

Following Narcissus traces on Sá-Carneiro's work

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“The light in the room was, in effect, a projection of itself, it was still light, of course, but the truth is that the marvellous thing illuminating us did not seem like light. It seemed like something else, some sort of new fluid. I’m not talking nonsense here, I’m simply describing a real sensation, for we did not so much see that light as feel it. And I don’t think it would be going too far to say that it did not so much affect our sight as our sense of touch. If our eyes had been suddenly torn from us, we would still have been able to see it” (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 32).

This is the story of a journey through the pathways on which words first encounter the hands and eyes of those who read them. It is a tale of the erotic moment of fusion between the pages where the text is weaved and the longing skin of the reader, giving birth to the numerous readings edifiable around and about a given work. This presentation is the fruit of such an encounter.

Mário de Sá-Carneiro¹ (1890-1916) was a poet and Portuguese author whose *oeuvre*, charged with a unique magnetism, is both seductive and fascinating. The solar light that shines forth from it threatens to hurt our eyes as we look unto it, although we find ourselves unable to turn our sight the other way. And, not unlike children trying to gaze upon the dawning daybreak, dazzled by the light, shadows, shapes and tonalities is all that we are able to perceive. This immense light is at the same time seductive and startling. In this world nothing is univocal and all its shapes and shadows are presided by a common notion of *mystery*.

Besides the image of light, in this author another fundamental image is to be found: *the mirror*. His works seem to *mirror* life itself. I underline mirror because everything takes place in a mirror-like game: the author, lost in himself as if he himself was a maze, looks for himself in and through writing, essaying to unveil *the other* through the reflection of words. However, just as Narcissus, the mirror – instead of bringing about the desired encounter – brings the impossibility of reuniting himself with that other that is an *other-of-himself*.

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¹ Mário de Sá-Carneiro was one of the major figures of Portuguese literature in the first half of XX century. Along with Fernando Pessoa (with whom he exchanged more than 220 letters after leaving to Paris), Almada-Negreiros, and other Portuguese writers and painters, he wrote for *Orpheu*, a magazine of poetry and artistic prose influenced by the European Avant-Garde. Although he belonged to the Portuguese Modernistic Movement, he was profoundly influenced by Decadentism and Symbolism.

Four were the main themes that, in my previous study of the works of Sá-Carneiro, continually showed themselves and drawn me to the myth of Narcissus: *the double, the feminine, the circulation of desire* and, finally, the *thanatical triumph*. In this presentation I shall address the first theme – *the double*.

The connection between the double and Narcissism was pointed out early on in the history of Psychoanalysis. Traceable back to Otto Rank who, as soon as 1914, dedicated a study to this subject entitled *The Double*. In his analysis, Otto Rank (1932/1973²) states that the authors in whose works the double is present show several common points. First, they all have what Rank called a certain state of pathological personality, which seems to be beyond the neurotic personality commonly existing in each artist. In addition to suffering from nervous diseases, they also consumed enthusiastically substances capable of producing changes in consciousness: alcohol and drugs. In these artists, this psychological predisposition for nervous and mental problems appears to have originated an unusually strong interest in themselves, being focused on their feelings and anguishes.

In 1919 Freud dedicated several pages to the matter in his essay *The Uncanny*. Freud (1919/1981) refers to an uncanny feeling, linked to something we had ever known and which is familiar to us. Although, this uncanny sensation triggers feelings of anxiety and surprise because it is linked to a repressed content trying to return to conscious. The appearance of a double causes a relatively constant return of the identical and similar, caused by the repetition of the same characters, thoughts and behaviours, leading to the uncanny feeling.

However, the first source to establish in a direct fashion the aforementioned connection was in fact the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid (cc.3-8/2006) emphasizes the *dual* nature of Narcissus story, even more than the idea of beauty to which he is usually promptly associated with. Soon Narcissus became conscious of his double nature: first through his name, Narcissus, which is just another form of his mother's name, Liriope (the flower of *leirion*)³; second through Echo's voice, a double of his own voice; finally through the reflection of his image, which he recognized as a perfect *other* and by whom he fell in love.

Like Narcissus, Sá-Carneiro wasn't able to recognize himself on *the others* that replied from inside the mirror. Others-of-himself that in his identitarian quest could not be ignored. In this way he turned his alter egos into fictional characters and his own fiction into his world inside the mirror. And there, resorting to the figure of the double, he staged the drama of the *I* and the *other*.

Coming into being either through a game of unfolding⁴ or a game of identifications, the presence of the double is usually to be found at the beginning of the narrative. It then continues to increase in intensity up to the point in which the very existence of these wraith-like figures takes control of the plot, leading it to the only possible outcome: madness, frequently followed by the death of the main character.

I shall now mention *Lúcio's Confession (A Confissão de Lúcio, 1913)*, one of the author's most charismatic works. The plot can be summarized in the following way: Lúcio, the protagonist, sentenced for the murder of his friend Ricardo and having served his prison time, decides to write a confession depicting all the singular events that led into his friend's death. Ten years earlier, Lúcio (a young author) went to live in Paris. After his arrival he met a group of young artists, accompanied by his friend Gervásio Vila-Nova, an enigmatic and fascinating sculptor. One night they went to a *soirée* in the house of a mysterious woman, called the American woman. There Gervásio introduces Lúcio to Ricardo, a well known poet, and they immediately become great friends. Meanwhile, Lúcio returns to Lisbon and the contact between them diminishes. After some time apart, Ricardo also returns to Lisbon but, this time, accompanied by Marta, his beautiful and mysterious wife, of which Lúcio

² There are two slightly different versions of Otto Rank's study on the Double: the first one, *Der Doppelgänger*, was published in 1914 by Imago; the second one is a french version, entitled *Don Juan: Une étude sur le Double*, published by Denoël in 1932. In this paper I chose the second version.

³ As Julia Kristeva (1983/1987) suggested, "[...] the lily will eventually be metamorphosed, as the myth tells it, into that other flower of moist areas, the funeral narcissus" (p.103).

⁴ The term unfolding is used here in the sense of opening up an object revealing all its faces, like the plane representation of a cube.

would later become a lover. Eventually he discovers through his friend a startling reality: Marta is in fact a fictional character created by Ricardo, through which he's able to experience a true intimacy with the important friends of his life. It is then that Ricardo drags Lúcio to his home and, in a moment of extreme uneasiness, shoots Marta so that she will stop interfering with their friendship. Alas, Marta is volatilized in the air and it is Ricardo's dead body that falls on the ground. Due to the unlikely nature of the scene, Lúcio is charged with murder.

In this narrative the game of unfolding takes place since the beginning: several striking characters (Gervásio and the American woman) appear in an explosion of light and color only to vanish as quickly as they came, giving place to new characters which bear several of their characteristics (Ricardo and Marta).

Gervásio represents more than just the instrument through which Lúcio and Ricardo met. In fact, he is the main responsible for Lúcio's inclusion in the artistic groups of Paris. Something of Gervásio's meek and intimate nature seems to linger on Ricardo, and later on, end up reappearing in Sérgio Warginsky, the Russian diplomat whose name is an anagram of Gervásio Vila-Nova's name⁵, the sculptor that initially accompanied Lúcio and became his "[...] constant companion" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 19), as if Lúcio only could bare perfect communions with his friends. The fiery element present in Gervásio (which is shown to us as "[...] a superior being, there was no doubt about it, one of those people who remains engraved on our memory, who troubles and obsesses us. He was fire, pure fire!" p. 20) seems to ignite in him its combustion, spreading through the American woman and reaching Ricardo, through Marta. The incandescent nature of the work is present from the beginning until the end, when the fire burns out, revealing death.

Gervásio fascinated with his image and with his aura which, in fact, were one, forcing others to notice him: "He was that sort of man you look at in the street and say: he must be someone important" (p. 20). And he was a seducer, "women utterly adored him. They would watch in fascination whenever he wandered, tall and arrogant, into a café..." (p. 20). But his beauty seems to have something feminine and mysterious, something that simultaneously enchanted and disturbed.

There was something disquieting about his tall, gaunt, angular body, with its dual and contradictory suggestion of both a hysterical, narcotic effeminacy and a sallow asceticism. When his long hair fell back from his face to reveal a broad, firm but terribly pale brow, it evoked images of hairshirts and extreme abstinence; yet when it fell forward in waves over his forehead, it evoked only tenderness, the troubling tenderness of golden ecstasies and subtle kisses. [...] When his forehead was concealed by his hair or by a hat, there was nothing enigmatic about his face at all, quite the contrary. Oddly enough though, there *was* something mysterious about his body, something that made one think of sphinxes, perhaps, on moonlight nights. It was not his actual physiognomy that etched itself upon one's memory, but rather his strange personality. (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 19).

The disquieting feminine element present in Gervásio, which made women look at him in a jealously way ("[...] the way women look at some exquisitely beautiful and bejewelled member of their own sex", p. 20), seems to be also present in Sérgio Warginsky's exacerbated sensuality.

Sérgio Warginsky was a beautiful young man of twenty-five. Tall and slender, he reminded me physically of Gervásio Vila-Nova who, shortly before, had brutally taken his own life by throwing himself under a train. Sérgio's red lips, wanton and tender, parted to reveal teeth women must have longed to kiss. His reddish-blond hair, parted in the middle, fell gracefully over his forehead and his golden-shadowed eyes never left Marta – or so I was to remember in retrospect. In fact, he, more than Marta, seemed the one truly feminine presence among us (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 62).

⁵ As Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) noticed, if we transform the *y* into an *i*, we can see the same letters present in both names.

Gervásio's gradual disappearance coincides with the beginning of the friendship between Lúcio and Ricardo. We may suggest his removal was necessary so the protagonists could initiate such an intimate relationship, as if they were soul mates. However, Gervásio is still present in a very discreet way in Ricardo, both in his extravagances ("Ricardo came up with equally bizarre revelations on other occasions too, revelations slightly reminiscent of Vila-Nova's pretentious utterances", pp. 42-43) and in his genius ("[...] he was a superior being, brilliant and disquieting", p. 46). Somehow, Gervásio's features which most impressed Lúcio seem to reappear in Ricardo.

Nevertheless, if Sérgio Warginsky is clearly Gervásio's double, the same doesn't happen with Ricardo. Here, what seems to take place is a relationship of identifications between both characters and the unfolding of some of Gervásio's features into Ricardo. This unfolding makes us wondering if aren't they emanations of something else... Perhaps projections of the ideal that Lúcio (and also Mário de Sá-Carneiro) was seeking for and that only in literature could be found.

A much more interesting case of unfolding can be found in Marta. Since the very beginning one can perceive the same game of identifications between her and the American woman: the same burning perverse desire, the same sensual and longing flesh. The American woman "[...] had a beauty that was redolent of mystery and dreams. She was tall and thin with a long face and golden skin and extraordinary hair of a startling fiery red. Hers was a beauty that inspired awe" (p. 21). She is representative of the sexualisation of the senses and defender of the voluptuousness as art. She is vibrating and has a very special golden shine of her own. The American woman with her bare feet with golden fingernails appears covered in a "[...] closely woven mesh of metallic threads [...] that fused together to produce an appearance of shimmering fire, a fire that contained all the colors in the world alternately colliding in shrill harmony or merging to produce whistling, starry tumults of reflected light." (p. 30). So would Marta be, "[...] the statuesque lines of her legs, which her very open shoes showed to be almost bare but for the curious stockings she wore, made out of metallic threads that crisscrossed to form large diamonds through which her bare flesh showed" (p. 76).

Once again the situation between Gervásio and Ricardo repeats itself: Marta isn't the double of the American woman. However, it is noteworthy the same game of similarities occurring between them, especially when one vanishes so that the other could appear. Something of the American woman is remaining in Marta. Something that preceded her in the text. Perhaps it is the legacy of fire that led the American woman and will also lead Marta. However, if despite her brief appearance in the novel we can say it was the fire she represented, Marta would represent only the flame. A flame kindled by her creator, inflamed by the will of his desire and extinct when he decided to.

Marta is more than an extension of the American woman. She is Ricardo's double, himself a man. Ricardo is unable to maintain any friendship due to the permanently sexualized nature of his affection, while at the same time aspiring to a true form of communion with Lúcio, his soul-mate. He then envisions the creation of a woman, Marta, to ease the relationship between them. Marta is fruit of Ricardo's longing for Lúcio, another man who, in fact, is nothing but a reflection of himself. As Lúcio and Ricardo are themselves also doubles of one another. They become intimate friends, knowing one another as each one knows himself, sympathetic like nobody else towards each other's anguishes and aspirations, as well as their most intimate desires. But Ricardo doesn't create himself as a true other, as one which is known through its uniqueness and longed for in its singularity. Ricardo is the image the mirror reflects. An image that, although not a copy, is still just a picture of the same self.

Lúcio is an author who wrote several novels and Ricardo is a well known poet. Both artists, the link between them is not mere coincidence; their relationship is based on literature (Martins, 1994). Lúcio is aware of this deep union and expressed it in the outset of their friendship: "We had risen to a higher plan, we hovered above life. We could have grown drunk on pride, had we wanted to – but we suffered so much, so very much. Our one refuge was our work" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 40).

As to when Lúcio and Ricardo became doubles, it seems that this relationship was established since the very beginning, as if they had always known one another, having only been temporarily apart.

Within a month, Ricardo and I had become not merely inseparable companions but close and sincere friends, between whom there were no misunderstandings nor even secrets.

[...] Ah, how different this new friendship was, how much more spontaneous, affectionate!

[...] My conversations with Ricardo – an interesting point this – were, from the start, conversations from the soul rather than the usual conversations intellectuals have.

For the first time, in fact, I had met someone capable of descending, even if only a little way, into the unvisited recesses of my spirit, which for me were also the most sensitive and painful. And, as he told me later, he felt the same.

Not that we were happy, oh no! Our lives were tormented by desires, misunderstandings, obscure sufferings (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, pp. 39-40).

As noticed by Fernando Cabral Martins (1994), along the narrative Lúcio will ultimately resemble Ricardo in so many ways, that he will repeat what before appeared his friend's eccentricities. In one of the major moments of the novel, Ricardo will say he has never felt affection, *only tenderness*. For him the greatest friendship would simply be translated into the greatest tenderness. Later, at the time of his escape to Paris, Lúcio will also say: "My affections always found expression in feelings of tenderness..." (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 103). One of Ricardo's characteristics was "the physical sensation of the soul" and later on, in Paris, Lúcio will use almost identical words: "I've always experienced the moral sufferings of my soul as physical pain" (p. 100). And pride, one of Ricardo's distinctive features, will also manifest itself in Lúcio in a striking way: "I have never been able to forgive a lack of pride" (p. 102).

This desire to possess the other by blending into him and the consequential unfolding of the self is magnificently expressed in the *threefold kiss scene*.

Thus, on a summer afternoon, we were having tea on the terrace when Marta suddenly – in a gesture that could, in fact, have been taken as a simple, playful joke – demanded that I kiss her on the forehead, as punishment for something I had said to her.

I hesitated, turned bright red, but since Ricardo insisted, I bent over, tremulous with fear, and just barely brushed her skin with my lips.

And Marta said:

"Do you call that a kiss! You mean you still don't know how to kiss properly? You should be ashamed of yourself! Come on Ricardo, you show him how to do it".

And laughing, my friend got up, came over to me, took my face in his hands... and kissed me.

Ricardo's kiss was the same, exactly the same, as my lover's kisses, it had the same colour, the same unsettling effect. Their kisses felt to me identical (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 86).

In this instant the three characters become perfectly concatenated, as if through the kiss – symbol of the fusion act – they became One. Kiss and desire move freely between Lúcio, Ricardo and Marta. First, at the request of Ricardo, Marta kisses Lúcio exploring the path so that the kiss between Ricardo and Lúcio might happen (already without the need of the double and mediator). And this last kiss has the same flavour of Marta's kisses because it is, in fact, the same kiss. One more it is Lúcio's disturbance what will strengthen the desire he felt and which is socially censured. That is what several authors (Lancastre, 1992; Lopes, 1987; Martins, 1994; Quadros, 1988) have referred to as homosexual drive. The kiss of three represents the key scene where, for a moment, the shroud of mystery is attenuated, summarizing the plot. This is when Ricardo's so far utopian desire – *the sexualisation of friendship* – is achieved.

Here we face the genesis of Marta, the fruit of Ricardo's desire to reach Lúcio through a woman that will enable their union. Marta is one of the vertices of the hypothetical love triangle (Lúcio-Marta-Ricardo). However, as pointed out by Carla Roque e Cunha (1996), her autonomy exists only

as a physical presence to the extent that Marta and Ricardo share the same psyche. Amid the fog that inhabits the work, a closer observation will show the shape of the triangle to be lost because it was nothing but a mirage: Ricardo desires Lúcio and Lúcio desires Marta. Marta is nothing more than the mediating space of the desire of both men. Although the question arises: is it an unidirectional or a mutual desire? Marta is the bridge, the link that allows the union between them and also the physical space where the union takes place. She is clearly Ricardo's double, emanated from his desire and an instrument of his will. However, Lúcio accepts Marta and with this movement of acceptance also accepts Ricardo's desire. Without refusals or questions, after all "our souls understood each other perfectly, insofar as two souls can understand each other" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 47). Because the desire belongs to both. Because Marta does not exist as a woman: she only exists as an instrument that makes possible the union of both men. Marta is the fusional space that has been long sought. In this regard another important moment is the scene in which Lúcio kisses Marta's bruised skin caused by another lover. In that moment, a monstrous feeling grows within Lúcio for having also possessed the male body of her lover.

Indeed, whilst it wounded my very soul to know she was possessed by another lover, it also excited me, inflamed my desire...

Yes – the truth flickered before me in livid purple – that splendid, glorious body had given itself to three men, three males had covered it, profaned it, drunk of it. Only three? Perhaps a whole multitude. And even while that idea was still lacerating my mind, I was also filled by a perverse desire for it to be true.

When I clutched her convulsively to me, it was in fact as if, with my monstrous kisses, I was also possessing all the male bodies that had passed through hers. I became obsessed with finding on her flesh some mark, some wound left by love, some trace of one of her other lovers.

And, at last, one triumphant day, I found a great lack bruise on her left breast. On an impulse, I glued my mouth furiously to that mark, sucking, biting, tearing at it (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 92).

Lúcio seems divided between disgust and desire. And, to some extent, rather than loathing him out, it contributes to inflame the fire of desire. Where are these feelings of revulsion and disgust coming from? Is it from Marta's progressive masculinisation? Is it from knowing that her body shared by Ricardo, Sérgio Warginsky and himself? Or is it from knowing her body she has no existence at all, only being an emanation of Ricardo? All this increases the desire for perversity.

Anyway, what if my feelings of repugnance towards Marta's lovely body had the same origin? What if the lover about whom I knew nothing were someone who, had I known him, would fill me with disgust? That could well be the case, an accurate presentiment, especially since – as I have already mentioned – when I possessed her I often had the monstrous feeling that I was also possessing the masculine body of that lover.

But the truth is that, deep down, I was almost certain I was still deceiving myself, that the man involved was very different, that the reasons behind my mysterious feelings of repugnance were far more complex. Or rather, that even if I met her lover and disliked him, that would not be the cause of my nausea.

In fact her flesh did not repel me in the sense that it made me feel sick, her flesh filled me rather with a sense of monstrousness, of strangeness. I felt sickened by her body in the same way I had always felt sickened by epileptics, madmen, witches, seers, kings, popes – people marked by mystery... (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, pp. 99-100).

Therefore, what disgusts Lúcio is more than knowing she was possessed by other men, even if these men cause him deep aversion. What is hidden here is knowing that Marta has no existence as a woman, she only is a representation of Ricardo's feminine side. She is the stylization of his deep

feminine sensitivity coupled with the desire of being the *other*. And when he tries to remember her, it is another image he recalls: “When I thought of her, I could never really imagine her. Her features slipped away from me the way faces of people in dreams do. And, sometimes, when I struggled to remember them, the only features I managed to call up were Ricardo’s, doubtless because he was the person closest to her” (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 82). Here is the unknown factor he speaks about, and if he refers to it, it is because somehow he recognizes it. And behind it is disgust.

Along with the masculinisation of Marta comes the progressive femininity of Ricardo. Lúcio had already noticed a change in his face and traits since his return from Paris.

But how he had changed in the year we had spent apart!

His sharp features had softened, acquired a satiny – indeed, a womanly – sheen and, even more startling, was the fact that his hair was not as dark as it had been, as if its colour had been diluted. Perhaps the fundamental difference I noticed in my friend’s physiognomy lay in that change alone – *it had become more diffuse*. That was it, that was my overall impression, that his physical features had become somehow scattered, diminished.

His voice had changed too, and his gestures: everything about him, in fact, had grown more shadowy (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 59).

As Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) noticed, two important aspects seem to arise here. First, Ricardo’s femininity: the mitigation of his traits, gestures, voice and movements, along with the appearance of Marta, his double. The second aspect to notice is the fiery element that seems to travel through the whole plot. Since the beginning of the narrative we are faced with the red hair of the American woman and, later, with Marta’s very blond hair. Also Ricardo’s hair seems to become lighter, change its colour. The “Orgy of Fire”⁶ was the performance that celebrated the meeting of Lúcio and Ricardo and, at the instant Lúcio met Marta, floods of light illuminated the room. The fire seems to arise here as an apotheosis of all sensations in which, even affection are supposed to be sexualized. Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) noted the fire works as a metonymy of total light, leading us to Lúcio’s name⁷. The light travels throughout the narrative and *Embers* and *The Flame* are titles of Ricardo’s and Lúcio’s works, respectively. Symbolically, Lúcio brings us to light, but also to lucidity, and even hallucination⁸. And isn’t Lúcio’s *Confession* a novel moving between lucidity and hallucination? The lucidity of the demand for the self based on hallucination as the unique way of carrying out. And isn’t Marta an hallucination? In a very insightful remark, Carla Roque e Cunha (1996) explains that the study of Lúcio’s *Confession* (and by extent all of Sá-Carneiro’s works) represents a true challenge: how can we possibly enlighten something which already is pure light?

Ricardo is the author of *Embers* and, along the plot, is writing *Diadem*, which is presented as his masterpiece. We may think it was the last verse he wrote when Marta was intimately with Lúcio for the first time. And shortly after, when Ricardo looked to the mirror, he noticed to have lost his reflection, as if the *other* inhabiting inside the mirror had materialized and gone to live its own life.

“You know, Lúcio, I had the most bizarre hallucination today. It was in the afternoon, it must have been about four o’clock. I’d just written the last line of my book. I left the study and went up to my room. I happened to glance in the wardrobe mirror but *I wasn’t there!* It’s true. I saw everything around me reflected in the mirror, *but I could not see my own image...* You can’t imagine my amazement... the mysterious feeling that swept through me... But do you know something? It wasn’t a feeling of terror, *it was a feeling of pride*” (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 78).

⁶ Lúcio and Ricardo met themselves in a *soirée* given by the American woman. “Orgy of Fire” was the name of the performance they were invited to attend that evening.

⁷ There is a clear proximity between the terms Lúcio and light (from the latin word *lux*).

⁸ The latin term *luci* is present both in lucidity and in hallucination. This aspect was first noticed by Lino Machado (1990) and then by Fernando Cabral Martins (1994).

The conclusion of the book and the love consummation between Lúcio and Marta happen at the same time. In turn, shortly before his sudden return to Paris, Lúcio wrote a play entitled *The Flame*. Despite the fact that the representation had already been scheduled, the sudden change of the last act triggered a discussion with the entrepreneur who refused to take it to the scene with the last-minute changes. As Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) brought to our attention, Ricardo's *Diadem* and Lúcio's *The Flame* are metaphors for Marta, and the sudden changes of the last act predict an also unusual outcome.

Lúcio's play was called *The Flame* and, like the play, Marta was also a flame consumed by fire and, at the time of her disappearance, it was the same fire that also took her: "Marta had vanished, silently evaporated, like a flame being extinguished..." (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 115). In turn, *Diadem* represents the female royalty. According to Fernando Cabral Martins (1994), in its circular shape is represented Marta's enfolding which results from Ricardo's desire. The diadem is also associated with gold – and to Ricardo, the gold of the body is representative of the soul – which, to him, has a physical representation. Thus, Marta is also a metaphor for the soul or even the very soul.

Narciso do Amaral had at last agreed to perform for us his concertante entitled Beyond, which he had completed many weeks before but which, until then, only he had heard.

He sat down at the piano. His fingers struck the keys...

My eyes had automatically fixed on Ricardo's wife, who had sat down in an armchair towards the back of the room, in a corner, so that I alone was in the position of being able to see both her and the pianist.

[...] And then, little by little, as the music grew in marvellous beauty, I saw – yes, actually saw – the figure of Marta slowly fade away, dissolve, note by note, until she had disappeared completely. *All that remained before my horrified eyes was the empty armchair...* (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 67).

Marta's image had been dissipated. But how? Why? Has Lúcio been a victim of an illusion? The answer is given in the next instant by Ricardo:

"I found the music quite extraordinary, it aroused emotions in me of an intensity I have never before experienced. It stirred up, as nothing before ever has, troubling, disquieting feelings. It was like the rending of the veil between us and the Beyond, so overwhelming were its harmonies... It was as if everything in me that constitutes my soul had to condense down in order to vibrate in sympathy with it... I felt it gather anxiously inside me, in a globe of light..." (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 67).

Here we face the key to Marta's mysterious disappearance because she was Ricardo's soul – or part of it – she needed to join him at that moment, to enjoy the wonderful music that was being played. But this is not the only moment in which Marta is described as Ricardo's soul. Also in the climax of the novel Ricardo made his own "confession".

One night, though, one fantastic sleepless night, I finally succeeded! I found Her, yes, I created Her, *created* Her. She is mine alone, do you understand? Mine alone. We understand each other so completely that Marta is like a part of my own soul. We think the same way, we feel the same way. We are Us. And from that night I could feel, really feel, your affection for me vibrate inside me, I could reciprocate your affection by ordering Her to be yours! *But when she embraced you, it was me embracing you.* I satisfied my love for you. I won! And when I possessed her, I felt that I possessed *in her* the friendship I owed to you, the way others feel their affections in their souls. When I found her, you see, it was as if my soul, by becoming sexualised, had become matter. *And thus I possessed you physically with my spirit!* That is my triumph... my insuperable triumph! My magnificent secret! (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 113).

Marta is then metaphor for the soul, but also metaphor for literature (Fernando Cabral Martins, 1994). Since, for Sá-Carneiro, the soul is the subject of art. Marta was the brainchild of Ricardo and

the moment she gave herself to Lúcio coincided with the *terminus* of *Diadem*, his masterpiece. She was the bridge built to overcome the chasm of distance separating both men, allowing their union. However, she unavoidably separates them. The bridge was materialized into soul to fulfil the wishes of the self but, as any double, it enjoys a relative autonomy. Therefore Marta, although identical to the self, ends up being different. That is why the outcome seems fatal. The game of doubles – and, with Lúcio, Ricardo and Marta, multiples – is a lethal herald. And death expects them... Marta has to die so that Ricardo can prove his affection to Lúcio. This is the outcome of the narrative: Ricardo fires on Marta, but the body that falls dead on the floor is not hers (which leaks away in the air like a flame is extinguished) but Ricardo's. And, at Lúcio's feet, the revolver...

We had arrived. Ricardo gave the door a brutal shove. It opened.

Marta was standing by a window on the other side of the room, leafing through a book.

The unfortunate woman barely had time to turn round. Ricardo pulled out a revolver he had concealed in his jacket pocket and, before I could do anything, before I could make a move, he fired on her at point-blank range.

Marta fell senseless to the floor. I had not moved from where I stood on the threshold.

And then he Mystery happened... the fantastic Mystery of my life.

To my amazement, to my grief, the person lying stretched out by the window was not Marta, no, it was my friend, it was Ricardo. And at my feet, yes, at my feet, lay his revolver, still smoking!

Marta had vanished, silently evaporated, like a flame being extinguished (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 115).

By returning Marta to her nonexistence, it is the actual Ricardo who coincided with her that disappears. By removing a part of his soul, the other part falls dead. Also Lúcio's soul ends up perishing: "[...] numb now to life and to dreams, with nothing more to hope for and no desires [...]" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 15). Lúcio was so deeply identified with Ricardo that, by losing him, loses himself.

Ricardo and Lúcio's dilemmas are the dilemmas of the self in Sá-Carneiro: a being that doesn't find itself in itself, that doesn't satisfy its own needs, that searches endlessly without finding itself. A being that casts itself into several selves without being able to appease itself nor, at the same time, willing to renounce to its quest. Because being what it is doesn't suffice. There is another, the *other*, who at the same time cannot be reached rather is also unrelinquishable. Lúcio and Ricardo manage to abolish the divisive barriers that the skin edifies. Ricardo could be Narcissus, fascinated by the image of the other that is the image of the self. Narcissus ascribes life to the reflection, turning him into a perfect being. So does Ricardo. And both aspired to the impossible – a relationship of absolute intimacy – whose price to pay was identical to both: death as the only way to eternally seal this bond with the other.

In *Lúcio's Confession* we witness a curious case of unfolding: the double seems to transform itself into the *triple*, personified in the Lúcio-Ricardo-Marta triangle. Through the gathering of these characters a sense of unity is sought for which only coalescence – the annihilation of all differences in a construct in which three people become one – would be able to provide. But this coalescence implies that no longer will an I or an other exist, but something which is neither the *same* nor the *other*...

In his work *Narcissisme de Vie, Narcissisme de Mort* (1983), André Green makes a few remarks about this unfolding of the self. André Green mentions that the One is indivisible but yet unfoldable. Operations such as summing, subtraction, multiplication or division are possible, in a kind of "identity mathematics" which we shall call "Narcissus' Mathematics".

To what binds and unbinds the One? *To another and from another*. In this way, the double – the unfolding in the *other* – would be given by the expression $1+1=2$. Here we have represented the relationship between Ricardo and Marta, or, if we wish to call to mind the relationship triangle in *Lúcio's Confession*, for which the designation of triple was proposed, we would have the expression $1+(1+1)=3$, where one could recognize Lúcio, Ricardo and Marta, in that order, as terms of the equation.

In what does the unfolding of the other's self differ from the original in each one of us? Perhaps the latter would be more closely associated with what Nicolas Abraham (s.d., quoted by Green, 1983) named the dual unit: the one is born out of the genetic recombination of two halves which together form the biological unit. The expression would be $1 \times 1 = 1$, which doesn't result in a duplicate but in a being that ultimately is the recombination of two beings acting as one (the dual unit). The One, as it multiplies itself, would produce the Unit. From this "two in one" all the subsequent development will take place: the separation and loss of the object that will give place to the One. One for whom the separation from the Other, division in essence, doesn't amount to a death sentence since $1:1=1$. The threat of disintegration isn't present here because the One doesn't find itself unfolded, dissolved in the Other, as it happens in the unfolding, where $1+1=2$ or $1+(1+1)=3$. In both cases, any of the above results – both the 2 (the double) as the 3 (the triple) – have lost their integrity, the unity of the self. In a nutshell, they are no longer a One as they became something else. The death (subtraction) of the double and the triple will always imply the death of the *self*, coalescent with the *other*, as $2-2=0$ (or $3-3=0$).

If we take into account that in narcissism, the self wants to be loved as its own ideal, the nature of love that the self nourishes to itself should be a closed system, not allowing space for the object. Locked in a circuit where the self unfolds in lover and loved, that is indicative of this self-sufficient love and of a dually split unit ($1:1=1$) or of an unitarian multiplied unit ($1 \times 1 = 1$). However, it should be noted the psychological paradox in these mathematical expressions: there is division that does not divide and multiplication that does not multiply – at the end of the operation the unit is in the same way that was at the beginning. André Green (1983) indicates that the cause of this is the need for unity at all costs.

But if One is the Unity, why is there this state of incompleteness that is to be found both in Narcissus and Sá-Carneiro, reflected in their own fictional characters? If the One is made of two halves, each one of these halves encompasses the status of division and incompleteness and, therefore, each half is by itself a unit inside the One formed by the union of two halves. It is thus understandable that each half has itself a double identity as it is both a half and, at the same time, a whole unit. This fundamental cleavage – condition inherent to any human being – tends to (and tends *solely* to) nullify itself in the blending process. That explains why in the narcissistic relationship that blending of oneself with the Other is sought for, although unable to embrace the different, what one looks for in the Other ends up not being different at all, but the Same. However, true unity is the result from dual unity, meaning, the couple, two distinct units that interconnect themselves to form a new unit. The choice of the object is the choice of the other-other, different from me. It is the choice of the different. With the double, this other-me, the difference is reduced to zero.

The double, cast away between life and death, between Eros and Thanatos, guarantee of immortality and simultaneously an omen of the end to come, accompanies alongside Sá-Carneiro's Work. It is equally present in Narcissus's story: the double is the other that he contemplates in the mirrorly water. Then it is not surprising that Narcissus took so long to realize that the other was in fact himself as, driven by the flow of the current, this other from himself enjoyed a certain freedom of movement, constituting an unfolding instead of a simple duplicate.

André Green (1983) mentions that the plane is one of the geometrical forms of narcissism. The plane evokes the mirror, a reflection surface and area of projection by excellence. And if the water was the reflexive surface that bound Narcissus, in Sá-Carneiro it is the Work that plays this mirror-like roll. His Work is the surface that enables self-contemplation and, as he sees his inverted image reflected (that from the other) he finds room for the edification of the self.

We are in this fashion faced with the *leitmotiv* of Sá-Carneiro's works: the internal break from a self that can't find his own unity and that aspires to it through the other. A unity perhaps once had but now long lost. And could that be, ultimately, the inherent aspiration of the human condition? Beings derived out of the combination of two halves (the expression $1 \times 1 = 1$ exemplifies our genesis), the incompleteness is in our nature, always walking alongside ourselves in our quest through life.

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