

2013

Her voice has life: the myth of echo in psychoanalysis and deconstruction, and the acoustic vision of a new subjectivity

Christian LaCroix Mecham

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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HER VOICE HAS LIFE: THE MYTH OF ECHO IN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND
DECONSTRUCTION, AND THE ACOUSTIC VISION OF A NEW SUBJECTIVITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Philosophy

by
Christian LaCroix Mecham
B.A., Central Washington University, 2011
December 2013

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family, especially my parents and sisters, for their continued care, guidance, and love. I'd also like to extend thanks to my fellow students of philosophy for their critiques, recommendations, and financial support during the process of writing this meditation on Echo. In particular, without the help and friendship of Greg Lotze, this project wouldn't have been possible. The assistance of the administrative staff of the Louisiana State University Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, especially Margaret Toups, was invaluable for navigating the murky depths of the LSU bureaucracy. I also extend my thanks to my committee members, Drs. François Raffoul, James Rocha, and Gregory Schufreider, for their feedback and comments.

Finally, I dedicate this work to the memory of my beloved grandmother, Lois Esther Stephenson Mecham, who passed away shortly before I began work on it. Her encouragement to continuously hone the craft of writing and thinking, and her love and dedication to the art of poetry is echoed not only in this work, but in her own.

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ABSTRACT

Taking seriously Ovid's claim that Echo's voice has life, this thesis examines the use of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, as presented in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in 20th century literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, especially as to how it pertains to the creation of the human subject. I argue in favor of John Hollander's restoration of the trope of metalepsis, and show how that trope is connected to a variety of topics, including, but not limited to, the imagery of echo in Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves*; how the myth relates to the Freudian notions of primary and secondary narcissism; Jacques Lacan's attempts to incorporate psychoanalysis into the history of philosophy, vis-à-vis Hegel's dialectical method; the relation between subjectivity and love in both Freud and Jacques Derrida's works; and how echo operates within the discourse of *écriture féminine*. Finally, I end the thesis with a critical reading of the film *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*, and a brief discussion on treatment of the female voice today.

1. INTRODUCTION

So she is hidden in the woods/ and can never be seen on mountain slopes,/ though everywhere she can be heard; the power/ of sound still lives in her.
(Ovid 3.401-404)

For thousands of years, philosophers, poets, scholars, and writers have been fascinated by the myth of Echo and Narcissus. Inspired by the many versions, the characters (which include many more figures than just those in its title), and the themes of love, loss, death, and mourning, they were drawn in, and caught in its snare. In particular, many have been enticed by the version presented in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As one studies the myth more, two things became increasingly apparent: 1) the strong influence that this myth has exerted on Western thought throughout its history, and 2) the important philosophical discussion about the nature of subjectivity contained within Ovid's version.

The term "subjectivity" has many meanings, but in philosophy we generally use it in one of two related fashions. First, most often in the fields of aesthetics and ethics, but also occasionally in epistemology, subjectivity refers to personal beliefs and tastes, what the "I" finds attractive and unattractive (in a broad sense). This is most often contrasted to objectivity, things which are true regardless of how the "I" might feel about them. A good example is the debate in meta-ethics of whether or not it is the case that there are moral facts, i.e., facts about morality, that exist independently of any given particular moral agent. The classic example is the Euthyphro Dilemma, presented in the eponymous Socratic dialogue. In brief, the question that arises there can be stated as, "Is something the morally correct action to take because the gods demand it, or do the gods demand it because it is the morally correct action to take?" Essentially, is something good because others have said so, or ought I to do it because it's a good thing regardless of others' opinions on the matter? In this case, subjectivity is strongly associated with relativism, the theory

that holds that all beliefs are simply that – beliefs – and that no amount of logical reasoning will give them absolute certainty as to their factual status.

However, in philosophy of language and metaphysics, as well as some epistemology, subjectivity means something else. While it is still related to the individual “I,” subjectivity is an attempt to answer the question, “Who am I and what kind of being am I?” Subjectivity then, in this sense, is not so much about any particular belief I hold about the universe, morality, religion, art, etc., but rather is an investigation into my very identity and being. What does it mean for me to be, to be in this way, and not some other way. This operates much more closely in line with the linguistic structure of most languages, where subject refers to the person who is undertaking some action, and object to the thing that that action is being done to. This use of subjectivity has likewise been heavily debated in philosophy, sometimes under different names, but always focused on the question of why one experiences the world in the way that they do.

Prior to the 20th century, most philosophers took for granted that there was some sort of subject. René Descartes’ *cogito*, that thinking, doubting I, can be read as one such attempt during the early Enlightenment. His separation of thought and extension laid the groundwork for a belief in an autonomous self that existed apart from the body’s material form. John Locke’s conception of the mind as *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, also shows a tendency to conceive of the human being as having some sort of unifying foundation of being. David Hume rejected the notion altogether, thinking that the human being was simply a collection of perceptions, that had no unifying principle or personage behind it. This in turn was challenged by the German Idealists, including Immanuel Kant and more notably G.W.F. Hegel. However, in the late 19th century, thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Edmund Husserl, all began to radically challenge the way in which we conceptualized the subject. These critiques were furthered by even more theorists

and philosophers, especially in the latter half of the 20th century. After two world wars, and the events of the Holocaust,¹ many philosophers, both those who are classified as falling into the Anglo-American Analytic camp, and those in the Continental camp, expressed doubts about the subject. For Analytics, the question was one that could be answered by advances in neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. For Continentals, the schools of psychoanalysis and post-structuralism posed serious questions about how a subject could exist as a unified whole, if at all.

What concerns me here in this work is not a historical account of subjectivity in philosophy, nor arguing that any one particular thinker has the correct account of subjectivity, especially in the sense of *contra* another thinker or school of thought. I am not offering a polemical attack or defense on subjectivity either. Instead, what I have sought to do is to explore and offer an exegetical account of the influence of the myth of Echo and Narcissus on philosophy, and how it supports two particular groups of thinkers who are often at odds with one another. To that extent, I think that the myth offers a synthesis of ideas, and an area where further dialogue between these two camps, psychoanalysis and the post-modernism of deconstruction, would be both successful and intellectually profitable, in contrast to so many other areas that are precisely not that (i.e., not successful or intellectually profitable). I also attempt to show how the myth can be used to help support a feminist cause, by reading the character of Echo as still having control over her voice and being able to express herself despite the divine punishment she received. The notion of the importance and role of the women's language is one area where we can see just how far women have come in any given society. But given that our language has underlying gendered assumptions built into that often denigrate women, this myth presents, by means of analogy, a way for women to escape the punishment that they suffer for using language too.

¹ My use of Holocaust is not intended to slight or remove any of its victims, and I recognize the tragic and horrible events that occurred under the Nazi regime by their many names – Shoah, Porajmos, Samudaripen, etc.

In Chapter One, I examine other versions of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in the classic literature of antiquity. I argue that we should accept Ovid's as the best version, especially on this topic of subjectivity, because of how the motifs are presented, and Ovid's own critiques of the practice of reading in the *Metamorphoses*. I also defend the literary critic and poet John Hollander's argument for the resurrection of the trope of metalepsis, and finally examine a use of the myth in a work of contemporary literature, Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves*.

In Chapter Two, I turn my attention to the use of the myth in psychoanalysis. First exploring Freud's distinction between primary and secondary narcissism, we then move on to how it relates to love. From there, I examine Lacan's use of narcissism in his famous work on the mirror stage. Finally, using Lacan's critique of Freud case-study of Dora, I argue, in agreement with Lacan, that Freud's discussion of transference and countertransference is essentially a movement of the Hegelian dialectic, on the scale of the psychoanalytic session.

In Chapter Three, Jacques Derrida's use of the myth in various works is explored, and considered. Derrida rejects the psychoanalysts' position that there is still a subject, as fractured and fragmented as it might be. Derrida believes that the subject is just another effect of a certain kind of thinking about subjectivity, that can be traced back to Descartes' project, and that remains active in even the psychoanalytic perspective. This chapter ends with a look at Derrida's critique of the traces of subjectivity that remain in Martin Heidegger's concept of *dasein*.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I continue the exploring both the psychoanalytic and deconstructive understandings of the subject, but turn the focus to that of the female subject. Looking at the works of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Kaja Silverman, we see how the female subject has been constructed both within and outside of psychoanalysis and deconstruction. Drawing from Silverman, I then argue for a particular interpretation of how the use of sound in

film can also construct not just the subjects of a particular film, but subjectivity in general. Finally, I apply said critique to the 2004 film, *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*, which I also argue is a contemporary retelling of the myth, though without some of the more tragic elements.

If the reader should take anything away from this work, than my hope is that they recognize and realize that even if subjectivity is a pragmatic fiction we use to comfort our (non)selves, then we must surely always remember that Echo escapes us and our attempts to confine her, thematically, intellectually, discursively, etc. In this escape, we find an alternative to a kind of thinking about the subject as it has been classically conceived in philosophy, and can begin to embrace a new subjectivity that operates metaleptically through language in all of its forms.

2. ECHO IN THE LITERATURE OF CLASSIC ANTIQUITY

2.1 The myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

In Book Three of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,² the myth does not begin with either Echo or Narcissus, but rather with the mortal Tiresias settling an argument between Juno and Jupiter (3.16-38).³ Tiresias was born male, but after interrupting the mating of two serpents, he was transformed into a woman. For seven years he lived as a woman, and was transformed back into a man when s/he encountered the scene that had changed him originally. As Tiresias had been both male and female, and experienced erotic pleasure in both forms, he was suitably able to decide the dispute regarding which sex enjoyed eroticism better. Tiresias supported Jupiter's claim that women, in fact, enjoyed the greater amount of sexual pleasure, which displeased Juno, who blinded him. As a means of amends, Jupiter granted Tiresias the gift of prophecy.

The first person to test Tiresias's gift was Liriope, a Naiad (water nymph), who was raped by the river god Cephisus. She asked whether her newborn child, Narcissus, would live to be an old man, to which Tiresias replied, "*Si se non noverit*," "Yes, if he never knows himself" (Ovid 3.348). From there, we go from Narcissus a babe in arms to a youth of 16, when Echo discovers him hunting in the woods. At this point in the narrative, Echo has already been cursed by Juno for helping to cover up Jupiter's extramarital affairs. Echo, who used her voice to distract Juno with

² When referencing Ovid's version of the tale of Echo and Narcissus, I have chosen to give both the original Latin and an English translation by Allen Mandelbaum (full citation below). For those seeking the full text in the original Latin, I highly recommend *The Latin Library* (www.thelatinlibrary.com) as it contains complete digital copies of not only Ovid's works, but a wide variety of Roman and Latin writers. While Mandelbaum takes some liberties with his translation in updating the verse to a more modern vernacular, overall I find it refreshingly clear and concise, and free of the faux-Elizabethan formalism that plagues so many translations of the poetry of classic antiquity, which often obscures the beauty and readability of these works. Finally, for the in-text citation, I listed the original lines from Ovid in the usual style, listing book number first, and lines following. For example, lines 34-56 from the fourth book of the *Metamorphoses* would be cited as 4.334-56.

³ Ovid. *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, Inc., 1993.

mindless chattering, had her power of choice of language stripped from her by Juno. From that moment forth, she could not freely choose what to speak, but could only repeat back what others had. What is intriguing, is that this lack in Echo, of being able to speak on whatever she feels, isn't a complete removal of choice with regards to language. Her tone, inflection, etc., are still hers, and while she can only repeat what others have said, she can choose among that speech what she will repeat. More simply, Echo doesn't merely parrot what she hears, but instead places herself within the sound, emphasizing and repeating that which she desires. Ovid provides an excellent example of this control when Echo attempts to embrace Narcissus: "*perstat et alternae deceptus imagine vocis 'huc coeamus' ait, nullique libentius umquam responsura sono 'coeamus' rettulit Echo,*" "That answer snares him; he persists, calls out:/ 'Let's meet.' And with the happiest reply/ that ever was to leave her lips, she cries:/ 'Let's meet' ..." (Ovid 3.385-88). Nowhere does Ovid describe Narcissus's call to meet as being happy; all indication to that point was that he was stupefied. It was Echo's own choice to inflect that emotion, to give feeling to the borrowed words. In a way, this is Echo's true voice, "...*sed, quod sinit, illa parata est expectare sonos, ad quos sua verba remittat,*" "...and so she waits for what her state permits:/ to catch the sounds that she can then give back/ with her own voice" (Ovid 3.377-78). Before her cursed state, her voice was merely used at the behest of another, Jupiter, to deceive on his behalf, yet Juno's curse gives Echo the chance to truly speak for herself, to express her desires and wants.

Narcissus rejects Echo's amorous advances, much as he has rejected all others. He flees from her, deeper into the woods, where eventually he comes across a pool of water. Catching a glimpse of his reflection, he discovers himself for the first time, and becomes engrossed in his own image. He attempts to kiss it, to hold it in his arms, but always the reflection in the pool remains out of his grasp; Narcissus's error is to think that this is another who is being kept from him.

Finally, he begins to die, having forsaken all food and drink, and even hope at the end. Echo, his constant companion still, repeats back his words of sorrow and loss. “*Quotiensque puer miserabilis 'eheu' dixerat, haec resonis iterabat vocibus 'eheu'...*,” “Each time he cries "Ah, me!" the nymph repeats "Ah, me!"..." (Ovid 3.495-496). Echo gathers many other nymphs to bury Narcissus, including his sisters, but when they return to the pool, his body is gone, and only a flower, the narcissus, or daffodil as we now know it, remains. Echo also dies alone in the woods, her bones becoming stone, and her voice haunting the caves and valleys where she lived.

2.2 The use of Echo in the literature of classic antiquity

Ovid writes that Echo's voice lives on in caves, but in this he is incorrect; Echo's voice is very much also alive in writing, both historically and in contemporary works. While Ovid's account of Echo and Narcissus is the most important of the classic works on these mythological characters, it was not the first. “Echo enters our poetry long before Ovid’s famous nymph” (Hollander 1981, 6).⁴ As such, our understanding of Echo must stretch before and past that account of her, and we must understand why none of these other versions are adequate by themselves to approach the problem before us (i.e., how can we navigate between a subject that doesn't exist and is always already fractured anyway). Echo and Narcissus are first introduced together in poetry and prose, and as such, in order to properly understand the importance that this myth plays within the philosophical works of psychoanalysis and deconstruction, we must investigate this tale and how it has been presented throughout the history of literature. While Echo is encountered throughout much of the mythological writing of antiquity, I have chosen to focus my efforts here on three other writers, Homer, Longus, and Pausanias in order to show how they supplement but do not exceed Ovid's account.

⁴ Hollander, John. *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1981.

Homer

Homer never writes directly on Echo. For him, she exists only as the natural acoustic phenomena - no nymph's voice is the rejoinder to Jupiter's thunder on Mount Olympus, nor accompanies the Muses' hymnals to their father as they climb up the same mountain, or in the tale of Polyphemus in Book IX of the *Odyssey*. The role of echo is particularly interesting in this last example. Odysseus, trapped along with several of his men in the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus, first encounters an echo after the monster enters his home. "He came, bearing an enormous pile of dried-out wood to cook his dinner. He hurled his load inside the cave with a huge crash. In our fear, we moved back to the far end of the cave, into the deepest corner." (Homer 9.310-15).⁵ This motif of sound as an element of terror is one which we will return to later on, when I discuss the use of echo (both acoustical and metaphorical) in contemporary literature. Suffice it to say for now that what stands out about this scene is not that Polyphemus can carry such a heavy load, i.e., that he has prodigious strength and size, but it is the noise, the echo, itself of the firewood being flung that frightens and terrifies Odysseus and his men. The noise itself is the signifier of Polyphemus' power and is when Odysseus himself begins to fear the Cyclops (his men, wisely, were cautious and fearful even before the presence of Polyphemus). In Ovid, Echo's voice has the power to terrify Narcissus with the intensity of her sincerity; in Homer, Polyphemus' voice is also terrifying, though for different reasons. "As he spoke, our hearts collapsed, terrified by his deep voice and monstrous size" (Homer 9.336-37). In order to escape, Odysseus and his men, after blinding Polyphemus, must remain silent, must avoid any action which will cause reverberations or sound in Polyphemus' cave. Even after they initially reach their ship, Odysseus hushes his men's crying over those comrades who had been slain by the Cyclops, and only begins to jeer the maimed

⁵ Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. by Ian Johnston. Arlington, VA: Richer Resources Publications, 2006. PDF version.

monster once he feels that they have passed a safe distance. His crew, who are more humble than Odysseus, beg him to silence his taunts, but he does not, and here occurs the last echoes of this part of the story. “That's what I said. It made his heart more angry. He snapped off a huge chunk of mountain rock and hurled it. The stone landed up ahead of us, just by our ship's dark prow. As the stone sank, the sea surged under it, waves pushed us back towards the land, and, like a tidal flood, drove us on shore. (Homer 9.636-42). Even though Odysseus rescues his crew from this attack, he continues to taunt Polyphemus, despite the pleadings of his men. Polyphemus' retort at this point is not only to physically attack Odysseus's ship again, but the Cyclops's also calls upon his father, Neptune, god of the sea, to levy a curse on the arrogant Greek.

After [Odysseus] said this, [Polyphemus] stretched out his hands to starry heaven and offered this prayer to lord Poseidon: “Hear me, Poseidon, Enfolder of the Earth, dark-haired god, if I truly am your son and if you claim to be my father, grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities, a man from Ithaca, Laertes' son, never gets back home. If it's his destiny to see his friends and reach his native land and well-built House, may he get back late and in distress, after all his comrades have been killed, and in someone else's ship. And may he find troubles in his House.” That's what he prayed. The dark-haired god heard him. Then Cyclops once again picked up a rock, a much larger stone, swung it round, and threw it, using all his unimaginable force. It landed right behind the dark-prowed ship and almost hit the steering oar. Its fall convulsed the sea, and waves then pushed us on, carrying our ship up to the further shore. (Homer 9.693-713)

Thus, the physical quaking of the sea, the acoustical echo of the crashing rock, is mirrored by the blinded Cyclops's curse. This mirrored effect is itself an echo, in a metaphorical sense - the waves of the quaking sea are the visual form of the verbal prayer to Neptune; just as the ocean operates in waves, so too does sound. But this sound not only carries across the water, but also across the heavens themselves, carrying with them a fate that reverberates throughout Odysseus's entire journey home.

What is also interesting about the story of Polyphemus is the way in which Ovid subverts Homer's description of him. Both Theocritus and Ovid portray Polyphemus as a suitor of the sea

nymph Galatea and a rival of Acis, but here the similarities between them end. In his *Idylls*, Theocritus rejects Homer's portrayal of Polyphemus as monstrous, and instead converts him to a gentle shepherd more invested in song than in eating Greek sailors. "There's no drug, Nicias, to cure desire: no/ Hot compress, powder, ointment, or suspension/ Except for song: a sweet alleviation" (Theocritus 11.3).⁶ But Ovid's version is a much more critical approach than Theocritus's simple pastoralizing of the character. Instead, Ovid depicts Polyphemus in the *Metamorphoses* behaving much as any male Roman suitor of Ovid's day would, writing poetry, trimming his facial hair, etc. "Polyphemus,/ you tend to your appearance now, you care/ to see how handsome you can be, you take/ a rake to comb your shaggy hair, you shave/ your beard with a scythe, and you are pleased/ to mirror your crude features in a pool..." (Ovid 9.461-462). This brilliant subversion achieves two things: first, it forced the Roman audience to sympathize with the monster and the monstrous; secondly, it forced the audience to recognize that the nature of a character, whether myth, fiction, or biographical, is one that will be perceived differently over time. Polyphemus is sympathetic not because he is completely defanged of his monstrous nature as in Theocritus, but rather because Ovid combines the monstrous with the urbane, the beast with the civilized. Ovid's Polyphemus is a much richer character than either Theocritus' or Homer's versions because it challenges our very understanding of what it means to read a character. Whereas Homer simply gives us a cruel cannibal and Theocritus gives us a singing farmer, Ovid's version is a commentary not just on social mores, but on the very act of reading itself.

Longus

In Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, we are given one of the older historical versions of Echo's mythical origins. After Chloe experiences the acoustic phenomena of echo for the first time along

⁶ Theocritus. "Cyclops (Theocritus 11)." Trans. Diane Aronson Svarlien. *Arion* 5.1 (Spring/Summer 1997): 161-63.

the sea shore, Daphnis explains that Echo, a virginal wood nymph was taught by the Muses to sing beautifully. Jealous of her voice and her closely guarded virginity, the half-goat god Pan drives a group of shepherds mad, and in their madness, they tear Echo's body apart, limb from limb. Here there is a pun on the Greek for singing and limbs, *adonta ta melê*, "her yet singing limbs" (Hollander 1981, 8) that hints at the otherworldly nature of her voice and its ability to haunt concave spaces. The earth itself buries her body, leaving only her voice behind. Regretting his actions, Pan plays his pipes in imitation of Echo's voice, enacting her namesake in her memory. But not all interactions with Pan end tragically for Echo; other versions claim that Pan is successful in his amorous pursuit and fathers two daughters with Echo: Irynx and Iambe (Jenks 2005, 1075).⁷ What is important to note here is that Iambe, like her mother, is connected to language. Iambe is the creator of her namesake's poetic verse, which she uses to cheer up Demeter, goddess of the harvest. Demeter, despondent in her search for her daughter Penelope, who was kidnapped by Hades, is brought into a joyous state by Iambe, and the fertility of the world returns and extinction by mass starvation is prevented.

Longus fails to account for several of the powerful motifs that Ovid's version captures. In particular, Echo's agency is entirely removed. Ovid's version is superior in this aspect because at each point it is Echo's own decisions that determine her fate. She chooses to cover up Jupiter's marital misadventures from Juno, she chooses to pursue Narcissus, and ultimately, she chooses to stand by him even as he dies and she fades too. An Echo murdered by love driven to violent obsession instead of choosing to sacrifice herself for love is an Echo whose voice doesn't have a life of its own, but is simply a mere reflection of that other. In Ovid's account, this is a critical point in our understanding of Echo as a mythological figure; as Tivadar Gorilovics, a Hungarian

⁷ Jenks, Kathleen. "Pan." *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*. Vol. I. Ed. C. Scott Littleton. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2005. 1074-1078.

professor of French literature, points out, “Ovid's Echo is an opinionated and indeed obstinate lover...” (2000, 264).⁸ Echo is no mere passive object to be pursued, but always is the pursuer, following Narcissus to the pool after he has violently rejected her, and even following him into death by likewise wasting away. Even the acoustic phenomena hints to Echo's active nature, pursuing the initial sound with its own interpreted version. I say interpreted since no acoustic echo is a perfect reproduction of the originating sound, and Echo the character certainly grabs onto the language of others in order to emphasize unexpected secondary meanings. This is as true of Ovid's rendition as it is of later writers, especially poets of the 1600s, such as George Herbert and William Browne (Hollander 1981, 28, 58).

Pausanias

Pausanias' version of the myth in the *Description of Greece* is perhaps the weakest account of all antiquity because of his gross misunderstanding of the important motifs of the myth. Writing what was essentially a tourist guide for Latin visitors to Greece, Pausanias at times takes the tales he hears too literally (Vinge 1967, 22).⁹ Pausanias rejects the idea that Narcissus could have fallen in love with himself, thinking it entirely too stupid that someone could be so taken with a simple pond image (Vinge 1967, 22). He instead argues that Narcissus truly fell in love with his twin sister, who passed away. The image that Narcissus therefore perceives in the pool is not his own, but rather that of his deceased beloved sibling. He does accept that the myth may have some historical elements, i.e., that Narcissus was in fact a person who existed, lived, and died while watching his reflection in a pool, but downplays or ignores the mythic elements (e.g., Tiresias's

⁸ Gorilovics, Tivadar. “Narcissus' Attitude to Death.” *Echoes of Narcissus*. Ed. Lieve Spaas and Trista Selous. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000. 263-270.

⁹ Vinge, Louise. *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature Up To the Early 19th Century*. Trans. Robert Dewsnap, Lisbeth Grönlund, Nigel Reeves, and Ingrid Söderberg-Reeves. Lund: Skånska Centraltryckeriet and Gleerups, 1967.

prophecy, the role of Nemesis on behalf of the youths wronged by Narcissus, etc.) (Vinge 1967, 22).

However, Pausanias misses the point entirely. First, he misunderstands the importance of the motif of error present in the tale. It is not enough that Narcissus simply imagine his reflection to be the image of his twin sister; what error is there in mourning the loss of a loved one? No, in order for the narrative to have any impact on the reader it must be a full error. That Narcissus cannot recognize himself for himself as a self is the very point indeed of his tragic ending. "Why try/ to grip an image? He does not exist - /the one you love and long for" (Ovid 3.432-33). This is true error - to mistake the imaginary for the real, and to further not even recognize the imaginary as mirror, as visual echo, of one's own self. "Unwittingly,/ he wants himself; he praises, but his praise/ is for himself; he is the seeker and/ the sought, the longed-for and the one who longs;/ he is the arsonist - and is the scorched" (Ovid 3.425-26). The thematic patterning of transformation that characterizes not only the tale of Echo and Narcissus, but also whole of the *Metamorphoses* is almost completely absent in Pausanias' version, and in his denouncement of Narcissus's transformation into the flower of his name sake, Pausanias eliminates even that little transformative element. By eliminating the motif of error and death and in arguing against Narcissus's mythic transformation into his namesake flower, Pausanias fails to see that, "Without death, the myth would not be what it is" (Gorilovics 2000, 263). Gorilovics argues that the death of Narcissus is the very *dénouement* of the tale, and as such, Pausanias' mistake is not in improperly unraveling the plot and all of its complexities, but in not even attempting to do so at all, in mistaking the mythical for the literal. Instead of embracing the story for what it was, and what it attempted to do, he concocts a new tale that utterly fails to have any impact on later interpretations of the myth.

2.3 The use of Echo in post-antiquity literature

The myth of Echo and Narcissus has continued to be a source of inspiration for thousands of writers, poets, and artists beyond their ancient origins. Just as in antiquity, the list of prominent works that either draw from or allude to Echo are too numerous to discuss in detail here. However, two particular works stand out for their excellent work, the first for its critical dissection of the use of echo, and the second for its use of these critical reflections: John Hollander's book on poetic criticism *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* and Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves*. Here I am not seeking to show how these works are in some way inferior to Ovid, as I did with Homer, Longus, and Pausanias, but rather to illustrate how Echo has operated as a rhetorical figure in more contemporary literature.

John Hollander and Echo as a Trope

In his investigation of the use of Echo as a literary figure and trope in poetry, Hollander, himself a poet and literary critic, demonstrates how Echo has often been used to mock other's speech. "Whenever possible her [Echo's] fragmentary response involves a pun or other alterations of sense. From an epigram by the Byzantine Guaradas in the *Greek Anthology*, up through much Renaissance lyric and epigrammatic verse, the form tended toward the satiric" (Hollander 1981, 26). Hollander gives the example of an exchange in Erasmus's *Echo*, where an arrogant youth's knowledge is challenged and defeated by Echo's rebuke. "[The] youth's 'decem iam annos aetatem trivi in Cicerone' ('I've spent ten years on Cicero') is echoed, in Greek, 'one!' ('ass!')..." (Hollander 1981, 27).

But for Hollander, Echo as a mocker, as a satirist, is neither her only role nor her most important. Instead, Echo operates primarily as allusion, especially in a metaleptical sense. Metalepsis, μετάληψις or *transumptio* in Quintilian (the first of the Romans to deal with this Greek

trope), is a particular form of metonymy, what noted American literary critic Harold Bloom defines as, “In a metalepsis, a word is substituted metonymically for a word in a previous trope, so that a metalepsis can be called, maddeningly but accurately, a metonymy of a metonymy” (2003, 102).¹⁰ By metonymy I mean a word, acting as a name for a thing, stands in for a thing which already has a name. The common example¹¹ is using the word “Hollywood” to refer to and mean the entirety of mainstream American film, particularly the industry surrounding it. Place-names are often easy examples, “D.C.” for the entirety of the American federal government and political process (“D.C.’s going to raise our taxes again”); “Vegas” for any dangerous and vice-ridden place; “East/West Coast” to draw attention to particular cultural variations within a country’s populace (in this case, the United States); and so on. Not all metonymies rely on place-names though; any naming structure will do. Ian Fleming’s novel-turned-film series of a Cold War era superspy James Bond gave us the metonymy of “007,” the character’s code name, which references not only the character, but spies in general. In fact, the character’s name has also become a metonymy both for a particular kind of subgenre within action films (“It’s a real James Bond kind of flick”) and for a particular kind of depiction of masculinity, both in media and real life (“Check out James Bond over there trying his luck at cards”).

Metalepsis, as Bloom noted above, is a much more difficult trope to work with. Many rhetoricians throughout history have either overlooked it, disregarded it, or dispensed with it entirely. Hollander notes in his appendix a whole series of works and writers who fail to properly understand metalepsis, starting with Quintilian himself. What is clear is that there is always a temporal relation between the metonymies that metalepsis invokes as it moves from one to the

¹⁰ Bloom, Harold. *A Map of Misreading*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

¹¹ Many of these examples are drawn from Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., "Speaking and Thinking with Metonymy" in *Metonymy in Language and Thought* (ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter, Radden. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1999. 61–76).

other. Take the following sentence as a case example: “I’m off to bed; I’ve got to catch the worm.”¹² Here, the original metonymy being invoked is the adage “The early bird catches the worm,” i.e., those who begin their project (such as waking up early in the morning) sooner than others will achieve success. Here, the temporal move is one from the present moment to the future – the worm hasn’t yet been caught, but by alluding to the adage one makes it clear that one is going to bed much earlier than normal. In this manner, metalepsis acts as, what Hollander calls, a meta-trope, “a linkage between figures” (1981, 114). When metalepsis acts allusively, he argues, we can’t escape this diachronic relation between that figure which was used in the past and our referencing it here in the present.

For Hollander, Echo, then, however she is used, is always pointing to something else which itself is pointing to something else. “An echo of the kind we have been considering may occur in a figure in a poem, and it may echo the language of a figure of a previous one. But the echoing itself makes a figure, and the interpretive or revisionary power which raises the echo even louder than the original voice is that of a trope of diachrony” (Hollander 1981, 114). Much of his own analysis centers around this use of echo as metaleptic in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (which has its own allusion to the myth of Echo and Narcissus)¹³, but he also traces its use in the poetry of Walt Whitman (122-23), Lewis Carroll (124), and Trumbull Stickney (128), among many others. The point he makes with this sketch is to show how works allude, sometimes elusively, through a structure that is always somehow metaphorically an echo of another work. While this doesn’t mean that every echo is an allusion, nor every allusion an echo, we ought to take seriously that “in

¹² This is the most common example used to illustrate metalepsis, and can be found in a variety of online dictionaries and encyclopedias, including Wikipedia, myenglishpages.com, and answers.com. For more literary examples of metalepsis at work see Bloom 2003, 130.

¹³ And to Polyphemus as well: Hollander shows how, through metalepsis, Satan’s spear in *Paradise Lost* alludes to Polyphemus’ club which Odysseus transformed into a spear in order to escape the Cyclops.

the transumption of the W, Y, Z, etc.,¹⁴ that an expository structure gains figurative force” (Hollander 1981, 115).

Mark Z. Danielewski and echo in House of Leaves

Echo, whether as metaphor, acoustic phenomena, and/or mythic character, is rarely described as a force of and for terror in literary and cultural references, but that doesn’t mean that it can’t be achieved. However, in his post-modern novel *House of Leaves*, Danielewski achieves precisely that effect.

The novel is a multilayered narrative that consists of three levels: the meta-fictional *Navidson Account*, the (presented as) nonfictional story of the Navidson family and their uncanny House in Virginia; Zampano, the narratorial author of the *Navidson Account*, who undertakes a critical analysis of his fictional “nonfictional” story *qua* nonfiction; and Johnny Truant, the narrator and editor of Zampano’s work, which Truant inherits after Zampano’s death. On the surface, the primary plot is the Navidson family dealing with the House they live in, and its ability to generate rooms and structures seemingly out of thin air in defiance of all known science and meaning. As the Navidsons explore the labyrinthine structure underneath their House, Zampano gives a brief yet thorough examination of echo as both physical acoustical phenomena and literary metaphor, citing extensively Hollander’s work. “Myth makes Echo the subject of longing and desire. Physics makes Echo the subject of distance and design. Where emotion and reason are concerned both claims are accurate. And where there is no Echo there is no description of space or love. There is only silence” (Danielewski 2000, 50).¹⁵ Here we see the concavity of Echo, both acoustic and metaphoric (and metaleptic even) in Hollander’s analysis brought to full force in the very type of works that he analyzes.

¹⁴ A reference to the structure of Miltonic simile.

¹⁵ Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000.

Echo is terrifying for the residents of the Navidson House in Danielewski's novel precisely because there shouldn't be an echo in their House – it is too small, too constrained. There is no space for echoes to occur yet occur nonetheless they do. There is no room here for Echo; the Navidsons are divided among themselves – wife Karen mistrusts husband Will's intentions about the House, and their two children grow increasingly distant. In one of the more subtly crafted moments of terror in the novel, Daisy Navidson approaches her father and asks to play always. “[N]o one has ever commented on the game Daisy wants to play with her father, perhaps because everyone assumes it is either a request ‘to play always’ or just a childish neologism. Then again, ‘always’ slightly mispronounces ‘hallways.’ It also echoes it” (Danielewski 2000, 73). The hallways which spring up beneath the House become increasingly long as the novel goes further on, seemingly stretching on always. The play of “hallways” and “always” is echoed in the character of Holloway Roberts, whose first name is a literal acoustic echo of both, especially if one pronounces it with a silent “h.” This name itself names three key factors: the architectural structure of a hallway as an empty space; the emptiness that these ever expanding rooms present, not just in their structural make-up, but in their very lack of purpose (they only connect to other hallways and empty rooms); and in the psychological and philosophical nihilism¹⁶ that this lack of purpose generates – each room is devoid of the material objects that we psychically invest in that transform a House into a home (e.g., pictures of loved ones, artworks, furniture, etc.) which symbolically stands for the lack of the love of the family for each other. In the novel, a pastiche of Harold Bloom, upon seeing a film of the House's mysterious always growing hallways states:

You see emptiness here is the purported familiar and your House is endlessly familiar, endlessly repetitive. Hallways, corridors, rooms, over and over again. A bit like Dante's House after a good spring cleaning. It's a lifeless objectless place. Cicero said “A room without books is like a body without a soul.” So add souls to

¹⁶ Which is itself an emptiness as *nihil* is the emptiness of nothing itself.

the list. A lifeless, objectless, soulless place. Godless too. Milton's abyss pre-god or in a Nietzschean universe post-god. (Danielewski 2000, 359)

This is the terror of the presence and lack of echo: a space too small has no room for echo, and thus no room for love. Too large a space, and echo drifts either endlessly and aimlessly, or there is a lack of concavity necessary for echo to occur. In terms of love, one can be both distanced from one's beloved literally, as in literally named long distance relationship, or one can metaphorically also be separated from one's partner, an emotional distance. Our space must be just right, and without the surprise of terror in order for echo to occur acoustically and metaphorically.

Likewise, if we hold that speech is a means of communicating our very self, then Echo makes that problematic as well, in two ways. She loses control of full choice, being limited only to repeating the language of others, but she has control over that speech and may take our words and twist them against us. And in the twisting, Echo gains power. When Narcissus demands that she reveal herself, she chooses to meet him on her own terms, with open arms seeking an intimate embrace. When Narcissus mourns his own death, it is Echo who gives his reflection speech, and it is she who gathers those who will attend his funeral. Echo then is a loss of our own imagined control of our speech, and of our self.

As we have seen in Danielewski's work movement through space requires a temporal move. This temporal move is reproduced metaphorically in literature whenever metalepsis occurs. This move can be used in narrative works to reproduce a trope already within the work itself, especially when connected with narration, which draws us back to metalepsis. "Perhaps the most common example of metalepsis in narrative occurs when a narrator intrudes upon another world being narrated. In general, narratorial metalepsis arises most often when an omniscient or external narrator begins to interact directly with the events being narrated, especially if the narrator is

separated in space and time from these events” (Estes 242). Often it is Zampano who operates here, treating the Navidson Account, but because of its multilayered narrative structure, *House of Leaves* is always distancing itself temporally from itself. The *Navidson Account*, being treated as nonfiction, is portrayed as being in the past. Zampano’s own writing takes place over many years, edits, and rewrites. Johnny Truant, as the narrator of the narration, further places us in the past in his many (seemingly) tangential musings on his daily life. One could argue that the entire structure of *House of Leaves* is metaleptic for reading itself – a full sheet of paper is also known as a leaf, and a House of leaves would be a bound book. The very process of reading temporally and spatially displaces a reader of any text, something which *House of Leaves*, through its textual structure and playful use of language, does throughout. The name of the novel names reading itself.

Here we begin to see Echo turned away from its use as terrifying back towards its role in love. One mustn’t forget that at its core, the *Metamorphoses* is a collection of love stories, and at its end so is *House of Leaves*. Among fans of the novel, there is a famous anecdote where a fan, upon meeting Danielewski at a book signing, she claimed to not be frightened by the novel at all, unlike everyone else there, as it was a love story. Danielewski enthusiastically agreed and signed her copy with “This is for you,” in direct contradiction to the novel’s opening epitaph “This is not for you [i.e., the reader]” (Wittershaus 2000).¹⁷ This fan alone understood that the terror of encountering an unexpected Echo in the woods (or in the House, in the case of Danielewski’s novel) is tempered by the love Echo has for Narcissus. In the novel, Will becomes trapped in the House, burning a book for light and heat, and he is rescued by Karen. This rescue is only possible because of the love that Karen extends to Will, to the bridging of the space of the hallways that

¹⁷ Wittershaus, Eric. “Profile: Mark Z. Danielewski.” *Flak Magazine*, May 6, 2000.

she makes possible through this act of love. And it is implied in the text that Karen is able to do this because she hears something (Danielewski 2000, 522).

The implication is an echo.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

Ovid's version of the myth of Echo and Narcissus stands apart from the other versions (both those examined here, and those that were not) largely because of Ovid's grasp of the tropes at play within the myth. In addition, Ovid showed himself to be the superior writer by offering up critiques of reading and textual interpretation by the audience within the *Metamorphoses*. Through the trope of metalepsis, the figure of Echo, both as a character and as a literary allusion, has been able to inspire and drive generations of writers and poets to explore the diachronic relationships that they share with one another's work. The motifs of love, terror, death, error, and mourning that are present in this myth also point to how subjectivity arises in the first place, as I will show in the next chapter.

3. ECHO PSYCHOANALYZED

In her warning to the feminist movement of France to not simply reproduce masculine values and beliefs, Antoinette Fouque argues that the women's struggle must take into account that discourse which accounts for sexual difference. "The only discourse on sexuality that exists is the psychoanalytic discourse" (Fouque 1988, 118).¹⁸ While this isn't strictly true given the whole history of sexology – the science of sexuality and sexual practices, which preceded and helped influence Freud – psychoanalysis is perhaps the only discourse that examines the subjectivity of humanity *qua* sexuality. Psychoanalysis, through examining the subject *qua* sexuality, demonstrated that the subject was not a unified whole as previously conceived, first in the Enlightenment and then in the mechanistic late 19th century. The myth of Echo and Narcissus contributes to the discursive power of psychoanalysis in two ways: first, and most famously, by providing the template for the neurosis known as narcissism; secondly, through its motifs of love and mourning, the myth, as Ovid describes it, highlights the doubling key to understanding the divided subject of psychoanalysis.

3.1 Thought and Sexuality

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, borrowed liberally from ancient myth to name and help describe the various processes and conditions that psychoanalysis revealed in the human subject. Most famous and arguably the most important of these to psychoanalysis was Freud's use of the myth of Oedipus to describe how children complete their psychosexual maturation into "proper" (for Freud) heterosexuality. This Oedipal complex highlights the relationship between the fundamental, dynamic components of the mind: id, ego, and super-ego.

¹⁸ Fouque, Antoinette. Quoted in Nicole Muchnik's "Le MLF c'est toi, c'est moi" in *Le nouvel observateur* September 1973. Ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. New York: Schocken Books, 1988.

The id, as the most primal portion of the mind, is that part which dictates the most primary urges – the desire to satiate hunger, thirst, and sexual appetites. The ego develops as an infant matures, in line with the libidinal stages of oral, anal, phallic, and oedipal. The ego arises because the id comes into conflict with the external world – it discovers that it is reliant on others to fulfill those desires. But at the same time, the child discovers that others aren't always willing to tolerate certain actions – e.g., gluttony, alcoholism, masturbation, etc. As such, the ego operates both externally, by directing the conscious mind to reality, and also internally, by disciplining the psyche through repression of the id's desires to the unconscious mind. It must be noted that repression isn't always a negative thing for Freud, for without repression, we would indulge in violence and unhealthy, both physically and psychologically, sexual practices such as incest.

As the child comes to the oedipal phase of libidinal development, the super-ego begins to arise as well. It is important to note that the super-ego is not merely the “conscience” of one's internal moral monologue. The super-ego is a much deeper and aggressive psychical structure than that; it is the night-panoptical sense of wrong-doing that stands vigil over all of one's actions. It is important to note that none of these processes stand apart, alone, from one another. Instead, they all inform the development of each other. The id is suppressed by both the ego and the super-ego, but it informs the ego of what is necessary for continued life (e.g., “I'm hungry, I need to eat”) and gives the super-ego its aggressiveness. The ego, through its internal critique, gives the super-ego its self-critical ability, and the super-ego in turn gives the subject an actualized sense of morality and acts as a civilizing force. Because each of these arises in turn, from id to ego to super-ego, through the physical and mental maturation of the child's libidinal stages, thought and sexuality are inextricably linked and joined together.

This linkage of the two – thought and sexuality – is most apparent in the oedipal stage of libidinal development. Here, the child must struggle with their id’s incestuous desire to give their mother a child by replacing their father as the progenitor of life. The child fears this desire because of the threat that the father represents through castration anxiety: for boys, it is the fear that the father will actually castrate them, removing their penis; for girls, it becomes the case that they’ve already been castrated and that the father will remove any power from them whatsoever. If the child successfully represses these oedipal desires than they will develop, for Freud, a healthy sense of sexuality that excludes various practices that Freud considered perverse, e.g., homosexuality, sadomasochist fetishism, etc.

What many critics have pointed out though is that Freud’s use of the oedipal myth to describe both the libidinal stage and complex fails to recognize the important point that Oedipus deliberately tried to avoid his fate. Furthermore, Oedipus’s own father, Laius, is the one who initiates the whole ironically tragic situation by attempting to kill Oedipus as an infant. For psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin, Freud later reconciles this difference by arguing that both Laius and Oedipus represent different aspects of the complex. “The oedipal father [Laius] is one who cannot give up omnipotence; the thought of his own mortality, surrendering his kingdom to his son, is too much for him to bear....The oedipal son [Oedipus himself], then, is one who cannot bear his wish to unseat his father, because its fulfillment would deprive him of the authority who protects him, the ideal that gives him life” (Benjamin 1988, 142).¹⁹ The complex is as deadly for the son as it is for the father who never properly repressed it (in) himself. Neither has a complete, healthy sexuality, as both are obsessed with the danger of their own libidinal desires, and as such, neither is able to escape his fate.

¹⁹ Benjamin, Jessica. *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

3.2 Freud's "On Narcissism"

While Freud paid at least some attention to the narrative of Oedipus, when it comes to Narcissus, Freud completely ignores the mythical origins entirely, instead focusing on its use in other psychological works. Freud only wrote one essay on narcissism itself, "On Narcissism: An Introduction."²⁰ However, narcissism itself has come to be one of the most important concepts in psychoanalysis and psychology in general; for example, narcissistic personality disorder is an Axis II disorder, in the DSM-IV, the definitive text for American psychology and psychiatry. What separates Freud's understanding of narcissism from earlier psychological and sexological work is that whereas prior to Freud, narcissism was seen only as masturbation taken to perverse excess, Freud identifies narcissism as having a much deeper relationship with both the libido and the ego. For Freud, everyone is narcissistic to some extent; infants are inherently narcissistic, loving only themselves. Narcissism in this sense of self-love is motivated by survival instincts. "Narcissism in this sense would not be a perversion, but the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature" (Freud 1949, 31). Freud called this sense of self-love "primary narcissism" because it was the first, primal sense of love that one felt as an infant before one was able to differentiate between self and other. Secondary narcissism is that which arises in neurotic adults, whose libidinal drives have been turned from external objects, i.e., other people, to internal drives. As such, secondary, and not primary or childish (as Freud sometimes refers to it) narcissism is that which is of concern to us.

Freud identifies three potential sources of knowledge about secondary narcissism in those suffering from physiological illness, hypochondria, and of the love between sexes (Freud 1949,

²⁰ Freud, Sigmund. "On Narcissism: An Introduction." *Collected Papers*. Vol. IV. Ed. Ernest Jones. Trans. Joan Riviere. London: The Hogarth Press, 1949. 30-59.

39). Each one of these people engages in primary narcissism as adults and as such, they may slip from primary to secondary narcissism. Those suffering from illness become narcissistic because their entire conscious focus shifts from external objects, drives, desires, etc., to their own internal pain and displeasure brought on by the disease. “[The] sick man withdraws his libidinal cathexes back upon his own ego, and send them forth again when he recovers....Here libido and ego-interest share the same fate and have once more become indistinguishable from each other” (Freud 1949, 39). The person suffering from illness can’t focus their energy on loving others because the illness itself prevents them from focusing on anyone but themselves, hence their narcissism. The sexual desire (libido) recedes into the ego, which governs the ability to achieve desires – in this case, the ego’s desire to become physically healthy again. The person suffering from illness is only narcissistic in the primary sense though, because the point is that they won’t continue to focus only on themselves once they are brought back into health. Freud makes the comparison between a person suffering from illness and someone who is asleep – both have withdrawn libidinal desire to the ego, and once the condition for that withdrawal ends, so too does the withdrawal itself. In other words, just as the libido returns from the ego when the sleeper awakens, the person suffering from illness will have their libido returned when they have recovered from said illness.

Like the person suffering from illness, Freud sees the hypochondriac as also becoming narcissistic in that they too suffer from a pain that prevents them from turning their libidinal drives outward, towards external objects (e.g., other people). However, Freud distinguishes hypochondriacs as not suffering from an actual organic change – that is to say, for Freud, the hypochondriac’s pain is all in the mind, though this doesn’t carry the same condescending intonation that one normally associates with that phrase. The hypochondriac is as neurotic as

someone suffering from anxiety or neurasthenia.²¹ Freud sees hypochondria as a “damming up” of the libido in the ego (42) – because hypochondria is a psychological as opposed to physiological condition, one can’t simply wait for the hypochondriac to return to health. That is, if one is suffering from a head cold or infection, one simply needs to just take one’s medicine and get plenty of bed rest and/or rehabilitative exercises until one is completely recovered from said illness. Hypochondria, of course, does not operate in this fashion, and Freud makes the strong claim that it is the damming up of the libido in ego as the source of the hypochondriac’s pain.

The strong philosophical claim Freud makes here is that we must balance self-love with love for others. “A strong egoism is a protection against disease, but in the last resort we must begin to love in order that we may not fall ill, and must fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we cannot love” (Freud 1949, 42). Even as it works to protect from illness, self-love can sabotage the healthy by denying them the very love of others that they need, the love that self-love alone doesn’t provide. This line draws our attention to the plight of both Narcissus and Echo, who both died for failing to love and be loved (respectively). Narcissus’s death was divine punishment for failing to engage in love with any but himself; likewise, the narcissist is doomed to suffer pain for being unable to love outside themselves. Several reports and studies by the empirical sciences have likewise proved Freud to be accurate in this assessment. “Researchers have found that men with lower levels of testosterone are more than four times as likely to suffer from clinical depression, fatal heart attacks, and cancer when compared to other men their age with higher testosterone levels. They are also more likely to develop Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia, and have a far greater risk of dying from any cause (ranging from 88 to 250 percent, depending on

²¹ Weakness of the physiological nerves, i.e., the actual nerves of the nervous system. Symptoms include fatigue, dyspepsia (with flatulence), headaches and intra-cranial pressure, and spinal irritation.

the study)” (Ryan and Jethá 2010, 297-298).²² Testosterone, which has been directly linked to human sexual desire and drive, could stand in here for the libidinal drive itself, though we must note that Freud certainly saw libido as more than just physiological in nature. Ryan and Jethá make the connection between testosterone and desire even more explicit when discussing how testosterone affects the sex drive of transgender female-to-males (ftMs).²³ For many transgender ftMs, the introduction of high amounts of testosterone not only produces the physiological effects associated with the hormone (e.g., increased hair growth, deepening of the voice, etc.), but also completely changes their internal mental narrative regarding sexual desire. As one person they interviewed described it, after taking testosterone, he stopped constructing stories about why he would desire someone, and began to instead simply have an almost violent need for sexual satisfaction (Ryan and Jethá 2010, 281-282). The point remains though, that in order to be a healthy subject we require the intervention of the Other²⁴ through love.

Freud didn't see primary narcissism as an impediment to being in love, or loving another; it is only when one withdraws from one's object-libido into one's ego-libido that narcissism shifts from its instinctual primary mode to its perverse, neurotic secondary mode. Freud believes that secondary narcissism arises differently in the two sexes he identifies. Among women, beauty is directly related with the likelihood of being narcissistic (in the secondary sense) (Freud 1949, 46, 56). What is even more confounding, initially, is that people find themselves attracted to those who are narcissists. “It seems very evident that one person's narcissism has a great attraction for those others who have renounced part of their own narcissism and are seeking after object-love;

²² Ryan, Christopher, and Cacilda Jethá. *Sex at Dawn: The Prehistoric Origins of Modern Sexuality*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010.

²³ That is, people who are transitioning from being chromosomally female to being primarily hormonally male.

²⁴ I capitalize Other here to invoke the Levinasian sense of the word – i.e., an irreducible, absolute Other to me – a rule which the reader may safely assume is in action whenever the word Other is so capitalized.

the charm of a child lies to a great extent in his narcissism...” (Freud 46). The aloofness of a narcissist can be a very attractive feature, at least at first glance, as it is easily mistaken for confidence. The myth of Narcissus and Echo has an interesting gender reversal for the early psychoanalytic accounts with its strict *proper* gender roles: Narcissus is the one of the two described with great beauty and is likewise aloof, rejecting all suitors even before his curse. Echo seeks to realize her love in an external object, namely, Narcissus himself. Freud sees this style of relationship, where the libido is directed to external objects, as the ideal masculine relationship. Narcissus likewise demonstrates the passivity normally subscribed to women in our society, e.g., his rejection of suitors demonstrates a desire to retain his virginity in the face of Echo’s erotic passion. While Freud recognized that many people wouldn’t easily fit in to his defined roles, what the myth demonstrates is that gender is a much more fluid thing than even what Freud would allow.

However, for women who suffer from secondary narcissism, Freud proposes a possible solution: childbirth. “In the child to whom they give birth, a part of their own body comes to them as an object other than themselves, upon which they can lavish out of their narcissism complete object love” (Freud 1949, 47). The child is a reflection of themselves, yet also an external object, and as such the child suffices for redirecting the libidinal drives away from the ego and back into the external world. This solution demonstrates even further how narcissism shows that the subject is inherently divided and incomplete in the psychoanalytic view. But is this solution perhaps too simplistic? The mother finds her treatment for her narcissism in having a child, thus “completing” her. The very act of creating an image of oneself might itself be seen as narcissistic. By investing herself in this child, the mother has attempted to reproduce herself in an external object, but in doing so, she splits her subject even further. Even the shift away from narcissism that the child inspires in its helplessness (“I must care and love this thing that will die without me, love it above

all other things”) isn’t a clean return from narcissism to a whole subject. The mother has always already given up a part of herself to this child. In allowing her love for it to supersede her love for her own self, she still remains incomplete because it is this very thing outside of herself that is seen as being the completing force.

This incompleteness is at once exhilarating and terrifying for the narcissist. Observing that many of those suffering from paranoid schizophrenia are also narcissists, Freud argues that the narcissism of the paranoid manifests as a “new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, deems itself the possessor of all perfections” (Freud 1949, 51). Paranoid schizophrenics claim to have some sort of special relationship to the true nature of the world, often through claims of having an accurate understanding of the self-created and self-delusional²⁵ conspiracy theories that fuel many paranoiacs’ mental lives. The paranoiac’s claims of “being watched” (which is really just their super-ego at work, and not some vast conspiratorial force observing them) fuels both their fear of living in the world of their delusion, yet it also simultaneously justifies their paranoia. The paranoiac takes the feeling of being watched, and in their delusional state, believes it to be true. This sensation of being watched is then added to the paranoiac’s list of evidence in favor of their conspiracy theory being true. But, because the aforementioned sensation is really just the super-ego flexing its power, the paranoiac fails to appreciate that all that has really occurred is that their own fractured self is attempting to correct its very fractured nature. “The lament of the paranoiac shows also that at bottom the self-criticism of conscience is identical with, and based upon, self-observation” (Freud 1949, 53). Freud even speculated that philosophical inquiry is rooted in a healthy, i.e., non-psychotic, sense of self-observation and self-criticism (1949, 54).

²⁵ Again, this shouldn’t be understood with the usual condescension that one often hears used with the term in daily life, but rather in the psychological sense of actually suffering from false ideas about the world, often through hallucinatory images and sounds.

3.3 Lacan and the Mirror Stage

This simultaneous double movement between exhilaration and terror is best expressed in the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's work on what separates infant, or primary narcissism, from adult narcissism in his essay "The Mirror Stage." There he describes the moment that infants begin to see themselves as both subject and object. "This moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification of the imago of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy...the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations" (Lacan 1977, 5).²⁶ The actual experiment that the essay draws its name from involves placing an infant or animal (sometimes an infant, sometimes not) in front of a mirror, and observing how long it takes them to recognize that a dot has been painted on them. Again, the sense of doubling is reproduced here: the mirror stage is both a literal experiment that has been tested on various mammals, specifically human and chimpanzee infants in Lacan's work, but also elephants and dolphins in others' work;²⁷ the mirror stage is also a metaphor for the burgeoning conflict between conscious and unconscious portion of the mind.

In the closing stages of the "Mirror Stage," Lacan critiques the position taken by his contemporaries in the existentialism movement. Attacking Camus's endorsement of suicide as the fundamental philosophical question, Lacan warns of, "a personality that realizes itself only in suicide; a consciousness of the other than can be satisfied only by Hegelian murder" (Lacan 1977, 6). Hegelian murder occurs when others make us objects, or when we do the same thing to them. Here Lacan is referencing G.W.F. Hegel's famous "Master-Slave Dialectic," from his work the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. "And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus

²⁶ Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Ecrits: A Selection*. New York: Norton, 1977. 1-7.

²⁷ See Dylan Evans' "From Lacan to Darwin" in *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative* (eds. Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005, 38-55).

is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, not the *immediate* form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it that could not be regarded as a vanishing point, that is *being-for-self*' (Hegel 1977, 31).²⁸ What it means to be is to be recognized as something with being, not just by one's own self, but other beings as well. For Hegel, it was only through another as Other that we were able to even conceive of ourselves as selves. It is through interaction with (the) Otherness itself that creates subjectivity. Yet even as we desire to be recognized by others, to have our consciousness reflected, mirrored, doubled in their own, we become terrified of the Other, for our will, which governs our own self, does not inherently govern theirs as well. We must struggle against them, and when Narcissus tells the voice in the wood to come to him, to appear at his call of "*Veni!*" Echo's appearance is terrifying for him. Why? Her willingness shocks him out of his own self-involvement, his own narcissism; Echo's appearance is that of another consciousness that he doesn't control. "*Emoriar, quam sit tibi copia nostri!*" Narcissus cries, "May I die before I give you power over me!" (Ovid 3.391). He can't comprehend another consciousness than his own, as it is something that escapes his grasp, his understanding, and thus his control.

But why bring Hegel into psychoanalysis at all? What role does Hegelian dialectics play at all in the psychoanalytic situation? One of Lacan's great achievements was thinking psychoanalysis in and through the history of philosophy, most especially via Hegel's dialectical reasoning. The Master-Slave Dialectic provides an especially unique example of how the Hegelian dialectical movement works within the psychoanalytic scene. "Lacan's reinterpretation of the relationship between psychoanalysis and the history of philosophy exhibits a distinction which parallels that between the Freud of the countertransference and the Freud of transference [in the

²⁸ Hegel, G.W.F. *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. New York: Oxford, 1977.

Dora case], between the Imaginary and the Symbolic” (Gearhart 1990, 119).²⁹ Lacan is thus not only demonstrating how philosophy benefits the psychoanalyst, but he is likewise showing the philosopher what psychoanalysis brings to the table as well.³⁰ Gearhart argues that Lacan’s reading of Freud through Hegel gives psychoanalytic proceedings the triadic structure of the Hegelian dialectic, which in turn highlights and illuminates the process by which an analysis of the patient is produced. This is most apparent in the movements of transference and countertransference between the patient and therapist.

3.4 Narcissism and Dora

Freud wrote his essay on narcissism in 1914, several years into his practice as a psychoanalyst. As such, by this time he was well aware of the dangers of transference and countertransference that occurred in the psychoanalytic scene, i.e., during the therapeutic session itself. At the end of the essay on narcissism he gives a warning to future psychoanalysts to be wary of the narcissistic patient, who seeking to cure their condition by gaining the love instead of an analysis from their therapist. “Indeed, he [the narcissist] cannot believe in any other curative mechanism [than love]; he usually brings expectations of this sort with him to the treatment and then directs them to the person of the physician” (Freud 1949, 59). Transference occurs when the patient places upon the therapist their desires for what they hope to achieve through the therapy; this is often made through an erotic attachment. Countertransference, then, is when the therapist places their hopes for the session on the patient. A good therapist or psychoanalyst is constantly on watch to prevent either of these, as they upset the patient’s progress away from neurosis and

²⁹ Gearhart, Suzanne. “The Scene of Psychoanalysis: The Unanswered Questions of Dora.” *In Dora’s Case: Freud – Hysteria – Feminism*. 2nd Ed. Ed. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. 105-127.

³⁰ More specifically, psychoanalysis demonstrates a lack on the part of philosophy, a lack to understand the lack itself, i.e., the unconscious.

may even threaten to send them into psychosis (which Freud believed was untreatable by psychoanalytic means, something which Lacan disputed). This becomes especially apparent in Freud's first major psychoanalytic case study, published as "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," but is more commonly referred to by the patient's pseudonym, Dora.

In brief, Dora was a young woman who was suffering from hysterical symptoms after her father had discovered her associating with a known lesbian. Dora was being sexually harassed by her father's friend, named as Herr K. in the case study. To complicate matters further, Dora's father was having an affair with Herr K.'s wife. Shortly after developing hysterical symptoms (including psychosomatic pains and aches), Dora's father had her sent to Freud for analysis. The sessions spent between Freud and Dora were marked by great difficulty; Dora often resisted Freud's interpretation of her actions and dreams. Dora ended the analysis before they cured her hysteria, but over a year later she returned to Freud to let him know that his treatment had helped greatly, and that her hysteria was entirely cured. However, a later report by Felix Deutsch throws much doubt on this ending.³¹ Furthermore, as the Dora case was published in 1905, Freud wasn't yet aware of the dangers of transference and countertransference (Marcus 1990, 89).³²

In Dora, Lacan sees three key dialectical reversals where the conflict between the patient's desire for their love-object and the analyst's desire to succeed at curing the patient comes into being. "What is involved is a scansion of structures in which truth is transmuted for the subject of which her 'objects' are a function. This means that the conception of the case history is identical

³¹ Deutsch, Felix. "A Footnote to Freud's 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria.'" *In Dora's Case: Freud – Hysteria – Feminism*. 2nd Ed. Ed. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. 35-43.

³²Marcus, Steven. "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History." *In Dora's Case: Freud – Hysteria – Feminism*. 2nd Ed. Ed. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. 35-43.

to the progress of the subject, that is, to the reality of the treatment” (Lacan 1990, 95).³³ It is interesting here that Lacan sees the structure of the analysis as scansion, that graphic representation of the metrical patterns of poetry. The structural scansion as metaphor shows the back and forth of the process of the analysis and how the truth is changed (transmuted) by the interference of the patient’s love-objects. The subject’s progress only occurs in this method of back and forth, of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, and as this scansion occurs in the analysis, we may see the progress of the treatment accordingly. Envisioning the case and the dialectic both as scansion will reveal the pattern within each.

Hegel’s argument that in order to be aware of one’s own self one is required to recognize others as having selves as well is an important distinction in the history of Western philosophy. “Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself” (Hegel 1977, 29). For Hegel, when self recognizes another, it is precisely seeing in that other it’s very own self. Lacan envisions psychoanalysis as this very relationship of one self to another, “What needs to be understood regarding psychoanalytic experience is that it proceeds entirely in a relationship of subject to subject...” (Lacan 1990, 93). For both Hegel and Lacan, though, this relationship is one of struggle. For Hegel, it is to see who gains master status – which of the two beings can overwhelm the other so that it and it alone is the one recognized as having self-consciousness. For Lacan, the danger is transference and countertransference, which he sees occurring in the dialectical reversals in the case of Dora.

In therapeutic practices, the person undergoing the treatment is (and should be) asked by the analyst what they hope to achieve. It is in this moment that Lacan identifies the first dialectical reversal, where Dora transfers her distaste of Herr K onto Freud. Freud, in suggesting to Dora that

³³ Lacan, Jacques. “Intervention on Transference.” *In Dora’s Case: Freud – Hysteria – Feminism*. 2nd Ed. Ed. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990. 92-104.

she should “‘Look to your own involvement,’ he tells hers, ‘in the disorder which you bemoan’” (Lacan 1990, 96) essentially says to Dora that she is responsible for hiding the illicit relationship between her father and Frau K. The second dialectical reversal occurs after the exploration of Dora’s oedipal relationship with her father; here, it is revealed that Dora identifies with her father as a subject-rival. This subject-rival is the being that Dora desires recognition from in this Hegelian sense of wanting yet fearing the other’s own self-consciousness. “They are, for each other, shapes of consciousness that have not yet accomplished the movement of absolute abstraction, of rooting out all immediate being, and of being merely the purely negative being of self-identical consciousness...” (Hegel 1977, 31). Dora’s father because of his impotency becomes too closely aligned with Dora herself vis-à-vis her own self-identification with him. She wants his full recognition, but as a man bereft of his own phallic virility, he cannot be seen as man, and thus occupies a space of less-than-man. Given that Dora identifies Herr K. with this weakness of her father (he is simply a substitute for “the real thing”), and that Freud is also identified with both her father and Herr K., who else could Dora possibly be oriented to?

In the third and final dialectical reversal that Lacan identifies in the case, Dora has moved away from both her father and Herr K. to Frau K. What Frau K. represents to Dora is the nature of adult femininity. “Woman is the object which it is impossible to detach from a primitive oral desire, and yet in which she must learn to recognize her own genital nature” (Lacan 98). Lacan notes that Freud should have focused on how impotent men please women via cunnilingus rather than receiving fellatio; this act represents for Dora the nature of female sexuality. In Hegelian terms, she over-identified with her father, and thus subsumed his self-consciousness within her own; she could see no other, but herself in him. Thus she could not receive the recognition of self-consciousness that she desired. In the Master-Slave Dialectic, the master overpowers the slave,

and demands sole recognition, but in denying the slave's own self-consciousness, the master has inadvertently defused the power that the master sought all along. Lacan reads all women as occupying this slave position – “As is true for all women...the problem of her condition is fundamentally that of accepting herself as an object of desire for the man, and this is for Dora the mystery motivating her idolatry for Frau K.” (Lacan 1990, 99). Frau K., then, is, in Hegelian terms, a slave who has found self-consciousness in her work. “Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is” (Hegel 35). This is the brilliant move that Lacan achieves here by linking the Hegelian dialectic not just with transference/countertransference, but also with the psychosexual development. Frau K. synthesizes her oral desire in her genital desire by being the woman who receives sexual pleasure from an oral act on the genitals. This is what makes her a mystery to Dora, and for Dora, Frau K. represents all that she (Dora) is not. This is also what drives Dora's fear, for if she is to become a woman like Frau K., to finally find her own self-consciousness, she will become just another tool in the master's house, who can be discarded at whim by her husband (“My wife is nothing to me” and “If she is nothing to you, then what are you to me?” [Lacan 1990, 101]). This is Freud's failing: that he is not able to see beyond his own desires in Dora's case to actually seeing Dora herself. Like all the other men in Dora's life, he has simply become another master.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

Following from the previous chapter, it is only through interaction with others that we can begin to see ourselves as a self. What psychoanalysis does is to extend this Ovidian-Hegelian notion; the self is created not only by confrontation with the Other, as in Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, but also in one's self confronting itself as a self, as Lacan demonstrated in “The Mirror Stage.” The distinction between primary and secondary narcissism, and the role in which they

play in both love and mourning, as well as in the stage of psychoanalysis, i.e., the session between patient and analyst, will arise again in Chapter Four in the discussion on the film *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*. Primary narcissism makes love possible by providing an avenue for the recognition of the other in us. Secondary narcissism removes any such boundaries, wholly consuming the other to the point where there is only the singular self (i.e., one's own). This relates to the dangers of transference and countertransference – as patient and analyst attempt to empathize with each other, they must struggle not to project their own fantasies, desires, and traumas onto one another. To do so runs the risk of the analysis failing, and the (now secondary) narcissist to not love at all.

4. ECHO DECONSTRUCTED

Even though psychoanalysis is very critical of the classic notion of the subject, as a discipline it still retains a certain sense of the subject: a subject who is fractured by the conflicts between the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind, and further by the divisions between id, ego, and super-ego. However, one must ask, if this subject is already so divided, between conscious and unconscious drives, desires, etc., is there actually a subject there at all? For the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who, unlike Freud, has directly referenced the myth of Echo and Narcissus in several of his works, the answer is much more complicated.

4.1 The (Non)Liquidation of the Subject

Two contemporary French philosophers, Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, accused Derrida, as well as many other thinkers who were associated with post-structuralism, of attempting to liquidate the subject.³⁴ Highly critical of what they refer to as the “thought of ’68,”³⁵ they argued that the subject needed to be saved and rehabilitated from the post-structuralists and other critics of modernity (Derrida 1995, 256). However, what Derrida rightly points out is that many of the targets of Ferry and Renaut’s critique actually weren’t opposed to the idea of a subject, and often retained, at least in part, the classical subject.³⁶ “Did Lacan 'liquidate' the subject? No. The

³⁴ Ferry, Luc, and Alain Renaut. *French Philosophy of the Sixties. An Essay on Antihumanism*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

³⁵A reference to the massive protests that shook the French government and society as a whole during the month of May, 1968, that led to the near collapse of the de Gaul government. See “The Beginning of an Era” in *Situationist International* 12 (September 1969). Trans. by Ken Knabb. www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/beginning.html

³⁶ Furthermore, Ferry and Renaut’s critique of Derrida fails because they actually embrace the deconstruction of the subject, as Ned Lukacher points out in his review of *Glas*:

Ferry and Renaut conclude that Derrida's texts are not, as he claims, “assembled otherwise (*l'agencement de ces textes est autre*),” but that they conform to a quite traditional and identifiable notion of the subject, that “this disorganization is ably organized, and that here we touch on the great naiveté of this type of enterprise: that it is always a subject who decides to erase itself as subject” ([1990,] 193-94). What is astonishing about this facile caricature of Derrida's deconstruction of the subject is that it incorporates the logic of *Glas* itself, for *Glas* is precisely and relentlessly committed to the logic of stricture that binds the subject formally and intractably to a

decentered 'subject' of which he speaks certainly doesn't have the traits of the classical subject (and even here, we'd have to take a closer look...), though it remains indispensable to the economy of the Lacanian theory” (Derrida 1995, 256).³⁷ This defense of Lacan against Ferry and Renault succeeds on two levels: first, by showing that Ferry and Renault’s critique is fundamentally flawed by attacking those who actually aren’t in direct opposition to Ferry and Renault’s own position; secondly, it advances Derrida’s own critique of Lacan’s argument on the subject. “There has never been The Subject for anyone, that's what I wanted to begin by saying. The subject is a fable, as you [Jean-Luc Nancy] have shown, but to concentrate on the elements of speech and *conventional* fiction that such a fable presupposes is not to stop taking it seriously (it is the serious itself)...” (Derrida 1995, 264). This model of subjectivity, even though such a subject does not exist as classically conceived (e.g., by Descartes), even though it is a fable, a story, a myth, is one we must take seriously precisely because we are effects of subjectivity, i.e., that the subject itself is an effect of the various things that construct it (language, history, etc.), and not subjects-as-essences (i.e., the subject is not an essence). “Derrida never contests that there is always a subject that decides; his point is rather that the decision never took place on the grounds the subject thought it did and that the decision has effects that the subject cannot account for” (Lukacher 1987, 1198).³⁸ This is perhaps what calls Derrida back again and again to the myth of Echo, for it too is a myth that calls us to question what it means to be human.

Throughout his many works, Derrida continually argues against the transcendental signifiers of our intellectual history. A transcendental signifier is something which both unites a

series of self-erasures and reinscriptions...In their irrepressible desire to make *Glas* the exemplary naive test of the 60s, Ferry and Renault perform their own act of stricture. (Lukacher 1987, 1198)
[Full citation below.]

³⁷ Derrida, Jacques. "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject." *Points...Interviews, 1974-1994*. Ed. Elisabeth Weber. Trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. 255-287.

³⁸ Lukacher, Ned. "Rev. of *Glas* and *Glassary*". *Modern Language Notes* 102 (5) (1987): 1196–1201.

narrative of conceptual thought and gives final and ultimate meaning to a whole host of associated concepts. Often, as is the case in religion, the meaning that the transcendental signifier seeks to provide is fundamental to understanding how the world itself came to be. For example, in Christianity, the figure of Christ as the second person of the Holy Trinity (God as the Word Made Flesh) is a transcendental signifier. Through the crucifixion, according to Christian theology, Christ redeems all people and offers the chance of salvation to all who choose to believe that he is the messiah. The following resurrection of Christ is seen as an act where death itself is conquered from within, by one who died, and through this act, gives all who believe the chance as well to conquer death and live forever. This in turn props up a whole system of Christian belief, including its eschatology and ethics.

Derrida rejects all transcendental signifiers as being grounded in a metaphysics of presence – that is, the tradition of Western intellectual history to privilege that which is present before us, and that which also makes something present. He is especially critical of the way in which transcendental signifiers operate, dominate, and infiltrate language. Derrida resists embracing transcendental signifiers precisely because he rejects the notion that there could be any ultimate, fundamental, truth-bestowing meaning granted by a presence that rises above and beyond its absence. If anything, Derrida argues, it is the relationship between binary opposites that gives them both meaning, but which also prevents any final meaning between the two. Here, Derrida is drawing on, but also critiquing and extending the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's argument that in language, there are only differences between signs.³⁹ Saussure argues that language only develops meaning in relation to itself – words only mean something because they relate to one another. The common example of this idea is that when one seeks to define a word, such as a word

³⁹ Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Eds. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. Trans. Roy Harris. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1983.

in a dictionary, one is forced to use other words to do so, but in order to understand those words, further words must be used and so on and so forth. Thus, no word escapes its being mired in a whole system of relationships to one another. For Derrida, signs are not only marked by their differences, but also by the deferral between them – both the literal time it takes to utter or digest a new sign, but also the metaphoric hierarchy that we establish between the signs of binary oppositions: good and evil, right and wrong, man and woman, transcendent and immanent, etc. Because all signs exist in this fashion, none of them can act as a transcendental signifier, and thus they can't escape this relationship; it is impossible. Many saw Derrida's work as a negative or even nihilistic, but this is mistaken because it is the transcendental signifiers that instead keep us trapped. The rejection of transcendental signifiers does entail a certain responsibility, but it also grants us a certain freedom that we lack as well. Derrida's deconstruction of the transcendental signifiers involved in hospitality is a strong example of this relationship between responsibility and freedom that rejecting transcendental signifiers brings.

4.2 Hospitality and Echo

In the preface to *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Derrida traces a sense of the *a venir*, the "to come" in Echo, and connects it with the state of politics in contemporary times. "If I seem to be insisting a bit too much on these *Metamorphoses*, it is because everything in this famous scene turns around a call *to come* [*a venir*]....[Each] time once and for all, one does not see *coming* what remains *to come*, the *to come* turns out to be the most insistent theme of this book....[These] lectures [that make up the book] seem to invoke a certain *reason to come*, as *democracy to come*..." (Derrida 2005^a, xii).⁴⁰ But what is meant by this "to come"? It is important to note that Derrida here is playing on a whole host of words related to the French verb *venir*. For example, the "to come"

⁴⁰ Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

plays on the future *l'avenir* by allowing for a something that is not yet, that hasn't yet come to be. It plays on the present as *arrivant*, "to arrive," or "to happen." It can also be the *revenir*, the one "to come again," or "to come back." The "to come" is the possibility of the impossibility of the event, for when (if) it arrives, it comes from above, disturbing the expected and surprising the one who awaits its arrival. Like Walter Benjamin's conception of weak messianism, a messiah that always stands poised to arrive on the threshold of the temporal, but hasn't yet arrived, the "to come" is a guest that has not yet arrived, a messianism without a messiah, a hospitality without a restriction on the guest, a forgiveness which is not merely reconciliation. Derrida further plays with the language of arrival by turning the "to come" to the topic of hospitality. In French, *hôte* refers to both the guest and the host; in his deconstruction of hospitality, Derrida argues that the *hôte*, as both guest and host, ultimately requires that the host also becomes a guest in their own home. Derrida identifies two different but not contradictory kinds of hospitality: the unconditional law of unlimited hospitality (the transcendental version of hospitality), and the laws of hospitality (the immanent acts of rules and regulations created by governments and societies). "The two meanings of hospitality remain irreducible to one another, but it is the pure and hyperbolic hospitality in whose name we should always invent the best dispositions, the least bad conditions, the most just legislation, so as to make it as effective as possible" (Derrida 2005^b, 67).⁴¹ We treat hospitality as though it were a universal principle (Derrida 2002, 361).⁴² Yet, we fail at this absolute hospitality because of our protective concern for our "home," whether this be our literal house, nation, profession, etc. We hold this concern above all others and our hospitality has been always already been involved in an exchange of economy and power – "My home is yours so long as you obey my rules." Even asking the name of the guest prevents this pure, radical, hyperbolic

⁴¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Paper Machine*. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

⁴² Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Religion*. Trans. Gil Anidjar. New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

form of hospitality because in needing to know their name, I have already imposed a limit on my generosity.⁴³ How we greet one another is also an issue; do I invite the other in with a smile and open gestures, or am I sad and frowning, perhaps even crying? Such a gesture would undermine my very gesture of hospitality. In *Acts of Religion*, Derrida makes a passing reference to how certain tribes in the Americas would greet guests with tears, as though those guests had come to them already deceased (359). For this is the state of the *hôte* as guest; even as we are ethically obligated to welcome the newcomer in this sense of absolute (pure, unconditional, hyperbolic, etc.) hospitality, the guest can't stay infinitely as guest. Either they become assimilated into the "home" (society, nation-state, profession, etc.) that they have been welcomed into, or they leave, whether by force as when so-called illegal immigrants are deported, or by their own volition, e.g., the foreign exchange student returning to their native country after their formal education has been completed. The guest disappears, but we must remain open to them as *revenant*, the one who comes back, without any previous preconception of what or who a guest is.

It is clear that Echo is the *hôte*, both in the sense of host and guest, of Ovid's tale. Through her declaration of love, she invites Narcissus in, welcoming him without even inquiring of his name. Likewise, she remains poised on the threshold of the pond, waiting for Narcissus to welcome her in; her voice is always poised to repeat what he says without saying exactly how he said it. Likewise, even after Narcissus dies, Echo's voice remains, ready to respond to the call of the other at a moment's notice. Echo never places any restrictions on Narcissus', or indeed, anyone else's, speech or actions. And as one whose very voice marks the return of another's language,

⁴³ There is also a deconstruction of ownership at play in Derrida's critique of hospitality, that was greatly influenced by Emmanuel Levinas' work, such as in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

she is always already the one who can (will) return – her voice is a ghost, a revenant, haunting the rocky hills and caves, as Ovid notes.

Elsewhere, Derrida speaks on how the voice, Echo's weapon of choice⁴⁴, acts as the means itself to disrupting the notion that there is a subject. "Derrida revises the history of identity in suggesting that the projections of voice reveal the space or gap between origins of speech (the speaker) and what is thrown out as the simulation of the speaker's presence" (O'Donnell 1992, 3).⁴⁵ The sounds of one's voice are conceived initially to be the sole domain of a single speaker, or subject. However, the act of speaking projects one's words out into the world for all to (potentially) hear. One has no control over who hears what; one need only look at the numerous examples of secretly or inadvertently recorded speech of politicians, journalists, and celebrities that led to their embarrassment and/or dismissal.⁴⁶ Technology, then, further acts to remove the speaker from "their" speech - if I can't even control whose listening in the room when I talk, how do I have any chance of affecting those who listen to me speak thousands of miles away via video, television, the Internet, etc. The issue is further problematized when sound editing technology is brought into play. Once recorded, my words can be digitally altered in a million possible ways, limited only by the imagination of the editor. My speech is no longer my own. Echo likewise acts as this sound editor, choosing at her discretion what she will and will not repeat. "Although she repeats, without simulacrum, what she has just heard, another simulacrum slips in to make her response something more than a mere reiteration" (Derrida 2005, xii). Again, we see a claim that should be taken seriously: her voice has life.

⁴⁴ A weapon against the "tyranny of a jealous goddess" (Derrida 2005^a, xii).

⁴⁵ O'Donnell, Patrick. *Echo Chambers: Figuring Voice in Modern Narrative*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992.

⁴⁶ Such as the campaign donor dinner where former Massachusetts state governor Mitt Romney disdained half the country for their poverty, a significant faux pas that ultimately helped to lead to his defeat during his 2012 presidential campaign.

In Pleshette DeArmitt's article "Resonance of Echoes: A Derridean Allegory," she traces the use of the myth of Echo in Derrida's work. What she finds is that the search for the subject is bound in a narcissistic sense of selfhood. Derrida argues in that Narcissus is like a blind man because he can only see his reflection and nothing else. "Yet, like a blind man feeling his way in the dark, he will ceaselessly attempt to sketch his own portrait, to trace his own image. And, even though each gesture of narcissistic reappropriation is destined to fail, such gestures must be attempted, time and again, if there is to be any relation to the other, any love, any hospitality" (DeArmitt 2009, 90).⁴⁷ Echo's reappropriation of Narcissus's words gives life to both his love and her own. In order to do so, Echo must "eat" Narcissus's words, ingesting them as we do food. DeArmitt draws a connection here between the ethical obligations that the other places on us discussed in Derrida's "Eating Well." Just as Narcissus represents the visual, the gaze, the eyes of the other, Echo stands for the voice and the ears and the means by which my own words are separated from any sense of me.

In each experience, we find ourselves *before* the other (as one is before the law), who will have always come *before* us. Thus, to (the other) well, with eye, ear, or mouth, would not only involve an identification with the other by repeating him, but also require respect for the voice or the gaze of the other, which, as our law, 'is in us who are before it' [Derrida 1995, 283]. (DeArmitt2009, 94)

The eating of the other is like the ear swallowing up all sound that it hears, taking in everything it chooses to just like a mouth does with food and air. However, because of this loss of the classical sense of the subject (the master of one's own speech), we cannot totally appropriate the other within ourselves, they will always resist a complete incorporation. Thus, Echo and Narcissus are connected with mourning and not just love. The other's death lingers on in me, their spirit stirring

⁴⁷ DeArmitt, Pleshette. "Resonances of Echo: A Derridean Allegory." *Mosaic* 42/2. June 2009.

restlessly in the rocky caves of my psyche, and I am haunted by the lack of their physical, bodily presence, which makes their ghostly, psychical presence all the more intense.

Derrida is also at turns critical and sympathetic to Freud's understanding of narcissism. Having been accused of being narcissistic himself,⁴⁸ Derrida understands narcissism as an antimonial relationship between life and death. Life itself is narcissistic, because it is in love with itself; the desire to stay alive is a love for oneself, but, as Freud argued, it also through narcissism that we are able to love others. This is because we find a reflection of at least some part of ourselves in the form of the other. "What is called non-narcissism is in general but the economy of a much more welcoming, hospitable narcissism, one that is much more open to the experience of the other as other" (Derrida 1995, 199).⁴⁹ In this sense, narcissism, as an extension of the libidinal forces that drive us towards life, is a defense against death. Death "hates" us because it ends us, negates us, destroys not only our projects, but also our very ability to have and achieve projects at all. Self-love is thus a protection from death.

However, Derrida stands against Freud in two ways: 1) there is no singular form of narcissism (that exists in either a primary or secondary mode) and 2) we are all narcissistic, not just the neurotic and psychotic. While Freud thinks we all began as narcissistic (i.e., primary or childish narcissism) and that we eventually grow out of it, as we saw in Chapter Two, Derrida thinks that this narcissism remains, fractures, and becomes many different types of narcissism. "Beyond that, there are little narcissisms, there are big narcissisms, and there is death in the end, which is the limit. Even in the experience – if there is one – of death, narcissism does not abdicate

⁴⁸ E.g., when he wrote on Gilles Deleuze after Deleuze's death; see Jacques Derrida, "I'm Going to Have to Wander All Alone," in *The Work of Mourning* (trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2001).

⁴⁹ Derrida, Jacques. "There is No *One* Narcissism (Autobiophotographies)." *Points...Interviews, 1974-1994*. Ed. Elisabeth Weber. Trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. 196-215.

absolutely” (Derrida 1995, 199). One can be more or less narcissistic, as opposed to Freud’s absolute measures of narcissism. When we encounter death, narcissism is there to preserve us against it, such as when a loved one dies. This is because we focus on our pain as mourners, how sorrowful we are that we must lose the one who has died. We can’t empathize with the dead one at all because we have no idea what it is like to die, but we can feel the loss that this death has generated in our own selves.

4.3 Dasein: Death and Birth

While Derrida does critique the psychoanalytic notion of subjectivity in “Eating Well,” his main target both there and elsewhere is the work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Simon Critchley succinctly summarizes Martin Heidegger’s magnum opus, *Being and Time*,⁵⁰ as “...being is time. That is, what it means for a human being to be is to exist temporally in the stretch between birth and death. Being is time and time is finite, it comes to an end with our death. Therefore, if we want to understand what it means to be an authentic human being, then it is essential that we constantly project our lives onto the horizon of our death, what Heidegger calls ‘being-towards-death’” (Critchley 2008, 204-205).⁵¹ To be is to only be for so long, and so long as we keep in mind that our time is limited, and we live with that understanding in mind, we are acting authentically with regards to our death. With that in mind, there are at least two archetypal phenomenal events described in: birth and death. What constitutes these events is their relationship to possibility.

First, it is important to realize that death is the possibility of the impossibility of our possibility. What is meant by that? Simply this: to be human, or Dasein, as Heidegger refers to human beings, is to be in such a way that we have the possibility of defining ourselves. We are

⁵⁰ Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.

⁵¹ Critchley, Simon. *The Book of Dead Philosophers*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008.

thrown into the world and it is alien to us because we did not create it, we are still able to explore the world; create art, philosophy, music, etc.; love, hate, feel sorrow, feel joy, etc. etc. We are able to impose ourselves on the world – this is our possibility. However, death threatens that possibility, it is the ultimate arrest on our life, for so long as we live we are presented with the possibility of living differently. “When Dasein reaches its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the being of the there” (Heidegger 2010, 229). Death denies us the ability to exist in the here and now, or to revel in the past or contemplate the future even – it is the ultimate temporal limit of our experience as human beings. Furthermore, we can die at any time for we have no knowledge of exactly when and how we will die. This is the possibility of impossibility; if death is that which renders Dasein impossible, then the threat of death is always a possibility, even from the moment of our birth. “Dasein’s awareness that it will die, that it may die at any moment, means that ‘dying’, its attitude to or ‘being towards’ its own death, pervades, and shapes its whole life” (Inwood 1997, 69).⁵² If we didn’t have this awareness, then life becomes somewhat pastoral and hedonistic; the threat of one’s own death motivates us in a way that encourages and drives us to act.

It is interesting to note that for Heidegger, again as mentioned above, death is not something we experience. We can experience dying, but not the actual moment of death itself. This creates a certain sense of anxiety within us. “In anxiety, Dasein finds itself *faced* with the nothingness of the possible impossibility of its existence. Anxiety is anxious *about* the potentiality-of-being of the being thus determined, and thus discloses the most extreme possibility” (Heidegger 2010, 254). Death isn’t experienced because we are not yet dead; Dasein ends with its end, but that knowledge is often of little comfort to the living or even those who are close to death.

⁵² Inwood, Michael. *Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Anxiety arises from confronting the possibility of the most extreme possibility, i.e., impossibility itself (our death).

One last note on death before we move onto birth: I have been using the words “we” and “our” to describe the relationship between Dasein and death, but this is incorrect, for Heidegger argues that Dasein’s relationship to death is in the singular first-person perspective. “Death does not just ‘belong’ in an undifferentiated way to one’s own Dasein, but it *lays claim* on it as something *individual*. The nonrelational character of death, understood in anticipation, individualizes Dasein down to itself” (Heidegger 2010, 252). Death’s character is nonrelational because I cannot relate my death to others, and vice versa. I anticipate only my death – others’ deaths are not important in the same way that my own is because my relation to my death defines me utterly as the end of me period.

Just as death is the ultimate end of my possibility, birth too is an end, but whereas death is the end of my future possibilities, birth is the endpoint of my past choices. If one imagines one’s life as a drawn line, birth and death are clearly the points at which the line begins and ends. Thus, birth is the beginning of all my possibilities, but as we saw above, as soon as one is born, one is old enough to die. Thus birth makes the possibility of my impossibility *possible*. Furthermore, birth, like death, is inappropriable because it arrives before I am ready to appropriate it because I don’t exist yet; birth is the moment of thrownness that echoes out for the rest of our lives. This thrownness prevents us from ever being completely ourselves, wholly unique and always being-towards-death, and this creates within us a sense of guilt. This guilt as being guilty of not being myself completely begins with birth and ends with death, as death annihilates all our projects.

We thus see that Dasein is stretched between two points: birth and death. The first is the absolute beginning for the individual (because I did not exist before it) where I am thrown into the

world (because I did not create the world or its inhabitants, not even and most especially myself). The second is the ultimate end of the individual (because I will not exist after it) where all my projects are annihilated (because as I no longer exist I can't work towards them at all). In this space between birth and death, life occurs, a movement from beginning to end. It is here in this space that the event of Dasein itself occurs. It is here, bound between two impossible events that the eventfulness of me is constituted.

Derrida criticizes Heidegger as both wanting to eliminate metaphysics, yet falling back into a metaphysical trap nonetheless. This is also the case in Derrida's critique of Heidegger's rejection of humanism, which is tied in directly with Heidegger's argument against subjectivity, for the humanism of Heidegger is specifically about the human as a subject. In the essay, "The Ends of Man,"⁵³ Derrida especially takes to task Heidegger's rejection of humanism, arguing that while Heidegger may reject a traditional or simpler form of humanism, he replaces that with an anthropocentric privileging of Dasein.

In the beginning of the essay, there are three movements as Derrida examines Heidegger's rejection of what I will call traditional humanism. The first movement recalls the long history of humanism in the French intellectual tradition. One need merely think of Sartre and his work *Existentialism is a Humanism*, but there are others, such as Descartes. From there his critique centers on Sartre's misinterpretation of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. Sartre wrongly claims that each is a humanist, when, in fact, they aren't (at least in the traditional sense, which Sartre fails to distinguish). Derrida's third movement then launches into a discussion of how the critique of humanism is limited in its anti-humanism. This leads us into the fourth and most important movement.

⁵³ Derrida, Jacques. "The Ends of Man." *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. 111-136.

Derrida is deeply suspicious of Heidegger's privileging of Dasein, especially in the emphasis that Heidegger places on the subject of Dasein, who is, for all intents and purposes, the human being. "...Dasein has ontological priority over all other beings--as a being in the possibility of existence [*Existenz*]..." (Heidegger 2010, 35). The human being for Heidegger is that being which has a special relationship to being; it is not an entity among other entities. Instead, it is the being who has the event of being. In plain words, humans are concerned about their ontological existence. We worry about our lives, and what it means to be, in the Shakespearean sense (i.e., "To be or not to be"). We are the only living thing, as far as Heidegger (and most of the traditional and contemporary philosophy) is concerned who asks that question which wonders if I'm living the good life. In a way, we're the only creature who thinks, and ponders, and questions, and does work towards finding out if there is something more to who we are than just flesh and bone. Dasein is not "man," the historical construct, but rather (hu)man as understood ontologically.

What Derrida takes issue with is Heidegger's understanding of the proper state of human being, especially in the motif of the proximity of Dasein and being. "We can see then that Dasein, though not man, is nevertheless nothing other than man" (Derrida 1982, 127). Derrida's concern here is that Heidegger has simply transformed Dasein into a kind of anthropocentric ontological project, which makes the phenomenological truth of Dasein, i.e., its being, into a transcendental signifier. Heidegger's very Dasein-centeredness, which is the human in all but explicit naming, turns Heidegger and his work into an actually stronger form of humanism than anything Sartre, Descartes, or anyone else did! This is because of the subtlety of his commentary on Dasein - it is at once couched in terms that would make it seem that any being that had being could be Dasein (there is no hierarchy to Dasein). But what actually occurs is that Heidegger rejects the idea that anything not human could be Dasein. "Heidegger does not simply say 'The animal is poor in

world (*weltarm*),’ for as distinct from the stone, it has a world. He says: the animal *has* a world in the mode of a *not-having*” (Derrida 1995, 277). Animals are thus deprived from ever being able to have an authentic existence, of ever being able to discover the being of being. This is the subtlety of Heidegger’s work: he hasn’t denied the animal a place, like a Sartre or Descartes would do. Instead, he has merely relegated them to the position of less-than-Other.⁵⁴ He has stripped them of the chance to have Dasein before one even wonders if they can ask the same questions of being that humanity does. They are not removed from the discourse, but pushed aside in favor of that which has the proper relationship to being, the human. This proper is like any other transcendental signifier--it freezes the play of signs in favor of a simplistic, totalitarian explanation that doesn’t actually reach the heart of the matter.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

Derrida sought consistently to challenge the privileging of the subject as classically conceived (e.g., in Descartes and Cartesian-inspired versions, such as in Lacan). In place of this classic subject, Derrida didn’t seek to simply to “liquidate” the subject, nor replace it with something that was presumably more primordial and fundamental to our ontology than “mere” subjectivity. Such attempts, Derrida warns us, play into the same tradition of a metaphysics of presence that we find throughout the history of philosophy. This is what occurred with Heidegger’s attempts to replace the subject with Dasein; Dasein still maintains a privileging of

⁵⁴ There is a question as to whether the animal in Heidegger’s discourse is actually less than Dasein, or simply other than it. If it is the case that animal is actually simply other than Dasein, than it becomes less clear what precisely Dasein is. Heidegger ascribes to the animal a sadness because it can’t understand its relationship to death in the same way that Dasein can. Sadness implies a sorrow at a lack of some feature or structure; one feels sad that one doesn’t have something, not that one is different from something (though that difference can be construed as a lack, perhaps). So is the animal sad because it doesn’t have something, or because it has mistook its own being as lacking something that it never had and can’t have? For a complete list of the appearances of the animal’s sadness in Heidegger’s work, see Susanna Lindberg’s “Heidegger’s Animal” in *Phänomenologische Forschungen* (eds. Ernst Wolfgang Orth and Karl-Heinz Lembeck, 2004, www.helsinki.fi/teoretiskfilosofi/personal/Lindberg/Lindberg_Heideggersanimal.pdf).

presence. Echo, being bodiless and defying the relations between presence and proximity, presents us with a glimpse of this deconstructed subject that Derrida points us towards.

5. ECHO AS *ÉCRITURE FÉMININE*

We have seen how the myth of Echo has been used in a variety of contexts, from its ancient origins as a myth, to more recent literary, psychoanalytic, and philosophical uses. For all of these areas of study – mythology, literary criticism, psychoanalysis, philosophy – Echo’s tale, as told by Ovid, provides us with a clear relationship between how language and subjectivity are not only intertwined, but related to each other in a causal fashion. For the mythologist, Echo points to our desire to be heard by the ones we love; the literary critic (such as Hollander) sees Echo as a map, or *topos* as Roland Barthes would call it, of the relation between reader, author, and text. The psychoanalyst points to the fractured nature of the individual psyche, and how this fracturing can produce a neurotic or even psychotic person who is completely unable to hear or see the other as other. Finally, for the philosopher, Echo’s love for Narcissus drives home how deeply subjectivity is connected to relations: in Hegel, without the other, there is no self, and for Derrida, without the other, there is no love, no responsibility, and no possibility of making the impossible possible. However, there remains a discussion to be had on Echo’s voice itself, and also on how we might view Echo’s voice as a metonymical and metaleptic distinction for the language used and employed by women in our contemporary society. While there is an abundance of work on how women’s voices and language is perceived, I shall limit my focus here to two seminal writers, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray, and a critic of both, Kaja Silverman. I do this in part because of the massive influence that Cixous and Irigaray have had on the theorizing of feminine writing (*écriture féminine*) and language in general, but also because of the impact that their discourse has had on the realm of cinema and film. While critical of Irigaray and Cixous, Silverman both also demonstrate how the female subject is constructed in film. Finally, I will close this chapter and

conclude this work with an extended reflection on the film *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*, as a contemporary example of the myth of Echo and Narcissus.

5.1 Writing and the Body in Cixous

Cixous, in her highly influential essay “The Laugh of the Medusa,”⁵⁵ issues the women of the world an ultimatum of sorts, that they can participate in language and with themselves in one of two ways: by either being constrained by their bodies and the language that the patriarchy uses to oppress them with; or they, women, can embrace their bodies and the language that it brings to the forefront of their multitudinous, plural, lived experience. “What they have in common I will say. But what strikes me is the infinite richness of their individual constitutions: you can't talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes-any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible” (Cixous 1976, 876). Unlike the classical forms of logic and critical writing, which have been dominated not only by men, but by a patriarchal and masculinist thinking, Cixous embraces the many ways in which women can communicate and express themselves. Women’s writing isn’t uniform precisely because women’s bodies, and through said bodies, their sexuality, their erotic desire, isn’t uniform. Medical science supports this claim: while men almost universally receive physical erotic pleasure through direct stimulation of the penis, women’s bodies are much more fluid, with orgasm being achievable through a variety of means, including vaginal, clitoral, anal, manual manipulation of the breast⁵⁶, etc.; some women have even reported being able to achieve orgasm through kissing alone.⁵⁷ Thus,

⁵⁵ Cixous, Hélène. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” *Signs*, (1.4, Summer, 1976): 875-893.

⁵⁶ The breast, as symbolized by the roundness of an orange, would later become for Cixous the signifier par excellence of femininity and what feminism should strive for. See her works *Vivre l'orange* (Paris: Editions des femmes, 1979) and *Portrait du Soleil* (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1999).

⁵⁷ Researchers have even recently discovered a link between vaginal orgasms and the structures of adult human female lips, with those having a more prominent tubercle on the upper lip more prone to having vaginal orgasms.

Cixous argues, woman's language is intimately connected to her body and to her pleasure. For Cixous, writing and reason have historically been inextricably bound up together, and because both have been dominated by men, and masculine thought, the work produced in both is therefore consumed by what she calls "phallogentrism," that is the tendency of writing and reason to privilege the work and thought of man over and above woman. The phallus, as this dominating transcendental signifier, thus marks both writing and reason as the domain of man, where his rule and his alone, is seen as the highest form of intelligence and logic. Yet, this is precisely antithetical to the very reason for writing itself. "[T]hat this locus [of marked writing] has grossly exaggerated all the signs of sexual opposition (and not sexual difference), where woman has never *her* turn to speak - this being all the more serious and unpardonable in that writing is *precisely the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" (Cixous 1976, 879).⁵⁸ Writing, and given its mutual and symbiotic relationship with reason, then, cannot be the domain of any single gender alone. Writing, and language in general, is the very means by which we are able to challenge, subvert, transform, and sublimate the things which trap us in the power-relations of oppositional and often pointless hierarchical binaries. Cixous makes clear that language isn't simply an exercise in mediated thought, but is a phenomenological experience carried over and throughout the entire physiological form of a person's being. She gives the example of a woman who is speaking publically, and describes how we don't simply say that the woman spoke, but rather, "she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the "logic" of her speech. Her flesh

See Brody, Stuart, and Rui Miguel Costa. "Vaginal Orgasm Is More Prevalent Among Women with a Prominent Tubercle of the Upper Lip." *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* (8.10, October 2011): 2793-2799.

⁵⁸ Emphasis in the original.

speaks true. She lays herself bare” (Cixous 1976, 881). The space that writing (and all of language) opens up, makes possible, is embodied precisely because it is her, the female writer’s, body that she finds the means by which to escape phallogentric bonds. These bonds say to her that there are only two sexes, but as Cixous argues, in agreement with Freud, men and women alike both share the qualities associated with their genders and sexes thus making them actually bisexual.⁵⁹ But she quickly breaks away from the Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytic model, since, according to them, the successful and final movement for a girl child in her psychosexual development is to accept her submissive position before man. Rather, it is men’s fear of the bodily power (and thus the power of women’s language) that brings about this critique. “Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. That’s because they need femininity to be associated with death; it’s the jitters that gives them a hard-on! for themselves!” (Cixous 1976, 885). Here Cixous is referencing the title of her paper, as well as previous work done by Freud on Greek myth; Medusa is beautiful, but in her gaze, her expression of desire, men find it impossible to not reciprocate that desire and thus become “trapped” within themselves. Powerless before their own desire, a desire that runs strictly counter to the locus of their writing, their logic, their language, they can’t help but feel the joy of becoming erect even as it kills them. The little death thus becomes the complete death.

One might think of Neil Gaiman’s comic series *The Sandman*, where in a scene in the collected edition⁶⁰ *Brief Lives*,⁶¹ a modern incarnation of Ishtar, the Sumerian goddess of fertility,

⁵⁹ In the psychoanalytic sense, i.e., possessing cultural, as well as physiological and mental, traits of both genders; not to be confused with the contemporary meaning of being erotically attracted to two genders.

⁶⁰ A collected edition in comics is a collection of individual issues that cover the same storyline or plot; it is most analogous to a television series individual seasons. It is most often printed in the trade paperback format, though this isn’t necessary to the narrative or publication.

⁶¹ Gaiman, Neil (w.), Jill Thompson (a.), Vince Locke and Dick Giordano (i.). *The Sandman: Brief Lives*. Ed. Karen Berger, Lisa Aufenanger, and Alisa Kwitney. New York: Vertigo DC Comics, 1994.

love, sex, and war, ecstatically and fatally dances away her life and the patrons of the strip club where she works. As she dances, the male patrons stare on helplessly enraptured by their own desire, even to the point of physical harm – one patron in particular is described as violently ejaculating blood. Only a fellow stripper, a woman, who recognizes that “*The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable*” (Cixous 1976, 884),⁶² is able to escape death.⁶³

The means by which woman will escape from masculine writing and reason, thus away from patriarchal domination, is through the embrace of her body, and through it, the love that one can express deeply for another, as both other and same, and yet also beyond simply that. “Does this seem difficult? It's not impossible, and this is what nourishes life—a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies” (Cixous 1976, 893). The Hegelian *telos* is stuck in its constant repetition of reproduction; psychoanalysis can't think of love without (or even beyond) some sort of shared primary narcissism; these are the real pathways to death. Life exists in a plurality of sometimes contradictory desire, and it is this that the woman-writer, and arguably all people, ought to embrace.

5.2 Freud's Sexual Indifference

While not as critical of the psychoanalytic process itself, Irigaray likewise locates the source of woman's language in her body in *Speculum of the Other Woman*⁶⁴ though I must note that this isn't the only place where she does so.⁶⁵ What is at stake in both of these works, as Silverman so succinctly puts it, is her critique of Freud that argues that his understanding of woman

⁶² Emphasis in the original.

⁶³ Hegel doesn't escape Cixous's critique either; she explicitly connects the master-slave dialectic, and the dialectical form in general, with phallogentrism (1976, 893).

⁶⁴ Irigaray, Luce. *The Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

⁶⁵ See, for example, her work in *This Sex Which is Not One* (trans. Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

fails to account for the sexual difference that he seeks, and instead promotes sexual indifference (1988, 142).⁶⁶ Take for instance the section in *The Speculum of the Other Woman*, “The Little Girl is (Only) a Little Boy,” where Irigaray critiques the notion that the girl child initially goes through all of the same psychosexual development stages as the boy child. The lack of physiological difference is mirrored by the lack of psychosexual difference between the boy and the girl, yet the girl is treated as inferior to the boy nonetheless. Man is thus consumed with a paradoxical relationship with woman: forever seeking symmetry with her, he consigns her to an asymmetrical, inferior position the moment “she”⁶⁷ begins to break with his mold, i.e., his body as perfect form. Drawing heavily from Freud’s essay on femininity, Irigaray highlights how the little girl has only been conceived of as a little man in Freud all along. “The ‘differentiation’ into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same, since the little man that the little girl is, must become a man minus certain attributes whose paradigm is morphological—attributes capable of determining, of assuring, the reproduction-specularization of the same. A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman” (Irigaray 1985, 27). At all levels the woman is conceived as being the same as the man, only inferior. This is made most manifest at the Freudian insistence that the clitoris is simply a small penis,⁶⁸ and that the vagina is simply its literal name sake, i.e., a sheath, for the penis. Irigaray is especially critical of Freud’s notion that the clitoris is the only source of autoerotic pleasure that the little girl finds during the phallic

⁶⁶ Silverman, Kaja. *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana State University Press, 1988.

⁶⁷ As though it were really her that was in control of her hormonal and genetic data, and her response to psychic trauma.

⁶⁸ An idea which unfortunately despite being proved wrong by medical science, remains very prevalent in our contemporary society. Note the exchange between the characters Dante and Randall in the 2006 film *Clerks II*, where Randall criticizes Dante for engaging in oral sex with his fiancé. Dante asks him, “You wouldn’t wanna be with a girl with an oversized clit?” to which Randall replies “No, ‘cause the next step is a guy with an undersized dick.” O’Halloran, Brian, and Jeff Anderson. *Clerks II*. DVD. Directed by Kevin Smith. Beverly Hills: The Weinstein Company, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2006.

stage, that stage when she must (and successfully does) find a replacement for the penis she lacks. Noting that it is impossible for the little girl to have discovered such a zone without also having experience the other parts of the vagina, especially the vulva and labia, Irigaray notes that, for Freud, these never provide any form of erotic pleasure, auto- or otherwise and neither does any physiological part of the woman “that lack[s] masculine parameters” (1985, 29).

The problem becomes further compounded because, again according to Freud, in order for the girl child to successfully move on from the phallic stage and navigate the negative Oedipal complex without succumbing to neurosis or psychosis, she must reject the clitoris and learn to accept the vagina as the source of erotic pleasure for her husband, but not necessarily herself. If the clitoris is the sight of such excitement and pleasure, and the vagina is not, what reason would the little girl ever have for giving up the clitoris? Irigaray claims that the little girl, under the Freudian model, doesn't therefore actually masturbate herself, but instead is simply practicing in anticipation for the penis of her husband. The vagina, therefore, is simply “the function that the little boy's hand has been forbidden to perform” (Irigaray 1985, 30), i.e., masturbation. What is perhaps most striking in Irigaray's critique of Freud is just how narcissistic his description of masculine desire actually comes off as. As Silverman once again succinctly notes, “normative male desire has nothing whatever to do with women—that it is solipsistic and self-referential” (Silverman 1988, 143). Therefore, Freud's analysis of femininity has less to do with actual observations of female sexuality and more to do with his own, and all men who stand in agreement with him, desire to have his (their) genitals played with. They can't do it themselves, because their language, which structures the symbolic order they operate in, forbids them: “And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did

displeased the Lord: wherefore he slew him also” (Gen. 38:8-10 KJV). Masturbation is death, sex is death; woman, that which man has created in his image in order to satisfy his own narcissistic desire, is likewise also death, because Narcissus died gazing at his own still image. Narcissus is as transfixed as any of Medusa’s victims, and he, like her, is undone by a mirrored of himself as well. Irigaray argues that in order for woman to escape the trap of the little girl as little man, she must turn her attention away from the clitoris and vagina to the vulva. This is not so much as to privilege other erogenous zones of her genitals over the parts that Freud privileges, but rather to recognize the clitoral and vaginal as part of a larger whole that is encompassed in the asymmetry of the lips of the vulva; asymmetrical from each other, but also, more importantly from man’s genitals. The vulva don’t simply replicate the penis (as the clitoris is seen) nor do they act as a stand-in for the man’s own autoerotic desires (as the vagina does). Unlike the penis, which ultimately seeks a telos around its own orgasm, the parts of the woman’s genitalia all act simultaneously, not in competition, but in collaboration. The vulva exists as a plural, unlike the penis, and takes pleasure in its plurality.

5.3 The Feminine Voice in Film

What Silverman find problematic in both Cixous and Irigaray is a concern over how the female voice becomes associated only with the female body.⁶⁹ I would add the concern that it’s only with the biological female body, which thus closes off the female voice to transgendered women. “Irigaray’s argument on behalf of a “feminine language” becomes even more problematic

⁶⁹ There is some question as to whether Cixous speaks only on the biological body, or on the phenomenological one. This distinction is lost on many critics (including perhaps Silverman), who simply reduce the body to one or the other; for Cixous, both appear to be at play – this general refusal to say the body is “this or that” highlights her general notion of the mutability of the feminine form and writing. For a defense of the phenomenological body in cinema, see Vivian Sobchak’s *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). Additional insight in the use of the female body in film and theory can be found in parts II and III of *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (eds. John Caughie, Annette Kuhn, and Mandy Merck, London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

when it is juxtaposed with classic cinema...Hollywood also holds the female voice to the female body... Whichever of these vocal/corporeal equations is employed within a particular Hollywood film, the end result is to magnify the effects of synchronization, and thereby to hold the female voice more firmly than its male counterpart to the inside of the fiction” (Silverman 1988, 162-3). Silverman, in her work *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, takes Laura Mulvey’s groundbreaking work “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” on the use of psychoanalysis to investigate the way the female body is portrayed in film, and expands it to the arena of sound. As Silverman says, her work rapidly expanded, becoming, “as much an anatomy of female subjectivity as a study of the female voice” (Silverman 1988, x). What Silverman seeks is an understanding of the feminine voice as a voice that is also an authorial voice, a voice that is as possessed of subjectivity as a male counterpart’s. Much feminist criticism, both psychoanalytic and otherwise, has focused on the visual within film. This is a fair way to approach film criticism, as film certainly is primarily a visual medium. However, film has not (and arguably never has been) solely about the visual, but also the acoustical. From the earliest days of film, when it was accompanied by live music to the modern THX Surround Sound mega-theaters, sound has played an important and critical role in structuring the experience of film as such.⁷⁰ Sound in film can thus act in similar and parallel ways to the imagery as well, including how film structures normativity. “It has somehow escaped theoretical attention that sexual difference is the effect of dominant cinema's sound regime as well as its visual regime, and that the female voice is as relentlessly held to normative representations and functions as is the female body” (Silverman 1988, viii). Using a variety of films, Silverman demonstrates how sexual difference is constructed, displayed, and pursued through both a desire for and (attempt at) mastery over the feminine voice.

⁷⁰ To say nothing of the development and use of leitmotifs in cinema!

For example, in her critique of the use of voice over, she notes that masculine voice overs are not held to the same rigor of diegetic space as the female voice is, such as in a documentary or a police thriller. Like God, it is the voice on high, dictating and directing the scene without necessarily being a part of it. This in turn conforms to and confirms the already existing symbolic order, which is rife and rooted in patriarchy itself. The disembodied voice is seen as the best example of male subjectivity in film, distancing itself from its emotions and desires, seeking only a pure logic of reason. This is another area of contention for Silverman: Cixous and Irigaray ironically reproduce the hierarchical binary of proximity vis-à-vis reason. “The notion that cinema is able to deliver ‘real’ sounds is an extension of that powerful Western episteme, extending from Plato to Hélène Cixous, which identifies the voice with proximity and the here and now—of a metaphysical tradition which defines speech as the very essence of presence” (Silverman 1988, 43). The voice is thus reduced down to the level of the body; in film, the voice over carries more power and weight, inhabiting the world from the “God’s eye” perspective, than the embodied voice. In this way, the concavity of the acoustic mirror that Silverman hints at in her title is made clear; just as we saw in Hollander’s work in Chapter One, sound requires space in order to resonate. By reducing the feminine voice to only the feminine body, there is a worry that the voice has been constrained and that the very space that Cixous sought to create through her (and all women’s) writing has been eliminated. “As I have already suggested, dominant cinema also holds the female subject much more fully than the male subject to the unity of sound and image, and consequently to the representation of lack” (Silverman 1988, 51).

While Silverman starts from a psychoanalytic position, Teresa de Lauretis, in *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, approaches this issue from a standpoint of a semiotics of experience. Drawing on Umberto Eco and C. S. Peirce, Lauretis argues that we are not only made

within certain structural constraints, e.g., linguistic, socio-economic, etc., but we are also capable of acting by making new meanings within these structural constraints. “Yet I remind myself that language and metaphors, especially, need not be thought of as belonging to anyone; that in fact masters are made as we...” (Lauretis 1984, 3).⁷¹ Even if language precedes us, it does not mean that it always will have hold over us as it stands currently. Lauretis sees subjectivity as something that is always, “a continuing process, an ongoing constant renewal based on interaction with the world, which she defines as experience” (Alcoff 1988, 423).⁷² An important aspect of this theorization of the subject is the subject’s willingness to analyze their position. There is an important element of self-analysis here, of a being willing to critique one’s own self and one’s experiences. There is much in common with Lauretis’s theory of positionality shares much in common with the general feminist theory of intersectionality, which seeks to examine the relationships between one’s various identities – e.g., how one’s race and gender interact, one’s socio-economic class and religion, class and gender, race and religion, etc. What I find hopeful in Lauretis’s argument is a rejection of a universal subject, but also an understanding of the limits of psychoanalytic and deconstructive thinking of the subject. The subject for Freud and Lacan is always already predetermined by the unconscious and the lack it represents; by the Oedipus complex and psychosexual development; by those moments of trauma that make us hysterical. The subject doesn’t exist for Derrida, being a linguistic illusion that we use to trick ourselves into thinking we are a unified, solid, whole, when in fact, there is nothing there at all (much like Nietzsche’s understanding of the *persona* as a mask that covers nothing). Lauretis doesn’t reject wholly either the psychoanalytic project or deconstruction, but recognizes our historical place

⁷¹ Lauretis, Teresa. *Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

⁷² Alcoff, Linda. “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory.” *Signs* 13.3 (1988). 405-436.

without removing us as being able to effect that position. Just as Echo is cursed, she too can see fit to pick and choose the language she returns. Echo's mirroring is not a perfect imitation, nor does the mythic character intend it to be so. Pitch, tone, and other elements of paralanguage (the nonverbal inflections of the verbal) combine with Echo's editing to deliver her own desires. Cursed though she may be, her voice still has life.

5.4 Deafness and the Signature of Love in *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*

To conclude this work, let us turn our attention to the 2004 film *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*,⁷³ in order to more thoroughly examine the use of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in film. This mockumentary⁷⁴ in many ways captures the motifs and philosophical importance of the myth that has guided us throughout this writing. In brief, the narrative revolves around an electronic dance music deejay named Frankie Wilde (Paul Kaye),⁷⁵ who eventually, because of drug use, physical abuse via a lack of ear protection, and genetics, goes deaf. The resulting loss of hearing leads to a psychological breakdown and an attempted suicide. This brush with death leads him away from drug abuse and just as importantly, begins his recovery from his loss of identity.

This loss occurs precisely because Frankie loses the ability to hear. The shock is twofold: first, that he can no longer operate as a professional music producer and club DJ, and secondly, that he is completely removed from discourse with others. It isn't until he loses his hearing completely that he realizes that in his narcissistic self-indulgence he was already removed from being with others. His sexual dalliances are many, frequent, and short; he snorts cocaine in front of his young stepson; he pays no attention to journalists' questions during interviews, answering

⁷³ Kaye, Paul, Beatriz Batarda, Kate Magowan, and Mike Wilmot. *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*. DVD. Directed by Paul Kaye. New York: Matson Films, 2004.

⁷⁴ A subgenre of comedy that seeks to replicate the documentary form while simultaneously critiquing it in a humorous fashion.

⁷⁵ Who is a pastiche of several real life musicians and producers in the electronic dance music scene, including Robbie "The Deaf DJ" Wilde.

them nonsensically (“I can confidently say Ibiza is dot dot dot dot”). One of the most vivid images in the film of this narcissism is that Frankie’s drug addiction manifests a hallucination in the form of a man in a badger costume. When Frankie finally quits using drugs and goes “cold turkey,” his addiction manifests, and attacks him. After fighting the badger-suited man off, Frankie removes the head piece, to reveal his own face underneath; before he shoots it point blank in the face, it mumbles something inaudible. Frankie replies, “I love you too,” as he pulls the trigger.

Even his marriage to the supermodel Sonya reflects his (secondary) narcissism; after an argument, where Sonya (Kate Magowan) says, “I’ve got good ideas, Frankie, you should listen to me,” they proceed to have sex. During the act of intercourse, Frankie tells Sonya, “I fucking hate you,” and she replies in the same way. Three things stand out in this scene:

1. Frankie’s rejection to listen to Sonya and her ideas, to engage with her as an equal, something which we tend to at least think occurs between marriage partners.
2. During the act of intercourse, Frankie penetrates Sonya from behind, and never looks at her face, as he tells her how much he hates her.
3. Frankie’s refusal to engage with Sonya, either aurally (by listening to her), or visually (by looking at her) alerts the audience that he is not only deaf physically, but also metaphysically.

Frankie doesn’t engage with Sonya because he doesn’t have to confirm his primary narcissistic love for her, i.e., he doesn’t have to try to find what he loves about himself in her. Recall from Chapter Two, that for Freud, primary narcissism is present in love, and is a means of escape from secondary narcissism, precisely because it is a means of being able to relate to the other (though not as Other). Frankie doesn’t have to find himself in another, because he unconsciously believes himself all that there is to be in this relationship. Sonya exists simply as Irigaray portrayed the vagina in the proper (submissive) woman: simply a place for him to put his penis, simply an extension of his own desire and want for orgasm. This is why when Sonya abandons Frankie, shortly after his diagnosis of complete hearing loss, it comes as a shock to Frankie; in leaving, she

challenges and disrupts his assumption that he is the only thing worth loving. That he can't understand why she's leaving is only compounded by the fact that he can't hear her reasons, nor hear the confession of his friend that she's leaving him for.

Compare this to the later love scene between Frankie and Penelope (Beatriz Batarda), the deaf lip reader who trains him to read lips, and also leads him to renew his interest and identity in music. She takes the superior position, above him, and guides his movements in time with the beat of a dance song. At one point, the song cuts out and there is no sound, but there doesn't have to be: because they can read lips, any communication between them can be silent, while still being engaging. They maintain eye contact, Frankie surrendering himself to Penelope's gaze. For Freud, this would symbolize Frankie's return from secondary narcissism through love, which places him back in the healthy primary narcissism. For Cixous, Penelope's use of her body to communicate and to understand language via lip reading would signify the space that the body-as-writing makes for women.

Penelope quite obviously fulfills the role of Echo in the film; "cursed" with deafness, she rejects the notion that she can't still communicate with the rest of the world. "It's okay to be deaf," she tells Frankie after he castigates himself for his failure to instantly master lip reading, "I'm deaf." She speaks in a high flat nasal tone in two languages, English and Spanish, not caring who hears her slightly off (to those with the ability to hear) tones and impressions. In his namesake documentary, Derrida responds to a question on Echo and Narcissus. During the short, though informative, segment, he says, "In repeating the language of another, [Echo] signs her own love."⁷⁶ Penelope, too, signs her love to Frankie: at first, she rejects his sexual advances because at that point in the narrative Frankie is in danger of returning to secondary narcissism; later on, once it is

⁷⁶ *Derrida*. Directed by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman. New York: Zeitgeist, 2002.

clear that Frankie is committed to rehabilitating himself, Penelope takes him to two night clubs, one a Spanish flamenco dance, the other a modern night club. At both locations, Penelope shows Frankie that he can still hear, in a sense: though his ear drums may be gone, punctured beyond repair, at the flamenco club he sees water in a glass rippling in time with the dance, and at the night club, he stands next to the speakers, feeling the actual vibrations of sound waves of the heavy bass in the air itself.

Throughout the film, the use of sound and image are interchanged, played with, and reversed, again and again. Several times all sound will stop, leaving the film in temporary silence. Once Frankie learns to lip read, the film employs this to great narrative and audio-visual effect. In some scenes, those that are more from Frankie's point of view, whenever someone is speaking to him, if he doesn't look at their face, their voice disappears from the audio. This is used to comedic affect, as Frankie and even Penelope will turn their heads away from Max's constant stream of nonsensical verbal output. Max begins to catch on to their game and despairs because of their refusal to engage him during his manic moments. At other points in the film, the background noise will fade into a tinnitus-like droning hum, both as a method of foreshadowing Frankie's encroaching deafness, or to highlight the metaphorical deafness of others, such as Max.⁷⁷ Sound is visually represented in a multitude of ways as well, including as sound waves in a computer program, as Frankie's feet tapping to the rhythm he feels pumping out from the speakers he's resting them on, and as a flip-flop sandal. This shoe both mimics the shape of the ear, and references an early line where Frankie tells a music journalist that his hobby is collecting flip-flops, and that whenever he can't make headway on a musical project, he goes off to work on his flip-flops. Contrast this with a later scene where his manager Max (Mike Wilmot), after Frankie

⁷⁷ Tinnitus, commonly recognized as a persistent "ringing" in the ears, is a common early symptom of hearing loss.

has returned to the music scene as a reborn success, tells Frankie and Penelope that deaf people hate their ears. Not only is Max usurping the position of authority that Frankie and Penelope have on the subject, but it's a completely absurd thing to say. Frankie loves flip-flops, he loves music, he loves Penelope, and he has even found a way to love himself – if anything, Frankie loves his ears. His ears led him to music, and the damage they suffered on his behalf eventually led him to Penelope as well.⁷⁸

One of the more beautiful scenes in the film takes place shortly after Frankie briefly attempts suicide. After he completely loses his hearing, Frankie locks himself away from the outside world, having contact with no one except his few drug dealers who would only make deliveries. He lives in total silence, but as he has also covered up the windows with pillows and blankets, he lives in near total darkness as well, and thus is also blind – to his condition, and to his isolation. He ultimately decides that he's going to kill himself, strapping fireworks around his head. Immediately after he lights the fuse, he realizes that he doesn't want to die, and stumbles around desperately for a means to extinguish the fireworks. He falls into his pool, which has a tarp over it, essentially giving himself a baptism, redeeming himself from himself. The aforementioned scene where he gets rid of his drugs and quits “cold turkey” takes place; after, he stands on the coastline of Ibiza, watching the sun set. There is no sound. Frankie has made a peace of sorts with his deafness, realizing that it is a condition placed upon his being that he must embrace or else risk losing himself again to drugs and madness. The next day, he discovers an ad

⁷⁸ This is not to say that there aren't some problematic issues with the film's depiction of gender and sexuality. In particular, Penelope ultimately ends up being a *topos*, that is, both a place that Frankie must arrive at, and a space he must occupy, in order to fulfill the narrative's full premise; Lauretis connects this sense of woman as place/space for the man-as-hero with the Oedipus complex in psychoanalysis and its relation to the audience's construction as subject. “Therefore to say that narrative is the production of Oedipus is to say that each reader – male or female – is constrained and defined within the two positions of a sexual difference thus conceived: male-hero-human, on the side of the subject; and female-obstacle-boundary-space, on the other” (Lauretis 1984, 121).

in a phone book for lip reading lessons, which leads him to Penelope. Together, at last, Narcissus and Echo overcome the blindness that Derrida attributes to them through the lack of another sense altogether.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

As Cixous, Irigaray, and Silverman demonstrated, we can escape the bonds of our culture's sexist and misogynistic stance to woman's language. The body, in its many shapes, forms, and ways of being (biological, phenomenological, etc.), in being intimately connected to writing and language presents a model of subjectivity that allows for and in fact demands, a respect to the person-as-their-lived-body. Furthermore, the voice, as metonymy for the person-who-communicates, whether through speech, writing, or any of the multitudinous ways of using language, can further demonstrate the relationship between oneself and the Other. This is the message imparted by the film *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*: without the ability to hear (whether literally or metaphorically), we become engrossed in our narcissism, and lose both ourselves and others. Like Frankie in his self-made madhouse, when we can't hear, we become stuck in an malaise of self-obsession and self-destruction, even to the point of suicide (symbolic or otherwise). Yet so long as we retain some small sense of opening to the other, we are open to love and its power to redeem and save us from our own selves. In Kaye's film, this is accomplished by giving Narcissus the same affliction as Echo; this affliction is the means by which primary narcissism is able to reverse the deadly course that Frankie had set himself on. Ovid's version of the myth of Echo and Narcissus ends tragically, but what Kaye's film does is subvert this ending, and allow for Echo and Narcissus to finally reflect in one another, and not the pool or the cave of their solitude.

6. CONCLUSION

It is clear that our present society does not respect nor rely on the voice and language of women. In February, 2012, a panel of members of the House of Representatives convened to discuss various governmental issues related to women's health, and thereby implicitly women's bodies. No women were present on the panel. Furthermore, the conservative Republican members of the board refused to allow women to testify on behalf of the minority party's (i.e., Democrat) position before the panel. As Representative Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD) wrote, "[The] Committee [on Oversight and Government Reform] commits a massive injustice by trying to pretend that the views of millions of women across this country are meaningless, worthless, or irrelevant to this debate" (2012, 2).⁷⁹ After Sandra Fluke, at the time a law student at Georgetown University and one of the witnesses that the Republican committee members had rejected, spoke before the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee a week later, conservative politicians and pundits viciously attacked her credibility, focusing exclusively on her sexuality and body. "[Fluke] essentially says that she must be paid to have sex—what does that make her? It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute. She wants to be paid to have sex. She's having so much sex she can't afford the contraception. She wants you and me and the taxpayers to pay her to have sex" (Limbaugh, Feb. 29, 2012).⁸⁰ Limbaugh's attack demonstrates just how easily the phallogocentric model of language is used to reduce the language of woman to her mere sex organs (not even her body as a whole being) and their use for male desire. This, of course, exemplifies Irigaray's critique of Freud's sexual indifference; Limbaugh cannot simply cognize the fact that the vagina, let alone its bearer, does not exist to please him and him alone. What he further fails

⁷⁹ Cummings, Elijah E. "Letter to Representative Darrell E. Issa." February 15, 2012.

http://democrats.oversight.house.gov/images/stories/EEC_to_Issa_Witness_Refusal_21512.pdf

⁸⁰ Limbaugh, Rush. "Butt Sisters are Safe from Newt and Rick." *The Rush Limbaugh Show*. New York, NY. WABC. February 29, 2012.

to recognize is that Fluke's voice, her speech and her body, has always already resisted this attempt at the attempted reduction of her speech to her sex organs and their function in male desire.

Throughout my analysis, I have attempted to show that Echo, as trope, phenomenon, and character, operates in many ways, perhaps most importantly metaleptically. Echo names herself in her speaking her own voice, and through speaking also defies the divine punishment placed upon her. She exemplifies the play between sight and sound, as demonstrated in *It's All Gone, Pete Tong*; she also is the movement between embodied and disembodied voice in film, to draw from Silverman. Throughout all of her many forms, the many versions of her myth, Echo, like Cixous's Medusa, is laughing, because she understands that one has to remain open to the other as Other, even if it kills you because without the Other, you're already dead, either literally, in Narcissus's case, or metaphorically, as in Frankie's. Echo's laugh re-sounds, and can boom or whisper to her delight and choosing. Like woman's body, and thus her language, she cannot be constricted or restrained, trapped in only one form. Her voice, after all, has life.

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