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**The Sea, the City, and the Machine: the queer
modernism of Hart Crane and Álvaro de Campos**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	2
Abstract	3
Resumo	5
Introduction	11
I. The Sea	27
II. The City (ainda sem alterações)	60
III. The Machine	98
Conclusion	138
Works Cited	145

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to contribute to the debate surrounding the intersections of Anglo-American and Portuguese modernisms, through a comparative approach that reads a representative corpus of poems by Álvaro de Campos, and another set of poems by Hart Crane according to three vectors of comparison (the sea, the city, and the machine), predicated on a queer reading of their poetry. As critics have remarked, it is highly unlikely that the two poets ever read — and much less met — each other. However, both show overlapping concerns with gender and sexuality articulated through the three highlighted vectors, which contribute to what is suggested in the title of this paper as a “queer modernism”, a concept used by critic Niall Munro. I contend that the relation Crane and Campos establish with their literary and socio-historical contexts is mediated by gender and sexuality and operates on a permanent tension between belonging and escaping, which are often conveyed through a conflict between the material and the intellectual selves — the mind and the body.

Keywords: Modernist poetry, Interseccionism, Hart Crane, Álvaro de Campos, Queer.

Resumo

Este trabalho pretende contribuir para um diálogo académico em torno das intersecções entre os modernismos Anglo-Americano e Português, através de uma abordagem comparativa que lerá e confrontará um corpus de poemas de Álvaro de Campos e de Hart Crane, de acordo com três vectores de comparação (o mar, a cidade e a máquina, referidos no título), articulados através de uma leitura *queer* dos poemas seleccionados. A crítica é consensual ao afirmar que é pouco provável que estes dois poetas se tenham lido mutuamente, e muito mais firme ao afirmar que nunca se conheceram. No entanto, os dois autores demonstram preocupações comuns no que diz respeito à sua relação com a sua identidade de género e sexualidade – o que, em articulação com os três vectores salientados, contribui para o que sugiro no título deste trabalho como sendo um “modernismo *queer*”, um conceito empregue pelo crítico Niall Munro. Defendo que Crane e Campos estabelecem uma relação com os seus contextos literários e socio-históricos que é mediada pelo género e pela sexualidade, operando numa tensão constante entre a pertença e a fuga, termos que balizam, por sua vez, a relação estabelecida entre o eu intelectual e o eu material de cada autor. Ambos, de forma recorrente, expressam interesse no conflito entre corpo e mente, interesse esse que transborda de forma clara para a sua produção poética.

O primeiro capítulo, intitulado “The Sea”, aborda a pertinência do topos “mar” na poesia de Campos e de Crane. Embora sendo central para ambos, o mar desempenha papéis diferentes na poesia de Campos e de Crane. No entanto, o uso que os dois poetas fazem dele tem algumas sobreposições funcionais. Dada a sua extensão imensa, o oceano afigura-se como incognoscível. Assim, torna-se possível que corpos e sujeitos não-normativos sejam capazes de realizar através dele os seus desejos mais íntimos e proibidos. Para Crane, o mar é uma fonte de dor e de esperança, sempre com uma quantidade significativa de perigo acrescido. Os sentimentos expressos pelo sujeito poético do sexteto “Voyages”, bem como as acções que ele

realiza, estabelecem uma relação simbiótica com o espaço em que se desenrolam. O mar surge aqui como um meio afastado da especificidade, que será analisado como uma atopia barthesiana: precisamente por ser um espaço “sem sítio”, pode acolher seres que foram expulsos das fronteiras da normatividade. No entanto, os perigos do mar não passam despercebidos. Na liberdade que é concedida através deste desconhecimento, há um sentimento constante de desgraça, exemplificado pelo sujeito poético mudo de “Voyages I”, que termina o poema ao anunciar a máxima “the bottom of the sea is cruel”.

A crueldade do mar de Crane é exacerbada no caso de Campos. O motivo do navio representa a era a que Campos anseia pertencer, por oposição à sua, de que deseja escapar. Os piratas do navio encarnam essa mesma era, esse contexto. São, por isso, um meio privilegiado para Campos realizar a sua fuga. Considero útil enquadrar, neste caso, o navio no conceito de “heterotopia” de Foucault, espaço fora de todos os outros, moldável aos usos e condições dos seus utentes; torna-se operante, pois, a fantasia de que os piratas possam acolher um outro no seu seio. Como também veremos em capítulos posteriores, o corpo do sujeito de enunciação é o meio de eleição para receber e realizar este esforço de inclusão. O sujeito de “Ode Marítima” realiza performances de género para permitir que o seu corpo seja transfigurado por estes agentes de outra época, relegando-se a uma posição passiva. A passividade não é exclusiva da “Ode Marítima” e tornar-se-á um conceito fundamental no segundo e terceiro capítulos desta dissertação, nomeadamente na “Ode Triunfal”, onde tal passividade recebe um nome — o poeta deseja tornar-se “passento”. No caso de “Ode Marítima”, a violência sexual a que se deseja sujeitar o corpo material deve ter lugar num corpo que é fundamentalmente feminino, talvez na esperança de que, desprovido de masculinidade, o corpo passivo seja também um corpo permeável. Tanto para Crane como para Campos, o mar é um *topos* privilegiado para a exploração de desejo não-normativo, em articulação estrita com o contexto cultural e histórico em que escrevem.

O desenvolvimento do segundo capítulo, “The City”, faz-se a partir de uma abordagem cosmopolita e urbana a dois poemas: “Possessions”, de Crane, e “Tabacaria”, de Campos. Estes dois poetas adoptam duas abordagens muito diferentes para a mesma preocupação global: a busca por relações humanas e o seu lugar nos seus contextos, enquanto sujeitos *queer*. Estas questões são abordadas na poesia de formas díspares. Enquanto Crane explora a complexidade da paisagem urbana em primeira mão, para entregar a sua auto-percepção aos corpos de outros homens que procuram, como ele, um sentido de pertença e ligação através da realização sexual, Campos, por outro lado, opta por permanecer acima do nível da rua, num apartamento, tornando-se um observador da vivência urbana e cosmopolita, mas não um praticante em primeira mão. Ele existe isolado do seu contexto, simultaneamente dentro e fora dele. O sujeito poético observável em “Tabacaria” não explora as ruas e os corpos que as povoam em busca da sua identidade da mesma forma que Crane e, portanto, expressa implicitamente uma vontade de regresso a um estado idealizado de pureza que já não existe — no fundo, uma fuga. Aqui, não reconhecemos o Campos energético de “Ode Marítima”, ou, como veremos no capítulo seguinte, de “Ode Triunfal”. Em consequência, a sexualidade não desempenha um papel expressivo em “Tabacaria”, tornando-se em vez disso significativa através da sua omissão gritante. O cenário que obriga o sujeito poético a isolar-se priva-o igualmente das suas sensações, tornando ineficaz as tentativas de se relacionar com o seu contexto através de qualquer tipo de impulso sexual. De facto, a cidade — a metrópole moderna — é um supressor da bravura que facilmente associaríamos a Campos. No entanto, o mesmo não se pode dizer em relação a Crane. Se para Campos a cidade aniquila a sua vontade de ligação, para Crane é exactamente o contrário. De facto, a geografia da metrópole moderna é o principal elemento facilitador da concretização de um desejo não-normativo, assumindo um papel fulcral não só ao permitir que se infiltre nos encontros sexuais entre homens o anonimato — possível através da entropia própria da existência urbana que torna os indivíduos anónimos no meio de uma

multidão —, mas também que se redefina o seu mapeamento, na medida em que os sujeitos a criam através do uso que dela fazem. A prática de *cruising* tem uma relação simbiótica com a cidade: só existe graças à própria cidade e, inversamente, a própria cidade é definida pelos comportamentos daqueles que a habitam, ajustando a sua geografia em conformidade (como é o caso de Greenwich Village, uma cidade dentro de uma cidade). Crane tira partido disso. Em última análise, os dois poetas dependem da cidade para enquadrar não só os seus esforços humanos, mas também a sua poesia.

Finalmente, o terceiro capítulo, “The Machine”, explora o papel desempenhado pela máquina em dois poemas fulcrais, “Ode Triunfal”, de Campos, e “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen”, de Crane. As abordagens de cada um deles são muito diferentes, mas convergem na atenção prestada à tensão entre a componente material e a componente intelectual do eu. O sujeito poético de “Ode Triunfal” é diferente daquele que conhecemos em “Tabacaria” — que, na cronologia de Pessoa, herdaria os méritos e deméritos deste triunfo — e também distinto daquele que conhecemos em “Ode Marítima”, embora a crítica os faça partilhar um mesmo espaço cronológico na obra de Campos. De facto, tal como o alvoroço que descreve ao longo do poema, parece que o nosso triunfante sujeito de enunciação está preso dentro de um limbo sensacionista, não tão violentamente negativo como nos seus tempos de marinheiro, nem tão letárgico e melancólico como na cidade. A sua propensão sensacionista ditaria que ele sofresse a notória indefinição de um novo sentido de si — extemporâneo, único, incapaz de pertencer, sem qualquer correlação com o seu próprio sentido de identidade. O seu corpo, porém, é um objecto material, e, como tal, é uma parte física desta era. Assim, não se pode facilmente subtrair dela, não sem sofrer a violência e a dor extremas que o conformariam com o eu intelectualizado. A dor torna-se um mediador privilegiado entre o eu e o seu contexto e é utilizada segundo uma lógica utilitária. Louvando as máquinas omnipresentes e naturalizadas, o sujeito poético não deixa de ansiar pela destruição do seu corpo às suas mãos, erotizando a

máquina e relegando o seu corpo para uma posição passiva (e, portanto, permeável), onde o sexo — não estritamente heterossexual — é também um instrumento de aculturação. Isto é feito de acordo com a poética do futurismo, que canta os louvores da máquina, por vezes em detrimento da humanidade, e do corpo feminino em particular. Longe de partilhar o entusiasmo futurista de Campos, Crane adopta a máquina na sua poesia como parte naturalizada da sua paisagem modernista e utiliza-a para resgatar um sentido de identidade de um passado que guarda um conjunto de valores em falta no seu próprio tempo. “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” é, entre os primeiros trabalhos de Crane, uma tentativa de resgatar a sua modernidade, não só do ponto de vista técnico e poético, mas também do ponto de vista cultural e ideológico. Crane está a reescrever a história do seu tempo, partindo da perspectiva dominante dos seus contemporâneos. Afinal, as suas preocupações com a máquina, a explosão do eu, o apagamento de empreendimentos líricos, e tudo o que essas coisas implicam, são fundamentalmente as mesmas. A divergência vem da sua ênfase num resultado positivo para tudo isto. Ao contrário de *The Wasteland*, de T. S. Eliot, “Faustus e Helen” deixa-nos esperançosos, estabelecendo um futuro mais optimista do que aquele que os contemporâneos de Crane poderiam esperar, ao esboçar um possível itinerário para a cura da sua era e da sua cultura. As figuras de Helen (beleza) e Fausto (tecnologia e progresso), com as quais o sujeito poético se identifica, são os dispositivos metonímicos que o acompanham através das três secções do poema. Estas secções são elas próprias representativas de diferentes aspectos da era que Crane está a tentar descrever: desde um verdadeiro catálogo de estímulos urbanos e tecnológicos na primeira secção, acompanhado por uma exploração do impacto que provocam nas mentes e corpos daqueles que os experienciam, à transliteração idiomática dos novos ritmos do Jazz e da musicalidade, culminando no horror absoluto da guerra — todas estas coisas se servem da máquina para alcançar o objectivo final de reconstruir um mundo a partir das cinzas.

Na medida em que os dois poetas têm claras intenções programáticas nos seus poemas, ambos sinalizam aspectos comuns aos seus contextos. Estes, apesar de geograficamente separados, são passíveis de se associar através dos temas de ambos os poetas, nomeadamente na importância que cada um deles coloca na sua sexualidade e identidade de género — em ambos, um instrumento vital para permitir o objectivo final de encapsular os estímulos da modernidade.

Ainda que não seja possível relacionar Pessoa/Campos e Crane através de uma abordagem estritamente textual ou filológica, dado que não existe nenhum contacto conhecido ou registado entre os dois, considerando a ênfase que ambos colocam na tentativa de definir os seus respectivos contextos, foi possível encontrar tópicos transversais a ambos. Além disso, os dois poetas partilham a mesma bagagem literária: as referências a autores como Walter Pater, Walt Whitman, ou Friedrich Nietzsche são feitas de forma semelhante, para servir propósitos análogos. A poesia dos dois contribui para um esforço de recuperação e definição do seu tempo. Quando tal poesia é lida através da lente do género e da sexualidade levanta, sem dúvida, questões inesgotáveis e altamente estimulantes que, espera-se, alimentarão a maquinaria da poesia modernista e permitirão reenquadrá-la num contexto que nem mesmo o mais aventureiro dos futuristas conseguiria conceber. É possível trazer estes debates para o nosso presente e aproveitar as contribuições da poesia para continuar a remodelar as nossas múltiplas e mutáveis percepções de nós próprios, do tempo e do espaço — de pertencer a uma era, dentro de um eu não-conforme, escapista.

Introduction

In 1932, at barely thirty-two years of age, Harold Hart Crane would jump over the railing of a ship and plunge his body into the cold waters and into the arms of the uncaring waves of the ocean. Years before, across the Atlantic, a naval engineer that went by the name of Álvaro de Campos had long since been dreamed up by Fernando Pessoa and had been questioning his place in his time ever since he was forged. The two poets never met, and yet their works display a concern for their place within their context with overlapping *topoi*. As the title of this dissertation suggests, both poets value the roles of the sea, the city, and the machine, as paramount examples in which they find the media to frame their context and explore their over-arching concerns, such as finding a new cultural identity for a newly minted era — in the case of Crane — or mediating the self’s presence in it — in the case of Campos. Moreover, both Crane and Campos deeply care about this new world. They inhabit it in so profound a way that it becomes a central theme of their poetry. Both were troubled souls, both struggled with a deep and inescapable awareness of their identities, which were all but impossible to fully enact in the age they lived through. A source of much of the anguish that plagued either poet can be traced to their respective relationship to their sexuality and gender. These topics find their way into the poems that I have selected as the chief objects of my work and likewise occupy a privileged position in the title of my dissertation. In connecting the word “queer” to a broad definition of “modernism” (as critics have done before, particularly in relation to Crane’s work), I aim to read these poets so as to contribute to a characterization of “queer modernism”¹.

Even if a bottom-up methodology will be preferred (in the sense that I intend to depart from the texts themselves to speculate on how “queer modernist” concerns show up in each

¹ This phrase was used by Niall Munro in the title of his study concerning Crane’s poetry in relation to his queerness, *Hart Crane’s Queer Modernist Aesthetic*.

author), a brief conceptual framework is in order. As such, it is important to, first, define what I mean by “queer”, given that this is a term that has undergone profound change through the times, especially throughout the twentieth century. What would seem to be an anachronic choice of wording in the title of my dissertation might not, in fact, be so. For the two poets, the word “queer” did not hold the broad and even scholarly meanings that we associate with it today, but these more recent uses of the term provide a work frame that I believe is quite helpful in reading their poems in a novel, broader light. As such, I would like to begin by very briefly tracing the cultural usage of the word up until the present day.

During the AIDS epidemic crisis in the late 1980s and early 90s, LGBT minorities would gain newfound voices and power, taking to the streets to enact public and heavily mediatized protests, spearheaded by groups such as ACT UP and Queer Nation. In this context “many LGBT people began using the word ‘queer’ to describe themselves and their culture” (Bronski 232). According to Bronski’s historical tracing of the term, this word, which originally meant “‘odd’ or ‘quaint’, acquired the meaning of ‘bad’ and ‘worthless’ in the early eighteenth century” (*ibid.* xvii). This word would then be used “negatively to describe homosexuals”, particularly “[s]ince the 1920s [in] mainstream British and U.S. vernacular” (*ibid.*). It would not be until the 1990s that “the grassroots political action group Queer Nation [would popularize] the reclaimed ‘queer’ so successfully that within a few years, national television shows (...) used the word without offense” (*ibid.*). This appropriation of the disparaging lexicon of the dominant heterosexist culture “(...) was partly an act of reclaiming language” giving it “a new, positive context that could change [its] political meaning” (*ibid.* 232). As a result, “(...) ‘queer’ could be used to describe people with a wide range of sexual identities who were working in coalition” (*ibid.*).²

² Theorists such as Paul B. Preciado have elaborated on the complexity of the term, stating that it “doesn't seem to define a quality of the object to which it refers” and is instead used to showcase “the inability of the subject who speaks to locate a category in the field of representation that fits with the complexity of that which they are

Similarly, this semantic expansion of the term gained increased importance in the context of early twenty-first century academia, in the field of Queer Theory and through broadening approaches to Gender Studies. In these areas, “queer” takes on a wider meaning, one that deviates substantially from its previous usage. In fact, if we look up the word “queer” in *Merriam-Webster* today, we find that alongside more literal meanings such as “1. a. differing in some way from what is usual or normal”³ (or the narrower “relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to members of one's own sex”⁴) we now also find that this word can be used in reference to a “sexual or romantic attraction that is not limited to people of a particular gender identity or sexual orientation” (*ibid.*). More importantly, for the purposes of my work, “queer” also extends beyond the confines of sexuality, crossing into the realm of gender identity. The same dictionary entry tells us that this word also means “being a person whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose gender identity is not cisgender” or “a person whose gender identity cannot be categorized as solely male or female”⁵. It is also interesting to note that these two latter definitions represent a significant shift in the way that the word is used by speakers themselves. Rather than subjects being described by others as queer, it is now the subjects themselves that reclaim the characterization, signalling a shift in the connotations associated with the word. This less passive approach to the adjective “queer” also strips it of its formerly pejorative strength — it is not only a descriptor, but it has also become a way of defining one’s *own* identity, rather than letting it be forcefully defined.

Consequently, I use the word “queer” in the title of this dissertation — as well as throughout its three main chapters — to signify an individual’s relation to the performance of

trying to define” (cf. Preciado, Paul B. “‘Queer’: History of a Word”. Smith, Sam (trans.). *Parole de queer*, 2009. see “Works cited” for full reference).

³ “Queer.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster.* (see “Works cited” for full reference).

⁴ And here it should be noted that this meaning overlaps with the meaning of the word “gay”.

⁵ *Merriam-Webster*’s links this to the concept of “Genderqueer” and “Non-binary”.

their body, their own sexual *and* gender identities that go beyond a heteronormative framework. In my work, “queer” may, at times, seem to refer to strictly homosexual relationships and intercourse. This is especially evident in the readings of Crane’s poems, as the queering of the poems’ speaker, as well as of the reading of the poems themselves, is more closely connected to homosexuality, in a strict sense. However, this word takes a more expansive meaning when referring to Campos’s poems, where gender is more important, as a result of the context in which it is used⁶. In the case of either poet, their approach to their times is fundamentally queer, precisely because it does not limit itself to the prescribed heterosexual — and even heterosocial — norm. As it is so, my approach deals more directly with reading, in the poetry itself, how this different — and at the time inevitably ostracising — sense of identity flows into their worldbuilding efforts, which incorporated bits and pieces of their cultures and environment into the poetry.

For instance, Crane shows true concern with “how American poetry might incorporate the world (...) into itself” (Mariani 97). This is in line with his wish to find a way to express a new reality, which, by definition, is ultimately impossible to do without devising a similarly new way of expressing it. However, he does not fall in line with his contemporary lyricists, as his diction is somewhat anachronous to the time and subject matter of which he sings. His efforts at finding a new idiom of American culture still retain some aspects of the diction of turn-of-the-century decadent authors, such as Walter Pater or P. D. Ouspensky⁷, which were also an influence in terms of his thematic concerns. This literary and idiomatic inheritance is made clear especially through his use of metaphor, in an effort to devise a logic of relationality

⁶ In fact, the emphasis that Italian modernists placed on gender contributes greatly to the role it plays in the poetry of Campos, in particular. This is especially relevant in the third chapter of this dissertation.

⁷ This influence is clear in the poems themselves, not only thematically, but directly in a textual way. In the first section of “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen”, for instance, Crane includes a quote from Ouspensky’s *Tertium Organum*. This quote frames the entire argument of the poem, allowing readers to trace Crane’s concerns directly back to his readings, creating a literary genealogy that also serves the purpose of clearly framing his approach. This subject is made clear in my reading of the poem, in the third chapter of this dissertation.

that would lead his readers to create associations that served the double purpose of dotting his own works with clear literary ancestry. Furthermore, Crane's use of metaphor and thwarted references provided a semantic, and oftentimes syntactic, shield of obscurity through which he could cut deeper into more sensitive matters, such as when it came to writing about his homosexuality. This is related to what some critics refer to as "the rhetorical function of Crane's difficulty" (Tapper 20) and is in line with Crane's own strategy of the "logic of metaphor"⁸, a sort of variation on Eliot's objective correlative, with a much more programmatic intent. This extends to the form of address in the language of the speaker of his poems.

To address the unfolding of queerness within nascent modernist aesthetics, I chose to focus on comparatively early works of both poets. *White Buildings* is a volume that is extremely useful for reverse-engineering Crane's development as a lead character in the devising of his era. As such, I have focused exclusively on poems from this volume, three in total (one for each chapter). *White Buildings* is a collection of his earlier works, not too removed from what could be considered juvenilia. Unlike the more often read *The Bridge*, Crane did not have a pre-existing overarching topic, theme, or agenda when anthologising his poems, written in various stages of his literary education. There are poems that directly reference some of his influences, whereas others are more stylistic experiences in articulation with the dominant poetics of his era.

The first chapter, "The Sea", will deal with Crane's "Voyages", a cycle of six poems that close *White Buildings* and articulate Crane's relationship to the sea, in parallel with a romantic liaison that was of particular importance in life. The second chapter, "The City", takes as its primary object of study the poem "Possessions", where Crane summons a series of cryptic and obscure metaphors to describe what we would now recognize as gay cruising. This is one

⁸ Cf. "General Aims and Theories"

of the poems where Crane deals with his queerness more explicitly, with the city as his background (and ally, as we will see). In the last chapter, “The Machine”, I will read Crane’s “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” as a chief example of Crane’s dialogue with the literary voices of his age, as well as those that more closely influenced. Here, his opposition to Eliot’s pessimistic views of his age take centre stage and are enacted through a series of architextual references to which the machine plays counterpoint. Just as the three main vectors that I identified as being of particular significance in his poetics, so too do these three poems hold a privileged position in Crane’s questioning of his age.

The texts I selected from among Campos’s works — “Ode Marítima”, “Tabacaria” and “Ode Triunfal”, for the first, second, and third chapters, respectively — are also foundational in nature, and they also represent formal and stylistic experiences for their author, but they do not hold the same initiatory qualities that we find in Crane’s. As is well known, Campos is a creation of Fernando Pessoa, part of his literary-performative experience with alterity, a central character of his “drama em gente”⁹ — a literary performance of “heteronymy”, as Pessoa-himself describes it. As a fictionalised entity, the elements of his biography that give off a semblance of verisimilitude are, in fact, deliberate and fictitious. Campos is part of Pessoa’s anglophone heritage, manifesting his particular anxieties concerning the modern era, not always in sync with Pessoa-himself’s own preoccupations — more of a parallel persona, rather than a substitutive pseudonym: a heteronym.

Campos’s odes are originally written in Portuguese. As such, I have adopted Richard Zenith’s translation of Campos’s poems, except in the first chapter, where I took the liberty of providing my own translation, for the sake of clarity, as the usefulness of Zenith’s translation was not as noticeable in this case.¹⁰

⁹ A concept used by Pessoa-himself in a 1929 text titled “Tábua Literária”.

¹⁰ Zenith’s translations, which are more readily available than most other translations of Campos’s works, take some significant stylistic liberties. As such, they are at times a reflection of the translator’s own interpretation of

In the six poems that make up the corpora of the three, the emphasis given to issues pertaining to the body varies significantly. However, the materiality of the body is an inescapable instrument of exploration that mimics the spatial and ideological positioning of each poet's relationship to the age in which they exist. At times, such as in Campos' odes or Crane's "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen", both poets rely very heavily on the possibilities offered by the bodies of their speakers — which often double for themselves — to either *escape* or *belong* to their age. Other times, it is the absence of the body — the physical attempt at removing the self from its context — that best puts across the influence of context on the self, as will be made clear in my reading of Campos's "Tabacaria". To this effect, Foucault's work regarding the importance of spatiality in twentieth-century culture is useful, and I will draw upon it in the very first chapter of this dissertation. In his lecture "Other Places (1967), Heterotopias"¹¹, Foucault believes "that the anxiety of [his] era has to do fundamentally with space". Despite writing a good few decades later than our two modernist poets, his work on the making and unmaking of spaces in connection with the uses their practitioners make of them is relevant for attempting to understand the anxieties that both Crane and Campos exhibit and work on in their poetry: that of needing to relate to a fundamentally hostile context, while simultaneously praising it and singing it, heralding the dawn of a new age, always in a constant conflict between the materiality of this attempt to belong — chiefly manifested through the physical human body, the "flesh" that Merleau-Ponty also talks about (*The Visible and the Invisible*) — and their external context.

the work in question, and not a word-for-word representation of the author's original meaning – insofar as it is possible to effectively decide what it is, exactly, that Pessoa's Campos meant. Rather than this being a hindrance to my work, I found that these discrepancies were, at times, instrumental in cementing my own understanding of the poems, as they provided a useful counterpoint through which it became possible to better substantiate some of my more long-winded arguments, hopefully making them clearer to the reader.

¹¹ Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias." *Architecture, Movement, Continuité*, no. 5, 1984, pp. 46-49. Available online at <https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en/>. Accessed 15 May 2021.

The conflict between the inner and the outer selves spills over to the manifestation of the speakers' non-normative sexualities. For Crane, the tension between "love and lust" (Martin 117) is in effect a dialectic relationship between thought and materiality — an inner and an outer manifestation of the self. Likewise, Campos's "Tabacaria", for instance, establishes, in its opening lines, "(...) a radical dichotomy between 'outward' reality—where the speaker and whatever he might achieve or become are ultimately nothing—and his 'inward' reality of dreaming" (*Pessoa: A Biography* 283). When put into contrast with the more manic and extrovertedly sexual Campos of poems such as "Ode Marítima" and "Ode Triunfal" (dealt with in the first and third chapters of this dissertation, respectively), this speaker stands out, allowing me to approach my subject through a different angle.

The removal of the self from modernity is often done with the intent to allow for the enactment of behaviours or traits that are not possible within the context from which the body — the actual, flesh and blood being — cannot be extricated. The relation that either author has with his context is permanently mediated by an irrepressible urge to either intensely *belong* — adapting personal and interpersonal behaviours to conform to the cultural expectations of their age — or to *escape* — mediating their relationship to said context through a poetics of aversion and fugue, or escape.¹² In either case, the body, as a privileged means for relationality, becomes an epistemic anchor — as do the stimuli that are inherent to experiencing something through one's body. Pain, as both concept and experience, is central, especially in the poetry of Campos, who often resorts to the violent eroticization of his self and his context, with assimilationist intent. Here, I will briefly look at Elaine Scarry's examination of pain in connection to the body to substantiate my argument. Furthermore, the emphasis on the materiality of the experiences of the bodily self has its ground in the poetics of Sensationism, as outlined by Alberto Caeiro

¹² As will hopefully be made clear, this escapism is not necessarily a negative phenomenon, but rather one that allows its practitioners a degree of freedom that would otherwise be unreachable.

and adopted by Campos, up to a certain point. The ethos of Sensationism stands at a halfway point between decadent aesthetic concerns and futurist preoccupations¹³. As such, pain is itself instrumentalized by the speakers of the poems as a fundamental tool in furthering their poetic agenda. Whereas for Campos, pain is most often grounded in the material realm — though often a result of pre-existing intellectual concerns that lead to shifting the focus and the efforts of *belonging* to the material realm itself — for Crane, pain is more often connected to the realm of ideas, of emotions. This is especially prevalent in the three sections of “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen”, where the speaker catalogues the various elements in his surroundings that make up the whole of his predicament and suffering, as we will see in the third chapter.

In either case, there is a constant preoccupation with the role of beauty in an age that not only was starting to move away from some of the stable aspects that characterised it, in lieu of the technological advancements that came about with the advent of the machine. This beauty of old is attractive to both Campos — who often professes his wish to revert to an earlier stage — and Crane, who wishes to rescue it. Beauty is also a necessary anchor of literary heritage and tradition, that either author explores in their own way, as is the case of Crane’s invocation of Helen (of Troy), as a metonymy for beauty and tradition. This older tradition also brings a different attitude towards non-normative sexuality.

Furthermore, in a set of notes for a prospective essay titled “The Process of Human Degeneracy”¹⁴, Pessoa goes on at length about his views on homosexuality, arguing that

¹³ Cf. Ramalho Santos: “an important characteristic of sensationism as thus fragmentarily defined by Pessoa is that it is futurist and decadent at the same time” (“Intersexualities” 177).

¹⁴ It is important to note the distinction that Zenith points out between Pessoa’s usage of “degeneration” and “degeneracy”, in English; “degeneração” and “degenerescência”, in Portuguese; predicated on the French “dégénérescence”, which is also the title of Nordau’s masterwork, which heavily influenced Pessoa’s views in this matter. In a paratextual note to Pessoa’s fragments, he writes the following: “Quanto à distinção entre *degeneration* e *degeneracy*, por vezes fluida, há uma tentativa de destrição (...). Advirta-se que Pessoa procurou a definição de *dégénérescence* – da biologia antropológica – no *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des science médicales* (...) traduzindo *dégénérescence* por *degeneration*. Em inglês *degeneracy* conota perversão sexual, significado que não possui *degeneration* (ou *dégénérescence*, no sentido médico), e por isso, ao reflectir sobre a

“sexual attraction and the feeling of beauty” were one and the same for “primitive humans but became separated as humanity evolved” (*Pessoa: a Biography* 316). This meant that beauty was “to be appreciated in its own right, independent of any physical consummation” (*ibid.*). Pessoa believes that, in his present-day, this distinction is not enforced by homosexuals (or “Pederasts”, as he refers to them). He states that they “may be right to consider male beauty superior; their error is to act on that consideration by desiring physical union with a man, thereby reverting to the primitive association of beauty with sex” (*ibid.*), therefore ascribing homosexual sex to a more primitive, less sophisticated state. There is an “assumption that sex must be useful, aiming at procreation; otherwise, it is unnatural”.¹⁵ This “utilitarian” (*ibid.*) notion of sex is virtually unchanged when compared to the use Pessoa makes of sexual violence in “Ode Marítima”, with a clear purpose in mind, though in this instance, he dabbles in gender performativity as well. This will be made clearer through closer analyses of the texts throughout the dissertation.

Indeed, “Pessoa was keenly aware of his feminine, ‘hysterical’ side, to which he attributed his intense and swiftly fluctuating emotions as well as his propensity for pretending, for depersonalization” (Zenith 310). He makes good use of this in giving Campos the awareness of the possibilities offered by the passivity he ascribed to his feminine qualities. In keeping with Futurist ideals as expounded by Marinetti, feminine virtues held very little virtuosity, in that they contradicted the traits futurists wished to praise. What they saw as passivity seemed incompatible with their exaltation of speed and virility. Consequently, the feminization — indeed the transsexualization — of the self in some of Campos’s odes is often done as a way

sexualidade, Pessoa empregará o termo *degeneracy*. No entanto, em português, o uso do termo *degenerescência* é predominante” (“Da Degenerescência” 87).

¹⁵ It would seem that “Pessoa, at any rate, admitted the possibility of his favoring men over women, but only if the attraction was purely aesthetic” (Zenith 317). Other critics, such as Klobucka, note the experimentalist nature of Pessoa’s ambiguity regarding sexuality and gender, emphasizing their shifting nature throughout his body of work.

of allowing the self to be possessed by the forces of modernity. This is often enacted by resorting to sexual violence. This is certainly the case with the speaker of “Ode Marítima”, clearly observable during the famous section titled “canção do grande pirata”, wherein the speaker is raped and penetrated by the representatives of this other age to which he wishes to escape, one removed from the qualities of modernity that he finds incompatible with his idealized sense of self.

But to pinpoint this self is no easy task. I feel it is important to note that it is not my intention in this dissertation to provide an exhaustive view of the outlined topics. Such an enterprise is not possible in a work of this nature, especially when considering the vastness of Fernando Pessoa’s body of work. In fact, many of his poems, essays, and assorted fragments are still unpublished. Likewise, the significance and overall interest surrounding this author have meant that Pessoaan scholarship and critical work have evolved into quasi-industrial proportions. As such, it becomes rather difficult to begin to approach a subject as vast as Pessoa, even if I have chosen to limit the scope of my work to only one of his many people. Crane’s poetry has also been the subject of extensive inquiry, and the debates surrounding his biography and his works are yet to reach a firm consensus. As a result, it is impossible to coherently argue towards a holistic or comprehensive theory regarding Campos and Crane’s views on modernism and sexuality without first delving into a deeper theoretical and philological framework that would occupy the majority of the allowed space for this dissertation, if it were to be done in a respectfully sober and intellectually honest way. Instead, within these three chapters, I aim to read the selected poems closely, always in articulation with both cultural and literary theory, as well as relevant scholarship, when they become relevant. By shifting the focus from a generalised cultural or literary-historical approach into a more intimate and close perspective on the poems themselves, I aim to substantiate my readings, first and foremost by providing evidence from within the poems themselves, as well as through

drawing on similar efforts of specific criticism and scholarship, including biography. As such, while the sections within each chapter that focus mainly on close-reading the poems themselves can be extensive, they have been supplemented and substantiated by criticism and, at times, the contrasting readings of other readers.

A potentially negative consequence of this methodology is the inevitable preclusion of topics that would seem to require more ample mention. For instance, the importance of Whitman as a clear architextual figure (in Genette's understanding of the term¹⁶) to the poetics of both Crane and Campos is noticeably absent from my argumentation. This is because this connection has already been established in the works of Irene Ramalho Santos, whose output I use at several points throughout my chapters, taking part in the same discussion the scholar inaugurated. For instance, in the first chapter, "The Sea", I draw heavily on the readings of Ramalho Santos and John T. Irwin, for Campos and Crane, respectively. The former author is also a precursor to the work I am presenting, as Ramalho Santos's *Atlantic Poets* is a seminal book concerning the relevance of Pessoa's works in the context of North-American modernism and vice versa. She is also a precursor in attempting to bridge Crane and Campos's geographical distance through a careful reading of each of the author's works. In them, Ramalho Santos finds significant thematic and architextual overlaps, from which I drew heavily throughout this dissertation, and which can easily be corroborated through consulting other secondary sources. On his part, Niall Munro has highlighted the transtextual dimension of Crane's work, dialoguing with other writers at the turn of the 19th century and with early modernism¹⁷. This is made clear in my dissertation, right from the start.

¹⁶ Cf. Ceia, Carlos. "Arquitexto". See "Works Cited" for full reference.

¹⁷ Munro writes that "Crane's work can be seen to bridge the gap between these decadent writers of the 1880s and 1890s and nascent modernism. Indeed, Crane's work is representative (...) of a particular kind of decadent modernism that fused together different forms of experimentation in terms of language and content" (Munro 4).

The first chapter, “The Sea”, deals primarily with the connection between the two poets’ works and the sea, in articulation with what that might entail regarding sexuality and gender. I believe that the way the authors treat this subject is fundamentally connected to the creation and mythologizing of both their sense of self and their age, as well as of the place they held in their historical and social contexts. The sea is a mediator between the self and this particular age and frames the way each author relates to their sexuality and gender, the former being more explicit in Crane’s “Voyages”, whereas the latter is more prevalent in the case of Campos’s “Ode Marítima”. Aside from the maritime echoes in the titles of the poems, these two works are paramount for working on the problem I exposed above. Likewise, the two are rich in references pertaining to non-normative views on sexuality and gender that stand out and, as such, are useful for working on these topics, according to a theoretical framework that centres on the ideas regarding space, as developed by Foucault and Barthes, namely the concepts of “heterotopia” and “atopia”, respectively.

In the second chapter, the emphasis shifts towards the city as it is yet another essential vector of the modernist poetics of our two authors. Its connection to non-normative desire is, once again, fundamental for understanding its conditioning of the roles occupied by Campos and Crane, as well as the actions (or inaction) that their speakers take within this urban context. Theory regarding the advent of the modern urban landscape in connection to the exploration of non-normative desire takes central stage, primarily through the works of Joseph Allen Boone on the influence of gender and sexuality in the making of modernism, and Diane Chisholm, who expounded on the articulation between spatiality and queerness, particularly in connection with the modern city; alongside other more canonical works on this subject, such as the concept of the *flanêur* as described by Baudelaire and cemented by Benjamin, or the relation between space and its practitioners, as Michel de Certeau elaborated in his *Practice of Everyday Life*.

The layout of the city itself is fundamental in understanding the possibilities it offers to its practitioners. Through its separation into various sub-hubs of urban life, non-normative subjects are free to select and organize accordingly, creating the city through the uses they make of it. A fundamental instrument for the enactment of this creating force is the act of walking. In connection to queer rhetoric, the act of walking takes particular significance in Crane's "Possessions", whose speaker cruises the streets of a place we can identify as Greenwich Village in search for correspondence in the bodies of equally urban, just as anonymous, and likely also queer brethren.

In this chapter we will also see how the Campos of "Tabacaria" is different from that of "Ode Marítima". He is a recluse, has removed his physical self from the context with which he formerly wished to meld, and voyeuristically stares through his apartment window, down into the streets where people cross his gaze (the actual word he uses is "cruzam" which has interesting etymological resonances with the word "cruising"). Rather than being overly sexual, the speaker is melancholic, and this erasure of sexual agency also provides ample ground to discuss its relevance in Campos's works, in a logic of opposition. Campos stands removed from the context, but still fundamentally surrounded by it — trapped by the structures of urban space.

Finally, in the third chapter, the emphasis is on the machine and the possible overcoming or erasure of the self that it promises. The attitudes of the two poets are quite different in this regard — for the most part. Campos is much more aligned with the poetics of Futurism, appropriating some of the language and structures employed in the "Futurist Manifesto" so that he can sing the praises — and highlight the struggles — of the age of the machine. His "Ode Triunfal" is a battleground in which the speaker suffers a violent barrage of stimuli, always identified with the technological components that frame this new era. He welcomes this violence, similarly to what was done in "Ode Marítima". However, if in this

poem the speaker instrumentalizes gender to serve his escapist purpose, in “Ode Triunfal” it is sex and sexuality that are given this responsibility. The speaker welcomes sexual violence so that the limits of his material body might be violated by the machine, in an effort to conform his intellectual self — which resists — to the novel plane of technological existence, of which his body cannot be removed. Judith Butler’s discussions concerning the discursive capabilities of sex and sexuality briefly come into play at this stage.

For Crane, however, the weight of the machine is more subtle. His poem, “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen”, was written in direct response to Eliot’s fatalistic vision of western culture as outlined in *The Wasteland*. Crane enacts this dialogue with Eliot’s text in three separate sections that make up the poem, through which the speaker journeys in search of reconciliation with Helen, who symbolises ancestral beauty and tradition. The speaker identifies with the other half of the binomial coupling presented in the title: Faustus, who stands for modernity, and progress. The first section of the poem presents us the difficulties imposed on the speaker’s mind by the various stimuli that parade through the urban landscape, generated by artificial technologies that seem to disagree with the speaker’s disposition. In the second section, there is an attempt to translate into poetry the new soundscape of modernity, with references to an emerging form of music: Jazz. This new music, and the remaining sounds and architectural elements have a palpable material dimension, which the speaker is eager in pointing out. If in the first section we are greeted with a catalogue of less than agreeable stimuli, these are far more pleasurable and give us a glimmer of hope for reconciliation. The third and final section of the poem takes us directly into what is possibly the single most harrowing conflict experienced up until that point — we enter into the world of the First World War, wherein machinery has but one clear purpose: to destroy. Stable assumptions regarding the body, the self, culture, gender and sexuality all come into question in the face of the Great War.

This provides us with ample ground to explore the shifting conceptions of masculinity and virility, in the homosocial context of the trenches.

As I hope to make clear, the importance of the sea, the city, and of the machine is paramount. From ships floating atop the menacing unknowability of the possibilities offered by the ocean, to the promises embodied in the novel shapes, sounds and smells of machinery, our heralds of this new age live within great urban landscapes which encompass all of this, and thus frame their own perspectives accordingly, in poetry that springs from their context, as well as from their own selves.

I. The Sea

Standing on a pier, a naval engineer stares out into the unknowable expansiveness of the ocean, from which ships come into the promises of the modern city. In this wharf of liminality, he is in a place that stands as a border between the city and the sea. Here, he is free to argue his position, which is itself quite liminal in attempting to resolve the tension between an urge to belong and a painful awareness that such an endeavor is, in fact, not possible. Across the Atlantic, a young man silently observes children playing in the ocean, reminiscing on the days when he, too, could play without a care, without an awareness of the weight of his version of play. If he could speak, he would tell them how he, too, has lived and loved the sea and all its promises — but he cannot. Instead, he observes, and remembers a particular love that fell outside the scope of normativity.

Crane and Campos use the vastness of the ocean to enact performances of gender and sexuality. They have different perspectives on what the sea stands for, what its dangers and promises can be, but they converge in their acknowledgment that the ocean is a space that is both ready and able to welcome desires that are not possible in spaces more defined, with tighter rules, more solid ground. Both are also aware of the weight of history that the ocean carries, and similarly weave this into their poetry, which, in turn, is itself rich with allusions to sex, sexuality, and gender that frame their perspectives firmly within a non-normative approach. Both poets had their own troubled relationships with their sexual and gender identities and found in their poetry a privileged medium to explore it. Irene Ramalho Santos sees each poet's respective concerns regarding these two topics as a natural consequence of their time, thus establishing an indelible bond between some of modernism's most assertive practitioners and their queerness. Indeed, the critic claims that

[a]t a time when art was being redefined as the common language of internationalism, and gender categories were beginning to fluctuate under even the most strict definitions, the sensitivity of the finest poets of the period could not but render problematic the apparent ideological certainties of futurist affirmation, whether cultural political or sexual.

("Intersexualities (...)") 170)

As such, this chapter aims to read both Hart Crane's and Álvaro de Campos's poetry, paying particular attention to one of the recurrent themes in both poets' works — the sea — and to what it might represent regarding sexuality and gender. Secondly, and delving deeper into the subject matter, I aim to assert that each author's perspective on their sense of being, of loneliness, of love, and on the place each of them occupied in their respective social and historical context, as mediated by the sea itself (represented in their poetry), goes a long way to establish a particular form of modernism. This is framed by how each of the authors relates to their respective sexualities — more noticeable in Crane — and gender or sexual identities — especially prevalent in Campos.

To do so, I have selected a small corpus of each author's poems. I will read Campos's "Ode Marítima" and Crane's "Voyages" sextet, as they are of particular importance to understand each poem's usage of the Sea as both a space and as a multi-layered construct. I contend that "Ode Marítima" is a long and self-consciously poetic exploration on the theme of flight and escape from modernity. Furthermore, I argue that a privileged device that Campos uses to perform this escape is the sexualization, transsexualization, and an effective erasure of the speaker's masculinity that enables the abovementioned escape, in part due to the somewhat misogynistic interpretation of the qualities stereotypically ascribed to women, especially

prevalent in modernist — and, in this case, futurist — writing¹⁸. Spatiality plays an important role here, as well. There is a tension between the location that the speaker actually inhabits — the pier (*cais*) — and that which he desires — the sea. Just as I will show in my analysis of Crane’s own sea voyages, these are either spaces of indefiniteness, or of transition. This ultimately renders them uninhabitable in any real sense of the word. They are spaces without the specificity of space — they are, in fact, atopias, as described by Roland Barthes and explored in connection to Crane’s poetry by Niall Munro, among others. The Foucauldian concept of the heterotopia is also relevant for exploring this question, especially in connection to Campos, as his escape is aided by mnemonic devices that anchor and enable the speaker to be transported into his fantasy — the memory and performance of “the scream” that sends him on a journey through his remembered sensations and desires, a scream that encapsulates all things related to seafaring life. These concepts will be articulated more in-depth later on in this chapter.

Crane’s “Voyages” cycle is made up of six poems, each in its own way providing a vignette that, together, encapsulate a love affair of particular significance to the author, all the while musing on the different ideas of love in connection to the sea. Indeed, for the author, the meaning and agency of the ocean seem to be manifold. In each of the six poems, we delve deeper into the significance of the ocean in connection to love — in particular as it pertains to an especially significant love affair that Crane had with a Norwegian-American merchant-seaman, Emil Opfer. In all of them, however, there is a sense of unknowability or indefiniteness regarding the sea — both as a physical space and as a way of life, both ashore and onboard a ship.

¹⁸ This idea will be further expanded later on in the dissertation, in Chapter III’s discussion of futurism in connection to the advent of the machine (cf. pp. 112).

In a letter to his mother, Grace, dated November 16th 1924, Crane details being hard at work, “engaged in writing a series of six sea poems called ‘Voyages,’” which, he adds, “are also love poems” (Crane, 2006, 400)¹⁹. The publication history of the cycle is amply recorded in various critical readings of the six poems and, to an extent, it frames the undercurrent themes that Crane wished to impart to these exercises on lyricism, as it is, predictably, closely intertwined with their author’s own life. Initially, the poems were not intended to become a cohesive six-poem cycle, nor were they meant to work on love right from the get-go. Werner Berthoff notes this, writing that “[t]he new love relationship Crane formed in the spring of 1924 with Emil Opfer quickly yielded drafts for two more poems” (76), which were originally independent works. The first, titled “Sonnet,” would later become “Voyages III,” while the second, “the one performative lapse in the sequence” (*ibid.*), would later become “Voyages II”, written shortly after Crane thought he had “contracted a serious venereal infection and in panic imagined having to break permanently with Emil Opfer, who was away at sea” (*ibid.*). This latter poem was then “dedicated ‘to E. O.’” and is, conveniently, understood by Berthoff to be “the most direct in conveying private confusions and hopes” (*ibid.*). By this time, “Voyages I” had already undergone a double transformation, departing from its original title of “The Bottom of the Sea is Cruel” — the line that finishes the poem and reconfigures the reading of the remainder of the cycle —, into “Poster”, before finally being adopted as the opening lyric of the cycle. A similar account of it can be read in John T. Irwin’s *Hart Crane’s Poetry: “Apollinaire Lived in Paris, I live in Cleveland, Ohio”*, one of the most comprehensive studies of Crane’s work. As Berthoff before him, Irwin accounts for the somewhat convoluted writing and publication history of the first of Crane’s “Voyages,” writing that, for example, “Voyages I”

¹⁹ That Crane thought it necessary to detail the nature of his seafaring collection as one that also pertains to love is relevant, since it outlines the majority of the critical responses to, and readings of, these six poems, which tend to be framed primarily through the biography of their author, sometimes relegating their actual literary achievements to the background.

had originally been written as a separate poem titled “The Bottom of the Sea Is Cruel,” and it was only in 1924, at the start of what proved to be the most intense sexual relationship of Crane’s life, his love affair with the young Norwegian-American merchant seaman Emil Opfer Jr., that he wrote “Voyages II” and incorporated the early poem as the initial section of the sequence.

(Irwin 351)

However, while most critics seem to agree that “‘Voyages’ is built around an extended metaphor in which the tenor is love and the vehicles are the sea and voyaging” (Irwin 351), how this “love” is enacted varies significantly as the poem progresses further, throughout the six tightly-woven lyrics that compose it. The analogy present in the title becomes “an imaginative-expressive voyage” (Berthoff, 75), that “constitutes, within the invoked coercions of time and space and of common fortune, a venturing out into the seawell of conscious existence” (*ibid.*). More importantly, this also means diving into “the turbulence of love — love of another, love of all created being” (*ibid.*). The individual, almost always self-sufficient, nature of each of the poems is fundamental to the completion of a fully-fledged, well-rounded exploration of Crane’s proposed theme of love.

In “Voyages I”, the reader is immediately put face to face with the sea. It is a constant presence, even if, at this point, the speaker is not voyaging through it (at least, not in any physical sense of the word). Critics agree that a possible reading for the beginning of this poem is that “[t]he shore is equated with childhood, and the sea with the maturity that comes from sexual experience” (Irwin 351), and thus, the sea functions as the background for the main objects of the poem, the “[b]right striped urchins” (ll. 2) at play “[a]bove the fresh ruffles of

the surf” (ll. 1). The speaker observes their behaviour intently and describes it throughout the remaining lines of this opening stanza, as the children “have contrived a conquest for shell shucks” (ll. 3), and with “their fingers crumble fragments of baked weed / Gaily digging and scattering” (ll. 4-5). The sea looms over the entirety of the action, passively — and perhaps inertly — haunting both innocent children and the concerned observer. Moreover, not only is the sea the setting for what the speaker aims to convey but it is also one of the primary reasons he is unable to do so, for the children speak to each other as they play by the shore, and “in answer to their treble interjections” (ll. 6), the natural elements that surround them prove to be nonchalant in their reaction, as “[t]he sun beats lightning on the waves” (ll. 7) and “[t]he waves fold thunder on the sand” (ll. 8)²⁰. Faced with this passage, Irwin suggests that

[t]he thunder and lightning suggest the dangers of the sea, but the sun’s movement and the beating of the waves on the shore evoke a subtler danger to childhood — the passage of time that will *inevitably* bring the children to a dangerous knowledge.

(351, my italics)

The repetitive and uncaring motions of the elements signal their disregard. They are the background for the children’s innocence, even if, according to the speaker, they will ultimately be their downfall.

The speaker expresses a wish to address the children, to tell them of his own history, but we learn he is unable to do so through the use of the conditional tense in “could they hear me I would tell them (...)” (ll. 9), implying that the speaker does not rise above the primordial roaring of the sea, whereas the children, through their unassuming and unblemished idiom, can

²⁰ Another possible interpretation is that one of the reasons the children cannot hear the speaker is precisely because of the aforementioned actions of the natural elements.

become, in effect, a naturalized part of the seascape, assimilated into the ebb and flow of its promises. Furthermore, unlike the speaker, these children do not yet know what their life has in store for them and are consequently rendered invulnerable to the knowledge that the speaker has of what he's lived through. His experiences are of such foreign nature to that of the children that he can no longer circle back and return to their idyllic state of being, and is thus unable to comprehend them — and, more importantly, he is unable to speak to them. He is excluded from their world: he has lost his innocence — for that is the pure dialect that the children speak and which, conversely, puts them at risk through its obliterating bliss.

It would then be easy to assume that the speaker, in detailing his advice for the children, which occupies the remaining third stanza of the poem, is providing a warning to them. Indeed, many critics have assumed that this is true, that in using imperatives such as “frisk” (ll. 10) and “fondle” (ll. 11), the speaker is attempting to guide the urchins' behaviour. I do not believe this to be the case. In a reading that contradicts most established interpretations of the poem, Evelyn J. Hinz tells us that “Voyages I” is not about a warning. As I have established, the speaker is unable to voice his thoughts, and thus the children cannot heed his possible warnings, which are rendered moot. As a result, the poem assumes a sort of painful nostalgia, as if the speaker is watching the same mistakes and behaviors of his youth being replayed in front of him, framed by the indifferent, constant, unrelenting sea. The speaker is powerless to act. Furthermore, his ordeal, the same as that of generations past and yet to pass, is unavoidable. Hinz goes one step forward and reframes the subject matter of the poem, stating that the issue at hand is that “(...) the speaker *has* experienced, not that he will risk experiencing, the sea” (322, italics as in the original). There is a will, on his part, to “communicate this experience to the children (...)”, but he is ultimately unable to do so. They cannot hear him, and so, “because he has no audience, he really has not spoken. If they could hear he would tell them; since they cannot, the implication is that he does not” (*ibid.*). As a result, if we accept the validity of this reading, the

imperative tenses mentioned above are reconfigured into painfully conforming to the already established inevitability of the ocean. The advice that the speaker hands out in saying that the children “must not cross nor ever trust beyond” (ll. 13) the “line” (ll. 12) that would separate the “spry cordage of [their] bodies” (ll. 14)²¹ from dreaded “caresses” (ll. 14) falls on deaf ears. If, indeed, “Crane prepares the reader for the ensuing concerns over mortality and immortality that feature as key ideas throughout the remainder of the sequence (...)” (Munro 102), then “[t]he final lines of ‘Voyages I’ affirm negativity — indeed a negative passivity — and imply that these children will be destroyed by the sea” (*ibid.*), leaving the last line of the poem echoing heavily in the forever pulsating undulation of the vast expanse of the ocean. As such, it would seem that “Crane forces the reader to begin his sequence with an ending, one that seems to challenge heteronormative understandings of generative, linear progress” (Munro 102). Indeed, all evidence points to the indelible fact that would lead one to argue that “[t]he bottom of the sea is cruel” (ll. 16).

But there is hope. Acting as an immediate continuation of the last line of the first poem in the cycle, the opening line of this second Voyage begins with a dash, thereby doubly implying a sense of contradiction and continuity — of a compounding explication that begins by describing the sea itself, as the speaker sees it. “— And yet” (ll. 1), we are told, this notion that “[t]he bottom of the sea is cruel” (“Voyages I” ll. 16) is not entirely true — or, at the very least, it is not a cause for concern as pressing as the ending of the previous poem would have us believe. “Crane presents the opposite view [to ‘Voyages I’] in ‘Voyages II’ — the case for risking everything for love” (352), Irwin writes. The ever-present sea, “this great wink of

²¹ The description of the children’s bodies as “spry cordage” attests not only to their youthfulness, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to the degree to which they have already entered into a symbiotic relationship with the perils of the sea. The use of “cordage” places them well within the lexicon of maritime life. As such, these children are (soon to be) sailors, battling with the sea, as well as with its implications.

eternity” (ll. 1), that has accompanied mankind through its toils and tribulations ever since its conception, continues to stand steadfast in its nonchalance, “unfettered” (ll. 2) in its concerns or movements, existing beyond any constraints in the minds and lives of men, reflecting only the pulsating light of the moon on the surface of “[h]er undinal vast belly” (ll. 4)²², all the while “[l]aughing at the wrapt inflections of our love” (ll. 5). It is important to note that the line that closes the first stanza of this poem gives us a hint of what specific type of love it is to which we are bearing witness. If, as Munro put it, “[t]he first stanza of the published version of ‘Voyages II’ describes an intimate relationship between the lovers and the sea” (Munro 112) — lovers, plural, as made clear by the specificity of “*our* love” (ll. 5, my italics), implying a couple, or even a collective of likeminded people — then “the description of the love as containing ‘inflections’ suggests a love with an accent, as being non-normative” (*ibid.*)

This non-normativity seems to be at the root of the problem developed in the poem’s second stanza. With the imperative to “[t]ake this sea” (ll. 6)²³, the speaker urges the reader to pay close attention to the punishment exerted upon the lovers by the “sceptered” — and thus, legitimate, royal, normalized — “terror” (ll. 8) of the immaculate sound emitted by the “diapason” (ll. 6). This musician’s tool, often used to tune instruments as close to perfection as possible, creates a normative point of comparison for the sea that writes its cruel edicts on “scrolls of silver snowy sentences” (ll. 7), once again harkening back to the naturalized aspect of the power of the sea. These judicial-like “sessions” (ll. 8) seem to take no casuistic notice, but — and here is a glimmer of hope — they do show some degree of compassion for “the pieties of lovers’ hands” (ll. 10). It would seem that these, alone, “(...) may be able to placate the world of the sea” (Munro 107).

²² Crane’s unsubtle choice of “belly” reinforces a reading of the sea not only as a female entity — as is clearly discernible here through the usage of feminine pronouns — but, moreover, as a motherly entity.

²³ Just as in the first poem in the cycle, “(...) the impulse behind the words of instruction that punctuate the final version of ‘Voyages II’ are intended to engage the reader” (Munro, 108).

The rest of the poem pays great importance to the time-bending properties of the sea. Indeed, throughout the three remaining stanzas, the references to time multiply. Take, for instance, the third stanza:

And onward, as bells off San Salvador
Salute the crocus lustres of the stars,
In these poinsettia meadows of her tides,—
Adagios of islands, O my Prodigal,
Complete the dark confessions her veins spell.

(ll. 6-10)

Here, we have “[a]dagios of islands” (ll. 14) that “[c]omplete the dark confessions” (ll. 15) “spell[ed]” (*ibid.*) by the “tides” (ll. 14)²⁴. These tides are then anthropomorphized as having “shoulders” (ll. 16) that “wind the hours” (*ibid.*). Further on, we realize that the speaker wishes that he and his love would be encapsulated forever at sea, “[bound] (...) in time” (ll. 21), so that they would not have to return to “no earthly shore” (ll. 23) before “[t]he seal’s wide spindrift gaze toward paradise” (ll. 25) would be “answered in the vortex of [their] grave” (ll. 24). As Berthoff put it,

²⁴ I would also like to mention the wilful obscurity of Crane’s poetry, as made clear by the complex syntax, often inverted, further complicated by the constant employment of enjambment. This may also be a marker for the personal nature of these poems, as they require a great deal of input from readers, demanding that they fill in the gaps left by the speaker, in an interconnected web of obscure metaphors that emphasize connotative meanings, rather than exploring the poem’s subject matter in a direct and candid fashion. This creates a bond between poet, poem, and reader, attesting to the “logic of relationality” put across by Niall Munro as one of the fundamental pillars of Crane’s poetry.

[t]he timeless expanse of the sea, terrifying to an unsupported consciousness, brings confirmation in its great beauty to the passion, the indwelling worshipfulness, of all self-delighting lovers.

(78)

This apparently contradicts the overall menacing properties of the sea as described in “Voyages I” — but that may not be so. In fact, I argue that it is precisely because of the dangers described in the previous section that the lovers do not want to come ashore. The nature of the love and experience offered by the sea is unique unto itself, as it deviates from what is acceptable back home, on the shore. As such, it is understandable that the lovers do not wish to return until a possible paradise — something entirely removed from their reality (like the sea) — would come true. The love that they experience is equated to the sea. If this is true, then, just like the ocean, so too does this love carry danger. As we will later see, the possible answer to this problem does not, in fact, cannot, require a paradise.

“The third and fourth sections of ‘Voyages’ maintain the reciprocal correspondences of ocean world and the rapt (and ‘wrapt’) communion known to lovers”, so Berthoff tells us (79). Indeed, “[i]n ‘Voyages III,’ it seems that Crane wants to commemorate his relationship by encapsulating it in the phrase the ‘tendered theme’ (...)” (Munro, 107). This is in many ways a transitional poem in the cycle, for it is here that the love we have heard of since the beginning now begins to take physical shape.²⁵ As such, there is a theme of sameness that occurs

²⁵ As Berthoff put it:

“The ‘you’ of ‘Voyages III’ is now out on that same sea, and the imaged consummation that follows — in lines that through the physical imagery of ‘swollen gates,’ ‘whirling pillars’ and ‘lithe pediments’ and an accelerating participial rhythm both directly evoke love’s bodily acts and assert for them a transporting of dissolution of being (...)” (Berthoff, 79).

throughout the three stanzas that precede the hanging line that will then lead us into the next section of the poem. We are told that to come this far, the lovers have been “admitted through black swollen gates” (ll. 9) that have suppressed “all distance” (ll. 11). It is in immediate proximity that we see “Light wrestling there incessantly with light” (ll. 12), where “star” kisses “star” (ll. 13), through “wave on wave” until the ultimate climax of “[y]our body rocking!” (ll. 14). This sameness might also stand for an absence of time, unlike what we saw happen with “Voyages II”:

(...) in ‘Voyages III,’ Crane maintains his queering of time, distorting the normative linear understanding of temporality. Not to do so would mean that a faithful representation of the queer relationship could not be possible

(Munro 118).

Because it is, in fact, a *queer*²⁶ relationship that we are witnessing, and in suspending the final line of the poem, we are granted a sense of continuity, of future, commencement, and hope, even despite the perils that this love will undoubtedly bring forth, judging by the omens present in the somewhat fatalistic tone of “Voyages I”. Despite its dangers, the speaker ends by asking his lover for permission to join him, by quietly supplicating, “Permit me voyage, love, into your hands...” (ll. 19).

The third and fourth poems of ‘Voyages’ establish a similar relationship to that of the first two, in that, to the suspended ending demarcated by the ellipsis which ends “Voyages III”, we find an immediate answer at the beginning of “Voyages IV”. Keeping true to the course traced thus far, from exposing the dangers of love to finding in them a silver-lining that would then culminate in physical union, we come to a poem that in Munro’s words, represented for

²⁶ According to the definition of the term I provided in the Introduction.

the poet “the initial exaltation (...) of his experience with Opfer, and so if we take him at his word (...) this poem represents an unfiltered version of Crane’s experience, or as unfiltered as a poem can be” (129). This experience, however, is bittersweet.

Continuing straight from ‘Voyages III,’ the speaker seeks refuge in his lover’s hands that synecdochically stand-in for the person himself, as well as for the relationship bond. They are described tenderly in the opening lines of this poem yet retain a melancholic or even painful tone. Alas, what possible beauty might have come from eagerly awaiting his lover’s arrival is marred by the foreshadowing of pain to come. Indeed, while remembering his lover’s smile, the speaker describes it as a “counted smile” (ll. 1), made of up “hours and days” (ll. 1), signalling the painful reminder of his separation that comes with thinking of his love away at sea. The lover’s departure is certain. Irwin notes that “[h]aving claimed in ‘Voyages III’ that the sea shared the same blood as the lovers (its ‘infinite consanguinity’), Crane in ‘Voyages IV’ now suggests that New York harbour (...) is a sign of the returning lover (...)” (Irwin 361). Indeed, “he has counted the ‘hours and days’ before the lover’s homecoming, known time’s passing through the ‘spectrum of the sea’” (Irwin 359), and is haunted by an image of a “[c]hilled albatross”, “white” in its “immutability” (ll. 5), who might have otherwise stood in for the constancy of his love, but “since this soaring bird is an albatross, with all its Coleridgean connotations of ill omen, one gets a sense of the speaker’s uneasiness about the absent lover’s faithfulness or the mutable quality of physical love” (Irwin 359).

Thinking about the concept of time brings about a reminder of instability, followed by an imagined reunion, yet again marred by the uncertainty of the future. The lover has gone to sea and will have doubtless changed during his time away, leaving behind a pining lover who is only too aware of this.²⁷ Irwin leads us into the following section of the cycle:

²⁷ Berthoff adds to this, stating that “(...) every consummation integral to the world’s existence will close within the lovers’ ‘steps,’ though the proper telling of it must perhaps wait for some final encounter with fatality. From nearby harbor to distant unseen islands the lovers’ own reciprocity signs itself in every intimation of the sea-

Though his affair with Emil Opfer Jr. may have been the most intense and meaningful of Crane's life, he knew by the period of writing 'Voyages' that the very nature of love and time would bring that intensity to an end, that the island that was Emil would be left behind (an ending foreshadowed here and directly confronted in 'Voyages V').

(Irwin 361)

"Voyages V"'s particular exploration of love concerns separation, instead of togetherness — even if the lovers are, indeed, together physically. Moreover, it takes place away from the sea, and the descriptions we get of water or of the ocean itself are only tangential. When faced with this poem, one gets the sense that it is here that the foreboding exposition we got at the beginning of the cycle is finally taking shape. Here, the lovers are now together, but their encounter and their love are in a state of permanent tension. The poem offers us fragments of the affair, remembered from ashore by the speaker, as he stands watch over the city and into the harbor, pointing out the "[m]eticulous" (ll. 1) outline of the harbor, offered "smooth as though cast / Together in one merciless white blade" (ll. 2-3) by the "bay estuaries" (ll. 5) as they "fleck the hard sky limits" (*ibid.*) and bring to attention the ever-changing nature of the waters, made worse by winter.²⁸ It is especially important to note that this first stanza specifies that the estuaries, as framed by the city, are described not only as "meticulous" and "merciless",

presence, whose 'blue latitudes and levels' are for the poet consubstantial now with those seen in the other's eyes" (79).

²⁸ Berthoff writes, "[w]e are placed (...) as if at a high window looking out, in winter, past the tip of Manhattan (as Crane could look out in 1924 from his apartment window in Brooklyn Heights); and we are given in broken succession, through a temporal montage, the overwhelming harbor scene at night, fragments of talk between the lovers when they were (or might again be) together, and the poet-speaker's solitary musings against the fact of separation" (80).

but also as “infrangible” and “lonely”, thereby pointing out the inescapability of the loneliness that floods the speaker’s mind as he prepares his digression.

There also seems to be a confrontation between the self-at-sea and the self-at-home. As we saw in “Voyages IV”, the speaker’s most vocal fear is that the lover that returns will not be the same that set sail into unknown waters, from the point of view of the speaker. In a logical continuation of this idea — even if not as obviously as before —, in this fifth section, Crane leads the reader through fragments of this relationship, relating its instability to the permanent restlessness of the ocean. His love is oceanic, and, as such, it is subjected to the same qualities of the ocean itself, that the poet attempts to describe throughout the cycle²⁹. The lovers are “overtaken” (ll. 10) by the relentless power of the sea, to the point that no display of emotion, no possible surrendering to the possible generosity of their mutual love, “no cry, no sword” (ll. 10) can assuage the indelible “wedge” (ll. 11) that now separates the two, described as the “[s]low tyranny of moonlight, moonlight loved / And changed” (ll. 12-13). Perhaps the greatest testament to the divide that now stands between the lovers is manifested in the lines “In all the argosy of your bright hair I dreamed / Nothing so flagless as this piracy” (ll. 19-20). The line break creates an ambiguity that mirrors the plight of the speaker: if, firstly, he admits to having seen in his lovers’ bright hair the possibility for the enactment of his dreams, then, in the following line, this meaning is reconfigured. All love and beauty are plundered by ill-meaning and “flagless”, i.e., unknown, unforeseen, stealthy, subversive — yet impersonal — piracy. As a consequence, in the final stanza, “[t]he poem ends with the speaker resigning himself to the lover’s departure and the waning of their love” (Irwin 363). The stanza reads as follows:

²⁹ At this point, though the scope of my work does not allow me to dwell too much on this subject, I would nevertheless like to call attention to Sigmund Freud’s work on the concept of “oceanic feeling”, as elaborated in 1930’s *Civilization and its Discontents*, which seems to be an interesting reference for the subject at hand. Freud uses the concept to explore what he deems to be “the true source of religious sentiments” (11), that would explain one’s desire for surrender. This is useful for reading the poem at hand and provides hints of possible future explorations of Crane’s work.

But now

Draw in your head, alone and too tall here.

Your eyes already in the slant of drifting foam;

Your breath sealed by the ghosts I do not know:

Draw in your head and sleep the long way home.

(ll. 21-25)

Fittingly, the poem ends with yet another example of Crane's insistence on the usage of the imperative to direct his lover's behavior, even as he prepares to, once again, depart. Irwin further adds that "[t]he lover's final comment [(‘Draw in your head and sleep the long way home’)] suggests an incomprehension of the link between the natural cycle of the rising and falling tides and the human cycle of rising and falling passion" (Irwin 363). This further tightens the bond between the lovers' connection and the effects of the sea — its all-pervasive and uncaring allure, its inevitability. It further implies that the lover's true place is not with the lover, but at sea, for he is headed "home".

And so, following the lover's departure, we reach the end of the cycle, with "Voyages VI", which "presents the speaker as he tries, with the waning of this real, individual love affair, to recover from this betrayal by renewing his commitment to love, imaginatively embarking on a sea voyage of his own to its idealized personification" (Irwin 364). The speaker is alone, and, consequently, "Voyages VI" is an exploration of love that falls somewhat outside the sphere of what had been done before in the cycle, coming full circle in returning to a register that is not entirely dissimilar to that of what we read at the very beginning of the journey, in "Voyages I". Similarly, in "Voyages VI", the lover is absent, yet very much present thematically, in that he is the motivator for the particular kind of finality we reach, having

molded the speaker's ideas on love throughout the past. What we get is, in fact, an elegy of sorts, a farewell, as the speaker departs.

On the whole, I tend to agree with Irwin, who suggests that "Voyages" can be read as

(...) a rite-of-passage poem depicting a similar progress in the speaker's understanding of the nature of love — from the real and temporal to his continued allegiance to the ideal and the immutable.

(Irwin 364).

This exploration holds the sea as a figure primarily accountable for the difficulties that come in relating to someone perhaps too similar to oneself, or who one wishes similar to oneself, but is, in fact, apart.

The sea holds, in itself, the knowledge of trouble to come, and yet, at the same time, it is exciting. By being so vast as to be virtually unknowable in any extent of the word, it holds in it the possibility for the enactment of desire that falls outside the limited scope of a norm. Considering the marine lyric as an "occasion of intimate, reversible exchange, it opens the poetic consciousness to the mutability of the self in the world. This restlessness is elemental to the marine lyric itself" (Hyman 15) and its lack of constancy and stability make it a space for projecting non-normative desire. Indeed, Munro suggests that "[t]he female sea acts as an atopic space in which the sexual relationship can be continued without fear of reprisal. The fact that it appears 'endless' means that it cannot be defined, that there is no temporal certainty about it" (Munro, 72), which reinforces the conceptualization of the sea as an atopic space that allows for the enactment of a kind desire that would otherwise be suppressed by normative expectations.

In *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, Roland Barthes expounds on the idea of “atopia” as it pertains to the description of the characteristics of what is it, precisely, that attracts one to the object of one’s love. Under the entry titled “Atopos”, he begins by stating that “The loved being is recognized by the amorous subject as ‘atopos’ (...), i.e., unclassifiable, of a ceaselessly unforeseen originality” (34). That the object of desire is rendered unclassifiable by that desire is further expanded upon, its originality culminating in the inability to “classify the other, for the other is, precisely, Unique, the singular image which has miraculously come to correspond to the specialty of my desire” (*ibid.*). The burden of proof lies, then, with the object of desire itself. The entity that desires it is, by this very definition, unable to comprehend why that is. Consequently, there ensues an “innocence” (35) that, as “*atopia*[,] resists all description, definition, language” (*ibid.*). Thus, Barthes concludes,

“(…) when the relationship is original, then the stereotype is shaken, transcended, evacuated, and jealousy, for instance, has no more room in this relation without a site, without *topos* — without what in French we call, colloquially, ‘*topo*’ — without discourse.”

(Barthes, 36)

If desire is true — if love is genuine — then it transcends the notions of space. Moreover (and as a corollary to this), this “original” type of desire, that shakes the “stereotype” — i.e., the norm — will, according to Barthes, belong in an *atopia* — not, as we will later see, a *utopia* — and will transcend and override the adopted conventions that rule the use of said space. Prohibited desire will look to occupy a space that allows for its free expression. By extension, literary creation that takes as its chief concern the very possibility of one such love also resists a norm and inherently belongs in a space far removed from the standards that would shape it.

Niall Munro uses Roland Barthes' concept of "atopia" to describe the spaces created by Hart Crane like what I have described in the former paragraph. As we saw, by taking the concept of "atopia" literally (i.e., by adjoining to the Latin noun "topos", meaning "place", to the prefix "a-", meaning "without" this creates a space that does not correlate with the reality that would host it — it is a place outside reality) we can postulate that the enactment of non-normative behaviour is enabled by the creation of this space, precisely because it is removed from the established, conventional, normative surrounding — because it is an actual non-place.

Crane resorts to the creation of atopias, such as the sea, to enact his queer sentimentality and desire. According to Munro, this concept is used "to refer to the way in which Crane creates spaces that are *unclassifiable*" (71). If he were to reimage the established reality, which he inhabits, and turn it into a utopia, he would be acknowledging a norm that he is adamant in resisting. Therefore, Munro establishes that Crane's "resistance is in acknowledging the normative but at the same time asserting his queerness" (*ibid.*). Consequently, through designing instead an atopia, the poet is creating spaces that "are constantly in flux, their only contingency being linguistic, and even here the multivalency of Crane's diction means that this contingency can frequently be in doubt" (*ibid.*)³⁰. The sea of "Voyages" is one of these alternative and unstable places (*ibid.*), where non-normative desire, longing, and love can take place, away from the prying eyes of controlling vigilance — even if self-imposed.

Finding an alternative space to one's actual reality would become something of a dream for one Álvaro de Campos, a naval engineer by trade, though in permanent conflict with his mechanical inclinations. In Campos's "Ode Marítima", the pier ("o cais") is just one such

³⁰ The author further elaborates, stating that "The 'Voyages' sequence demonstrates most clearly that the spaces that Crane creates through the language of his poems are spaces of resistance. In their queerness, these spaces figure alternative desires and push back against the pressures of normativity. Since Crane does not seek to create 'some more perfect social order' in such spaces they cannot be called utopias, so I propose to describe such spaces as atopias, adopting a term and its sense from Roland Barthes" (71).

space. As a recipient of cosmopolitan solitude, it is a privileged place for setting sail, as well as for the receiving and shipping of goods — in this case, emotional commodities. As a place for departure, it is also amply primed for escape — and escapist — day-dreaming, which is, as we will see, one of the dominant themes of this ode³¹. Throughout the poem, the reader is made aware of a painful spatial dichotomy that surrounds the speaker’s fantasies. There is a constant tension between the Pier — where he stands — and the Faraway (“o Longe”) where he dreams to go. He is very clear in stating his objectives:

O que quero é levar prà Morte
Uma alma a transbordar de Mar,
Ébria a cair das coisas marítimas,
Tanto dos marujos como das âncoras, dos cabos,
Tanto das costas longínquas como do ruído dos ventos
Tanto do Longe como do Cais, tanto dos naufrágios
Como dos tranquilos comércios,
Tanto dos mastros como das vagas,
Levar prà Morte com dor, voluptuosamente,
Um copo cheio de sanguessugas, a sugar, a sugar,
De estranhas verdes absurdas sanguessugas marítimas!

(ll. 368-375)³²

³¹ Not only that, but, for the actual Fernando Pessoa, the idea of escape is very dear. In describing the genesis of his heteronyms, in the now-famous letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro dated January 13th 1935, he writes that “the mental origin of my heteronyms is in my organic and constant tendency towards depersonalization and simulation” (in the original: “a origem mental dos meus heteronymos está na minha tendencia organica e constante para a despersonalização e para a simulação”) (Pizarro e Ferrari 644). Other critics, writing on this Ode, have also pointed to this, such as Irene Ramalho Santos and Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, whose works will provide solid grounds for my own argumentation throughout this section.

³² “What I want is to bring to death / A soul overflowing with Sea, / Inebriated by maritime dealings, / Both of seamen as of anchors, of cables, / Both of faraway shores as of the sound of the winds, / Both of Faraway as of

The “Pier” is a liminal place. It is the mediator between the sea — “the Undefined” — and the suffocating crowds of the city that prevent the speaker from fully becoming his maritime self.³³ Here, the speaker seems to equate the Sea and the Faraway with a sense of freedom, of conquest, advancement, or future; whereas, conversely, the Pier, the here and now, are the sense of finality that ultimately keeps him in chains. This indefiniteness would likewise extend to how the poet related to his sexuality, for, as Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez put it, “[f]or Pessoa’s entrapped heteronym, all forms of sexualized yearning for union with the outside world of modernity fail” (217). It would seem that, on the edge of a profoundly cosmopolitan setting, the speaker’s wish and pulsion towards the sea is hampered by the reality that frames it. Here, the machines and engines of progress, that the author elsewhere praises, become obstacles that stand between him and his wish of reunion with a simpler, perhaps more innocent, more authentic, self. As such, at an early stage of the poem, there is a tendency towards a wish of recurrence, a complete removal of the here and now, a refusal of modernity that would allow the speaker to come closer to the idyllic and idealised notion of a sea voyager. This poses a conflict, acknowledged by the speaker himself:

E eu, que amo a civilização moderna, eu que beijo com a alma as máquinas,
Eu o engenheiro, eu o civilizado, eu o educado no estrangeiro,
Gostaria de ter outra vez ao pé da minha vista só veleiros e barcos de madeira,

the Pier, both of castaways / As of quiet shops, / To bring to Death painfully, voluptuously, / A body full of leeches, sucking, sucking, / Of absurd strange green maritime leeches!” (my translation).

³³ The scope of this work does not allow me to delve too deep on other significant references present in the lines quoted, but I believe it is necessary to call to attention that this seems to be an instant where Campos, aside from the concerns I described, is also highlighting the role of the sea as a medium for expansion, for bridging the gap that the Atlantic poses, separating the Portuguese part of his self from its more anglophone traits – after all, like Pessoa-himself, Campos’s education is also split between these two worlds. Likewise, to flirt with ideas of mortality, as he does in the first line of the excerpt quoted above, might also indicate an acknowledgment of the role of the Portuguese empire in the slave trade, with the Atlantic as its backdrop.

De não saber doutra vida marítima que a antiga vida dos mares!

Porque os mares antigos são a Distância Absoluta,

O Puro Longe, liberto do peso do Actual...

(ll. 196-201)³⁴

This will to escape, this denial of the present in favor of “Absolute Distance”, that would free him from “the weight of Actuality” through the removal of the contemporaneous self is inherent to Campos. Bishop-Sanchez elaborates:

This anachronistic fusion [of his mythified past to his modern present] brings Campos to investigate the very beginning of modern times, the primitive modernity (...) [‘]of the time of incipient technology, of sailing ships made of wood [’] (...)

(212)

This is also made clear by Campos’s own account of his relationship to his “Master”, another heteronym, the “flock keeper” himself, Alberto Caeiro.

In fact, it is in “Notas para a recordação de meu mestre Caeiro” that Campos’s restlessness concerning his present state of being — his reality — comes to light. As Irene Ramalho Santos writes:

Campos’s observations in his ‘Notas para a recordação do meu mestre Caeiro’ (...) testify to his inability to grasp Caeiro’s tranquil sense of objective reality — what

³⁴ “And I, who love modern civilization, who kiss machines with my soul, / Engineer me, civilized me, educated abroad me, / Would like to once again only have sailboats and wooden boats in my sight, / To not know of any other sea life than the ancient life of the seas! / Because the ancient seas are the Absolute Distance, / The Pure Faraway, liberated from the weight of Actuality...” (my translation).

Campos calls here Caeiro's 'direct concept of things' (*conceito directo das coisas*). Because he cannot really grasp them, Campos is tormented by the presentness of reality³⁵, the immediacy of space, and the inexorability of time.

(2007, 186)

In "Notas (...)", written somewhere between January and February 1931, Campos recalls a series of conversations between Caeiro and himself. A feeling of Campos's uneasiness regarding Caeiro's uncomplicated view of the world pervades throughout these detailed accounts, particularly when it comes to the relationship between the self and the present moment. At one point, Caeiro sums up his point of view in one single sentence, conveying his being utterly unable to conceive of infinity, of anything but the present, the material, palpable world — which, of course, leaves Campos utterly dumbfounded. The master says, "How hard is it to conceive that something is just something, and that it isn't constantly being something else that is further ahead?"³⁶ (Pizarro 457). In reality, for Campos, this kind of thinking would turn out to be very hard indeed.

The difficulties expressed by Campos in establishing a sense of self, in an epoch that refuses to conform to his wishes, is paramount to the understanding of a profoundly dissatisfied Campos that then pours this incompatibility out into his odes. "Ode Marítima" is a prime example of this, as, for the speaker,

(...) the mental 'sea voyage' is a clear replacement for the real thing (...). His search for Being takes on the form of mental masturbation of sorts that can merely exist in the

³⁵ Here, the author seems to almost paraphrase Campos's formulation of "the weight of Actuality", as quoted before.

³⁶ In the original: "O que é que custa conceber que uma coisa é uma coisa, e não está sempre a ser uma outra coisa que está adiante?".

realm of his imagination, given that there is no physical contact with anything external to his self.

(Bishop-Sanchez, 211)

Language thus becomes a privileged way to interact with a world outside his own. Faced with the immense unknowability and physical (and metaphysical) vastness of the sea, the speaker resorts to listing an eclectic selection of seafaring terminology in quick succession, as if language was itself a possible mediator between the idea of the sea and its unapproachable reality. The speaker is effectively seduced by the sea and one of the strategies he resorts to in attempting to come closer to inhabiting his longed-for nautical life is through creating a Whitmanian catalogue of nautical instrumentation to be able to interact with it.

Resorting to the use of a very specific maritime lexicon, the speaker sheds yet another sense of self, even if, by training, Campos was a naval engineer — as one, he would have primarily interacted with naval life through concepts, never actually enacting it in full. Furthermore, it is through language that the actual mental voyage begins, as the speaker introduced the concept of a universal scream that would unite under its sound and evocation all the myths of the sea, complete with what he assumes to be the knowledge of life at sea. We are told it was through Jim Barnes, an “English seaman” (ll. 221)³⁷ that he learned of this “very ancient scream”, which is further qualified as “English” — perhaps harkening back to Campos’ own life and education abroad and establishing yet another level of detachment. The poem reads as follows:

Tu, marinheiro inglês, Jim Barns meu amigo, foste tu

³⁷ In the original: “marinheiro inglês”.

Que me ensinaste êsse grito antiqùíssimo, inglês,
Que tão venenosamente resume
Para as almas complexas como a minha
O chamamento confuso das ágoas,
A voz inédita e implícita de todas as cousas do mar,
Dos naufrágios, das viagens longinqùas, das travessias perigosas,
Sem feitio de grito, sem forma humana nem voz,
Esse grito tremendo que parece soar
De dentro duma caverna cuja abóbada é o céu
E parece narrar todas as sinistras cousas
Que podem acontecer no Longe, no Mar, pela Noite...

(ll. 223-233)³⁸

Despite it being performed in a foreign language, this scream is “made universal” in the speaker’s “blood” — his core, his sensuous being — and can thus report all manner of sensations, experiences, and memories that would otherwise be barred from our very-much urbane sailor. This is only made possible by removing a sense of individual self and of corporeal aspect from the scream itself, as well as through a displacement of the scream from the concrete nature of specific locations, such as the pier — on which, lest we forget, the speaker stands and fantasizes — that would otherwise condition the scream and thus cause it to lose its universal appeal. As we know, this is a scream that has “no semblance of scream”,

³⁸ “You, English seaman, my friend Jim Barnes, you who / Taught me that ancient English scream / A scream that summarises very venomously / To complex souls such as mine / The bemusing call of the waters, / The unprecedented and implicit voice of all things of the sea, / Of shipwrecks, of far-reaching voyages, of dangerous crossings. / That English scream of yours, made universal in my blood, / With no semblance of scream, no human shape nor voice, / That tremendous scream that seems to sound / From within a cave whose dome is the sky / And seems to narrate all things sinister / That might happen Faraway, at Sea, through the Night...” (my translation).

sea is indeed a space for the performance of desire — sexual and otherwise — then it is also true that, in its vastness, the ocean holds within it the many worlds Pessoa drank from, to imbibe his literary selves with the forms and rhythms of forefathers and of ancient foreigners to create a whole and multiple self.

Shortly after this passage — and with the recurrence of this very scream at various significant passages in the ode — the speaker's wishes to erase his contemporary self and depart on a voyage throughout the sea are further complicated by yet another layer of transformation and disintegration of self — his sexuality and gender. As we will see, this is yet another case of Campos returning to his “theme of impossible possessiveness, as both possessing and being possessed” that, in Ramalho Santos' estimation, “is at the heart of Campos's odes” (*Atlantic Poets* 174). Bishop-Sanchez also picks up on this idea, claiming that “[t]his mythical journey backwards is an alternative means for Campos to break through temporal and rational barriers and yield to the violence of excessive desire” (213).

In my estimation, Campos' transexualizing gesture is made in an effort to render the perceived strengths of the male body more permeable to change, and thus to optimize and facilitate the surrendering — even erasure — of the cosmopolitan, modern self in favor of the idealized sea-voyages that would provide the ultimate escape.⁴¹ If the bodies and minds of women are understood to be less able than that of their male counterparts, then the struggle required to erase such a non-conforming body — one that does not answer to neither modern nor premodern desire — would indeed be lessened if one's body was feminine.

Thus, part of the speaker's ultimate desire is to lose this sense of masculinity that anchors him closer to the much-reviled sense of modernity that prevents him from achieving

⁴¹ This is a device Campos will return to, in other odes, as I have observed in the third chapter of this dissertation, in connection to the views of Futurism regarding women and to the gendered nature of the machine. This is clear in Marinetti's “Futurist Manifesto”, a text which holds some striking similarities to Campos's “Ode Triunfal”. More on this later.

the sense of complete recurrence he strives for. In fact, “to become the victim of sexual and violent offences that coalesce in the references to rape, Campos becomes objectified ‘as a woman.’” (Bishop-Sanchez 215). As Ramalho Santos points out,

(...) futurist celebration of masculine aggression, energy, and technological velocity, as well as futurist indictment of sentimental (i.e., feminine) passivity (...) irrupt in the odes of Pessoa’s Campos as the sadomasochist chant of a multisexual subject that originates a true aesthetic *simultaneity* of historical agency and victimization.

(*Atlantic Poets* 177)⁴².

In no passage is this made clearer than in the stanzas that anthologise the harrowing ordeal through which the speaker effectively wishes to be put through: the episode commonly referred to as “the Great Pirate song”⁴³. For instance: when nearing the climax of the poem, the speaker begins to more verbally and insistently yearn for a transformation that would bring him closer to his idealized maritime self:

Ah piratas, piratas!

Piratas, amai-me e odiai-me!

Misturai-me comvôsko, piratas!

Vossa fúria, vossa crueldade como falam ao sangue

⁴² I would like to point out the connection established between femininity and passivity pontificated by the so-called “futurist celebration.” This concept is paramount to understanding the necessity of transformation, escape, and otherness behind the motive of the speaker of “Ode Marítima”, as well as for other important poems in Campos’s body of work, as is the case with “Ode Triunfal” which I will read in the third chapter, “The Machine”.

⁴³ Here, I am borrowing the translated term from Bishop-Sanchez’s own analysis (212).

Dum corpo de mulher que foi meu outrora e cujo cio sobrevive!

(ll. 453-457)⁴⁴

Bishop-Sanchez reads this passage as “Campos’s desire to become one with these consummate outlaws of the sea, as expressed by his cry ‘Misturai-me convosco, piratas!’ (...)” (213), further noting that it “translates a means to escape the confinement of his in-existence by fusing with a male homosocial camaraderie that excludes women” (ibid). Moreover,

[t]he reference to being the ‘fêmea’ destined for the pirates’ domination underlines the vulnerability and subjugation that the poet incarnates in order to become part of their society by yielding to animalistic instincts. In these verses the objectified subject is clearly gendered as female (...).

(*ibid.*, 215)

Sexual desire is also conceptualized as being specifically feminine, named “cio”, i.e., sexual heat commonly ascribed to female animals⁴⁵, and is yet another device employed by the speaker to transcend his limitations, in this case by resorting to the feminization of his yearning (for) self. The “homoerotic manner” (191) discussed by Ramalho Santos in her chapter “The Truant Muse and the Poet’s Body” references is patent in the speaker’s desire to belong to the world

⁴⁴ “Oh pirates, pirates! / Pirates, love me and hate me! / Merge me with you, pirates! / Your fury, your cruelty, how they speak to the blood / Of a woman’s body that was once mine and whose heat survives!” (my translation)

⁴⁵ Reading “Ode Triunfal” Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, quoting a line from the poem that reads, “I rub up against all this like a cat in heat against the wall!” (Bishop-Sanchez, 206), states that “[h]ere the speaker is gendered female by the comparison that likens the poet to a she-cat in heat who does not obtain what she desires and must therefore make do with the substitute of a wall” (*ibid.*). It is yet another example of Campos’s frustration at his inability to fully possess — or be possessed by — desire. It also substantiates the argument that considers the reification of a feminine body as a tool serve the speaker’s purposes.

of the pirates that he petitions: a world that can be described at the very least as homosocial⁴⁶, if nothing else. He wishes to be, at once, “the body of the brave mariner and that of the plundering pirate at one and the same land, the body of the rapist and the woman’s raped body” (*ibid.*) Clearly, “[t]aking his urge straight to his climax, he desires to be part of this transgressive homosocial world during the golden years of its dominance (...)” (Bishop-Sanchez, 213) — a world that is prior to that which he inhabits, and would thus constitute a space of escape. Not only that, but “[i]n ‘Ode Marítima’ this homosociety gives rise to a power structure that points to “interdependence and solidarity among men that enables them to dominate women” (*ibid.*)⁴⁷.

I have written before about the importance of the Barthesian concept of atopia for understanding the role of spatiality in Crane’s poetry. A similar concept, analogous to this one, but more specific in its application, is the concept of “heterotopia” as elaborated by Michel Foucault,⁴⁸ a concept based on the idea of utility in connection to spatiality that is conditioned precisely by the uses and conditions their practitioners set for it.

Foucault describes a “site” as being “defined by relations of proximity between points or elements.” Turning his attention more specifically to “external space” (rather than “internal space”, which had already been the object of study of, for instance, Bachelard’s *Poetics of Space*), Foucault then moves on to declare his interest “in certain [spaces] that have the curious

⁴⁶ The concept of homosociality will come into play again in the third chapter, during a brief discussion concerning the role of the Great War in modernist poetics.

⁴⁷ The idea of establishing domination over minoritarian bodies resonates with the imperialistic echoes felt throughout the ode, namely in the role played by the Portuguese empire in the transatlantic slave trade. Later on in the poem, the speaker invokes other bodies, equally subjected to the wills of dominant men: “Homens que negociastes pela primeira vez com pretos! / Que primeiro vendestes escravos de novas terras! / Que destes o primeiro espasmo europeu às negras atónitas!”. This passage is significant because, aside from raising questions surrounding domination and subjugation in terms of gender, it also brings questions of race to the forefront, in connection to the imperialist impetus felt elsewhere in Pessoa’s work.

⁴⁸ Foucault, Michel. “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias.” *Architecture, Movement, Continuité*, no. 5, 1984, pp. 46-49. (see “Works Cited” page for the full reference. As an online source, it lacks the page numbers required to create proper in-text citations).

property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect". He takes this description as his setting-off point to describe what he calls "heterotopias", i.e., places "outside of all places" which he contrasts with utopias, which are "sites with no real place", but still hold a relation of analogy or contrast with the society they represent. Heterotopias are "a constant of every human group", but take "varied forms", which Foucault divides into two different categories: "crisis heterotopias" and "heterotopias of deviation". It is the latter definition that I believe to be most useful for this dissertation.

Heterotopias of deviation are spaces "in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed", implying that these spaces can be used as areas of segregation, when devised by the normative, hegemonic power; or as places of freedom, if created by those who see themselves excluded. Heterotopias are not naturally welcoming sites. Foucault mentions that "the entry" in these spaces is either "compulsory (...) or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in, one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures." Foucault is writing about the mundane rituals of hygiene for certain communal places, or of selecting specific attire to be allowed entry into a specific type of building. However, the same concept could be extended to account for the marginal and liminal existence of practitioners of non-normative desire, such as the speakers of the poems we have read in this chapter. Interestingly, Foucault singles out "[T]he ship" as "the heterotopia par excellence", precisely because, as "a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea", the boat is "the greatest reserve of the imagination". As such, it becomes the ideal scenario for the projection of the desire for escape, as is the case of Campos looking out into the distant ships that pass. Likewise, it also serves as a space for the enactment of the transfiguration of the self, which would then conform to the norms for the performance

of self that the hegemonic power that devised the ship had put in place. Removed from the culture that devised it (seeing that it is floating on the infinite and unspecified vastness of sea), yet permanently a satellite extension of said culture, the ship is equally a stage for Campos's transfigurative and transexualising performance of pain and violence, as much as it is a near-perfect encapsulation of what it is, exactly, that Campos is longing for. Beyond the confines of the ship, the sea, the "Absolute Sea"⁴⁹, as a heterotopic space likewise allows for the expression of deviancy, while at the same time it materializes the nostalgia for a space where deviancy is hegemonic.

While being a central *topos* for both, the sea plays different roles in the poems of Campos and Crane under analysis. However, it seems that the use the two poets make of it has some functional overlaps, namely in the use that the two poems make of the indefiniteness of the ocean. With the lack of specificity that a body of water as vast as the Atlantic holds, it becomes possible that other bodies are also able to play out their most intimate and prohibited desires. For Crane, the sea is a source of both pain and hope, always with a significant amount of danger added to it. The feelings, and also actions, that the speaker of the "Voyages" sextet enacts are committed to a symbiotic relationship with the space in which they take place. The sea is a space removed from specificity: a Barthesian atopia that, precisely because it is "without location", can welcome beings that were cast away from the strict confines of normativity. However, the dangers of said sea do not go unnoticed. In the freedom that is granted within the realm of the unknown, there is a constant sense of doom, as exemplified by the muted speaker of "Voyages I".

If "the bottom of the sea is cruel", such cruelty would be no match for the harrowing ordeal that Campos's speaker undergoes in order to dismantle himself and successfully refashion his body as one that (be)longs, since, as a material entity, it cannot escape as easily

⁴⁹ In the original, "o Mar Absoluto".

as the speaker's intellectual half. The ship, which only functions as a ship in connection to the sea that hosts it, stands in for the age to which Campos longs to escape. The practitioners of the space that is the ship embody that same age, and, as such, are the vehicles for transmitting it into Campos's own body, which does not yet belong. They are the gatekeepers of the well-structured heterotopia that is the ship and, as such, hold in them the knowledge required to welcome another into their midst. As we will see in later chapters, the speaker's body is the medium of choice for receiving and performing this effort of inclusion, as was also clear in this first one. The speaker of "Ode Marítima" goes to great gender-bending lengths to allow his body to be transfigured by the agents of this other age, going as far as to place itself in a fundamentally passive position. This extreme passivity is not unique to "Ode Marítima" and will become a fundamental concept in the second and third chapters of this dissertation, namely in "Ode Triunfal", where this passivity is given a name — the speaker wishes to become "passento"⁵⁰. In the case of "Ode Marítima", the sexual violence that the speaker wishes would take over his physical body is to be enacted on a fundamentally feminine body, perhaps in the hopes that the body would be more passive, and, as such, more permeable.

For both Crane and Campos, the sea is a privileged *topos* for the exploration of so-called deviant desire. The sea can also paradoxically be seen as framing a theatre for the performance of modernity — and through its mechanization, seem from the turmoil of the pier, borders the city. This latter point will be the subject of the next chapter.

⁵⁰ *Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa* defines "passento" as an adjective used to describe a material that can easily absorb liquid ["diz-se (...) de material que absorve líquidos facilmente" (6136). This permeability serves Campos well, as I am demonstrating in the reading of "Ode Marítima", and as will be made doubly clear in the chapters that follow, particularly in Chapter III, "The Machine".

II. The City

In the dead of night, a solitary wanderer traverses the perilous streets of New York City in search of a connection. He is alone and masks his true intentions with the assistance of a landscape that seems tailored to suit his anonymous and transgressive needs. In its complex geography, the city camouflages nameless desire in a *mise en abyme* of compartmentalized spaces that, together, make up an otherwise seemingly cohesive whole. Our prowler would perhaps have been observed by an onlooker, standing at his window, and thus removed from the chaos of the streets, pondering on his place in this world, wishing he was somewhere else. Crane would perhaps be part of the millions of voices that parade the streets of Campos' Lisbon, were it not for the ocean that separated the two poets. Indeed, coming from each of their voyages, in the previous chapter, I now find myself with the difficult task of attempting to extend the connection between the two poets, having as a background an environment as predisposed for hiding as the city. And so it is that in this chapter I aim to read examples of both Crane's and Campos's works that expound on the urban landscape, central to the poetry of both authors, always in relation to their sexualities.

Firstly, through Hart Crane's "Possessions", I will explore the evidence for a near-symbiotic relation between urban geographies and the beginning of an emerging *queer* subculture, that would only much later come into complete fruition, from the 1970s onwards. Nevertheless, I argue that the establishment of a subversive culture — indeed, a subculture — has its indelible roots in modernist cosmopolitan life.

Secondly, through Álvaro de Campos's "Tabacaria", I aim to explore the idea of belonging to a context while simultaneously denying it, in a state of permanent melancholia that withers any semblance of sexuality in remotely similar modes to those we saw in previous poems of the author.

In both cases, I aim to explore the place of non-normative sexuality — queer desire — either in the possibilities offered by the city, in the case of Crane; and, on the other hand, through a clear attempt to remove the self from said city, in Campos. In either one, the attempts they make to establish a sense of identity is made *through* the city — by cruising the streets of New York’s Greenwich Village at night, or by projecting a sense of self onto passers-by, melancholically observed through an apartment window in Lisbon, simultaneously within the city, while removed from what it implies and the expectations it imposes. I contend that the two authors have near-diametrically opposed relationships with their urban settings, converging only in their interpretations of it.

Whereas with Crane the topic of sexuality is discussed more overtly — albeit not without the heavy dose of obscurity that pervades the majority of his body of work — with Campos, it is the very absence of explicit sexuality that makes it clear that the setting in which he operates is doubly a potent influence over the *topoi* commonly observable in his poetry, as well as the suppressor of the sexual impetus. This can be quite graphic at times and characterizes much of the poetry that emanated from the mind of this fictional creator, some of which we observed in the previous chapter. These two diverging approaches both serve the purpose of defining the space their speakers navigate, while, either actively or by omission, commenting on the assumptions that make this space effectively inhospitable for the speakers of these poems. Could it be that they find themselves struggling with anachronistic senses of identity? What role do their sexuality and the enactment of their desire play in defining the space that hosts it?

In any case, the connection between non-normative sexuality and the design and activity of the modern city is a recurrent theme in contemporary criticism that has, as of late, started to regard modernist culture as having a particularly decisive role not only in shaping

our perception of what it means to source a sense of identity amid a crowd, but also to enact non-normative desire within the heart of normativity.

Cruising is an example of a queer activity — typically homosexual — that is made possible by the type of urban landscape that characterizes the modern city, providing evidence of a correlation between modernity — and, indeed, modernism — and the emergence of non-normative forms of desire. Joseph Allen Boone, in his *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism*, gives the example of New York City, that even though it was still very much designed to be a modern city (with the American and supposedly democratizing grid pattern⁵¹, i.e. “the quintessential emblem of modernity” (212)), it nevertheless blended together with more traditionally hierarchical forms of urban planning, more prevalent in Europe, to cement the modernist city as a space of transition in and of itself. Indeed, “[t]his is particularly true of the two quintessential cities of modernity that become such evocative sites of queer social and textual innovation, Paris and New York”, wherein “the actual physical layout or mapping of street patterns within particular sectors has worked to make these sites more amenable to emerging gay lifestyles” (*ibid.* 213) and culture.

For Boone, one of the essential ways through which a physical and cultural layout of the city is created, from a queer point of view, is cruising. In its essence, it is one of the primary devices through which queer mobility asserts itself within the city. As Boone writes, “[o]f equal relevance to any discussion of the interimplications of urban mobility and sexual identity is the ‘creative’ role played by individual pedestrian movements in demarcating and thereby constructing social space” (214). The importance of walking as both an act of creative expression as well as of active resistance against the established norm will become more

⁵¹ Boone elaborates: “As the product of urban planning, the grid is most often seen as an American innovation, an utopic attempt to reconceive the hierarchized space of the European city by using right angles to create equal or democratic relations among its sectors and hence its citizens (...). As a relatively recent historical phenomenon, then, the grid pattern forms a contrast to the most traditional feature of urban organization in European cities (...) Hence, in contrast to the putative democracy of the grid, the radiating axis is often equated with an authoritarian impulse to police human relations through a hierarchical division of space” (212)

evident as we read the poetry of both authors. For now, suffice it to say, as Diane Chisholm did, that “the city of late capitalism, with its ‘major redevelopment,’ prompts queer writers into crises and critical confrontation” (2) that contribute to the efforts of defining it. Chisholm goes further in saying that, “[d]eriving its sense from post-structuralism rather than empirical history, queer space demarcates a practice, production, and performance of space beyond just the mere habitation” of said space (10).

Indeed, the city has historically established a deep connection to those among its inhabitants who perform their sexuality outside of socially condoned norms. One need only think back to biblical times and remember the tale of Sodom and Gomorrah that tells of the demise of a society and, as a result, its city, strictly in connection to the sexual and affective behaviours that fell outside very strict rules, imposed by divine decree. In fact, non-normative forms of sexuality have often been associated with cosmopolitan life. Some authors go as far as to establish a direct connection between, for instance, homosexuality and the city itself. In pre-World War II New York, gay life was indissociable from the context in which it took place, and operated within fairly well-defined sexual identities, that differed greatly from what we, 21st-century creatures, might be accustomed to⁵². At the same time, Robert Aldrich writes that “[t]he appearance of new gay cultures alongside the persistence of traditional ones of ‘men who have sex with men’ prolongs a phenomenon of urban homosexuality stretching back to Antiquity” (1731). Indeed, they furthermore “show the city as a site of homosexual life par excellence, a privileged place of constantly changing same-sex cultures” (*ibid.*) that would later go on to constitute actual communities. Joseph Allen Boone elaborates on this, stating that “as

⁵² Robert Aldrich elaborates on this subject:

‘Homosexual’ and ‘heterosexual’ held little meaning from 1890 to 1940, as sexual categories were far more complex: ‘fairies’, men who inverted genders by acting effeminately (sometimes dressing as men), ‘wolves’ who preferred sex with men though occasionally with women, young male ‘punks’ who provided sexual favours for reward, and ‘queers’ who identified as homosexual.

(1726)

the term *community* indicates, all these characteristics cannot be separated from the quintessentially modern *urban* experience that provides the specific geographical and textual siting for the rise of this queer modernist enterprise” (207). Chisholm expands on this idea and states that

Against the domination of space by abstract constructs of urban planning and the implantation of technologies of social surveillance, queer space designates an appropriation of space for bodily, especially sexual, pleasure.

(10)

However, in an early twentieth-century context, at the height of literary modernism, it is not yet possible to discuss the concept of a queer identity (be it homosexual or another form of queer affectivity). Long before “[s]egregation into gay ghettos (...) marked a passing phase in homosexual⁵³ urban history, (...) establishing an identitarian homosexual culture” (Aldrich 1732), men who entertained the notion of sexual affectivity with individuals or objects of desire that were outside the sphere of what we now call heterosexuality were often social pariahs, and, thus, devised strategies to facilitate the enactment of said desire, such as creating specific bars and other social venues, that would become part of the urban landscape, effectively shaping it from within its normative restrictions.

Baudelaire’s description of a “dandy” or a “*flanêur*” seems to allow for a parallel between that specific form of existence within an urban context and the seemingly co-dependent relation established between queer culture and the city it requires to exist. For

⁵³ Here, I read “homosexual” as standing in for non-normative sexualities, not just homosexual. Whereas Hart Crane’s sexual identity may more easily be denoted as “typically” homosexual, the same cannot be said for Campos, who extended the reach and purpose of his sexuality beyond simple binaries. Furthermore, even our American poet had his share of heterosexual liaisons.

Baudelaire, a modern being that aspires to be more than just a simple *flanêur* is someone who “marvels at the eternal beauty and the amazing harmony of life in the capital cities, a harmony so providentially maintained amid the turmoil of human freedom” (11). In essence, this is a being that *belongs* to a cosmopolitan context, is created by it, lives in symbiosis with it. Indeed,

The crowd is his element (...). His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flanêur*, 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 (...).

(*ibid.*, 9)

This is a man who is looking for what Baudelaire calls “‘modernity’” (12). His definition of this concept falls in line with some of the precepts we have come to associate with twentieth-century modernisms, for “by ‘modernity’ [Baudelaire means] the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable” (13). He is, in effect, searching for the fleeting nature of modern life; a life that, in a modernist context, would not only be quite fragmentary in nature, but also overwhelming in its scope. An aspiring “Painter of Modern Life” — or, I would venture, a “Poet of Modern Life” such as Crane, or Campos — can only be in full command of his art and of his time if he accepts the transient nature of existence, that, if masterfully captured, will preserve its innate potential for greatness — for becoming art (or, in this case, poetry) that crosses over into the realm of the eternal, having crystallised in it a specific sense of time and place. Baudelaire is sure that “[t]his transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be

despised or dispensed with”, for “by neglecting it”, it is inevitable that one shall “tumble into the abyss of an abstract and indeterminate beauty” (*ibid.*). Art of this kind will fall outside its context and, consequently, be rendered moot. Yes, “to study the old masters” is “doubtless an excellent thing”, but it will amount to “no more than a waste of labour if your aim is to understand the special nature of present-day beauty” (*ibid.*).

Baudelaire was, of course, writing about *his* “present-day”, a landscape of decadent beauty of 1860s Paris, a world at odds with constant change in what concerned society and its morals, impacting both public and private life. Baudelaire’s approach provided a framework of sensibility that informed both Crane and Campos. As we will see, this will be instrumental in reading the contexts in which each of them lived and worked.

I do not entirely agree with Boone when he says that “cruising may be said to become the ‘pedestrian rhetoric’ *par excellence* in the modern era” (215). A proto-subculture still at the brink of genesis, such as was the case with queer culture at the beginning of the twentieth century, can never be the provider for the molds that shape general society. For that to be the case, it would no longer constitute a subculture. As such, to ascribe generalizing, near-hegemonic power to a minority faction would be to strip it of the attributes that shaped it. However, when Boone establishes that the gay man cruising has “[taken] the place of the role Walter Benjamin attributes to the flâneur of the nineteenth-century city” (215), he is usefully articulating evidence for the somewhat co-dependent relation established between queerness and a cosmopolitan setting.

Indeed, if we follow the thread, as Boone did, onwards towards Michel de Certeau, who created a parallel between discursive acts and the act of experiencing a city we will find that, in that sense, the cosmopolitan experience is not entirely dissimilar to what our authors do when they attempt to place their speakers in the middle of a modern, urban, and very much

cosmopolitan setting. After all, how different is it, from de Certeau's observations, for Hart Crane to replicate the affective and spatial experience of cruising in "Possessions"? Or, for that matter, for the speaker of "Tabacaria" to be melancholically removed from that very setting, consequently defining that urban space by opposing it? Indeed, when de Certeau posits that "[t]he ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (93) he is effectively describing the position of a common city-dweller, part of whose existence in the city demands that he enacts this belonging in accordance to the geography of this space, made possible by moving within in. Thus, walking becomes the privileged mode of designing an identity within the confines of the city, in a permanent and self-sufficient dialogue. Indeed, these practitioners "walk — an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers (...) whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (*ibid.*). The speaker of Crane's "Possessions" behaves in just such a way, be it through his actions or through the language employed in the poem itself, as we will later see.

de Certeau goes on to write that "[t]he practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen" (93) rendering

their knowledge of them (...) as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices of organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness.

(*ibid.*)

It is because the geography and layout of a modern city cannot be perceived from within — or, rather, that it can only be perceived from a deliberately *external* point of view — that it lends

itself to being appropriated by cultures and behaviours that, at the time, effectively relied on subterfuge to be enacted. Because these spaces “cannot be seen”, their non-normative “practitioners” are free to literally rest in their “lovers' arms”, ironically from within the very context that was created by the institutional powers that attempted to suppress this behaviour. Indeed,

“[if] in discourse the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded. The language of power is in itself ‘urbanizing,’ but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power

(96)

Cruising is one such “element that the urbanistic project excluded”, that relies on, and, indeed, takes advantage of, the multiple and complex nature of the urban landscape to provide the ultimate setting for a form of connection and libidinal communication that would not be possible anywhere else. The Foucauldian notion of “panoptic power” is aptly employed to signify the inescapable sense of constant surveillance that only the modern city could make possible. It makes it doubly difficult for exclusionary practices to take place, which is partly the reason for the emergence of behaviours and modes of language specifically designed to serve and enable those very practices, such as the intricate choreographies of gay cruising — a ballet all too familiar to one Hart Crane.

Given that a space is defined by those who use it, by those who *walk* it, so it is with the figure of the *flanêur*, which we saw in Baudelaire. By being *of* a space — not just *in* it — the individual is creating it. The design of modern urban geographies is thus shaped by its users,

the wanderers of modern life. However, “Crane’s queer subjects do not practice the same kind of flânerie” (Munro, 73). The subjects we observe in Crane’s most-read poetry exist outside of a cosmopolitan setting. Indeed, the queer subjects we introduced in chapter one of this dissertation, in some cases enact and perform their queerness outside of an urban environment, at sea. Munro goes on to add that “[i]n depicting queer experience, Crane also describes how queer individuals move through these spaces”, implying that

Crane’s queer subjects are not subject to chance in the same way as the Baudelairean flâneur who, although it is claimed he is seeking [modernity], which Baudelaire defines as ‘the transient, the fleeting, the contingent’ (...), he nonetheless does so by idling. Crane’s subjects travel with a purpose in mind and in a certain direction.

(ibid.)

One such subject can be found in one of Crane’s most explicit poetic excursions through an urban landscape that features at its core an undeniable conscious concern with the needs of a homosexual man in early twentieth-century New York City, complete with the codes, spaces and dangers that would be required to put them into practice.

“Possessions” is a poem of particular significance for an attempt to understand the arguably central place that sexuality takes in Crane’s works. Through his bespoke obscurity⁵⁴, Crane weaves together three stanzas that, quite cryptically (and, at times, deceptively), mislead the reader through a series of anonymous sexual encounters achieved through cruising. The linguistic and semantic difficulties that pervade all through this poem are a result of Crane’s

⁵⁴ Some critics, such as John T. Irwin, remark on the particular difficulties of this poem, pointing out that “the disjunctiveness of its imagery [makes] it one of the most difficult poems in the collection to interpret on a line-by-line basis” (285). Werner Berthoff likewise points out “a failure to balance deliberate word-riot with that firmness of spoken syntax which is the expressive ground for both Crane’s grandest and his most intimate music” (69).

assumed concern with authenticity and the preferred linguistic means to achieve it. In his essay, “General Aims and Theories”, Crane reiterates the need for authenticity in art and, commenting on “Possessions”, he writes that a poem like this

really cannot be technically explained. It must rely (even to a large extent with myself) on its organic impact on the imagination to successfully imply its meaning. This seems to me to present an exceptionally difficult problem, however, considering the real clarity and consistent logic of many of the other poems.

(Hammer (ed.), 164).

Crane recognizes the difficulties of this particular poem, over the relative clarity of some of the others in *White Buildings*. This is due to two fundamental axes according to which the poem operates: on the one hand, the explicit homoerotic nature of the contents of this poem, in the context when it is being written, requires that it be shielded away from the eyes of normativity by linguistic trickery that would still “successfully imply its meaning” — but only ever just “imply” it —; and, on the other hand, the “organic impact” of the poem, i.e., the natural and authentic effect of the poem, must come from an inalienable source of authentic material. Thus, the difficulty of this poem comes less from a whim on the part of its creator and more as a natural extension of both its context and its content. A conscious, deliberate decision to obscure. It would be impossible for it to be written in any other way, given the limitations imposed by a turn of the century American and modern society. The role played by the urban space in this society is also relevant, as the aforementioned limitations are simultaneously highlighted and made possible by the city. This will come into play in the analysis of Crane’s poem, which, perhaps more than any other in his body of work written up until this point, demands obscurity.

As such, the difficulty of Crane's poem is related to the necessity to hide, and, as a result, to have to move in the shadows, in the underground nature of queer existence. It is a cryptic form of written eroticism that mirrors the instability of the queer experience within a normative space, much in line with Michel de Certeau's assertions regarding the instability of space. Picking up on de Certeau's concept, Niall Munro concedes that this "instability can be seen in Crane's spaces, since it is through their very instability, in terms of the description of movement within them and the poet's use of diction and syntax, that they assert themselves against the normative" (74). Consequently, Crane's usage of convoluted — indeed, seemingly clumsy — syntax, effectively imbibes the spaces he sketches with the same amount of instability and unknowability — and, by extension, danger and uncertainty — that, one might assume, would be ever-present in the lives of the lyrical bodies to which Crane gives both birth and voice. As a result, he forces non-normative desire into belonging in a place that is simultaneously exclusionary and a necessary requirement for it to become possible, thereby defining said space according to these specific needs and practices. "Possessions" is a clear example of the aforementioned articulation and dependence between the enactment of non-normative forms of desire — *queer* desire — and an urban setting.

In fact, it is in this poem that "Crane interrogates the modern capitalist city through the queer spatial practice of cruising" (Munro, 75). This poem also offers a rare and privileged glimpse into what one might assume to be Crane's relation to his sexuality, especially through the significant choice of words he uses to describe it. As Warner Berthoff put it, that overwhelming weight of the lust which we read before "is in some measure justified by the city setting this poem, too, grimly projects (...). Lust here becomes an escape from the city's own brutal conspiracies 'of rage and partial appetites [(ll. 26)]'" (21).

John T. Irwin writes that this poem can be read as "a meditative evocation of its speaker's sexuality as a form of 'possession'" (285). This possession seems to take different

meanings as the poem evolves, beginning as “a drive to possess the objects of the speaker’s lust”, while being “equally a drive by which the speaker is possessed” (*ibid.*). This results in a series of impressions left on the speaker, “memories of those sexual encounters” that, in effect, are the “only possessions left to the speaker” (*ibid.*). Consequently, the speaker is a mere vehicle for the enactment of his desire, trapped within the confines of a body that demands the search for meaning in the bodies of others, all the while retaining a sense of consciousness, indeed awareness, regarding the dangers and potential consequences of performing this particular type of desire. This is overwhelmingly clear at the beginning of the poem:

Witness now this trust! the rain
That steals softly direction
And the key, ready to hand — sifting
One moment in sacrifice (the direst)
Through a thousand nights the flesh
Assaults outright for bolts that linger
Hidden, — O undirected as the sky
That through its black foam has no eyes
For this fixed stone of lust...

(ll. 1-9)

This first stanza opens with an imperative command to the reader, asking that they “Witness now this trust! (...)” (ll. 1), simultaneously setting the confessional and quite expositional nature of the poem, while prefiguring the descriptions and settings that are to come as being heavily dependent on some sort of “trust”, meaning that they perhaps require courage or bravado in order to be fulfilled. Moreover, this “witnessing” (ll. 5) implies a gaze, a stare, a look — i.e.,

the most basic gesture in the language of gay cruising. Indeed, what there is to be said needs to be done so covertly, in the dead of night, further bringing the reader into this world of mystery and anonymity. As Niall Munro put it, “the poem may be said to cruise the reader[s]” themselves” (75), seeing as their perspective is entirely dependent on that of the queer speaker, consequently queering itself in the process. The need for subterfuge is helped by the environment, as the “rain / That steals softly direction” (ll. 2) obscures the sight and allows for desire to come into fruition.

Imagery abounds, pertaining to the speaker’s body, as well as that of those he seeks. Quite explicitly, the answer to this secret — the somewhat phallic “key, ready to hand” (ll. 2) — lies in the plethora of potential dangers that require “sifting” (ll. 3) to become clear and worthwhile. Indeed, from within a “thousand nights” (ll. 5), there is yet “One moment in sacrifice (the direst)” (ll. 4) that leads to a possible correspondence, an understanding of sorts — an answer, a revelation. During these many nights the body peruses the available space, the “flesh” must be content with an “Assault” of phallic “bolts that linger” (ll. 6), a metonymy for desire and sexual completion, that the circumstances demand be “Hidden” (ll. 7). There is a tone of desperation and resignation, seeing that these advances are “undirected”, yet as ever-present as “the sky / That through its black foam has no eyes” (ll. 7-8), thus signifying that this behaviour takes place in public, but that the public space does not acknowledge it, even though it is inevitable and remains unchanged. The speaker furthermore confesses that his desire is inescapable, rendering him a “fixed stone of lust” (ll. 9), a metaphor that will accompany both speaker and reader throughout the remainder of the poem.

If this first stanza served as an exposition of the fundamental components that characterise cruising in a modernist setting, then it is in the second stanza that we begin to see them put into practice, elaborating on the consequences of enacting non-normative desire in

such a way, framed by the cold, unfeeling — but, ultimately, necessary — geography of the city. For this to be possible, the reader is once again called to attention:

Accumulate such moments to an hour:
Account the total of this trembling tabulation.
I know the screen, the distant flying taps
And stabbing medley that sways —
And the mercy, feminine, that stays
As though prepared.

(ll. 10-15)

The imperative form “Accumulate” implies that the speaker wishes that the reader — and perhaps himself — sum up the totality of the sensations, behaviours, and, naturally, the perils that they imply, and that they condense them in a fairly restrictive — some might say hurried — time-frame. This doubly implies a sense of urgency — a rush — as well as of limitation. It would seem that the speaker’s wishes, methodically recorded in what he describes as “this trembling tabulation” (ll. 11), are corseted not only spatially, but also chronologically. As a consequence, desire has a lifespan of a single “hour” of intense search and potential correspondence. However, this is not a discovery, not a novel experiment into the forays of cruising.

The sum “total” of this “[accounting]” (*ibid.*) is already known to the speaker. We already know that this search is one amidst “a thousand nights” (ll. 5)⁵⁵, and in this second stanza, the speaker likewise catalogues the many gestures and signs — indeed, the language —

⁵⁵ Tangentially to my argumentation, it nevertheless warrants pointing out the emphasis that Crane places on quantifying his experience in the city, in reference to the “accounting” quoted shortly before. It highlights the economic character of the city as a place of capital and exchange, and, in this instance, this is an exchange of sexual fulfilment – again at the center of normativity.

of cruising for anonymous and casual sex. He knows “the screen, the distant flying taps” (ll. 12), i.e., the looks, the stares, eye-contact from afar, that aim to culminate in a “stabbing medley that *sways*” (ll. 13, my italics) — a continuation of the phallic imagery we read before —, which immediately rhymes with “the mercy, feminine, that *stays*” (ll. 14, my italics), calling to attention not only the wandering nature of cruising but also, and perhaps more importantly, what, exactly, it involves.

This seemingly corporeal “feminine” mercy has been a source of disagreement for some critics. To those who go as far as to read in it the evidence for a disassembling of potentially queer readings of this poem, John T. Irwin writes that “the mention of ‘mercy, feminine’ is, one suspects, the real ‘screen’ here, making one possible reading of this sexual encounter the speaker’s picking up a female prostitute and thus screening the poem’s homosexual subtext” (287). While it would be very much in line with Crane’s purposeful dabs at obscurity to introduce this conflicting term to further push the true nature of this encounter away from prying eyes, I would venture that not only does this mention of the feminine provide an illusory and misleading (and, thus, protective) “screen”, but it also might further the dichotomy between these two instrumental lines. For “the stabbing medley that sways” there is a correspondent “mercy, feminine, that stays”, thus establishing the two roles involved in male homosexual intercourse — an active role that penetrates; and a passive role (and, as such, perhaps perceived as feminine) that is penetrated. This feminine half is not forced to be passive. We are told that it “stays / as though prepared” (ll. 14-15), further substantiating the argument that there are two willing participants in this intricate choreography.

But what role does the speaker assume? That is made clear to the reader at the beginning of the third stanza:

And I, entering, take up the stone

As quiet as you can make a man...
In Bleecker Street, still trenchant in a void,
Wounded by apprehensions out of speech,
I hold it up against a disk of light —
I, turning, turning on smoked forking spires,
The city's stubborn lives, desires.

(ll. 16-22)

He literally enters — indeed penetrates — into this world of desire, taking up “the stone” — that former sentence, now perhaps less of a burden — still in the shadows, “quiet as you can make a man” (ll. 16)⁵⁶.

The following line situates the poem in a specific and quite significant part of New York City: Bleecker Street is a street in Greenwich Village, a hub of gay life in New York, even now, in the twentieth century. This geographic specificity is very much in line with what we discussed before: the layout of the modern city allows for an internal subdivision of the spaces that constitute it, consequently engendering a particular type of regionalism that allows different behaviours to be enacted within the same, apparently cohesive, whole. Greenwich Village is, effectively, a city within a city, as Boone suggests, with all the perks that entails⁵⁷. This is yet another piece of crucial evidence to justify a queer reading of this poem, and, yes, to articulate the necessary and evident connection between queer desire and the spaces that allow it to come into fruition.

⁵⁶ Irwin comments on the possible double meaning of “make a man”, saying that this phrase “clearly was chosen by Crane because it has two possible meanings, one meant to screen the other — on the one hand, the phrase can refer to a heterosexual encounter in which a child is engendered and, on the other, to the speaker’s having intercourse with a man” (287).

⁵⁷ This idea will gain further importance in the subsequent pages of this chapter, particular in connection to the poems of Campos and Pessoa.

And yet, despite the speaker's will and his best efforts, encounters of this kind have a predictable and disappointing outcome: the "trenchant" encounters fail to provide an escape from an all-consuming "void" that stems from anonymity. Predictably, this has a negative effect on the will of the speaker, who finds himself rendered mute by the realization — by the "apprehensions" (ll. 19) — that anonymity and casual desire are perhaps the best that can be expected in the face of an absolute norm that did not show signs of change.

Despite the possibilities offered by the city, this hub of modernity is still to blame for the limitations of such searching lust. In line with what Irwin assumes to be a reference to the Manhattan skyline, the speaker holds up the aforementioned stone of lust "against a disk of light—" (ll. 20) and sees the true effect that the city has on it — on him. That stone, his lust, his self, is spinning on "smoked forking spires" (ll. 21) — which is to say, impaled on skyscrapers —, along with the remaining "stubborn lives" of the city, its "desires" (ll. 22). Indeed, Irwin tells it best:

I take it that the 'smoked forking spires' are the skyscrapers of Manhattan evoked as if they were spits on which the lives and desires of city dwellers, the speaker among them, were turning and burning. That the speaker holds up the stone of lust up against the disk of the sun, exposing it in broad daylight, figures the speaker's self-conscious confrontation with, his public exposition of, his sexual possession in the poem.

(287)

There is, then, a sense of awareness concerning the speaker's position amid his context. Not only does this context demand that precautions be taken, but it also never stops weighing on the mind of the practitioners that they are, indeed, surrounded. Even if they attempt to curb

these restrictions by taking advantage of the geography of the city, their private concerns are still very much public and exposed.

No longer speechless, perhaps having regained some of the impetus with which he introduced himself at the beginning of the poem, the speaker leads us into the final stanza of the poem, a conclusion of sorts, one that summarises the path so far, and offers a few hints as to where to go from here:

Tossed on these horns, who bleeding dies,
Lacks all but piteous admissions to be spilt
Upon the page whose blind sum finally burns
Record of rage and partial appetites.
The pure possession, the inclusive cloud
Whose heart is fire shall come, — the white wind rase
All but bright stones wherein our smiling plays.

(ll. 23-29)

There is a sense of submission, of giving in to the inevitability of his position. Thus, we are told that those very impossibilities, “[t]ossed on these horns” (a reworking of the “smoked forking spires” we saw previously), painful as they may be, result in “piteous admissions” that are “spilt / Upon the pages whose blind sum finally burns”, a veritable “Record of rage and partial appetites”. The peripatetic pain of having to resort to cruising as the only feasible way through which to enact his desire has the converse advantage of fuelling the speaker’s — and, it is safe to assume, Crane’s — poetic endeavors. At this final stage of the poem, all that remains are the “bright stones” of lust, “wherein our smiling plays”. The speaker has given in to his perceived destiny of errant lust and feeble connections.

The speaker's subjectivity has now subsumed under the overwhelming weight of normativity. The only saving grace is that, insofar as the urban landscape remains complex enough to allow the practitioners that make it their own as they interact and effectively create it according to their desires, there will remain the relative safety of existing inside of a veritable village within the larger city. The same can be said of Campos.

It would not be unfeasible to say that early-twentieth-century Lisbon would prove itself unable to correspond to the needs of a very particular dweller, a modernist at heart, sometimes a champion of technique and progress, other times a relentless and quite melancholic contrarian. He is safe within his world. In the same way that Crane found in Greenwich Village a somewhat safe harbor for homosexual desire to take place in the middle of New York, so did Campos's creator find solace within the metropolis by resorting to a sort of compartmentalization. Indeed, within the complexity of Lisbon's geography, there is room for one to find a village, and Pessoa-himself wrote of it in the often-read poem "Ó Sino da Minha Aldeia".

Critics have often criticised João de Gaspar Simões's reading of this poem as a literal pining for Pessoa's childhood, a form of returning to a purer, less complicated state of being, and thereby establishing a theme that would run throughout the poet's works, of a form of nostalgia (*saudosismo*)⁵⁸. Richard Zenith remarks on the obstinacy of the biographer in arguing against Pessoa's own testimony, stating that he got his revenge on Pessoa's rebuttal of his interpretation by doubling down on his assertions. Indeed,

⁵⁸ John Pedro Schwartz elaborates on *saudosismo* and Pessoa, describing "saudosist nostalgia" as "occasioned by the decadence through which the Portuguese were living at the time" (30), and relating this to Pessoa's proclaimed "returned to the Golden Age" (*ibid.*). The theme of a return is extensively present in Pessoa's own identitarian project, as well as in the works of heteronyms, chief among which is Campos. What I have highlighted as a constant tension between an impulse towards an escape is prevalent in the works dealt with in this chapter, and constitute an iteration of his nostalgic character.

the number one evidence presented by João Gaspar Simões to support his thesis that Pessoa was viscerally nostalgic about his childhood was the very same example the poet invoked to say the exact opposite: that he *did not* miss his childhood.

(“Ó sino da aldeia de quem?” 168, my translation; italics as in the original)⁵⁹

Despite the tension between Pessoa’s and Gaspar Simões’ ideas, what is most relevant is that “Ó Sino da Minha Aldeia” offers an undeniable sense of longing for a different state of being, for a simpler time, a refuge from the rush of modern life. Indeed, this is patent in the second-to-last stanza of the poem:

Por mais que me tanjas perto
Quando passo, sempre errante,
És para mim como um sonho.
Soas-me na alma distante.

(ll. 9-12)

The ringing of this bell brings forth a memory of a place long gone, a simpler, more private place that is very different from the speaker’s current life. This wish for removing the self from its present circumstances translates directly into Campos’s recurrent longing to escape, heightened by the weight of his uncertain relationship with the core of his identity.

Coming from “Ode Marítima”, the emblematic opening lines of “Tabacaria” offer us a very different Campos and establish an environment of broody melancholy that will transpire throughout the remainder of the poem, and likewise provide the guiding *ethos* for Campos

⁵⁹ In the original: “(...) a prova número um, apresentada por João Gaspar Simões em abono da sua tese de que pessoa era visceralmente saudoso da infância, foi o mesmíssimo exemplo invocado pelo poeta para dizer exatamente o contrário: que não tinha saudades da infância”

himself. Fernando Pessoa's writings on what he calls "sensationism" offer solid ground for this worldview. Indeed, in a quasi-manifesto or treatise precisely titled "Sensationism", the very first point the author puts across opens with what could be read as a possible corollary for Campos's opening to "Tabacaria". Indeed, the speaker proclaims thusly:

Não sou nada.

Nunca serei nada.

Não posso querer ser nada.

À parte isso, tenho em mim todos os sonhos do mundo.

(II. 1-4)⁶⁰

Afterwards, reading Pessoa-himself assert that "[t]here is nothing, no reality, but sensation. Ideas are sensations, but of things not placed in space and sometimes not even in time. Logic, the place of ideas, is another kind of space" (Pessoa 2015, 61), we are, in effect, reading in "Tabacaria" the practical and poetic implications of this tenet. Sensation governs reality, and the input of our speaker is effectively rendered moot in the face of such an overwhelmingly intrusive way of perceiving reality. All that the speaker has left to stay connected to his reality are "all the dreams in the world", i.e. idealized sensations that are itself "not placed in space and sometimes not even in time", implying a further degree of removal from the context it means to emulate, evoke, or represent.

⁶⁰ In Richard Zenith's translation:

I'm nothing.
I'll always be nothing.
I can't want to be something.
But I have in me all the dreams in the world.

Indeed, the motif of “fugue” is present once more. “Tabacaria” can be read as a lengthy reflection on the speaker’s position within the context of modernity, a concept that this particular heteronym struggles with throughout his fictional life, at times praising it, others reviling it, even fearing it. This is demonstrated by his spatial placement within a particular subsection of a cosmopolitan and very much modern setting that allows him to be isolated from it, without ever truly escaping it. This tension between the public and the private spheres of modernist life is aptly demonstrated by the speaker, who is standing at the window of his apartment, looking out into the hustle and bustle of Lisbon’s modern urban life from a vantage point that places him both within that urban setting, while also isolating him — perhaps shielding him — from it. This position allows him to explore the meaning of his current self, and of his surroundings, always in a permanent sense of denial (with not uncommon bouts of self-loathing — a consequence of what some critics refer to as “desprezo” (Kinsella, 98)), while never belonging *per se* to the world he is thinking about, instead searching for meaning and identity in what he can observe, rather than experience. This degree of removal of the self from the context it inhabits is not unlike what we saw in the first chapter of this dissertation, wherein Campos, in “Ode Marítima”, is quite adamant in putting across the speaker’s desire to regress into a more primitive and simpler way of existence — with the poignant difference that, while in “Ode Marítima” Campos desires sensations in a practical sense, wishing to physically and personally experience them, in “Tabacaria” we have a diametrically opposed way of fulfilling desire.

In this poem, sensations come into fruition through thought and rational rumination. Indeed, it would seem that, at this stage of Campos’s poetry, the poetic subject has lost the fascination with modernity that elsewhere appeared to be everpresent, and the connection he established with his cosmopolitan setting is painful, rather than exciting, demanding that he attempt to retreat from it entirely.

This culminates in a degree of removal similar to what Michel de Certeau commented on — and which we already broached when reading Crane’s “Possessions” — when looking down at the expanse of New York City, from the vantage point of the summit of the World Trade Center. Anachronisms aside, his assertion is fitting, in assessing that, lifted away from the hustle of the street level, “[o]ne’s body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences (...)” (92). Indeed, “[w]hen one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators” (*ibid.*). By placing himself above and away from the streets, the speaker of “Tabacaria” engenders a point of view that enables him to think about those streets — and, by extension, the city that they map — from an external, and thus more objective, perspective. Surrounded by the city, he is faced with a sense of anonymity, of which he is painfully aware:

Janellas do meu quarto,
 Do meu quarto de um dos milhões do mundo que ninguém sabe quem é
 (E se soubessem quem é, o que saberiam?),
 Daes para o mysterio de uma rua cruzada constantemente por gente,
 Para uma rua inacessivel a todos os pensamentos,
 Real, impossivelmente real, certa, desconhecidamente certa,
 (...)

(II. 5-10)⁶¹

⁶¹ In Richard Zenith’s translation:

Windows of my room,
 The room of one of the world’s millions nobody knows
 (And if they knew me, what would they know?),
 You open onto the mystery of a street continually crossed by people,
 A street inaccessible to any and every thought,
 Real, impossibly real, certain, unknowingly certain,
 (...)

From his cosmopolitan observatory, he is aware that his window is one of millions inhabited by a myriad of similarly anonymous participants that make up this very particular form of reality. Furthermore, he knows that, even if one were to breach his anonymity and take a perhaps more active and exposed part in urban life, that wouldn't make a difference, perhaps because his setting conditions him in such a way that he reaches a point of altogether dispensing with any semblance of authenticity. No one knows who he is, and he himself is not entirely certain of who there is to know — *if* there is someone there at all.

This removal of the self from its environment takes a toll on the weight of the role that sexuality plays in mediating the interaction of the speaker with his context. The speaker of “Tabacaria” is unrecognizable — most of all to himself. Whereas in “Ode Marítima”, gender, sexuality, and desire were essential tools in exploring the articulation between the self and modernity, the sexual impetus which we encountered then is nowhere to be seen in “Tabacaria”. Here, we are faced with a much more subdued, pondered, and, indeed, quite a melancholic speaker, devoid of the sexual impetus we have come to expect. Some critics remarked on this, stating that

In Campos's later works, the growing sense of inauthenticity and even of abjection — witness the opening declaration of ‘Tabacaria’ (Tobacco Shop), ‘Não sou nada’ (I'm nothing) — that indicates his loss of faith in his meta-affective capacities is concomitant with the withering of this sexual bravura.

(Klobucka and Sabine, 7)

It would seem that, at this stage of Álvaro de Campos's poetry, the speaker has lost the fascination with modernity that elsewhere appeared to be everpresent. Moreover, in

“Tabacaria”, the speaker seems to be in a constant struggle between an idealized, and very much modern, identity, and the painful realization that, despite his best efforts, his own private and authentic self does not — indeed, cannot — belong there. At one point, he confesses:

Estou hoje perplexo, como quem pensou e achou e esqueceu.

Estou hoje dividido entre a lealdade que devo

Á Tabacaria do outro lado da rua, como coisa real por fóra,

E á sensação de que tudo é sonho, como coisa real por dentro.

(ll. 21-24)⁶²

This is the crux of the whole poem. Here, the “Tabacaria” (“the tobacco shop”) across the street stands metonymically for the world from which he is isolated (and, I would venture, which he is reneging) — his modernist context. It is the external manifestation of the idealized version of modernity to which he desperately longed to belong and which is ultimately the very reason why he is unable to do so.

The other half of the dilemma comes from within. It is his self that causes a divide between self and space. The solipsistic impetus that renders reality a dream now weighs more heavily on his mind, given that, “in feeling that everything’s a dream”, he is effectively relegating his sensations to an outward perception that, inevitably, fails to connect to the real world. Much in line with what we saw before of Campos, in this poem there is yet again a wish and a need to escape. If the clear discontent the speaker puts across were to leave room for any possible doubt insofar as to the speaker’s feelings and intentions, it is shortly after the last passage that he says:

⁶² In Richard Zenith’s translation:

Today I’m bewildered, like a man who wondered and discovered and forgot.
Today I’m torn between the loyalty I owe
To the outward reality of the Tobacco Shop across the street
And the inward reality of my feeling that everything’s a dream.

Falhei em tudo.
Como não fiz proposito nenhum talvez tudo fôsse nada.
A aprendizagem que me deram
Desci d'ella pela janella das trazeiras da casa.
Fui até ao campo com grandes propósitos,
Mas lá encontrei só ervas e arvores,
E quando havia gente era igual á outra.
Saio da janela, sento-me numa cadeira. Em que hei-de pensar?

(II. 25-32)⁶³

His failures now weigh heavily on his mind and prevent him from taking action. There is a sense of misguided effort that renders his impetus and previous will to change useless, in effect. The most appealing thought is, then, to escape.

He confesses that his education, his training as an engineer — and, one might argue, his upbringing as a citizen of modernity — is incompatible with his will and his wishes and, as such, he exits his house, synecdoche for his context, and flees to a rural world, as removed from his urban surroundings as possible, carrying with him the luggage of his modernist intent, perhaps wishing that, there, they would be better received. This, of course, was not the case.

⁶³ In Zenith's translation:

I failed in everything.
Since I had no ambition, perhaps I failed in nothing.
I left the education I was given,
Climbing down from the window at the back of the house.
I went to the country with big plans.
But all I found was grass and trees,
And when there were people they were just like the others.
I step back from the window and sit in a chair. What should I think about?

No nostalgic bell was rung there. He complains that all he found was, indeed, that very rural world.

There is no place for modernist Campos in a pastoral setting that does not differ all that much from the city, especially in what seems to concern him the most: interpersonal relationships. The people, he tells us, were “just like the others”. The last line of this passage also marks a change in the architecture of the poem. The speaker goes and sits in a chair, moving away from the window that allows him to peer into the outside world, further retreating into the confines of his shelter, and proceeds to perform a soliloquy, filled with the metaphysical implications of trying to be himself — and, of course, what it means, in reality, to be this person.

The stanza that follows (quite poignantly one of the longest in the whole poem) denotes the sense of confusion that Campos shows concerning his sense of self. Furthermore, this selfhood seems to be equally connected to the idea of perceived genius. The first line of this stanza offers the reader a rhetorical question: “Que sei eu do que serei, eu que não sei o que sou?” (ll. 33)⁶⁴. The crisis of identity that has accompanied us through the poem so far has, here, its reiteration, further expounding upon a sense of incompatibility between what the speaker perceives to be his true sense of self, and his idealized identity that the weight of modernity wants to impose. He is no genius, as he tells us:

Genio? Neste momento

Cem mil cerebros se concebem em sonho genios como eu,

E a historia não marcará, quem sabe?, nem um,

Nem haverá senão estrume de tantas conquistas futuras.

⁶⁴ In Zenith’s translation: “How should I know what I’ll be, I who don’t know what I am?”

He is one amongst many whose voices get devoured by a choir of unknown geniuses that pervade modernity and, despite their best intentions — their dreams and ambitions — never fail to fall into oblivion. The speaker is quite aware of this, and adds: “O mundo é para quem nasce para o conquistar / E não para quem sonha que pode conquistá-lo, ainda que tenha razão” (ll. 50-51)⁶⁶. This implies a sense of predestination from which the speaker seems to be excluded. The speaker’s ambitions, according to his perception of them, seem to amount to nothing more than a collection of ineffective dreams. For example, he has dreamed more dreams than Napoleon himself (ll. 52), is more human than Christ (ll. 53) — but only just hypothetically (*ibid.*) —, and believes himself to be the greatest of all philosophers (ll. 54). These three arguments follow the same pattern of logical reasoning which Campos will reuse shortly after. His argumentation goes from the realm of the specific to that which encompasses the broadest possible domain. From Napoleon — the specific, individual, desire — to Christ — that of humanity — to philosophy — the universe. But, again, these are only dreams, and fail to translate into his reality — a reality, it bears reminding, from which he is presently excluded.

This long outcry ends with the speaker further extending his sense of existential dread to his perceived incompatibility with the entire universe:

Escravos cardiacos das estrelas,

⁶⁵ In Zenith’s translation:

Genius? At this moment
 A hundred thousand brains are dreaming they’re geniuses like me,
 And it may be that history won’t remember even one,
 All of their imagined conquests amounting to so much dung.

⁶⁶ In Zenith’s translation: “The world is for those born to conquer it, / Not for those who dream they can conquer it, even if they’re right”

Conquistámos todo o mundo antes de nos levantar da cama;
Mas acordámos e elle é opaco,
Levantámo-nos e elle é alheio,
Sahimos de casa e elle é a terra inteira,
Mais o Systema Solar e a Via Lactea e o Indefinido.

(ll. 66-71)⁶⁷

The use of the plural suggests Campos placing himself within a brotherhood of misguided and misunderstood — perhaps ignored — geniuses. The progression of waking up, getting up, and going outside extends the speaker’s sense of dread to every possible nook and cranny of existence, as we saw before. There is no assuaging his melancholy — not in his sleep, not in the private shelter of his home, and certainly not in the outside world which would no doubt go beyond even his most ambitious reveries, rendering irrelevant whether he dreams of the Solar system (specific) of the Milky Way (slightly broader in scope), or the Unknown or “Indefinite”, as Zenith calls it (i.e., everything you could possibly dream of or imagine within the realm of existence, and perhaps beyond it). These dreamers are characterized as “cardiac slaves”, implying not only a naturalisation of this suffering, but also placing this longing within the very core of their being — their heart. It is important to note that this desire is framed within the confines of a subdivision of the city — they long for the stars, while being enclosed within a building — the basic unit of the urban landscape that, in turn, might actually hinder the sight of stargazers.

⁶⁷ In Zenith’s translation:

Cardiac slaves of the stars,
We conquered the whole world before getting out of bed,
But we woke up and it’s hazy,
We got up and it’s alien,
We went outside and it’s the entire earth
Plus the solar system and the Milky Way and the Indefinite.

What comes next is another emblematic image of this poem: an aside, clearly demarcated by the circumscribing this stanza within parenthesis, uttered or thought to himself, but directed perhaps at a little girl he sees through his window regularly, eating a bar of chocolate:

(Come chocolates, pequena;

Come chocolates!

Olha que não ha mais metaphysica no mundo senão chocolates.

Olha que as religiões todas não ensinam mais que a confeitaria.

Come, pequena suja, come!

Pudesse eu comer chocolates com a mesma verdade com que comes!

Mas eu penso e, ao tirar o papel de prata, que é folha de estanho,

Deito tudo para o chão, como tenho deitado a vida.)

(ll. 72-79)⁶⁸

This passage is significant for a couple of different reasons, chief among which is the sense that the speaker has given up hope of change, and, consequently, given up all prospects of futurity in the process. He urges the little girl to ignore the metaphysical concerns that will one day inevitably deprive her of her childhood — the innocence the speaker seems to crave — and instead eat chocolates, that, in their decadent authenticity, hold in them the knowledge

⁶⁸ In Richard Zenith's translation:

(Eat your chocolates, little girl,
Eat your chocolates!
Believe me, there's no metaphysics on earth like chocolates,
And all religions put together teach no more than the candy shop.
Eat, dirty little girl, eat!
If only I could eat chocolates with the same truth as you!
But I think and, removing the silver paper that's tinfoil,
I throw it on the ground, as I've thrown out life.)

necessary to exist. She eats honestly, for that is her only concern. When the speaker attempts to replicate this behaviour, perhaps in the hope of achieving the same sense of belonging that the girl seems to exhibit (or, at least, to which she is impervious), he is faced with reality. He is no longer able to remove himself from the truth of his surroundings, and, as such, sees through every attempt at assuaging it. The chocolate wrapper that, to a child or someone unblemished by modernity, would appear to be made of silver — and, thus, would be something to covet and yearn for — he knows to be, in reality, nothing more than foil. The veil is lifted and his illusion is shattered. Or, rather, he is no longer able to weave together a fiction that would sustain his regressive ambitions. This explains his “bitterness” (“amargura”, ll. 80), whose only saving grace is giving birth to the lines of poetry we read (ll. 81), that allow a glimpse into the Impossible (ll. 82). The everpresent sense of “disdain” (“desprezo”, ll. 83) that has accompanied us so far likewise shows itself through most of the remaining stanzas of the poem, wherein Campos continues to elaborate on what it is, exactly, about modern life that requires him to escape. The idea of consumption — eating the chocolates — done by a subject that would be unable to realize the implications of actually participating in the economic intricacies of modern life, is also something to long for. The tobacco shop, poeticized though it may be, is still very much a shop. As such, and as part of the city, it holds in it the weight of commerce and economy, in a manner similar to what we observed in Crane’s poem (and which will resurge in the following chapter’s reading of “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen”).

Shortly after this, the speaker moves again: he resumes his observations through the window. What follows is a catalogue of all that is observable through his apartment window:

Chego á janella e vejo a rua com uma nitidez absoluta.

Vejo as lojas, vejo os passeios, vejo os carros que passam,

Vejo os entes vivos vestidos que se cruzam,

Vejo os cães que também existem,
E tudo isto me pesa como uma condenação ao degredo,
E tudo isto é estrangeiro, como tudo. (...)

(ll. 98-103)⁶⁹

The sole purpose of this enumeration is for the speaker to, once again, assert his detachment from his surroundings. This does not mean that it is something that is easily accepted by the speaker. On the contrary, this is a source of anguish and anxiety, that makes his experience feel not entirely dissimilar to what it would feel like in exile (“degredo”). Everything feels foreign, detached from his sense of self.

The poem continues in this tone of finality, of ultimate dread and resignation, until the speaker turns the reader’s attention once more into what is going on outside, to the titular tobacco shop, source of further anguish, then of relief:

Mas o Dono da Tabacaria chegou á porta e ficou á porta.
Olho-o com o desconforto da cabeça mal voltada
E com o desconfôrto da alma mal entendendo.
Ele morrerá e eu morrerei.
Elle deixará a taboleta, eu deixarei versos.
A certa altura morrerá a taboleta também, e os versos também.
Depois de certa altura morrerá a rua onde estive a taboleta
E a lingua em que foram escriptos os versos.
Morrerá depois o planeta gigante em que tudo isto se deu.

⁶⁹ In Zenith’s translation: “I go to the window and see the street with absolute clarity. / I see the shops, I see the sidewalks, I see the passing cars, / I see the clothed living beings who pass each other. / I see the dogs that also exist, / And all of this weighs on me like a sentence of exile, / And all of this is foreign, like everything else. (...)”

In these opening lines of this stanza, the speaker puts across a clear demonstration of fear of the unknown, and fear of oblivion. Even though there are multiple references to death — both physical, as signified by the material world outside his bubble; and metaphysical, represented by the lines of poetry our speaker will hopefully leave behind —, death is not the issue. Memory, instead, is the chief concern of our speaker, a poet whose only bid for posterity is the poetry he writes. This memory is further shaped by the signposting that pervades the urban landscape. The “taboletas” (signboards) that charter the streets of the city and give it meaning, simultaneously allowing it to be navigated by its practitioners, are in themselves a form of urbanized collective memory crystals. Unlike the poet’s efforts for posterity, which are fundamentally literary, these signs are a part of the physical world, to an extent that would be very difficult to replicate with poetry.

Notice still another iteration of the progression we identified before: from the specific (the signboard and the verses); to the, might we call it, regional (the street, the language); to the universal (the planet). It is not enough for his peers to recognize his worth, nor does it suffice for the world to know his genius — if he admits to being called as such — no. Ultimately, not even the universe can know his greatness. There is nowhere for him to belong to, there does not seem to be any feasible course of action to take henceforth. Here, we have reached a very melancholic climax, wherein the speaker Campos sees no hope. And yet...

Mas um homem entrou na Tabacaria (para comprar tabaco?).

⁷⁰ In Zenith’s translation: “But the Tobacco Shop Owner has come to the door and is standing there. / I look at him with the discomfort of a half-twisted neck / Compounded by the discomfort of a half-grasping soul. / He will die and I will die. / He’ll leave his signboard, I’ll leave my poems. / His sign will also eventually die, and so will my poems. / Eventually the street where the sign was will die, / And so will the language in which my poems were written. / Then the whirling planet where all of this happened will die.

E a realidade plausível cahe de repente em cima de mim.
Semiergo-me enérgico, convencido, humano,
E vou tencionar escrever estes versos em que digo o contrario.
Acendo um cigarro ao pensar em escrevel-os
E saboreio no cigarro a libertação de todos os pensamentos.
Sigo o fumo como a uma rota propria,
E gozo, num momento sensitivo e competente,
A libertação de todas as especulações
E a ‘consciencia de que a metaphysica é uma consequencia de estar mal
[disposto

Depois deito-me para traz na cadeira
E continúo fumando.
Emquanto o destino m’o conceder, continuarei fumando.

(ll. 146-155)⁷¹

It seems that this time, the inevitability of reality has a positive impact on the mood of our speaker, and perhaps in his thematic concerns as well. The synecdoche for material existence

⁷¹ In Zenith’s translation: But a man has entered the Tobacco Shop (to buy tobacco?).

And plausible reality suddenly hits me.
I half rise from my chair — energetic, convinced, human —
And will try to write these verses in which I say the opposite.

I light up a cigarette as I think about writing them,
And in that cigarette I savor a freedom from all thought.
My eyes follow the smoke as if it were my own trail.
And I enjoy, for a sensitive and fitting moment,
A liberation from all speculation
And an awareness that metaphysics is a consequence of not feeling very well.
Then I lean back in the chair
And keep smoking.
As long as Destiny permits, I’ll keep smoking.

that is the Tobacco shop ceases to be a mere symbol and assumes a practical, material, tangible, non-rhetorical role when a fellow city-dweller walks through its doors to fulfil the purpose of this space. What happens is that this tangibility causes “plausible reality” to rush back into the mind of our speaker, filling him with a semblance of hopeful energy, leaving him quasi-reinvigorating to the point of being able to write more melancholic verses. After all, he is still, insofar as we, the readers, can tell, discontent. Or perhaps he means to maintain a façade of apathy that would shield him from having to effectively connect to the material world.

It is in a product of this material world that he finds liberation: tobacco. In smoking, he assures us, he finds “freedom from all thought”. The connection between the cigarette, as a liberator, and the tobacco shop, as a repository of freedom from thought, is not the least bit innocent. No longer “not feeling very well”, he has no reason to be metaphysical, and can then interact with the physical world he previously denied. He goes back to the window, and, for the first time, reaches out:

O homem saíu da Tabacaria (...)

Ah, conheço-o: é o Esteves sem metaphysica.

(O Dono da Tabacaria chegou á porta.)

Como por um instincto divino o Esteves voltou-se e viu-me.

Acenou-me adeus, gritei-lhe *Adeus ó Esteves!*, e o universo

Reconstruiu-se-me sem ideal nem esperança, e o Dono da Tabacaria sorriu.

(ll. 162-167)

Could we consider that this poem ends on a hopeful note? I find that, despite the apparent improvement on the speaker’s part, the evidence weighs against him. The only interaction he has with the outside world over the course of one hundred and sixty-seven lines of poetry is

still done through the very object that acts as a physical and metaphysical barrier between him and said world: the window. It was not his will that the man, Esteves, would notice him; this interaction was ascribed to divine causes and, as such, removed from the material world. Much like everything else with melancholic Campos, it happened *to* him, instead of being something he willed into happening. We are still quite a long way away from being able to recognize the energetic Campos of “Ode Marítima”, or, as we will see in the following chapter, of “Ode Triunfal”. As a result, sexuality plays no role here, instead becoming significant through its glaring omission. The setting that forces the speaker into isolation likewise deprives him of his sensations, rendering ineffective any attempt to relate to his context through any sort of sexual impetus, as he did before. Indeed, the city — the modern metropolis — is a suppressor of the bravura with which we would easily associate Campos, while at the same time it highlights the possibilities it offers, by hosting the crowds that Campos’s inner flaneur longs for yet can’t fathom achieving.

However, the same cannot be said for Crane. If for Campos the city is responsible for the annihilation of his will to connect, for Crane, it is the exact opposite. Indeed, the geography of the modern metropolis is, in fact, the principal instrument for enabling the performance of non-normative desire. As we saw, cruising takes a pivotal role not only in allowing the anonymity that the city provides to seep into sexual encounters between men — making them possible through that chaos that renders individuals anonymous in the middle of a crowd —, but also in defining the urban geography itself. This would perhaps become more evident in the ensuing decades, but it is nevertheless clear that cruising has a symbiotic relation to the city: it is only possible for men to cruise *because* of the city, and, conversely, the city itself is defined by the behaviours of those who inhabit it, adjusting its geography accordingly (as is the case of Greenwich Village, a city within a city) and Crane takes advantage of this.

In conclusion, the two contemporary poets, an ocean apart, take two very different approaches to the same overarching concern: human connection and their place within their contexts. This is mediated through the city in different ways. Whereas Crane descends into the street level to deliver his sense of self into the bodies of other men who search, as he does, for a sense of belonging and connection through sexual fulfillment; Campos, on the other hand, chooses to remain above the level of the street, becoming an observer of the reality of existing within a city, while never actually becoming one its practitioners. The Campos we see in “Tabacaria” never walks the streets in search of his identity in the same way that Crane does and therefore contributes to the regressive wish of a return to an idealized state of purity that no longer exists. Ultimately, the two poets depend on the city to frame not only their human endeavors but also their poetry. The city goes beyond being a simple background for Crane’s battle with his “fixed stone of lust”, or a landscape for Campos to stare at through his window — the city is alive, active and bustling, and depends on each of our poets’ voices to remain so.

III. The Machine

The advent of modernism seemed to spell death for the lyrical component of art and poetry. In the age of the Machine, to be whole seemed only possible through attempting to bridge the then-recent gap between machine and self — between man and the technology it birthed. But does an increase in proximity to the machine necessarily imply a denial or refusal of the human? Or would it be more accurate to read this gesture as close to a refusal of the material dimension of humanity, to a dismissal of the body? What consequences does this altered relationship with one's physical body have in terms of sexuality and gender identity? How do the two poets that have accompanied us throughout the previous two chapters manage to articulate a bodily self, made of flesh in the age of the machine? In this chapter, I aim to attempt to answer these questions by close-reading excerpts from Campos' "Ode Triunfal" ("Triumphal Ode"⁷²), as well as one of Crane's more important early poems, "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen".

Crane's poem is part of his first collection — *White Buildings*. In this volume, Crane's relationship to the machine differs from what it would become in his later works. Here, he is yet to reach a stage of "singing the machine in the technological miracle of Brooklyn-Bridge-as-America" (Ramalho Santos 169). Instead, this collection focuses more greatly on Crane's desire to "forge modernity from several traditions" (Schultz 331). This implies a conscious denial of his contemporary poetics. As such, I will once again focus on one of Crane's works where he more clearly and more self-consciously attempts to question and critique his place within his context, in constant articulation with the dominant poetics of his time. In the case of Campos, however, these newer forays of literature are embraced, as displayed in his "Triumphal Ode" that owes a considerable amount to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's Futurism.

⁷² According to Zenith's translation.

The second of Campos' artistic phases, often dubbed the Sensationist phase, consciously explores the pivotal place the speaker occupies in his own present time, always mediated through sensations, i.e. the stimuli of modernity that he transposes into his poetry. Indeed, Bishop-Sanchez, reading "Sensationist Campos's urge to 'sentir tudo de todas as maneiras'⁷³ (to feel everything in every way)" (203) provides us with an avenue through which it becomes possible to think about the importance of sexuality in the more effusive works of the poet and his poetic subjects (similarly to what was done in Chapter I). The poet's desire to extend his sensations beyond the reach of the normal — or normative — queers both the expressed desire and the subject who aims to enact it, "simultaneously involving all of his senses, [homing] in on the sexualization of the desire to experience fulfilment and complete oneness with the universe, attaining a peak of sensation that is orgasmic in its intensity" (*ibid.*). To be sure, to profess a desire to "feel everything in every way" necessarily implies that said desire extends beyond the confines of heteronormativity. If we consider, as critics often have, that "Campos's multiple, shifting, and even self-contradictory sexual identities are predominately vented during the heteronym's second artistic phase" (*ibid.* 202), then it becomes justifiable, indeed necessary, to explore the extent to which the poems that are attributed to this phase transpose this emphasis on sexuality to the speaker, as well as the author, and Pessoa's own considerations about their place within their context. If it is true that both Crane and Campos show concern for the divide between mind and matter, for Campos, his mind stands as the most problematic obstacle between him and his age. Whereas his body, a physical entity, is part of the modern material world — it *belongs* in it — his mind, ethereal and intellectual (and, consequently, *not* a part of the material world) is contrary to his body's inherent will, permanently pushing for an escape from this novel context. This conflict is at the

⁷³ In "Passagem das Horas".

heart of the speaker's epistemological conflict between self and context, ultimately rendering the body a perfect target for the physical assaults of modernity, especially prevalent in "Ode Triunfal".

The opening line of the poem immediately sets the scene as one that is not natural, i.e. fundamentally man-made. This is an industrial setting, lighted only by artificial light, described as "painful", implying that this setting does not agree with the speaker's sensibilities. This light, we are told, causes a "fever" (ll. 2) that fuels the creative process, thereby establishing that whatever lines may follow this opening stanza will be a direct result of the specific technological conditions that permeate the environment in which the speaker is writing. However painful, these lights appear to still alumnate a novel kind of beauty, for it is "completely unknown to the ancients" (ll. 4). These eldest of entities would likewise never have heard of the objects that now take the place that was previously occupied by the deities of their epic poetry, which the speaker invokes at the beginning of the second stanza:

Ó rodas, ó engrenagens, *r-r-r-r-r-r* eterno!
Forte espasmo retido dos maquinismos em fúria!
Em fúria fóra e dentro de mim,
Por todos os meus nervos dissecados fóra,
Por todas as papilas fóra de tudo com que eu sinto!
Tenho os lábios sêcos, ó grandes ruídos modernos,
De vos ouvir demasiadamente de perto,
E arde-me a cabeça de vos querer cantar com um excesso
De expressão de todas as minhas sensações,
Com um excesso contemporâneo de vós, ó máquinas!

The apostrophe demonstrates the speaker's wish to summon to his side the stimuli of modernity, metonymically represented by "wheels" and "gears" that produce the "bridled convulsiveness of raging mechanisms" (ll. 5-6). The effect that these objects have on the speaker — and, indeed, the *function* of these objects, as well as what they represent — is much too intense. The speaker's excessive proximity to these devices (he insists on hearing them "at too close a range" and wishes to *excessively* sing their praises⁷⁵) takes a heavy toll, not only on his mind but also on his body. The speaker is aware of this and explains that these sensations are raging "in me" and "outside me" (ll. 7), thus establishing a divide between his inner and outer selves, between thought and materiality, and consequently blurring this distinction into a transformative process that is mediated by the sheer intensity of the experience itself.

The first line of this stanza sees the speaker move beyond a mere description of the physical phenomena caused by the contact with machinery. Through his body, he attempts to replicate the intensity of that experience. This is the first of many instances in the poem where we see Campos resort to onomatopoeia. This device produces a direct transcription of the

⁷⁴ In Zenith's translation:

O wheels, O gears, eternal *r-r-r-r-r-r-r!*
 Bridled convulsiveness of raging mechanisms!
 Raging in me and outside me,
 Through all my dissected nerves,
 Through all the papillae of everything I feel with!
 My lips are parched, O great modern noises,
 From hearing you at too close a range,
 And my head burns with the desire to proclaim you
 In an explosive song telling my every sensation,
 An explosiveness contemporaneous with you, O machines!

⁷⁵ Zenith's translation neglects this particular point. What reads, in the original, as "E arde-me a cabeça de vos querer cantar com um *excesso* / De expressão de todas as minhas sensações" (my italics) is translated as "And my head burns with the desire to proclaim you / In an explosive song telling my every sensation," thus failing to account for the specific choice, on the part of the author, that reasserts the excessive (and perhaps exceptional) nature of these sensations. Even the use of a description as volatile and powerful as "explosive" fails to account for the sheer intensity of the speaker's desire.

noises that the speaker experiences, printed in italics, a typographical choice that not only serves the purpose of establishing the non-human provenance of these noises but also of separating this utterance more clearly from the remaining text, further establishing their unusual — and foreign, exterior — nature. If the speaker uses his body to replicate the noises which, as we saw, he so clearly correlates with modernity, then this “eternal *r-r-r-r-r-r-r!*”, by virtue of a chain of rhetorical inferences, allows the speaker to move closer to what appears to be a fusion with the machines he praises, a synecdoche for the age of which he sings. Through this melding together of human and machine, he aims to, finally, belong. His body, however, does not seem able enough to allow for this proto-transhuman gesture.

The various references to organic elements of the speaker’s anatomy throughout this stanza (and through the entire Ode) always appear in connection to some kind of suffering or mutilation. His “nerves” are “dissected” (l. 8), his “lips” “dry” (l. 9) on account of listening too closely to those “great modern noises” (*ibid.*). Likewise, his “head” (l. 12) — which may be read as his actual, physical skull, or to the thoughts that inhabit it — is ablaze with excess, with an unrelenting need, and desire, to sing the praises of this beautifully painful reality. Indeed, the speaker is overwhelmed by an excess of the contemporary. He is too invested in his age — even though he is never able to find his place within it. This is not the only instance wherein the will to *belong*, on the part of the speaker, requires a physical, violent, and, indeed, painful process inflicted on his body.⁷⁶

Consequently, after this invocation, the focus moves away from the speaker himself, and instead homes in more closely on his position within this context. His passion still burns with a fever that generates in him a delirium⁷⁷ that produces a flashback, situating both space

⁷⁶ A process quite similar to the one already observed in “Ode Marítima”, in Chapter I, wherein violence becomes a means to erase the will of the self, allowing the body to be permeated – indeed, penetrated – by the representatives of its context.

⁷⁷ Zenith translates the original’s “Em febre” (ll. 15) to “deliriously”.

and action in a context that does not occur in isolation, but that is rather a natural and necessary conclusion to a series of events that occurred in succession, in a somewhat linear manner. Both the speaker and his age are, in effect, part of a tradition, and thus cannot be understood in isolation, requiring instead a degree of continuity.

Furthermore, by likening his modern, urban landscape to a “tropical landscape”⁷⁸, the speaker naturalises the man-made elements that compose it.⁷⁹ They are, in effect, “human tropics of iron and fire and energy”⁸⁰, and, as such, indelible and constant elements of the new-formed surroundings of which the speaker sings, and as natural as those that preceded them, organic and natural though they were. Rather than occurring as a break from an established norm, it would appear that Campos, in this particular stage of his work, views this context, and the role of man within it, as a continuation of what came before, as part of a tradition. Instead of the machine surpassing the role of man, Campos assures us that “Plato and Virgil exist in the machines and the electric lights”⁸¹ (ll. 19), and, because he sings “the present, and the past and future too”⁸² (ll. 18), these and other figures from antiquity that seem to inform the speaker’s production also “[g]o round these transmission belts and pistons and flywheels”⁸³ (ll. 23), thus becoming melded with a new age that inherits them, indeed coming together to build the machine of modernity.⁸⁴ This attempt at placing the subject as part of a continuum is a

⁷⁸ According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “(...) Naturesa tropical” (ll. 15).

⁷⁹ The case could be made that it also gifts it with an exotic quality that might resonate with some of the more imperialistic overtones of some of Campos’s poetry, though this falls outside the scope of this work.

⁸⁰ According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “trópicos humanos de ferro e fogo e fôrça” (ll. 16).

⁸¹ According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “(...) ha Platão e Vergilio dentro das máquinas e das luzes eléctricas” (ll. 19).

⁸² According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “(...) canto o presente, e tambem o passado e todo o futuro” (ll. 18).

⁸³ According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “Andam por estas correias de transmissão e por estes êmbolos e por estes volantes” (ll. 23).

⁸⁴ The anachronisms present in some of modernism’s most active voices have been the subject of scrutiny at the hands of contemporary scholars. Even though it falls outside the scope of this dissertation, I believe that there are

conscious attempt at defining his age: more than an inheritance, modernity is also a project that looks to the future.

This communion between subject and context — the speaker and his age — is made doubly clear throughout the following stanza. In it, the poet expresses the crux of his condition and professes his desire for belonging, as well as his inability to effectively do so. He enacts an erotization of the self and his body with the ultimate goal of attempting to find a sense of completion, a fusion with his age, with his context. The stanza reads as follows:

Ah, poder exprimir-me todo como um motor se exprime!

Ser completo como uma máquina!

Poder ir na vida triunfante como um automóvel último-modêlo!

Poder ao menos penetrar-me fisicamente de tudo isto,

Rasgar-me todo, abrir-me completamente, tornar-me passento

A todos os perfumes de ólios e calores e carvões

Desta flora estupenda, negra, artificial e insaciável

(ll. 26-32)⁸⁵

interesting avenues to be explored in what concerns the relationship between our two authors and the current debates surrounding posthumanism, done in a particular, uniquely queer fashion. Critic Jeff Wallace poses a stimulating question: “[h]ow far does modernism’s response to the strenuous Nietzschean challenge of envisioning what we humans might become anticipate a form of posthumanism?” (“Modern” 43). This seeks to bridge the chronological gap between modernist thought and literary output, and the posthuman condition, dating the roots of posthuman thought as far back as the end of the nineteenth, and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The paradigm that regards modernism as an age of unparalleled breaking away from a linear tradition is lacking, in that to herald “make it new” as the principal banner of modernism is to ignore the variety of influential voices that preceded it and that, in effect, are responsible for self-proclaimed modernists to finally be able to break away from an established norm, or from linear tradition. Rather than being a spontaneous cry of revolt, the various modernisms that populated the first half of the twentieth century are, in fact, a direct result of the – perhaps analogous, quite certainly architextual – efforts of their literal and literary forefathers. Indeed, it might pose an interesting challenge and generate fruitful debate to ask just “[h]ow far, then, was the ‘make it new’ of literary modernism really new?” (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the questions raised by posthumanism surrounding the implications of technology for the human body seem to be aligned with some of the anxieties that pervaded literary output during and immediately after the First World War, around the time when Crane and Pessoa-Campos were most active. The relationship between machinery and the body – a clear concern of this chapter – has ample grounds to be explored through a queer and posthuman lens.

⁸⁵ In Zenith’s translation:

Much in the same way as what we saw in “Ode Maritima”, the speaker of “Ode Triunfal” violently eroticises his surroundings and his body as a way of facilitating the dialogue between self and context. His deepest desire is to “be complete like a machine” (ll. 27), to walk “triumphantly through life” (ll. 28), able to “express [his] whole being like an engine!” (ll. 26). He ascribes to the machine the qualities he longs for (implicitly admitting that he lacks those qualities), which would allow him to, at last, belong. This is aligned with Merleau-Ponty’s idea of the materiality of the flesh being a facilitator in the communication between what he calls a “seer” and the thing being observed. He mentions that “the thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication” (135). He concludes by telling us that “the thickness of the body, far from rivalling that of the world, is on the contrary the sole means I have to go unto the heart of things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh” (*ibid.*)

Our speaker would no doubt subscribe to this idea. He has, indeed, made things “flesh”, or part of *his* flesh, to be able to experience them in a way that dispenses with the challenges his intellect poses. He wishes to be “physically” [“físicamente”] (ll. 29) penetrated by machinery. The choice of this particular adverb to describe this interaction is telling. It substantiates the argument that the speaker is aware of the main obstacle in fulfilling his wish: the aforementioned divide between his physical and intellectual selves. Whereas the latter is subjective, varying according to perceptions rather than materiality, the former is inevitably

If I could express my whole being like an engine!
If I could be complete like a machine!
If I could go triumphantly through life like the latest model car!
If at least I could inject all this into my physical being,
Rip myself wide open, and become pervious
To all the perfumes from the oils and hot coals
Of this stupendous, artificial and insatiable black flora!

affixed to its context, given its physical and material nature. The speaker attempts to bridge this gap by once again becoming passive and permeable and allowing the sensations and impressions that surround him to take over and write modernity in the flesh of his body. He relinquishes any sense of agency in favour of an overwhelming rush of sensations that would, perhaps, erase his natural aversion to his age. If, on the one hand, he is unable to command his intellectual impulses; then, on the other hand, his physical self, his body, is an entirely different matter. His body, a material entity, is undeniably a part of the age with which his intellect struggles. As such, it becomes a conduit of modernity, quite against its owner's will. Moreover, if we situate the majority of the speaker's anguish in the intellectual half of the foregoing divide, then his pain is orphaned, in that it has no physical correlation to material reality. The speaker appears to deem it more worthwhile to abandon this struggle and instead give in to what is forced upon him. More than providing his speaker with a permanent anchor to his time, the body is also a vehicle for suffering, for a pain that is not physical, that is "objectless", as defined by Elaine Scarry, who notes that "[t]his objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it from being rendered in language: objectless, it cannot easily be objectified in any form, material or verbal" (162). To add to this idea, Judith Butler poses that

The abject designates (...) those 'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject.

(xiii)

Granted, Butler's object of study differs greatly from the one I am currently working on, but her point stands: Campos' body is the recipient of a barrage of assaults that attempt to regulate the materiality of his body in relation to its master's intellectual subjectivity, in an effort to navigate the otherwise "uninhabitable" zones of social life for which he, the subject, was not made. This implies that the violence inflicted on the speaker's body is not only necessary, but voluntary. Pain is a means to an end. It is through pain that the speaker finds a way to relate. As Ramalho Santos put it, "[t]he poet's body is the poem's grounding" ("Modernist Muses that Matter (...)") 45) — the only possible choice after the erasure of lyrical beauty, which renders "[t]he modern poet's muse (...) often indistinguishable from the poet's own body" (*ibid.*). The basis for belonging to, for feeling, and for singing modernity *is* the body, precisely because, no matter how intense Campos' thoughts are to the contrary, it, a material entity, is inseparable from its surroundings. As such, poetry that is *of* the time, and not *against* it, must "speak sense by letting the senses speak" (*ibid.*) — i.e., it must manifest itself through the realm of sensations, preferably physical, not intellectual: in a sense, unpolluted — authentic⁸⁶.

As an extension of this, the erotization and sexualization of the body become a privileged medium for the speaker to navigate his sense of self (intellectual, and, as such, removed from physical reality) through his perceptions of his context.⁸⁷ Indeed, "the poet's sensuously hyperbolic desire (...) [suggests] that the answer must lie in the promiscuous organicity of his own homoerotic body" (*ibid.* 49). Even if the speaker of "Ode Triunfal" displays the same intensity of feeling as we have observed in other instances of Campos'

⁸⁶ This is not too different from what we saw in Chapter 1, in Campos' "Ode Marítima", wherein the speaker similarly wishes his body to be transexualized, and then raped and penetrated by the representatives of an age to which he wishes to escape, and which was perchance even more violent than that of the machine, thus subjecting his self to violence in an effort to regress to an age that did not pose the struggles of his own. Walter Benjamin has written about the authenticity of art and of its belonging in a late nineteenth, early twentieth century context, mediated by machinery. More on this later, in connection to Crane.

⁸⁷ In contrast, whenever Campos abandons this obsession with the body, whenever he lacks this erotic and sexualizing impetus, we get a melancholy that is best exemplified by what we saw in "Tabacaria": a disillusioned speaker that does not belong, does not want to belong, and cannot will himself to want anything else.

poetry, this time around, that iridescent pulsation is directed at a wish to *belong*, rather than *escape*. We need no more proof that this is a divided Campos, “torn between the elating force and the crippling pain of the machines” (*ibid.* 48).

The speaker longs for dissolving the boundaries between self and modernity, and in order to clearly state what would be required of him to enact this transition, he employs a specific term: he wishes he was “passento” (“Ode Triunfal” ll. 19). This metaphor has been the focus of Ramalho Santos’s attention. The scholar states that

In ‘Ode Triunfal’ (...), Pessoa’s body-as-muse is powerfully expressed by an extraordinary, untranslatable metaphor: *passento* (...). The use Pessoa makes of this unusual word — *passento* — in Campos’ ode requires all the meanings associated with the verb *passar* [to pass], both transitive and intransitive (passing, letting pass, suffering, enduring, disappearing, dying)

(“Modernist Muses that Matter (...)” 48)

Once again, faced with a complete uprooting of traditional standards of beauty, the modernist poet turns to his body, a source of unequivocal stability. By using the word “passento” the speaker goes beyond what we read in the previous chapters. As we saw at the beginning of this work, the word is no mere stand-in for the passivity that we have described before, which Campos used as a device for facilitating his stripping down of his sense of self. Instead, this word takes on the meaning of passivity and expands it in order to also account for — and welcome — the violence that this process demands, and which he will have to endure. This is not an instance of mere assimilation with one’s context — it is, instead, quite painful and violent. To be “passento” means to become permeable, or able to be dissolved. This is interesting in two ways: firstly, it means that the speaker chooses to challenge the materiality

of his body in a way that would allow the physical world to triumph over it; and secondly, it also implies that this wish of dissolution is in effect a recognition of both the impossibility of belonging in this age in his normal state of being and thus of needing to allow that being to be fused together with said age.

Wishing to become *passento* necessarily implies not only coming to terms with, but also welcoming the violence that will be thrust upon the speaker. He prefaces his wish for this mellow and submissive state with the realization that, were he to fully be able to disintegrate his sense of self, his adaptation would, in fact, be easier. He wishes that, alongside the aforementioned physical penetration, he could be “ripped open” [“rasgar-me todo, abrir-me completamente”] (ll. 30). As such, he would be literally opening (him/his)self to be permeated by his surroundings, and, as a result, completely erase the self that resists his age. The desire to become *passento* is ultimately an attempt to find a way to open a gateway for modernity to inhabit the self (with all that it entails), including the aspects of said self that actively resist it, thus allowing the speaker to become an element of the now-naturalised landscape he praises — an extension of Campos’s self-mutilating pulsion. This “stupendous, artificial, and insatiable black flora!”⁸⁸ (ll. 32) is the source of “all the perfumes from the oils and hot coals” (ll. 31) that are an integral part of this new landscape the speaker inhabits. This is the setting that the speaker has to contend with.

His relationship to this new type of surrounding is made clear in the following stanza, in which the speaker expresses a specifically “[p]romiscuous fury”⁸⁹ [“Promíscua fúria”] (ll. 34) to become a “moving part”⁹⁰ [“parte-agente”] (*ibid.*) of his age, simultaneously implying

⁸⁸ According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “Desta flora estupenda, negra, artificial e insaciável!”.

⁸⁹ According to Zenith’s translation.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Zenith’s translation does not account for the weight of the word “agente”, which could be translated literally as “agent”, i.e. an entity who performs an action. As such, “parte-agente” not only means “a moving part”, as Zenith rightly puts it, but, moreover, an *active* part, i.e., one that deals with it directly, first-hand, perhaps in close proximity.

that sexuality is his privileged means of interaction and, by opposition, further signifying that he is yet to establish said connection. He is yet to establish a “Brotherhood with all dynamics”⁹¹ [“Fraternidade com todas as dinâmicas”] (ll. 33). The speaker is now positioned halfway through the sensational excess of “Ode Marítima” and the immense melancholy of “Tabacaria”. This modern playground, this “Brotherhood”, is characterized in greater depth through a rhetorical catalogue of the elements that compose it.

Here, the speaker turns his attention to the particular aspects of the modern city that allow the machine — and the desires it generates — to reign supreme. He pays particular attention to the usefulness of this machinery within this context. To both emphasize and deify the concepts he deems instrumental for the achievement of the modern condition, he capitalizes three different words, in much the same way as he does in other odes⁹²: in this case, the emphasis is on “Útil” (ll. 46), “Progressivo” (ll. 47), and “Momento” (ll. 49). The epistemological chain created by highlighting these three concepts (respectively: “Useful”, “Progressive”, and “Moment”) serves as a manifesto for an age defined by the special relevance that the speaker attributes to them. The role of machinery serves the utilitarian purpose of allowing for the projection of the goals of an age — and of one’s desires — into an abstract idea of future, predicated upon an exaltation of what, in particular, makes the now, the “Momento”, of particular significance. The usefulness of the instruments of the moment — of the machine — provides an idea of futurity. This is very much in line with the thought-process of some of Pessoa’s — and, consequently, of Campos’ — contemporaries.

⁹¹ According to Zenith’s translation.

⁹² A clear example of this trend would be the recurrent usage of “Indefinido” in “Ode Marítima”, for instance.

In the opening sentence of the prolegomenon to his 1909 “Futurist Manifesto”, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti clearly states his tenets. He, along with his “friends (...) stayed up all night, sitting beneath the lamps of a mosque, whose star-studded, filigreed brass domes resembled our souls, all aglow with the concentrated brilliance of an electric heart” (Marinetti 2). If the parallels between this scene and the opening lines of “Ode Triunfal” (“By the harsh light of the factory’s huge electric lamps / I write in a fever” (ll. 1-2)⁹³) are still insufficient grounds for establishing a direct architextual connection between the two authors, the contents of the remaining text of the Manifesto leave little room for doubt. Like Campos (and Crane), Marinetti and company regard themselves as the heralds of a new age, one that intends to restructure many aspects of a status quo that, until then, remained virtually unchallenged. This reshaping of life as they knew it would inevitably culminate in a profound alteration of the very standards that defined the literary and aesthetic interpretations of the world around them. The world the Futurists are presented with had “been further enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of *speed*” (Marinetti 5, my italics). However, at this point, the apparent symbiosis of man and machine, seen as a means of superseding the perceived limitations of man, fails to reach completion — and it remains doubtful whether that was ever a goal worth striving for.

Despite Marinetti’s exultation of modern technology, there is still a clear divide between man and machine. To state that one wishes “to sing the praises of the man *behind* the steering wheel” (*ibid.*, my italics), for instance, necessarily implies that the two parts occupy different roles and are ranked differently: one is behind the other, i.e. precedes it — is in control. This means that Marinetti’s position is different from the fatalist visions of a possible future wherein humanity’s existence and superiority are supplanted by the machines it created. His Futurism is imbued with an emphasis on denying the qualities, ascribed to mankind, that

⁹³ According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “Á dolorosa luz das grandes lâmpadas eléctricas da fábrica / Tenho febre e escrevo.”

are deemed as less than optimal, according to an optic that had as its ultimate goal overcoming, through this modern age, the one that preceded it. Such qualities include any and all signs of perceived weakness, nowhere as wholly embodied as in what Marinetti calls feminine virtue.

The gendered preoccupations of futurists have been subject of debate, with critics stating that “(...) in Futurism’s ‘contempt for women,’ the term ‘woman’ itself was seen to be fatally compromised (...) and could only be wrenched free by attacking some of the most cherished myths of female identity (...)” (Wallace, “Modern” 46). In this ethos, there is a denial of both female corporality and its identity, as they would be replaced by machines. If up until that point, human generations had followed each other in unchallenged biological succession (for which the female body would be indispensable) now, machinery would take over the march of progress. Indeed, “the machine, as a replacement for human interaction, has traditionally been portrayed as having a role similar to that of a woman, often as a mother, a child, or a wife” (Bishop-Sanchez 207), and for someone like Campos, it follows that it would be the machine to bring about the next stage of human progress, together with equally novel ideas of self. In fact, later in the ode, by interjecting his surroundings with “Hé-la as ruas, hé-lá as praças, hé-lá-hô *la foule*” (ll. 57)⁹⁴, the speaker is equally expressing his sonorous, physical and, indeed, material excitement for the streets, squares, people (aside from establishing another change in setting).

Within the dizzying catalogue of figures that traverse these locations, there is one that, quite unassumingly, seems to have been thrown in off-handedly, and, if we were not careful, he might have gone by unnoticed. From the chaos of modernity, together with aristocrats and other decadent figures, the offhanded reference to “[t]he falsely feminine grace of sauntering homosexuals” (ll. 69)⁹⁵ nevertheless stands out. This reference is interesting mainly for three

⁹⁴ According to the original. In Zenith’s translation: “Hey streets, hey squares, hey bustling crowd!”.

⁹⁵ According to Zenith’s translation. In the original: “A graça feminil e falsa dos pederastas que passam, lentos;”

reasons: firstly, the homosexual is naturalized as part of the modern landscape, side by side with other, less potentially divisive characters; secondly, as they walk by “slowly”⁹⁶, their “falsely feminine grace” not providing enough grounds for a retreat, it would seem at first glance that they, to some extent, belong; and, finally, this is interesting because Zenith’s translation of “pederastas” to “homosexuals” does not account for the historical weight of the original word, which not only references Pessoa’s francophone baggage (which is often underrated by critics), but it also grounds these queer figures in a Hellenic context, gifting them with the merits of tradition. Zenith himself addresses this in his most recent and quite comprehensive biographical study of Pessoa. He details the author’s interest in the subject of male beauty and homosexual attraction, primarily through his notes for a 1907 essay titled “The Process of Human Degeneracy”, written in English. In it, Zenith tells us, Pessoa uses the word “‘pederasty’ (...) — as the French use *pédérastie* —to mean homosexuality between males irrespective of age” (306). Pessoa argues that “sexual attraction and the feeling of beauty were indivisible for primitive humans but became separated as humanity evolved, with beauty coming to be appreciated in its own right, independent of any physical consummation” (*ibid.*). He sees sex through a utilitarian point of view and disregards the potential connection of the act to beauty, relegating it to a previous, less evolved era. Even though pederasts “may be right to consider male beauty superior” (*ibid.*), by exploring said beauty through intercourse, they effectively revert to “the primitive association of beauty with sex” (*ibid.*). As such, Zenith concludes that Pessoa’s “logic relied on an unexamined assumption that sex must be useful, aiming at procreation; otherwise, it is unnatural” (*ibid.*). And here it is important to note that Pessoa is deeming *all* non-utilitarian sex unnatural, not strictly homosexual. There is no

⁹⁶ Another omission in Zenith’s translation, who aggregates and erases, in his choice of “sauntering”, the polysemic aspects of the deliberate specificity of “lentos” in the original.

particular condemnation of homosexual sex or homosexuality *per se*, but rather a repression of sexuality in general, which seemed to be common throughout Pessoa's own life.

In Campos, sex is a means to an end. There is no exultation of sex itself. Instead, it is used as a tool to achieve the ultimate goal of melding with one's context, in a strictly utilitarian fashion. Like pain, sex is also a means to an end (similarly to what we saw with gender, in the speaker of "Ode Marítima"). However, the sauntering pederasts are ascribed a feminine grace — an unflattering adjective.

To be described as feminine, according to the lens of our speaker and within the context which he heralds, is, effectively, an insult (or, at the very least, a futurist's demerit). In the context of this poem — aligned with the poetics and politics of futurism — to assign feminine attributes to a character is equivalent to declaring their ineptitude to belong in the modern age. This is a veiled attempt by the speaker — and, one would argue, its author — to assert that a homosexual being does not belong to this context, contradicting the apparent naturalization of this being, who does not rush by. The homosexual body, who slowly saunters by, embodies this inability to belong. From the point of view of a sensationist, he cannot belong. Let us not forget that "(...) an important characteristic of sensationism as thus fragmentarily defined by Pessoa is that it is futurist and decadent at the same time" (*Atlantic Poets* 177). Consequently, trapped at a halfway point between decadent excess and futurist impetus, the excessively feminine homosexual man cannot belong — he is, in effect, rebelling against undeclared rules of engagement. And as we have seen before, a rebelling Campos inevitably spells violence for his material self.

In "Campos' odes, the machine is portrayed as either a female body or an aggressive male one, yet in both cases, this mechanization of sexuality portends an explicit 'scorn for woman, (...)' (*ibid.* 208). The emphasis on the violence of speed and masculinity, "as well as futurist indictment of sentimental (i.e. feminine) passivity (...) point to a sort of Nietzschean

transcendence of the merely human to the emergence of a mechanical being” (*Atlantic Poets* (...) 177). Indeed, in “Campos (...) [representing] the Dionysian impulse—the intoxicating affirmation of life, felt in all its pains and pleasures—as articulated by the German philosopher in *The Birth of Tragedy*” (*Pessoa: A Biography* 501), he is in effect challenging the apparently stable notions of humanity that prevailed. By dispensing with the formal and aesthetic constraints of those that preceded him (very much Apollonian entities, if we stay with Nietzsche), he is in equal parts reverting to a former way of navigating existence, while simultaneously developing a notion of futurity.

Along with Nietzsche, so too did Walter Pater play a crucial part in Pessoa’s life and his mythologized creations. In the “Conclusion” to his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Pater asserts that “[t]o regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought” (118). This inconstancy would perhaps be best recorded through snippets of modern life, and “[e]very one of those impressions [would be] the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world” (119). Elsewhere he sought to provide answers that would free this solitary prisoner from his dreamed-of world and that might bring them into general populace. Perhaps Marius (his character of *the Epicurean* fame) would be a fitting medium for this goal, and through him, his author would have “successfully explained the difference between the mediation on the perpetually changing world of impressions and sensations, and the mere apology of egotistical, irresponsible, and antisocial hedonism” (Uribe 190), somewhat aligned with Futurist poetics.

However, the Futurist inheritance that the naval engineer adopted failed to take into account the impact of one of the most scarring events of the twentieth century — the Great War. This war was, in itself, quite modern. It raised doubts about man’s potential for destruction and the role that recent technological breakthroughs would play in it, as well as it

put into question the place reserved for human bodies inasmuch as they relate to — and can be mediated through — technology. Recent scholarship that elaborates on the relationship between technology, culture, and the Great War asserts that “the dream of the machine, the whole romance of industrial technology that enchanted the cultural imagination of the nineteenth century, all of this was concluded and grimly disproved in the awful outcomes of mass mechanized warfare” (Sherry 1).⁹⁷ The importance of machinery for the mechanism of war and the importance of war for writing modernity have long been signalled as essential topoi for this subject. As we will see, this will also hold true for Crane, who takes on a different approach regarding machinery, as well as its prophets.

Unlike what we saw in Chapter 2’s reading of Crane’s “Possessions”, wherein Crane deals with homosexual desire in a candid and at times graphic way, this homoerotic desire is comparatively absent from the poem I have chosen to read in this chapter. However, from among Crane’s early major works, “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” is, in my estimation, the poem where the poet most assertively challenges his *zeitgeist*, championing a revisionist retelling of what we now know to be a typically fatalistic or pessimistic idealization of a modernist Western society in the aftermath of the Great War, a vision that owes a great deal to Eliot’s seminal poem, *The Waste Land*. If, in much the same way as his contemporaries, Crane shows a self-conscious (and self-aware) concern with the times in which he lives; unlike his contemporaries, he finds himself in the singular position of interrogating those times through a special lens — that of a queer man. As a result, it becomes clear to him that it would

⁹⁷ As we’ve seen, this sentiment is present in Campos, in his ever ambivalent feelings towards the machines of modernity, though not directly in relation to the Great War. Despite never fashioning himself as a pacifist, there are a few examples that showcase Campos’ attitude towards the Great War. Scholars have noted that the War weighed on the minds of Pessoa and Campos alike, and it is interesting to note that Pessoa once again inserts himself into the core of the contemporary debates raging wildly, concerning the weight of this novel War (cf. Monteiro, George. “World War I: Europe, Africa, and ‘O Menino de Sua Mãe’”).

be insufficient to simply follow in the footsteps of his anxiously influential peers — with Eliot leading their ranks.

In a letter addressed to his friend Gorham Munson, dated January 5th, 1923, Crane admits that “[t]here is no one writing in English who can command so much respect, to my mind, as Eliot. However, I take Eliot as a point of departure towards an almost complete reverse [sic] of direction” (Crane 308). This “point of departure” is Crane and Eliot’s common concern for the age in which they live, itself inextricably and quite symbiotically related to a newfound sense of self-reflective literary production. For Crane, Eliot initially plays the role of psychopomp for the modern age he intends to navigate. Even later on, when Crane deems Eliot’s vision of modernity somewhat lacking, he creates his own, but bases his assumptions in contradicting and overturning Eliot — and thus implicitly recognizes his importance in defining his time. Indeed, “Crane thought so highly of that poet that he aimed, in all of his major work (...) to overturn him” (Schultz, 329). With Eliot as a starting point, Crane would go on to define his age on *his* terms. He held a particular point of view that would come into play quite prominently when attempting to rewrite contemporary pessimistic — indeed fatalistic — premonitions, as well as in recuperating the lyrical aspects of poetry that had been lost to time and the destructive nature of war and the machine.

The role of the machine in this new age is a concern for Crane, who is aware of its ever-increasing importance in daily life. If this is not clear in his poetry (given Crane’s penchant for obscurity and complexity), in his essays the poet directly reflects on this and disregards the effervescent enthusiasm of futurists, believing that the machine does not play a particularly special part in his age. He states that “[t]he function of poetry in a Machine Age is identical to its function in any other age (...)” (“Modern Poetry” 171). Crane maintains that the ability of poetry to present “the most complete synthesis of human values remain[s] essentially immune from any of the so-called inroads of science” (*ibid.*) Equating science with machinery, he is,

by extension, separating it from poetry altogether. Crane does not seem to pay too much attention to the possible overlap between art and technology. Indeed, for Crane, “[t]he emotional stimulus of machinery is on an entirely different psychic plane from that of poetry. Its only menace lies in its capacities for facile entertainment, so easily accessible as to arrest the development of any but the most negligible esthetic [sic] responses” (*ibid.*).

Crane appears to be moving against Benjamin, who, despite asserting that “(...) what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art” (22) is the “aura” (*ibid.*) of the work of art itself (which is Crane’s main concern), nevertheless disregards this apparent erasure of authenticity. In fact, “[i]t might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition” (*ibid.*). Benjamin tells us that by displacing the overall aesthetic or cultural weight of a work of art in a context where it is mediated and multiplied through technology, and by “replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence” (*ibid.*), that the processes of reproducibility serve to increase the overall impact of said work, as it can move away from a generalised meaning or cultural significance and into a more personal and individualised one. Indeed, in “permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualized that which is reproduced” (*ibid.*). As such, despite defending that this new age “demands (...) along with the traditional qualifications of the poet, an extraordinary capacity for surrender, at least temporarily, to the sensations of urban life” (“Modern Poetry” 171), Crane is equally sure that “[t]he poems which attempt to realize the machine in poetic terms usually fail because they remake it into an object directly available to human emotions” (Hoffman 94). As such, Crane appears to be trapped in a limbo between working towards authenticity and placing the result of said authenticity within the age of which it cannot be extricated, all the while disregarding crucial aspects of that same age, such as the

increasing significance of technology and machinery, as well as what those things imply for the mediation of existence between self, time, and body.

As always, Crane's insight is shaped by the relationship he holds with his sense of self, heavily conditioned by his acceptance — and recognition — of his queerness. Robert K. Martin elaborated on this topic and explained that for “Crane the dilemma was double, since for him the plight of the homosexual in a heterosexual society and the plight of the artist in a materialistic society were conjoined” (117). The symbiotic relationship between gay man and struggling artist calls forth an equally ambidextrous solution, one that “must resolve Crane's anxieties about his artistic vocation and its relationship to the more democratic mission of expressing the potential of his society, as well as his anxieties about his homosexual identity” (*ibid.*). There is a permanent tension between a focus on the self and the collective, each one singularly conditioned by a common context. Consequently, for Crane to express in written form the complexity of the novel attributes of his age also necessarily requires that he express his own “anxieties”, beginning with a general theory of modernity.

To this effect, “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” is a self-conscious attempt to pour the foundations upon which the future of American culture could be erected. Crane himself corroborates this, for he admits that, when writing this poem, he intended to

embody in modern terms (words, symbols, metaphors) a contemporary approximation to an ancient human culture or mythology that seems to have been obscured rather than illuminated with the frequency of poetic allusions made to it during the last century.

(“General Aims and Theories” 160)

That he emphasises his wish to, specifically, “embody” his poetics, is not innocent. Crane, perhaps naively, takes on the role of being a reforming prophet of his era. His concerns are

predicated upon his lived and idealized experience, which differed greatly from that of most of his contemporaries. Aside from being a child of relative privilege, he was also queer. His body was the object through which his perceived difference would manifest itself in the physical world. By embodying his difference, he is inevitably also embodying his prophesising emphasis to rewrite modernity according to *his* terms, rescuing it from the hegemony of the likes of Eliot. Hence the strive for authenticity; for a poetics that was fitting of this modern era — using “modern terms” — and that extended beyond the mere “poetic allusions” that “obscured rather than illuminated” these references. Crane thus aims for a holistic beauty that is all-inclusive, and not necessarily strictly predicated upon what he perceives as the mangling intentions of his fellow lyricists, and here recognizing the tradition that led to his current condition — the poetics of romanticism and late nineteenth-century poetry at large —, while simultaneously moving away from it. This idea aligns with Benjamin’s definition of authenticity. He writes that

The authenticity of a thing is the quintessence of all that is transmissible in it from its origin on, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it. (...) And what is jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object, the weight it derives from tradition.

(22)

Crane does not wish to pollute his poetry of a new age with the remains of what came before him (nor will he allow fellow-contemporary voices to shape his own).

As such, in his poetry, not wishing to fall into what he assumes to be the commonplace usage of, and reference to, for instance, Helen (of Troy), Crane claims to refer to the Greek figure solely in the hopes of summoning the “very real and absolute conception of beauty” to

“[reconstruct] in these [(his)] modern terms (...) the basic emotional attitude towards beauty that the Greeks had” (“General Aims and Theories” 160)⁹⁸. This invocation is an unparalleled vehicle for Crane's attempt at "building a bridge between so-called classic experience and many divergent realities of our seething, confused cosmos of today, which has no formulated mythology yet (...)" (*ibid.*). He is, on all counts, effectively attempting to construct a foundational mythology for a newly-minted era, one that he perceives as lacking unifying points of reference — lacking identity.

Unable to locate these ancestral cultural underpinnings in his own age, Crane looks to the past. He intends to bring into his present the reconfigured poetics of ancient times. To achieve this, Crane goes back into Hellenism in search of an identity that he finds lacking in American culture.⁹⁹ It is in “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” that Crane attempts to “[blend] ancient and modern to situate the legend of Helen in a contemporary urban setting” (Munro, 38), particularly in the first section of the poem, thereby transporting into his own context the aesthetic values he wishes to rescue from a different, and, in his eyes, perhaps more welcoming era, one framed by the much more relevant presence of the machine. The title of the poem references the two historical and literary figures that represent the duality of Crane’s situation. If, on the one hand, he is concerned with progress and the possibilities offered by the revolution brought about by the technological advancements that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, he is also aware that said progress will inevitably question the notions of beauty and art that he inherited from his decadent literary forefathers. This is, then, a struggle between progress and stable beauty. In this poem, Crane goes against Eliot’s overwhelmingly

⁹⁸ An attitude that, as we saw in Pessoa’s exploration of the theme of sex in relation to male beauty, brings with it indelible echoes of homoeroticism, certainly present in Crane’s mind.

⁹⁹ Some critics point out that “Crane’s guide to this attitude was Pater’s *The Renaissance*, and in his use of it he presented a parallel between classical and modern societies that allowed him to show same-sex desire through aesthetic contemplation.” (Munro, 38). He shares with Pessoa a literary baggage that shows significant overlaps.

pessimist reading of his age and thus attempts to litera(ri)lly reconcile — marry — these two opposites. Faustus, i.e., progress and future, is to marry Helen — beauty and ancestry.

It is by now clear that the enthusiasm displayed by Campos insofar as what concerns technology and its possible implications for the future is not shared by Crane. He addresses the challenges posed by the advent of the machine, worried that “its firm entrenchment in our lives has already produced a series of challenging new responsibilities for the poet” (“Modern Poetry” 171). He is firm in asserting that “[t]he poet’s concern must be, as always, self-discipline toward a formal integration of experience” and not merely limit themselves to an imagistic or merely impressionistic rendering of said reality, even despite every single challenge he previously outlined in this same essay. Indeed, Crane goes on to say that

(...) unless poetry can absorb the machine, i.e., *acclimatize* it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles and all other human associations of the past, then poetry has failed of its full contemporary function.

(*ibid.*, italics as in the original)

The “contemporary *function*” of poetry (my italics) attests to Crane’s programmatic intentions in creating a new modernist lyric. In “Faustus and Helen” he goes to great lengths to fulfil them, by “trying to bring the classical ideal of beauty personified by Helen into the modern world and thus, by implication, uniting the classic and modern impulses in his own person as a poet (...)” (Irwin 327), but only succeeds to a certain extent, as he fails his naturalising project in establishing a dichotomy which separates beauty and progress in gender terms.

The first two stanzas of the poem place it within a modern urban environment, itself a factor in conditioning the lives and minds of those that inhabit it (as we saw in Chapter 2).

Indeed, Crane draws a comparison between a nondescript “mind” (I, 1)¹⁰⁰ and a baker’s “dough” (I, 2). This odd comparison is further characterized as being “baked and labelled” (*ibid.*), therefore ascribing it to a quintessentially modern context, wherein the most basic aspects of human life, existence, and, in effect, survival — such as a basic cultural unit of sustenance, i.e. bread — are predicated upon their utility — their *function*. Like baked goods that, despite being nourishing and necessary, are still “labelled”, so has the human mind ‘shown itself at times \ too much (...)’ (I, 1) an inalienable cog in the machine of modernity. This dough is then “divided by accepted multitudes” (I, 3), suggesting that the crowds of denizens that peruse the modern city are not only aware of, but consent to, indeed depend on, this way of being, and willingly take part in its minutiae.

The remainder of this opening stanza cements Crane’s idealization of the human mind as being inextricable from the intricate urban environments that frame his work (which serve as a backdrop to most of the aptly named *White Buildings*, as we have seen in the two previous chapters of this dissertation, and which make recurrent appearances throughout “Faustus & Helen”). This has allowed some critics to assert that this poem is “one of the earliest American poems (after Whitman) to express a renewed hope in the American city” (Yannella 103). However, in Irwin’s dissident voice, “[i]n figuring the crowds on their way to work in terms of the ceaseless flow of numbers in ‘stock quotations,’ Crane suggests how the world of business, of ‘getting and spending,’ marginalizes our days and curbs the pursuit of beauty” (329). It is important to note that the relationship that the speaker establishes between them and their context is not material: following the opening stanza, Crane reiterates his concern with “[t]he mind” (ll. I, 8), distancing the subject matter of the poem from a corporeal and material reality, unlike what we saw in the previous chapter’s reading of “Possessions”. For now, the object of

¹⁰⁰ This poem is divided into three separate parts. To facilitate the correct correspondence of lines in the poem to their quotations in the text, I have opted to make reference to this, by adding “I”, “II”, or “III” before each cited line number, which will be reset in each of the poem’s subsections.

study is the mind, not the body. As such, by “[evoking] the workaday world of modern urbanites in the opening stanzas of ‘Faustus and Helen’” (Irwin 328), Crane is, in effect, framing their existence not only within the city, but through the various technological — and, as such, non-human aspects — which it involves, with various references to the New York Stock exchange.¹⁰¹

The final line of the stanza adds to its introductory qualities, in that the image of “Smutty wings” pre-empt the multiple references to flying and flight that will appear throughout the rest of the poem. This is an essential element of Crane’s ingenious composition, in that, as Yannella puts it, “[t]he idea of flight, of a movement upward and away from the quotidian, is of course appropriate to the visionary basis of the poem and to the emphasis the poet places on the transforming powers of the imagination” (107). Not only does this add to my reading of a permanent motif of fugue or escape — a figurative “flight”, if you will — but, more to the point, taking into account Yannella’s emphasis on the “transforming” nature of Crane’s efforts, it further substantiates the idea that Crane wants to ensure that “Faustus and Helen” would be an answer to the negativism that ran rampant within the works of his contemporaries. This is achieved through, first and foremost, displaying head-on what he feels is wrong with his modern context, as he explains in the lines that follow.

It is possible to separate the second stanza in two different moments, divided by the usual obscure syntax deliberately employed by Crane. These two moments are predicated on the opening line of the stanza itself. It reads as follows:

The mind is brushed by sparrow wings;
Numbers, rebuffed by asphalt, crowd

¹⁰¹ Cf., Irwin 329.

The margins of the day, accent the curbs,
Convoying divers dawns on every corner
To druggist, barber and tobacconist,
Until the graduate opacities of evening
Take them away as suddenly to somewhere
Virginal perhaps, less fragmentary, cool.

(I, 8-15)

In keeping with the theme of flight, the first of these moments addresses the distractions that the speaker enumerates in the first stanza and which take them away from their context, with the notable difference that there seems to be a much heavier and more specific emphasis on quantification, in the aforementioned reference to the hegemony of the New York Stock Exchange. These “Numbers” (I, 9) pervade daily life, framed in the “asphalt” (*ibid.*) that has reconfigured the space in which it takes place, transforming it into something artificial, made and used by man. These things “crowd / The margins of the day” (I, 9-10). This enjambment emphasises the word “crowd”, which mimics the amorphous nature of the entities that play this modern game, depersonalized, mashed together in a faceless collective, same as the numbers that “accent the curbs” (I, 10) where those same crowds line-up to take part in the myriad of activities that are expected in one such context, “[u]ntil the graduate opacities of evening” (I, 13) eventually shield them from this hustle, and whisk them away “as suddenly to somewhere / virginal perhaps, *less fragmentary, cool*” (*ibid.*, my italics), i.e., somewhere where this particular modality of being does not take place, where the fragmentary, explosive, and incomplete — perhaps insincere — qualities of these activities are no more. The scattered nature of this post-industrial urban life is made clear at the end of this stanza. The end goal of

enduring the harrowing tribulations is to allow the coming of nightfall, in the hopes that it will lead to a sense of cohesiveness that will shield the urbanite from the perils of its surroundings.

To this stanza there follows an unusual graft of prose, clearly demarcated from the text, imprinted in italics, and indented. It reads “There is the world dimensional for those untwisted by the love of things irreconcilable”. Irwin states that this excerpt is taken from P. D. Ouspensky’s *Tertium Organum* (329). An in-depth discussion of this work falls outside the scope of this dissertation, but it is worth mentioning that this critic reads this reference as Crane implying that “those who possess the higher consciousness are able to exist at moments in a higher dimension of reality, a fourth dimension in which the mutually exclusive oppositions characterizing the world of three-dimensional space are reconciled” (329). This is very much in keeping with the idea that Crane is attempting to reframe American identity and consciousness using this poem as his flagship. There is a pessimistic reading of his *zeitgeist*, which he aims to reshape.

Displaying a rhetoric similar to the one employed in the transition between the first and second poems of “Voyages”, Crane abruptly shifts gears. The stanza that follows this pessimistic — and, as such, respectfully contemporary — vision immediately contradicts it by employing an adversative conjunction. “And yet, (...)” (I, 20), all of what came before is fixable. The speaker asks the reader to “suppose some evening” he “forgot” (*ibid.*) some of this and carried on “without recall” (I, 21). According to the speaker, it would only be “[t]hen” (I, 23), through forgetting, that he “might find your eyes across an aisle, / Still flickering with those prefigurations — / Prodigal, yet uncontested now (...)” (I, 23-25). Despite all of this confusing clash of stimuli of technology and the urban environment that frames it, “There is some way (...) to touch / Those hands of yours”, hands intrinsically connected to this same environment, as they “count the nights / Stippled with pink and green advertisements”.

The object of this desire, the figure whom the speaker addresses and describes by using the second person singular, is Helen. This is made clear later on in this same section as the name “Helen” is invoked in a vocative expression while referencing the speaker’s efforts to conform to Helen’s nature:

The earth may glide diaphanous to death;
But if I lift my arms it is to bend
To you who turned away once, Helen, knowing
The press of troubled hands, too alternate
With steel and soil to hold you endlessly.

(I, 42-50)

To this there follows a command: the speaker wishes that Helen, who now exists in a world removed from the speaker’s, would “[a]ccept a lone eye (...)” (I, 51), i.e., the speaker’s solitary gaze, fixed (“riveted” (*ibid.*)) to Helen’s “plane” (*ibid.*) — a different dimension, elevated. This gaze is described as a “*Bent* axle of devotion along companion ways / That beat, continuous, to hourless days —” (I, 52-53, my italics). The specific choice of the adjective “bent” to describe the speaker’s gaze — and consequently the speaker himself — has fuelled the debate surrounding possible homosexual undertones throughout the poem. Irwin states that “*bent* and *twisted* were in crane’s day words often used to characterize his particular sexual orientation” and that this might mean that the speaker’s “absolute devotion to beauty has left him caught between two realms - time and eternity, the modern and the classic - as he tries to effect in his own person the marriage of Faustus and Helen” (Irwin, 333) — i.e., as he tries to overcome the paradoxical obstacle that is trying to sing and create a novel age, while it is this same age that excludes the speaker from existing within it. Indeed, “[t]he dilemma reflected in this poem is

that Crane, who saw his own love as ‘irreconcilable,’ was nonetheless working within a literary tradition which embodied love as Helen or Venus (...)” (Martin 126). Crane’s “‘love of things irreconcilable’ led him to believe that only in the (...) passage of love beyond the ‘dimensional world’, could he achieve the freedom he yearned for” (*ibid.*). And to yearn to be “beyond” the dimensional world is, of course, to wish to escape it.

Crane’s Helen stands metonymically for the modern age. Indeed, in “Crane’s clearest formulation of her character and role she represents the speed, intensity, and dynamism of modern industrial-technological culture” (Yannella, 106). Crane’s effort is then to substantiate his vision of his age by harkening back to older, better-established interpretations, in a recurrent exercise of metonymical substitution that gives his efforts a semblance of facticity¹⁰². Helen is not a stable object, and, like the age for which she stands, she becomes multiple entities throughout the course of the poem. Critics have referred to this as the several “metamorphoses” of Helen¹⁰³. In fact, Helen “is so thoroughly mythicized that she not only takes on extra-human capabilities but in a very real sense becomes a mechanic being” (Yannella 108). As a “reflexive conversion of all things” (I, 35), Helen is naturalized and becomes herself a part of the fabric of this age, deemed “Inevitable” (I, 39), becoming “the body of the world” (*ibid.*) itself,¹⁰⁴ every part and function of her body, from her “deep blush” (I, 36) to the “limbs and belly”, creating it and adding to its mythology. Crane is now devoted to worshipping a higher form of being, one that, paradoxically, can only be achieved by going back in time and marrying the two polar opposites of existence that he represents through Faustus and Helen. In the early twentieth century, this meant conforming classical ideals of beauty to the new rhythms, idioms,

¹⁰² Cf. Yannella: “Crane’s Helen provokes the action of the poem; she appears as a symbol of supernatural beauty and is given a special status as spirit of her culture. But in most particulars she bears little resemblance to the historical or mythological Helen.” (106)

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Irwin adds to this idea, writing that “as the body of the most beautiful woman becomes the body of the world, the deep blush on her limbs and belly become rainbows in this ‘reflective conversion of all things’” (331).

and sounds — to the novel voices of this era, constantly framed by technology that would aid in transposing them.

Section II of the poem is laden with references to music, such as the “tremolo” (II, 3) of the “[b]razen hypnotics” that “glitter” (II, 1) throughout the rooflines of Manhattan, as “nigger cupids scour the stars” (II, 8) leaving observers, such as the speaker, “breathless” (II, 7). The nowadays insensitive and derogatory reference to the cupids’ ethnicity serves the single purpose of signalling that these are probably Black jazz musicians, whose conventional “cornets” (II, 17) introduce “[n]ew soothing, new amazements” (II, 16), “strange harmonic laws” (II, 22) that implode previously established conventions, such as the “opéra bouffe” that is “crashing” (II, 4). The “metallic paradises” (II, 25) that frame this action sit above, and are shielded from, “the deft catastrophes of drums” (II, 26), the disorganized sound of Jazz that contradicts established ideals of normalcy. They sit below the norm. The speaker, and any other listeners who dare to voyage into this new world, must “fall downstairs” (II, 19). Irwin reads this “ ‘fall’ (...) either [as] a drunken tumble of the dancers [(or listeners)] or a sexual dalliance”, in either case implying a deviation from a norm of some kind, that would sit above this transgression. The apparent cacophony of these new sounds is created from the same instruments as before, in similar spaces and contexts as those that also preceded them, in the same way as they take place in close proximity, indeed *within* them, as what came before. The speaker concludes that “[t]his music has a reassuring way”, precisely because it can bring together within it the various elements that our speaker has been trying to marry together. On the one hand, there is the hustle and bustle of daily life, with new technologies that serve the purpose of selling, of consuming, and that frame existence itself; on the other hand, these same apparently problematic things fuel music that is unlike any that came before it, done through the same old tools and disciplines — music, poetry, art — bringing together tradition and progress.

To this effect, in the midst of all of this, the speaker references “the incunabula of the divine grotesque” (II, 29). *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* defines “incunabula” as the plural for “incunabulum”, defined as “1: a book printed before 1501”, or “2: a work of art or of industry of an early period”¹⁰⁵. “The incunabula of the divine grotesque” signals the recording of a new form of being, divine because it is pleasurable, grotesque because it breaks away from what came before, always superimposed to the media that made it — a new language is effectively created over the one that preceded it. Indeed, regarding this section, Crane explained that he was trying to ‘invent a new idiom for the proper transposition of jazz into words’ (...), a feat he believed he had accomplished (...) by incorporating jazz rhythms into the second section of (...) ‘For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen’” (Tapper 4). This second section is also at a halfway point between the exposition of the problem, in the first section, and its resolution, in the third and final one.¹⁰⁶ Section II guides the cycle towards a possible solution that would finally bring together the old world and the new. To this effect, and so that this is actually possible, the speaker has but one request: he asks that their interlocutor “greet naïvely — yet intrepidly” (II, 16) this change.

Approaching the end of the poem, the third part of “Faustus and Helen” is tonally more serious and sombre than the sections that preceded it. It establishes a dialogue with Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, which leads some critics and biographers to assert that Crane was searching for something that “would attempt to answer Eliot’s world-weariness and despair with its own Nietzschean tragic gaiety. It would be Crane’s final yes to life and love in spite of death and the mass destruction of modern war” (Mariani 108). As such, even with Crane claiming that,

¹⁰⁵ “Incunabulum.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/incunabulum>. Accessed 3 Jul. 2021.

¹⁰⁶ It is interesting to note that in Crane’s early notes and drafts of the poem, Part II was meant to be its opening section, whereas Part I would occupy the middle-point (Mariani 97-98).

with Part III of the poem, he was “looking for a sense of speed for the conclusion of his poem” (*ibid.*), this was ultimately insufficient when facing of the enormity of the task that stood before him. He would later acknowledge this, stating that “[t]he theme of speed was not enough to convey all that he was after. The new poem would need ‘more sheer weight’ than that” (*ibid.*).

Despite the differences between “Faustus and Helen” and Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, the spark behind Crane’s poem seems to have been a “desire to affirm his age against what he saw as the shallow pessimism of his contemporaries. This negativism he identified particularly with Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (...)” (Yannella 104). Crane distrusted and attempted to oppose Eliot’s theory that “could not allow for a poem to function rhetorically as part of the historymaking business” (Doeren 20), thereby isolating itself from a larger, more holistic scheme of things. This was, effectively, against the “very rational continuity Crane was bringing into question” (*ibid.*), seeing as it was “a theory that thought modern culture essentially disconnected from the past” (*ibid.*). In opposing Eliot’s mainstream machinations, “[a]n American poet like Hart Crane, writing in the context of the Eliot-dominated twenties, would find his endeavor misunderstood, altogether too much a ‘stranger to the language’” (Doeren 19). The third part of “Faustus and Helen” tries to fix this divergence. If “[w]hat *The Waste Land* offered the age was (...) a ‘perfection of death’ (...) the only adequate response would have to be ‘a resurrection of some kind’” (Mariani 109).

For Crane, the fascination sparked by modern machinery is often in close connection to warfare, especially pertaining to the recent developments in the recent field of aviation. Indeed “he’d been fascinated by the possibilities of airpower, the Promethean hubris of it, canvas and gasoline and metal and wood somehow hurling into the air to climb the heavens’ ‘blue plateaus’” (*ibid.*). He is searching for the “lexical treasures” (*ibid.*) that would allow him to work on this particular subject; a language that would “describe such destruction, and yet move the mind beyond despair toward awe and even acceptance of the savage beauty and

sublimity of modern violence” (110). In much the same way that Campos looked to violence to effect change upon his self, so too can we look at violence here as an agent of transmutation. Consequently, Crane resorts to words such as “conscript” (III, 35), and mentions the “slain numbers” (III, 4) that those soldiers would become, as a result of the “destruction” (III, 12) caused by the novel “mechanics” (III, 13) of war, always in connection to the self, its mind, its body, and the relationships it forges with others in this context.

This conflict changed the until-then stable relationship held between humans and the bodies they held. As an extension of this, their sexuality, as well as the implications of non-normative sexual behaviour, was put into question. As this final part of the poem is consciously and purposefully set in a post-WWI world, it is possible to examine the homosexual undertones in the poem through this new prism. The never-before-seen violence experienced in the Great War had a profound impact on questions of gender and sexuality. While often “[h]omosexual men were denounced as ‘effeminate’ threats to [a] militarized ideal of comradeship” (Crouthamel 52), it is also true that “[m]en affirmed homosocial and homosexual behaviours and desires as natural, ‘masculine’, and even necessary mechanisms for surviving the strains of trench warfare” (53). In fact, the same stereotypical ideals regarding masculinity were used by gay men, who “appropriated militarized, nationalistic ideals of comradeship to counter stereotypes of homosexuals as effeminate ‘social outsiders’” (*ibid.*). The “crisis of masculinity” that came about as a consequence of the “psychological and physical damage caused by the trench experienced” reshaped not only expectations of gender until then thought of as stable, but also reconfigured the representation of these experiences in poetry, in particular. Contrary to the Futurists (whose chief manifesto was manifestly written before the War), it seems that to hold characteristics that were typically associated with femininity were now a necessary part of life in the trenches, through the creation of a “framework” that would make it acceptable for “steel-nerved, patriotic warriors for the nation” to “love other men” (54). Indeed “many soldiers

openly embraced feminine feelings of familial love and nurturing in the trenches, and these emotions were widely accepted under the paradigm of ‘comradeship’” (*ibid.*), always with the greater good in mind.

So, too, does our speaker, our Faustian Crane, have a comrade in this third section. He is not alone. Indeed, both the addressee and the form of address used throughout the third part of the poem also differs greatly from that of the two previous ones. Rather than remembering or postulating based on an individual sense of self, or even instead of projecting one’s hopes for the present onto the body of a single entity such as Helen, the speaker of Part III remembers collectively, always in connection to his companion. This “eternal” (III, 19) and “religious” (III, 6) gunman is an extension of the speaker himself, as he shares the same struggles, experiences the same violence, and undergoes the same harrowing ordeals as him. Alongside his comrade, the gunman, the speaker remembers the destruction they caused:

We even

Who drove speediest destruction
In corymbulous formations of mechanics, —
Who hurried the hill breezes, spouting malice
Plangent over meadows, and looked down
On rifts of torn and empty houses (...):
We know, eternal gunman, our flesh remembers
The tensile boughs, the nimble blue plateaus,
The mounted, yielding cities of the air.

(III, 11-21)

There is an emphasis on air and on flight, a result of the aforementioned fascination with the new machines of war that were first introduced to the battlefield on this scale during World War I. This interest extends to the vocabulary chosen, as well as to the sense of space throughout the poem. The qualities of urban cities are transposed, as now there are “cities of the air”, yielding in their welcoming of conquering humans. The “corymbulous formations of mechanics” refer to the sprouting of various new other forms of machine created for this war, as well as to the “V-shaped formation of the airplanes” (Irwin 338). Crane, despite not wishing to sing their praises, nevertheless recognizes their usefulness in reclaiming a new idiom for this age.

The speaker has commanded that he and his comrade, along with everything else they stand for “unbind [their] throats of fear and pity” (III, 10), acknowledging in war (and, as such, in machinery) a “*catharsis*, the acceptance of tragedy through destruction” (Irwin 338). So too must Helen, the pinnacle of beauty (yet the reason behind the Trojan war), recognize her duality — both as a source of beauty and as unmaker of worlds. Indeed, “the ominous lifted arm / That lowers down the arc of Helen’s brow” must be remembered. The lonely quatrain concludes this advice, again resorting to the imperative form to put its point across:

Distinctly praise the years, whose volatile
Blamed bleeding hands extend and thresh the height
The imagination spans beyond despair,
Outpacing bargain, vocable and prayer.

(III, 45-48)

Perhaps exceeding the domain of the poem itself, and, Crane would hope, overflowing into the fabric of American culture at large, it asks us to “distinctly praise the years”, i.e., to especially

remember *these* years, whose “volatile / Blamed bleeding hands” that caused it must not be allowed to forget. The use of the word “volatile” (III, 45) at this late stage in the poem, has the essential role of summarizing the many forms through which Helen (and the speaker), have been rescued from the age she purportedly represents. Simultaneously, it “suggests the ability to fly; (...) indicates the ability to erupt into explosive action; (...) and (...) it indicates lightheartedness” (Yannella 109), at the same time as it points out Crane’s fear that “with the coming of peace people might forget the trauma of war and be ready to fight again” (Irwin 338). This peace is, itself, volatile. This warning is made in a now much more stable, less frantic voice, one that has reclaimed its sense of belonging and now displays a speaker in command of its self.

Mariani states that, in this poem, “Crane [has] moved (...) into a new plateau, employing a language which would challenge even his friendliest readers, but which brushed against a new sense of reality and therefore new thresholds, new anatomies, for American poetry” (111). Schultz then goes on to say that, if Crane had initially defied “the usual definitions of the lyric as a univocal expression of feeling” (330), in a permanent tension “between feeling and intellect” (*ibid.*), then, at the end of these three sections, “he speaks in a unified, lyric voice. The new voice at the end of his poem speaks both to heart and mind” (*ibid.*). Crane has, in effect, laid the groundwork for constructing a vision of his age that would oppose more pessimistic, yet more mainstream, readings of this era.

Throughout this final chapter, I have attempted to explore the role played by machinery in two important poems, one from each of the two authors. The approaches taken by each differ greatly yet overlap in the overall attention paid to the division between the material and the intellectual selves. The speaker of “Ode Triunfal”, indeed the Campos of this poem, is different from the one we met in “Tabacaria” — which, in Pessoa’s chronology, would inherit the merits

and demerits of this triumphant poet — and also demonstrably different from the one we met in “Ode Marítima”. Indeed, much like the turmoil he describes throughout the poem, it would seem that our triumphant speaker is trapped within a sensationist limbo, not as violently negative as in his wishful seafaring days, nor quite as lethargic and melancholic as he would come to be. Indeed, his sensationist penchant would dictate that he suffered the noticeable indefiniteness of a novel sense of self — extemporaneous, unique, unable to belong, with no correlate for his own perceived sense of identity. His body, however, as a material object, is a physical part of this age, and cannot as easily be removed from it, not without undergoing extreme violence and pain that would conform it to what its correlate intellect devises. Pain becomes a privileged mediator between self and context and is used in very much utilitarian terms. Simultaneously singing the praises of the omnipresent and naturalised machines, the speaker longs for the destruction of his body at their hands, eroticising them and relegating his body to a passive (and, thus, permeable) position, wherein sex — non-heterosexual sex — is also a tool of acculturation. This is done according to the poetics of futurism, which sings the praises of the machine, sometimes to the detriment of humanity, and of the female body in particular.

Far from sharing the futurist enthusiasm of Campos, Crane instead adopts the machine into his poetry as a naturalised part of his modernist landscape and uses it to rescue a sense of identity from a past that held a set of values that he finds lacking in his own time. “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” is, among Crane’s early body of work, a promise for reclaiming modernity not only from a technical and poetic point of view but, in my estimation, primarily from a cultural and ideological standpoint. Crane is rewriting the history of his time, departing from a dominant perspective, that of his contemporaries. After all, his concerns with the machine, the explosion of the self, the erasure of lyrical enterprises, and all that those things entail, are fundamentally the same. The divergence comes from his emphasis on a positive

outcome to all of this. Unlike in Eliot's *Wasteland*, "Faustus and Helen" leaves us hopeful, establishing an optimistic future that modernist denizens could look forward to, devising a possible itinerary for the healing of his age and American culture at large. The figures of Helen, beauty, and Faustus, technology and progress (with which the speaker identifies), are the metonymical devices that accompany the speaker through the three sections of the poem. These sections are themselves representative of different aspects of the era Crane is attempting to describe: from a veritable catalogue of urban and technological stimuli in the first section, accompanied by an exploration of the impacts of these things in the minds and bodies of those who experience it; to the idiomatic transliteration of the new rhythms of Jazz and non-conforming musicality; culminating in the absolute horror of war — all of these things use machinery for achieving their ultimate goal of rebuilding a world from the ashes.

Insofar as either poet has a clear programmatic intent in their respective poems, both signal aspects common to each of their contexts, geographically separate, but in constant connection through their common themes. This is especially made clear in the importance each of them places on their sexuality and gender identity — in both, vital instruments for enabling their ultimate goal of encapsulating the stimuli of modernity.

Conclusion

Stepping off from a steam-powered ship into the curious streets of the city, our two poets have now concluded their explorations of their place within this modernist context, where the sea, the city, and the machine come across as fundamental pillars for the understanding of their age. Throughout the past three chapters, I explored how the connection between the speakers of the poems, their authors, and their contexts can be understood to operate on an axis of permanent tension between belonging and escaping. This is framed by the roles and functions that sexuality and gender play throughout the poems. The emphasis on these two broad subjects opens the door to a possible definition of a queer modernism, one that, insofar as Crane and Campos are concerned, can be explored through three major vectors of comparison, recurrent *topoi* of their poetry: the sea, the city, and the machine. These three vectors are not hermetically contained, but indeed overflow from chapter to chapter and interact with one another. This is especially prevalent in the last chapter, “The Machine”, wherein the now-machinal body has to navigate the same context that the authors dealt with in the works I read in the two preceding chapters. Rather than posing a possible problem, I believe this thematic overflow cements the idea that the three vectors are indeed an indelible part of a quasi-cohesive whole (never entirely unified, but rather consistent in its fragmentary nature). Furthermore, the sea, the city, as well as the machine are instrumental for allowing our poets to enact their queerness, interacting through it with their contexts. But what is it that we can understand as defining a “queer modernism”, as I called it in the title of my dissertation?

The concept has been used before, as attested by one of the main sources to which I resorted in reading Crane’s poetry. Niall Munro’s *Hart Crane’s Queer Modernist Aesthetic* provided me with an opening through which to approach the subject. Taking into account the definition of the word “queer” which we saw in the introduction (i.e., a non-normative relation or approach to the concepts of gender and sexuality, wherein the norm is understood to be

heterosexual and cisgender), I believe it is possible to read “queer modernism” as a way for poets to enact modernist poetics¹⁰⁷ (formal and thematic experimentation, the explosion and erasure of a stable sense of self, the questioning of the material stability of the body, etc.), while simultaneously interweaving them with their own embodied experience of queerness. Both Crane and Campos show a concern with the tension between mind and matter — the Whitmanian “body and soul”, where the body “gives proportions” for the “Soul somehow to live in other spheres” (Whitman, “Think of the Soul” 514). This is a problematic duality that is explored with equal centrality in the works of both poets, though each one proposes different strategies to attempt to solve it. For instance, in “The Machine”, we saw Campos longing to become “passento”, a word which signals a permeability that would allow his self to be steeped in the stimuli of modernity, and likewise harkens back to a wish for the self to be dissolved, i.e. erased, in them, as we saw in “The Sea”. This emphasis on the body as a material entity is common to both poets, who likewise explore the tension between this materiality and an intellectualized sense of self. The material body is an inextricable part of the context in which it exists, and can thus become a powerful resource for grounding a fugitive sense of self. This is central to Campos’s poetics, as the speaker of his poems often resorts to inflicting or allowing others to inflict, violence and pain on his body as a way to reaffirm its existence. Rather than being an effort to disappear, to escape, to de-materialize oneself, I contend that this instead displays an intense attempt at *belonging*. Crane’s material body, as well as the other bodies that populate his cosmos, are also at the core of his concerns, as was made clear in the second chapter’s reading of “Possessions”, where the speaker’s “fixed stone of lust” similarly becomes an immovable and indelible repository for desire, both his self’s and that of other prowlers.

¹⁰⁷ Always in an Anglo-saxon context, even for Pessoa-Campos, as Pessoa-himself had an English upbringing which framed his thought and is visible in many of his heteronyms.

Comparing these two poets through a strictly textual or philological approach is not possible, given that there is no known or recorded contact between the two, in what we know of each of their lives. However, considering the emphasis that both place in attempting to define their respective ages, I was able to find themes and topics common to both. Furthermore, the two poets share essentially the same literary baggage: the references to authors such as Walter Pater, Walt Whitman, or Friedrich Nietzsche are done in similar ways, to serve similar purposes. Taking all of this into account, what overall conclusions can we extract from my explorations?

In the first chapter, I paid close attention to the sea, identifying it as a central *topos* for both poets, though how they use it varies slightly. There is a common recognition of the possibilities that the sea offers: in its fundamentally unknowable vastness, its lack of specificity makes it possible that non-normative desires be acted out, precisely because they would be enacted in a space removed from the constrictions of normativity. This idea of a space without a place has some strict parallels to the Barthesian concept of *atopia*, as well as to Foucault's heterotopias, in which the removal of space from the context that regulates it erases the norms that restricted certain behaviours, at the same time as it establishes new norms, as it is, in fact, a new space. The ship represents a heterotopia. Campos has to gain entry into this world by subjecting his self to the will of those that regulate it. In the case of his "Ode Marítima", this means subjecting his bodily self to sexual violence to be able to belong. This violence is enacted at the hands of the gatekeepers that Campos identifies as pirates.

For Crane, the sea is also full of dangers, in that it holds in it the projected eroticism that has culminated in the current condition in which the speaker of the "Voyages" sextet now finds himself. Everything he experiences throughout the poems is a direct result of the tenet that tells us that "the bottom of the sea is cruel", even if there is still hope, as exemplified in the demonstrations of love that populate the other poems.

In the second chapter, the speakers position themselves amidst the promises and dangers of the urban landscape. The modern city serves Campos and Crane in two near-diametrically opposed ways. For Campos, the city is the chief culprit of the erasure of the will of his speaker. This is a much more subdued, sober and melancholic speaker than the one we met in “Ode Triunfal”. He is removed from his context, has retreated into the safety of his apartment, and stands at its window, spending his days watching people pass by. There is a suppression of the sexual bravado that we saw before, and which we saw being instrumentalised in the pursuit of navigating the tension between belonging and escaping. The speaker of “Tabacaria” never walks the streets, never experiences the city in the same way that Crane does, and therefore manifests a will to escape and regress into what he sees as a simpler, less convoluted time.

However, for Crane, the geography of the urban landscape is the main tool he uses for enabling the performance of non-normative desire. The importance of cruising — a fundamentally queer way of experiencing the city — cannot be understated. It allows this exploration of desire in the anonymity that the city gifts those who search for it. It has a symbiotic relation to the city in that cruising is only possible precisely because it takes place in an environment such as this, and, conversely, specific actions performed in specific locations defines the structure of the city itself, separating and classifying its various environments according to the use their practitioners make of it. It is in these places that the speaker of “Possessions” can indeed allow his self to be possessed. For both Crane and Campos, the city is an active participant in their mediation of self and context.

In the third and final chapter, the focus shifted towards the role of the machine in the poetry of each speaker. Again, both have different approaches to this topic but hold in common a preoccupation with the division between the material and intellectual selves, that are now put into question with the much more significant presence of machinery. The speaker of “Ode

Triunfal” is much closer to the one we met in the first chapter and differs greatly from the one in the second, but the similarities only hold true up to a certain point. What, at first glance, would seem to be a return to resorting to violence and pain, is now done in a different way, one that serves a different purpose. Whereas in the first chapter, violence served to allow the speaker to escape to a previous stage of existence — a less complicated, more innocent era (and here there *are* overlaps with “Tabacaria”) — here, it is instead done in a way that aims to fully conform the speaker into his *present* age. It is an effort to belong, rather than escape. However, in both cases, this is done in direct contradiction to the speaker’s intellectual will. Furthermore, in the first poem violence is closely tied to gender (with the speaker going as far as changing his own in order to aid the process), whereas in “Ode Triunfal” this is done through sexuality. The speaker wishes to be violently penetrated by machinery, in a queering of a hypothetical stable sexual norm, eroticizing the machine itself. Here, pain is a mediator between self and context. This is aligned with the poetics of futurism, praising the machine to the detriment of the human body, with special prejudice towards the female body.

Crane does not share this futurist enthusiasm and instead turns to the machine as a naturalised part of his context, using it to travel into a past that held values he finds missing in his present time. “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” is a clear response to the dominant poetics of Crane’s time, with the intent of overthrowing Eliot’s pessimist vision and replacing it with a semblance of hope for a culture that, in Crane’s view, would be written according to precedents that drew heavily from a tradition that Crane intended to reclaim. The overwhelming weight of the machinery of war, along with its subsequent explosion of self and stable notions of identity, sexuality, and gender, were a threat to this, yet held in them the inevitable impetus of progress. In marrying Faustus — modernity, progress, science and machinery — to Helen — traditional, classic beauty, culture, stability — Crane is attempting

to repair his age, rewriting it in a more positive light. Here, the machine is used as a representative of a particular vision of his age yet holds in it the promise of reparation.

There is an intentionality to the poems that, overall, allows us to signal aspects common to their contexts, seeing that in either one's case their respective sexuality and gender identity are instrumental not only for mediating their sense of belonging, but also for capturing modernity itself.

As I stated in the introduction to this dissertation, I do not mean for my work to be read as an exhaustive approach to the topics discussed. The intent, here, is to provide avenues of exploring these two authors, primarily through the poems themselves. Hopefully, the emphasis on textual evidence, aided by a theoretical framework, holds sufficient gravitas to then allow for a more expansive exploration of these same subjects. In this regard, the possibilities we are left with at the end of this dissertation point to the furthering of this discussion in light of novel theories, which are seemingly anachronic, when applied to a modernist context, yet fundamentally coherent, when all the evidence at hand is considered.

One such possibility is the recent discussions surrounding posthumanism. Taking into account the relationship between self and machine that I highlighted in the third chapter, it would seem that Campos is navigating an age in a way that could easily be described in the same terms Katherine Hayles used to describe posthumanism itself. This author calls it a "triumphant disembodiment", in that the self is no longer dependent on the limits imposed by the physical body and, through the possibilities offered by the hegemonic presence of technology. This places the poetics of modernism at the forefront of twenty-first-century debates. Jeff Wallace, in fact, dates back the advent of posthumanism to a time that coincides with that in which our two poets are writing (692-694). A lengthier discussion of this topic falls outside the scope of this work, regrettably constrained by word limits, page counts, and ultimate

goals, but I hope that these ideas provide possible avenues through which my work can continue.

The poetry of these two authors contributes towards an effort of reclaiming and defining their age. When done through the lens of gender and sexuality, they are doubtless a source of inexhaustible and highly stimulating questions that will hopefully fuel the beautiful machinery of modernist poetry and reframe it in a context that not even the most adventurous of futurists could devise. It is possible to bring these debates into our present time and take the contributions of the poetry of minds such as these to keep reshaping our delightfully multiple and shifting perceptions of self, time, and place — attempting to belong within a nonconforming, deviously escapist self.

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