings the action takes place. The city and Holden share a connection, an emotional one and now New York does not stand for "The Big Apple" anymore, but "Holden's New York". The relationship acquires a different meaning. The subject of postmodernism is exactly that: a subject. It is far from the ideas presented in earlier years, when the Communist Manifesto came out, talking about the importance of being united, and the strict duty of the state to provide for its people. Now the literature was more concerned on the subject, on the vicissitudes of the man. The reader wanted to engage in a narrower view, it was only concerned with the subjectivity, not the collective.

Certainly the idea of subjectivity highly influenced Salinger's novel. The Catcher in the Rye is more about how the subject perceives things, rather than how society perceives them. War, alienation, the fear of dying and the inevitability of change were indeed in the back of the head of many people at the time the novel was published; but how to reach for everyone at the same time?

Holden Caulfield most certainly did. With his unequivocal charm, his reluctance to grow up and become a member of society, Holden recreate the emotional state tons

[2] Urban Tick, 'Book - Architecture and Narrative', <http://urbantick.blogspot.com/2009/12/architecture-and-narrative-book.html> [Accessed 29 June 2011] para.1

of people were going through. That is why the novel was so successful, because it portrayed, in a singular way, the state of the collective.

The relationship that Holden holds with the city proves to be productive one, and we can see it reflected in many instances through the novel. In this case I will refer only to three that are chosen mainly because of matters of importance and repetition through the course of events in the book.

First, the connection between Central Park, Central Park Lagoon and Holden will be analyzed. Next, we will review the connection given by Holden and Grand Central Station (now called Grand Central terminal) and finally we will see how the link is performed by Holden and the Museum of Natural History.

Central Park Lagoon

Holden's relationship with the Central Park Lagoon is a very complex one. He mentions it early in the text, while visiting Mr. Spencer.

> "The funny thing is, though, I was sort of thinking of something else while I shot the bull. I live in New York, and I was thinking about the lagoon in Central Park, down near Central Park South. I was wondering if it would be frozen over when I got home, and if it was, where did the ducks go. I was wondering where the ducks went when the lagoon got all icy and frozen over. I wondered if some guy came in a truck and took them away to a zoo or something. Or if they just flew away". (Salinger, 13)

Instead of thinking about his future and take the conversation with Spencer seriously, Holden thinks about something as trivial as the whereabouts of the ducks in Central Park. At first we see this as a defense mechanism, as a way to avoid the truth: that he has flunked yet again in academic purposes and is set to attend military school according to his parents' plans. We create a parallel between adolescence and adulthood, how teenagers think they can deal with anything, and they prefer to forget

whatever troubles them instead of face it. But the lagoon will prove a much more complex device in Holden's analysis.

The second allusion to the Central Park Lagoon is when Holden is already in New York, starting his adventure and thus, his growth. He has just arrived and is in need for accommodation. He is on a cab, not sure of where he is going.

> "I didn't want to start an argument. 'Okay', I said. Then I thought of something, all of a sudden. 'Hey, listen' I said. 'You know those ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South?' That little lake? By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over? Do you happen to know, by any chance?' I realized it was only once chance in a million." (Salinger, 60)

Here Holden is trying to make conversation, but at the same time, he is defying the cab driver to see to what extent he is 'real' or not. When discussing phoniness, we need to draw a line of what is phony, something or someone who Holden considers fake, follower of alien ideals, someone who is not real. Then, what he is trying to determine is if the cab driver can see beyond the establishments of phoniness, or is just another follower of it.

The cab driver, of course, does not understand Holden's question, and instead, it interprets it as a mock, a thing that Holden is quick to remedy. Holden denigrates people quite a lot through the story and towards the end, finds himself friendless and with nothing to like. His alienation of the world is completely provoked, and it becomes his greatest contradiction.
He 'shoots' the cab driver with the question of the ducks. We see that clearly when, later on, Holden says he had put on his red hunting hat in the cab. We assume that, since the hat is the uniform for telling who is a phony and who is real, Holden put it on in order to determine which one was the cab driver.

The third mention to the ducks also happens in a cab. Again, Holden is testing whether the adults he encounters are all phonies or real people. He wishes inside that they are real, but he is quick to determine they are not.

With the intention to go for a drink at Ernie's bar in Greenwich Village, Holden gets into another cab, where a driver named Horwitz is questioned.

> "His name was Horwitz. He was a much better guy than the other driver I'd had. Anyway, I thought maybe he might know about the ducks.
> 'Hey, Horwitz,' I said. 'You ever pass by the lagoon in Central Park? Down by the Central Park South?'
> 'The what?'
> 'The lagoon. That little lake, like, there. Where the ducks are. You know.'
> 'Yeah, what about it?'
> 'Well, you know the ducks that swim around in it? In the springtime and all? Do you happen to know where they go in the wintertime, by any chance?'
> 'Where who goes?'
> 'The ducks. Do you know, by any chance? I mean does somebody come around in a truck or something and take them away, or do they fly away by themselves—go south or something?'
> Old Horwitz turned all the way around and looked at me. He was a very impatient-type guy. He wasn't a bad guy, though. 'How the hell should I know?' he said. 'How the hell should I know a stupid thing like that'" (Salinger, 81)

This conversation goes on for a couple more lines, but it does not get to happy port either. Horwitz fails to understand the true meaning of the question. But why is no definitive for Holden that someone knows where the ducks are?

The last reference to Central Park Lagoon and the ducks that inhabit it is towards the end of Holden's adventure in New York. After drinking too much at the Wicker Bar, Holden is drunk and alone. Once again, he has tried to befriend those around him, only to discover that he is making a fool out of himself. He acts no near his age, and even though he enjoys being alone at the bar, we can feel that he is waiting for something. He tries to speak to a group of girls, only to find them boring and hollow. Phonies, he calls

them. He also dislikes the piano player, and takes up a patronizing attitude when talking to him. All these attributes makes him even more obnoxious. His ways to approach people are wrong, but we indulge him because we know his true intentions and fears.

> "I've lived in New York all my life, and I know Central Park like the back of my hand, because I used to roller-skate there all the time and rude my bike when I was a id, but I had the most terrific trouble finding that lagoon that night. I knew right where it was—it was right near Central Park South and all—but still couldn't find it. I must've been drunker than I thought. I kept walking and walking, and it kept getting darker and darker and spookier and spookier. I didn't see one person the whole time I was in the park. I'm just as glad. I probably would've jumped about a mile if I had. Then, finally, I found it. What it was, it was partly frozen and partly not frozen. But I didn't see any ducks around. I walked all around the whole damn lake—I damn near fell in once, in fact—but I didn't see a single duck. I thought maybe if there were any around, they might be asleep or something near the edge of the water, near the grass and all. That's how I nearly fell in. But I couldn't find any." (Salinger, 154)

The whole discussion has brought us to the real meaning of the lagoon and the ducks. Why does Holden seem so interested in them? Why is the disappointment so big once he found that there are none?

The knowledge about the ducks goes beyond Holden's eccentricities. Being an adult conveys the unhealthy tradition of taking things for granted, especially things that are part of our everyday life. Adults forget how to walk the streets without running and stamping over it. The walk becomes something too purposeful. That is the reason why they forget to see something as familiar as the ducks at the lagoon. Children, on the other hand, do not forget to wonder and wander, as it is in their nature.

Holden does not forget to stroll around the city. He is neither a child, neither an adult, so he gets the best of both. He can be critical, but he *observes* what he sees. He is able to notice the changes in the landscape he frequents. That is the main reason for his

insistence with the ducks. Their presence is superfluous to adults, but for children, they are significant. For Holden, a New Yorker by essence, the whereabouts of the ducks becomes important because they are the direct connection with the city and they are invisible to adults, so, if by any chance they happen to know what happens to the ducks, they acquire immediately the status of 'real' for him. The ability to notice what seems to be invisible to 'phonies' is a great asset, but no person Holden encounters seems to know what happens to the ducks.

But, what happens once Holden decides to go and look for the ducks himself? He finds none. He insists on looking for them, but the quest is useless. What is the meaning behind this? If the ducks are his connection to the city, what does it mean that they are gone?

Holden fears change and loss. He is certainly not good when it comes to dealing with losing people in his life. His brother Allie and his classmate at Elkton Hills, James Castle, are very close approaches to losing someone over death. And death is a change that is permanent. He cannot do something to repair it. His fear of change and loss is completely justified, due to his losses. The city serves as guidance for the reader to understand Holden's personality and emotionality. Central Park Lagoon stands for Holden's panic to lose people and the inevitability of change.

Grand Central Station

Grand Central Station in New York has been depicted as a staging area in many artistic sources. First designed to bring New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, the New York and Harlem Railroad, and the New York and New Haven Railroad together, it was expanded between the years 1899 and 1900. It became what it is today through a series of remodeling and redecorating, creating an iconic figure and a mini-city within New York.

In The Catcher in the Rye, Grand Central Station serves as the place Holden goes to when in need for a hint of a 'homy' feeling.

> "I got a cab outside the hotel, but I didn't have the faintest idea where I was going. I had no place to go. It was only Sunday, and I couldn't go home till Wednesday—or Tuesday the soonest. And I certainly didn't feel like going to another hotel and getting my brains beat out. So what I did, I told the driver to take me to Grand Central Station. It was right near the Biltmore, where I was meeting Sally later, and I figured what I'd do, I'd check my bags in one of those strong boxes that they give you a key to, then get some breakfast." (Salinger, 106)

Holden does not want to feel alone and left out, so he looks for a place where these emotions are on everyday basis: a train station. The city again serves as a window to Holden's feelings. The connection between the city and Holden is a tight one, and is no surprise that the Grand Central Station serves this purpose.

The Grand Central Station is a commuting area, an area of constant change. People are coming in, and people are going out. This proves an accomplished metaphor of how people enter in and out of our lives. Holden is clearly traumatized by the way Allie died and disappeared from his life, that is why he looks for a place like the train station, where there are departures, but also arrivings.

The second mention of the Grand Central Station comes up towards the end of Holden's adventure in New York, after being heavily disappointed on Mr. Antolini and feeling that sometimes he just cannot figure people out.

> "I didn't know where the hell to go. I didn't want to go to another hotel and spend all Phoebe's dough. So finally all I did was I walked over to Lexington and took the subway down to Grand Central. My bags were there and all, and I figured I'd sleep in that crazy waiting room where all the benches are. So that's what I did. It wasn't too bad for a while because there weren't many people around and I could stick my feet up. But I don't feel much like discussing it. It wasn't too nice. Don't ever try it. I mean it. It'll depress you." (Salinger, 194)

After these words, Holden has one of the pivotal moments of the narration. After being patted in the head while sleeping, Holden flees Mr. Antolini's house interpreting it as a 'flitty pass'. After getting to Central Station he starts wondering—for the first time in the book—if he indeed was to quick to judge. Never before he doubted his abilities in reading people, in telling whether they were phonies or not, but after seeing himself in a similar situation with someone he highly regarded, he wonders if he misjudged Mr. Antolini's gesture.

This gives us an insight on how solitude has affected Holden. He is a middle child, so he is not used to receiving much attention, and even though he is desperate for some, Mr. Antolini's gesture immediately seems too intimate for Holden. He just could have interpreted it as a homosexual advance, but now that he has changed, he realizes he cannot just judge things by the first impression he gets out of them. Can we say Holden is growing up?

Grand Central Station serves as a place for change also related to the fact that Holden is in a staging area himself, going from childhood to adulthood. The process of travelling from one place to another is very similar to growing up. You have to give up things, but at the same time you pack a bag with your most important belongings. When growing up, Holden needs to decide what to take with him and what to let go, and that is exactly what New York will provide him. He will reencounter people he thought of importance, and will be disappointed by them (Sally Hayes and Carl Luce) or re-enchanted (Phoebe). He will also face aspects of his personality he dislikes, or assets that will help him to cope with maturity.

The Museum of Natural History.

The Museum Of Natural History was founded in 1869 and has gained world-wide acclaim due to its exhibitions and highly trained curators. Its location in Upper West Side Manhattan, just across Central Park provides the Museum with a privileged and accessible point for people who visit, and it becomes quite relevant in Holden's city tour.

Holden is trying to find his younger sister Phoebe, with whom he maintains a great sibling relationship. Holden is acute when describing Phoebe as a very insightful and mature-for-her-age girl. Phoebe fits within the mold of bright kids that Salinger

develops in his literature (there are some similarities with the Glass family, but we are not going to go further on that this time) and in this book she stands as the one person Holden highly regards.

> "Even though it was Sunday and Phoebe wouldn't be there with her class or anything, and even though it was so damp and lousy out, I walked all the way through the park over to the Museum of Natural History. I knew that whole museum routine like a book. Phoebe went to the same school I went to when I was a kid, and we used to go there all the time." (Salinger, 118)

Holden does not try to hide his taste for the Museum, and claims to have been there several times. He likes the routine, not only the museum routine, but routine as a lifestyle. Is the taste for routine another sign of his fear of change?

When Holden talks about the 'big glass cases' he refers to the dioramas; dioramas are like steady pictures of a specific moment in history, and once you walk side them it becomes an album of memories. Memories are all what Holden has left of people at this point, specially the ones he has lost. His brother Allie's baseball glove is a souvenir, a proof that Allie actually was there and existed. The same happens with the dioramas. They are proof that Eskimos and Indians all existed, and where once there.

Given Holden's fear to death and disappearance, he holds on to anything that seems timeless: Allie's baseball glove becomes timeless for him, just like dioramas. They are a way to bring the past to life.

After visiting the museum, Holden states clearly his fear of change, or at least, his dislike towards it

> "I kept walking and walking, and I kept thinking about old Phoebe going to that museum on Saturdays the way I used to. I thought how she'd see the same stuff I used to see, and how she'd be different every time she saw it. It didn't exactly depress me to think about it, but it didn't make me feel gay as hell, either. Certain things they should stay

> the way they are. You ought to be able to stick them in one of those big glass cases and just leave them alone." (Salinger, 122)

Holden whishes to encapsulate what he has lost, not just Allie, but also his childhood; His desire is to escape from the phoniness of adulthood, the responsibilities it conveys, the sacrifices that must be done. For that he needs to go back to being a kid. He also wants to spare Phoebe from the process he is going through. When he speaks of her 'not being the same' when visiting the museum, he is reflecting on his own experience. He knows that, thanks to the passing of time, she would be interested in other things, and fears that she changes so much she will lose the spark he so much admires.

How to store moments forever? Is Holden's fear of change 'holding' him back?

Holden's feelings and fears reflect the ones of an entire society. After war, everyone experienced the same alienation of the self that Holden experiences, as well as his fear for change. How not to fear it, if it already happened once and nothing went back to way it used to? His relationship with the city is certainly the one that the flaneûr of Baudelaire has, and I dare say, an even closer one. Everything Holden fears is reflected on the places he visit: he fears death, particularly, the grief that comes afterwards, but ends up learning that grief is only temporary when visiting the Lagoon; He fears growing up, going from one phase of life to another, but quickly defies this by going to the one place that time does not matter at all, and at the same time, being late is not an option, Grand Central Station; and finally, Holden fears change, that is why he loves the Museum so much, because he wants to keep things the way they are.

Conclusions.

The process of writing is developed in order to accomplish two things: one is to provide an idea and the other one is to portray a reality, no matter how far-fetched this one seems to the rest of the world. Ideas are the machinery of thought, even though no one can exist without the preexistence of another.

Stanley Fish develops this largely in his book, *Is There a Text in This Class?* When speaking of interpretive communities, Fish underlines the fact that all interpretations are influenced by the interpretive communities from which the individual belongs to. Interpretive Communities functions just as language, it needs to change in order to adjust to the needs of those belonging to it. These interpretive communities, likewise, have within subcommunities and so forth. "Within the literary community there are subcommunities (…) and within any communities the boundaries of the acceptable are continually being redrawn" (Fish, 343). The boundaries that decide what makes an interpretation valid, change constantly in order to adapt to the changes of everyday life. The changes can be seen from subcommunity to subcommunity, from interpretive community to another. The gap that separates acceptable interpretations from non acceptable ones is in constant change, just like human nature. No reading, no matter how exaggerate may seem cannot be disregarded only because at that specific moment the interpretive community does not believe it so. The rules and purposes of readings may change, and that would make the interpretation acceptable "The point is that while there are always mechanisms for ruling out readings, their source is not the text but the presently recognized interpretive strategies for producing the text. It follows, then, that no reading, however outlandish it might appear, is inherently and impossible one" (Fish, 347).

No interpretation should be ruled out as unacceptable just because there no other readers that can develop the same reading. That provides the interpretive autonomy that every community and individual needs to have in order to create a good reading. All interpretations should be free of being discarded. That is what makes interpretation plausible and acceptable.

It is impossible also to create a totally new interpretation. All interpretations will be influenced by the interpretive community which the writer belongs to. Fish refers to this in the text:

> "The discovery of the 'real point' is always what is claimed whenever a new interpretation is advanced, but the claim makes sense only in elation to a point (or points) that had previously been considered the real one. This means that the space in which a critic works has been marked out for him by his predecessors, even though he is obliged by the conventions of the institution to dislodge them. It is only by their provenience or prepossession that there is something for him to say; that is, it is only because something has already been said that he can now say something different." (Fish, 350)

The fact that we know can say something different about The Catcher in the Rye is only because I belong to an interpretive community with different angles and perspectives that allow me to develop this train of thought. I do not wish to make believe that precedent members of the community have failed to see this; instead, my interpretation would not exist if it wasn't for them. And the fact that today I can say different things about Holden Caulfield can only be done because society has changed the interpretive community which I belong, as has expanded its scope.

Holden's reading as a new flaneûr appears as a response to our reality. Today we are so enclosed in out own subjectiviy that we forget how to appreciate things. Life has turned people into mere machines of productions. Since we lived so many years under the wings of production as the only means of achieving goals, we have forgotten the real things that matter. Holden provides and protects that vision, highly portrayed in his drive to become a catcher in the rye. After discussing with her sister Phoebe that he, at the end of his journey hates every single thing, he tells her about the song-turned-poem "If a body meet a body coming through the rye", which he misunderstood as "If a body catch a body comin' through the rye", he says

> "Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in these big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean—except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I hace to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff—I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and *catch* them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be" (Salinger, 173)

Holden needs to recover the innocence that kids provide in order not for them to become the machines of production that adults are; in order for them to not succumb to phoniness.

His characterization of the flaneûr helps him with this purpose, seeing the city and experiencing it. He can have a glance at everything that is happening out there, so he has a good grasp of everything he needs to protect the kids from.

His relationship with the city is so close, that the city himself helps him to row and develop his abilities. But the society is not ready for Holden's view of life. That is why we see him locked in a mental institution, from which he narrates the story. The world was not ready for Holden Caulfield, the flaneûr and keeper of innocence.

Hopefully, from the reading I propose, we can all agree that the world needs more catchers, less producers; less running and more strolling.

Á une passante

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son oeil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair... puis la nuit! — Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! trop tard! *jamais* peut-être!
Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!

— *Charles Baudelaire*

To a Passer-By

The street about me roared with a deafening sound.
Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic grief,
A woman passed, with a glittering hand
Raising, swinging the hem and flounces of her skirt;

Agile and graceful, her leg was like a statue's.
Tense as in a delirium, I drank
From her eyes, pale sky where tempests germinate,
The sweetness that enthralls and the pleasure that kills.

A lightning flash... then night! Fleeting beauty
By whose glance I was suddenly reborn,
Will I see you no more before eternity?

Elsewhere, far, far from here! too late! *never* perhaps!
For I know not where you fled, you know not where I go,
O you whom I would have loved, O you who knew it!

— William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954)

A Passer-by

The deafening street roared on. Full, slim, and grand
In mourning and majestic grief, passed down
A woman, lifting with a stately hand
And swaying the black borders of her gown;

Noble and swift, her leg with statues matching;
I drank, convulsed, out of her pensive eye,
A livid sky where hurricanes were hatching,
Sweetness that charms, and joy that makes one die.

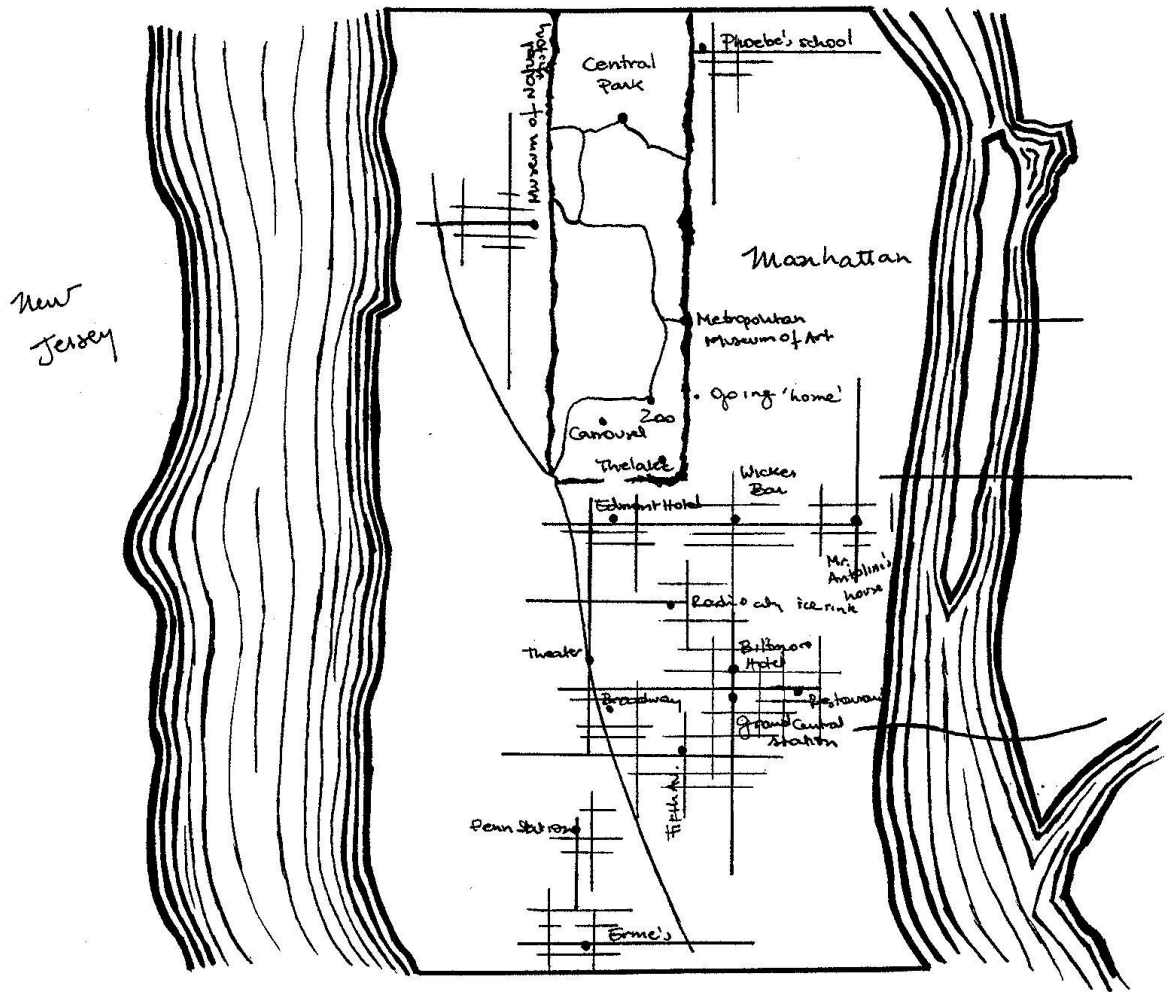
A lighting-flash — then darkness! Fleeting chance
Whose look was my rebirth — a single glance!
Through endless time shall I not meet with you?

Far off! too late! or never! — I not knowing
Who you may be, nor you where I am going —
You, whom I might have loved, who know it too!

— Roy Campbell, *Poems of Baudelaire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952)[3]

[3] Source : http://fleursdumal.org/poem/224

Holden's Tour through New York.



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