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*Sara Beardsworth*

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# The Return of Mythic Voice in the Aporias of Narcissism

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## Pleshette DeArmitt's Ethical Idea

*Sara Beardsworth*

Southern Illinois University

The ordeal of mourning, being so much harder than any thought its experience may deliver, bears out the impression developed in Julia Kristeva's opening to *The Severed Head*—that thought is swift.<sup>1</sup> She has recognized as well as anyone the interplay of blindness and insight. Nothing brings all this into starker evidence than the premature death of a loved other, a friend, or a true assistant in life and thought. There is a reminder in this that the new narratives of subjectivity on which Kristeva places a high value, and certainly the long life of meaning in the world, come at the price of the loss and mourning of our loved others. Pleshette DeArmitt's book, *The Right to Narcissism: A Case for an Im-possible Self-Love*, has given the condition of narcissism an intricate place in this difficult if promising work. I have taken the case for an "im-possible self-love" to mean an ethical idea that grows in the movement of the aporias of narcissism found in the Western tradition—a movement prompted not least by what I will call the *return* of mythic voice. I use the term "aporetic motility" here to capture the double sense of aporia as both "no exit from this condition"—no escape from narcissism—and the plasticity that comes from complicating its place in traditional oppositions. The idea of mythic voice joins three senses of *return* present in *The Right to Narcissism*: first, the return to the scene of narcissism, one psychoanalytic and the other deconstructive; second, the return of mythic figures in Kristeva's and Derrida's rehabilitations of narcissism; third, the experience of return *in* mythic voice at the center of these rehabilitations.

In placing readings of Kristeva and Derrida together, DeArmitt's book offers not "One Narcissus" but a plurality of big and little narcissisms, new and old Narcissi, turning away from any mere *agon* of suffering subjectivity to the aporias of narcissism whose movement ultimately draws out the ethical idea. To capture this movement, we must consider three features of

the book. First, Kristeva introduces narcissism as a dynamic—not a moral—value. Her Narcissus arises in a dynamic ternary structure that lays the foundations of psychic space, lies at the heart of the experience of love, and is essential to the creativity of the Kristevan imaginary. Second, Derrida introduces an ethical value in a versatile law of singularity that opens the passage to the other and institutes what might be called the “self” of deconstruction. In bringing the law of singularity that emerges in Derrida’s narratives of narcissism together with the rebirth of Narcissus in Kristeva’s work, DeArmitt underlines the need of *new Narcissi*, proposing an ethics of narcissism whose value in life is reflected into thought, and whose development in thought returns to life. On the one hand, this means the subject taking shape (again) and truly living in relations with others. On the other hand, it indicates the responsibility for producing new narratives of subjectivity. Even here, however, the ethical idea does not appear fully. Its full appearance comes only in a third feature of the book: the reconnection, in both Kristeva and Derrida, of the mythic figure of Narcissus with that of Echo. I would like to propose, here, that it is the experience of *return in* mythic voice that constitutes and animates the self-relation that DeArmitt calls narcissism, making it both an opening of the passage to the other and the seed of the experience of love, each enhancing and enhanced by the capacity for narration. Above all, DeArmitt’s attention to the return of mythic voice has left us with the opportunity to develop the *plurality* of the return “in” mythic voice, as one way of maintaining the open horizon of both psychoanalysis and deconstruction.

### The Rebirth of Narcissus in the Sounds of the Other

Following DeArmitt, we find that narcissism as a moral value appears in the opposition of self-love to love of other found in Western thought’s “naïve denunciations” of narcissism. Most conceptions posit either a monadic or a fusional dyadic state.<sup>2</sup> Freud’s version specifies alternative paths for subjectivity in love: either self-love or idealization of the other, corresponding to his narcissistic and anaclitic/attachment types of object-choice. Projecting the ideal image on to the *other* is the “true” object-choice, yet it is also the tendency of sexual overvaluation of the object,<sup>3</sup> conflating what is error and what is true in love. That is to say, an *aporia* is already present in Freud. DeArmitt shows Kristeva developing that aporetic moment by bringing narcissism and idealization together, so that the logic of error versus truth gives way to the logic of *narcissistic seeming*.<sup>4</sup>

She finds the major features of narcissistic seeming in Kristeva’s *Tales of Love*, where the very possibility of love lies in the idealization of a “third party”: a loving identification that is prior to or underlies the establishment of subject and object “positions” and relations. Its dynamic features, articulated in the psychoanalytic view on infantile life, are the elements of the cultivation of psychic space and are repeated in the experience of love.

The idealization that Kristeva calls *archaic* is a precocious loving identification: a transference of the emergent subject—the “not-yet-I”—to a third party whose advent forms Narcissus and his ideal self-image. In contrast to the traditional conception of the emergence of the narcissistic self-relation, which ties Narcissus to his specular or mirror image, Kristeva recovers his formation as an experience of not only vision but *voice*: the words of an other. As DeArmitt underlines, the archaic third is not grasped as a real person, however. The third is grasped, rather, like a sort of symbolic instance, “*something that is here that cannot be here.*”<sup>5</sup> That is to say, the advent of the ideal Other situates the emergent Narcissus in a register of being other than what *can* be here as, say, external reality in Freud or the more stable significations of the symbolic realm. The logic of narcissistic seeming unfolds what we might call “illusory” being, whose movement not only lays the foundations of psychic space as the space of imagination but also shapes vital elements of the experience of love.

In emphasizing that the third party is irreducible to any empirical entity and, above all, without any fixed features, DeArmitt allows us to hear, not vagueness in Kristeva’s expression for the third as “some sort of archaic occurrence of the symbolic,” but, rather, the flexibility and variability of its advent.<sup>6</sup> This dawning of a ternary structure in Kristeva’s presentation of the little Narcissus is dependent on maternal desire and brings the relation to an indeterminable “not I” into infantile experience. That is to say, the child receives *the relation to a third* that is offered (or refused) by the mother as a gift, allowing for a preliminary separation from maternal entity.<sup>7</sup> The mother’s gift prompts an “immediate” transference to the third party: in mimicking the relation to a third, the child does not have to elaborate a relation to the loving third party. The psychical act of loving identification is therefore also to be understood through the passive tense, as a displacement of the emergent subject “to the very place from which he *is* seen and heard.”<sup>8</sup> With DeArmitt, “in chewing on and swallowing these sounds, the infant becomes bound to the third *in love.*”<sup>9</sup> Archaic idealization receives and repeats the sounds of the Other in an oral assimilation, incorporating the other as rhythmic words.<sup>10</sup> This is where Kristeva reveals the possibility of love arising in unity with the earliest capacities for representation. The shaping of psychic space begins with representations in the “imaginary” register or, put simply, pre-verbal representations whose minimal elements lie in the “primordial echoing” of the sounds of the Other.

DeArmitt takes us from this notion of primordial echoing to Kristeva’s doubling of Narcissus in Echo: she who “nourishes herself on the words of the Other.”<sup>11</sup> Echo’s reception and repetition of words form Narcissus in and through his “listening” to the echolalia that are his only “object.” Narcissus *as Echo*, then, presents a return “to” the self who is first “there” in return from the place of the Other, where she is seen and/or heard in these

“infinite echoes of the other’s words.”<sup>12</sup> Archaic identification is a “being for and by the Other,” even *as* the Other, adds DeArmitt, for it is in taking himself *for* the third that the emergent subject comes to be situated “within the hysterical universe of loving idealization.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, a little self-deception makes existing for the Other existing for “myself.” In self-love “I” is *like* Other.

DeArmitt therefore emphasizes the dynamic organization that appears in Kristeva’s account of the emergent subject. Narcissism is neither monadic nor fusional as such, but, rather, a complex and malleable structure.<sup>14</sup> The accent falls especially on the nature of the rebound at the heart of transference to the third party, taking oneself for it. It is, above all, an experience of voice. Loving identification is carried out in sonorous rebounds between mouth and ear. The space of imagination therefore corresponds, for Kristeva, to “the entire gamut of perceptions, especially *sonorous* ones.”<sup>15</sup> Following DeArmitt, the site where Narcissus and his Ego Ideal are born is not opposed to being but *is* being. Narcissistic seeming—becoming *like* the Other in loving identification and transference—forms self-identity as singular, one, a producer of representations.<sup>16</sup> Above all, this self-relation through doubling—Narcissus *as* Echo, Narcissus *and* his Ego Ideal—is upheld by the third party whose living core is the sonorous rebounds: what I will call the *return* in the sounds of the Other.

If DeArmitt found a prescriptive in all this for new Narcissi as the complex organization in and through which the subject takes shape and truly lives, Narcissus is reborn, especially, in the experience of love. In projecting the ideal image on to an other, the subject repeats the transference and loving identification in the field of “positions” and relations of subject and object (other).<sup>17</sup> To Kristeva, love therefore flourishes “between the two borders of narcissism and idealization.”<sup>18</sup> Maintaining the tension between self-love and love of other is necessary to the experience of love. That is to say, although DeArmitt does not put it this way, the borders of narcissism and idealization also form the Scylla and Charybdis of the love experience, where to avoid one is to pass too close to the other, risking the whirlpool of the watery image or shipwreck on the shoals of idealization. These risks, the ones recognized by Freud, remain the internal limits of a projection in love whose essential rebound reveals “an exorbitant aggrandizement of the loving Self as extravagant in its pride as in its humility.”<sup>19</sup> Unfolding this dynamic ternary structure, which is, again, prior to the separation of subject and object and then repeated in love, leads to Kristeva’s stress on the *rebirth of Narcissus*. Here DeArmitt finds a prescriptive aspect, striking the first ethical note in her book. There must be *new Narcissi*, taking shape and truly living in love *as in* the space of imagination. Therefore “it is essential that one read Kristeva’s texts on narcissism... as prescriptive for new narratives of ‘subjectivity.’”<sup>20</sup> We observe, then, that in relation to the Western tradition these new narratives will mobilize the aporias of narcissism.

DeArmitt herself introduced the notion of aporia in turning to two narratives of narcissism in Derrida, first citing his assertion that deconstruction has always been concerned with the *aporetic* notion of narcissism, and then suggesting that this remains its explicit theme: “the aporias of narcissism are integral to the movement of ‘deconstruction’ and thus are made ‘explicit’ in each Derridean text.”<sup>21</sup> Aporetic motility is in the foreground, then, where DeArmitt turns to these texts. Derrida does not find the aporia of narcissism directly within the traditional opposition of self-love and love of other, however. He draws the aporia out from the psychoanalytic texts on mourning. This difference is one feature of the unresolved tension between the rehabilitation of narcissism in Kristeva and that in Derrida. No attempt is made to have the readings simply overlap.

Nonetheless, their juxtaposition in *The Right to Narcissism* does suggest an affinity between the respective narratives. Derrida’s first narrative of narcissism begins with psychoanalysis. Thus both Kristeva and Derrida find their productive aporia for the notion of self-relation in psychoanalysis, and both find it just where it is narcissism that is in question there. What is more, in Derrida’s second narrative of narcissism, as in the Kristevan one, the return to the scene of narcissism is a recovery of not one mythic figure but at least two. It is, I venture, as though psychoanalysis were our mythology, and discovering aporetic motility in its themes of narcissism could release certain restrictions on this mythology. For we are not looking back to a “mythic world,” nor recapitulating the “founding myth” of psychoanalysis, nor giving notification (as Lacan did) that in Freud’s theory of the drives we find the very myths of psychoanalytic thought itself. Instead, bringing Kristeva’s and Derrida’s narratives of narcissism together has allowed psychoanalysis to appear as our mythology in the sense of a development of the *logos* of myth for us. This, I will suggest, is where the crux of the problematic lies.

As each thinker draws out the aporias of narcissism in psychoanalysis, each develops a *return of mythic voice* that brings about the self-relation in DeArmitt’s sense: an opening of the passage to the other, the blossoming of the space of imagination, and the potentials of love. My objective is, not least, to show that the real depth of the affinity between Kristeva and Derrida in DeArmitt’s book lies, first, in their manifestation of the return *in* mythic voice that is the real key to the opening up of narcissism, and, second, in their shared knowledge of the role of love in this return. It is love that is responsible not only for the reverberation of the sounds of the Other at the heart of Kristeva’s rebirth of Narcissus but also for the resonance of words that institutes the relation to self in Derrida. In order to show this, we must first present the way in which deconstruction appears in DeArmitt’s book as the *movement* of the aporia of narcissism discovered within mourning.

## From the Gaze of the Other to the Voice of the Other

In an explicit relation to psychoanalysis, Derrida's first narrative of narcissism develops an "other topology of mourning." This "other topology" will exhibit the law of singularity that institutes the self in and through opening the passage to the other. In DeArmitt's book it is vital to discern that the law of singularity overreaches the paternal law that is found so problematic in Freud and in the Western tradition in general. Despite the dexterity of her demonstration, I will find that the relation between the two laws is beset by an instability in the condition of bereavement. With DeArmitt, Derrida's new topology of mourning is of course of general significance in overcoming narcissistic foreclosure. The passage to the other that lies in mourning the other is not limited to the experience of bereavement that ushers it in. Nonetheless, this experience remains essential to his presentation of the new topology, so I find that the instability affecting the law of singularity in bereavement belongs as such to his first narrative of narcissism. We will find a remedy for this in DeArmitt's presentation of his second narrative, just where Derrida comes to the resonance of mythic voice.

DeArmitt tells us that the movement of deconstruction is a double gesture. Taking up certain of Derrida's texts, she shows this movement going from the exposure of one narcissism as a symptom of Western thought to the elaboration of another narcissism that relieves the necessity of the first. In a remarkable avowal, she writes that narcissism for Derrida is initially *nothing other than the law of the father*.<sup>22</sup> It is the narcissism, not of the child too close to the mother and in need of the name of the father to exit this condition (to attain to the life of spirit), but, rather, of the *father* who brings "assistance" to his son or text (his "son-text") so that he may admire himself in his progeny. "The naïve rendering or common illusion [*fantasme courant*] is that you have given your name to X, thus all that returns to X, in a direct or indirect way, in a straight or oblique line, returns to you, as a profit for your narcissism."<sup>23</sup>

The second gesture comes in two guises. The first begins with an aporia of narcissism that Derrida discovers in the image of the (mortal) other, just where psychoanalysis stipulated an opposition between failure and success in mourning. Incorporation, which appropriates and keeps the other in the self, corresponds to Freud's conception of "pathological mourning" or melancholia. Abraham and Torok's notion of incorporation develops the pathological conception. It reveals a living dead object that has been set up in the self. As DeArmitt explains, incorporation functions "both as a monument to loss and as a resistance to this loss."<sup>24</sup> The contrary notion, introjection, corresponds to normal mourning in Freud, where the desires and drives previously invested in an external object are drawn back to the ego, ending dependency on the object. In Derrida's words, the drives and desires are "re-appropriated" in contrast to the appropriation of

incorporation, which keeps the other in the self as in “the tomb or the vault of some narcissism.”<sup>25</sup> Introjection is itself an interiorization, one that is “a memorization.” In contrast to the failure of melancholia, “success” in mourning would lie not only in freeing the drives and desires from the object but also in safekeeping the other in memory.<sup>26</sup> However, this is just where Derrida finds the aporia of narcissism, for introjection is both absolute fidelity to the other and the utter betrayal of their alterity in and through the safekeeping of their image “*in me*.”<sup>27</sup> The aporia of narcissism belongs to the very process of interiorization-idealization that sets up the image of the departed other “in me” in mourning.

What comes to move the aporia in Derrida is the inversion of the schema of visibility in the image of the other, for this alters the spatial relations of what is interiority and what is outside. That is to say, the ordeal of mourning brings the gaze of the mortal other to bear “on me,” frustrating and wounding the interiority that would close the other within itself. The gaze of the (mortal) other “in me, outside me” instructs and institutes the self. Thus “before the other” is “before the law.”<sup>28</sup> Once again, as DeArmitt stresses, this “mourning effect” does not wait for death but is, in Derrida, the general form of the inscription of the other in me. Nonetheless, we have seen it come to the fore in the movement of the aporia of narcissism discovered in the theme of mourning in psychoanalysis. The movement of memory, coming from and returning to the mortal other, “instructs and institutes” the self. Derrida’s law of singularity therefore turns up first in this “other topology of mourning” that displaces those psychoanalytic topologies that have configured the ambiguities of paternal law since Freud. Paternal law, for Freud, appeared not only as the civilizing function in the constitution of the “subject” but also as the unconscious persecuting judgment, especially active in melancholia. Derrida’s “other topology of mourning” therefore seems to offset the centrality of paternal law in Freud. It not only avoids the persecuting judgment but also deflects the narcissistic return of the “father” in and through the aporetic motility of unavoidable narcissism in mourning. The movement of the aporia brings forth the law of singularity.

It strikes me, nonetheless, that in bereavement the two laws remain in an unstable relation to one another owing to the difficult properties of the gaze. For some “accident” of psychic life—and there are many—may lead Derrida’s topology of mourning to undergo a reversal into the one known from Freud when he found the aggressive drive operating, across the unconscious-conscious gap of repression, between the superego and the ego. In bereavement certain accidents of psychic life, whether those of the living or those of the dead, may be reinforced by the ordeal of mortal loss and by the very process of interiorization-idealization itself, perhaps leading to repression. The memory coming from the other may slip away and the dynamics of the gaze revert to that superegoic relation in Freud. That is to



say, the bereaved falls under a judgment. For who, stunned by the sudden mortal departure of the loved other, will really hold off the encroaching sense that somehow one has failed them? Thus, in Derrida's first narrative of narcissism, which DeArmitt has called "the eye of Narcissus," the themes of psychoanalysis present in the first gesture of deconstruction may return to encroach on the second. In sum, a certain instability affects this narrative insofar as the second gesture takes the guise of the interiorization of the *gaze* of the other, which is now intimate and proximate

In our view, DeArmitt's presentation of Derrida's second narrative of narcissism—"the ear of Echo"—will respond to this instability. Here the second gesture supplements the interiorization of the gaze of the other with the interiorization of the voice of the other. The voice of the other appears in Derrida's return to the scene of Ovid's myth. The two mythic figures are not now in a relation of doubling, as in Kristeva, but are set apart and differently confined in respect of the address from one *to* an other (which is absent from doubling). Echo, deprived of spontaneity under a divine interdiction, cannot initiate the call to the other. Narcissus cannot "let himself go," but only issue the call aimed at a profit for his narcissism. An analogy now suggests itself. Under the sovereign injunction, Echo may neither speak first, nor remain silent, nor reply in her own words, but only repeat the final words or syllables of another's speech, according to a law she cannot address herself to—not unlike the bereaved suffering uneasily from a judgment that the living cannot quite get a hold of. Freud elaborated this seemingly inescapable sense of judgment—for it lacks all position—in terms of the deferred authority of the "dead father." Derrida, too, noted the persecutor in Freudian melancholy.<sup>29</sup> Altering the Freudian topology is a long cultural, philosophical, personal road between memory and forgetting. But there can be many a slip in the process of interiorization-idealization that sets up the image of the departed other "in me," as Derrida seems to be aware. This adds interest to DeArmitt's demonstration that his reading of Echo reworks the structures of self-relation in terms of the experience of voice. His presentation of the experience of voice equally maintains the tension with Kristeva's thought, even though psychoanalysis plays no particular role in "the ear of Echo."

Surprisingly, in relation to Narcissus, Echo manifests no sense of judgment under the divine interdiction. Of course Derrida elaborates the "ruse" that circumvents the sovereign injunction in her answer to the narcissistic call to her to "come." The "ruse" lies in the very return, in her own voice, of narcissistic words. Echo "speaks in such a way that the words become her own," for she mourns her own autonomy, "wholly affirming the precedence and alterity of the other."<sup>30</sup> The asymmetry in which his narcissistic words fall on her ear turns into the radical asymmetry of language in which his words are transcendent, wholly other in her ear. Through her reception *and* iteration of his words, she signs "in her own

name."<sup>31</sup> The key to this lies in the logic of (re-)appropriation. DeArmitt shows how it develops the narcissistic appropriation that Derrida has called the law of need or desire: the "it is necessary [*il faut*] that I want the thing to be mine" is at work in all experience; moreover, the "desire" alongside it that the other nonetheless "remain foreign, transcendent, other" lies in the interest one still has in making it one's own.<sup>32</sup> Echo cannot issue the gesture of narcissistic appropriation. In mourning her own autonomy, another logic takes over in a manner that underlines the important failure of mourning "to subjectivize the other in me."<sup>33</sup> We recall that this failure prevents the aporia that undermines the supposed success in mourning (introjection) from being a dead-end. The failure is the way forward. In Derrida's topology of mourning the constitutive failure of subjectivization is called an "ex-appropriation," an appropriation that begins from the other.

With DeArmitt, ex-appropriation is a double movement: "both an inescapable gesture of (re-)appropriation and the necessary failure to interiorize that which remains outside, over there, always out of reach."<sup>34</sup> The resistance to subjectivization is revitalized and sustained in the "the complex relationship" between iteration and ex-appropriation that Derrida articulates in the return to Ovid's myth.<sup>35</sup> With Echo, the return of words *from the other to the other* "prevents the self... from entirely closing the other within the self."<sup>36</sup> The return *in Echo's voice* of the beckoning call that was made by Narcissus to her brings Narcissus himself to the law of singularity—for she "speaks the other and makes the other speak."<sup>37</sup> In Ovid's myth Narcissus "looks around and shouts 'Come! Come!'"<sup>38</sup> To Derrida, Echo's initiative or inventiveness would therefore consist only "in opening, in uncloseting, destabilizing foreclosure structures, so as to allow for the passage to the other."<sup>39</sup>

But the cleverness of Echo's ex-appropriation is not all. To Derrida, she lovingly *and* lucidly "take[s] back the initiative of answering or responding in a responsible way."<sup>40</sup> For DeArmitt, her answer signs "her own *love*."<sup>41</sup> The iteration-ex-appropriation takes form and gains its force from a loving affirmation that exceeds his narcissistic call, infusing and giving narcissistic words new life.<sup>42</sup> I see this as the prevailing ethical moment in DeArmitt's presentation of Derrida's return to the scene of narcissism. It does not bring Narcissus back to judgment. Rather, the loving affirmation seems to strengthen the law of singularity in the very form it has taken in Derrida's topology of mourning: "I must and I must not take the other into myself."<sup>43</sup>

This is the point at which my emphasis diverges somewhat from the one made explicit in DeArmitt's text. She points to the analogy, in giving birth to singularity, between "the introjection of the other's gaze (as in the case of Narcissus) and the interiorization of the other's voice (as in the case of Echo)."<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, I suggest, the loving affirmation reveals another significance of Echo's "ruse," for it resists the process of interiorization-

idealization on account of which the law of singularity arises in the intimate, proximate gaze of the (mortal) other.<sup>45</sup> I have suggested that this process carries the risk of a covert recurrence of paternal law, as though not all of the latencies of this law were yet played out. That is to say, in the process of interiorization-idealization, the image of the other it sets up “in me” is susceptible to merging with the ego ideal. Freud identified the latter’s potential for contamination by a tyranny of the superego when he discovered that excessively juridical fate of the prohibitional form of the “other” in me in a kind of paroxysm of conscience: the judgment laden with aggressive drives exercised by the superego over the ego. In sum, what I am indicating is that the gaze of the other in mourning may return to the bereaved with the force of judgment, the *force* of law. Thus the importance of resistance in Echo’s “ruse.” If the voice of the other can strengthen the double bind of ex-appropriation—“I must and I must not take the other into myself”—it can equally hold off the risk that memory, coming from and returning to the other, may give way in bereavement to the unconscious paternal *imago* of which one experiences only the deadly judgment.

We are noting, then, that rehabilitations of narcissism that render Narcissus as an experience of not only vision but voice can develop the philosophical meaning of the gaze, yet, at the same time, the manifestation of the voice of the other resists the difficult properties of the gaze. This lessens the risk of return of the “force” of paternal law. Removing the subject from the implied narcissism of paternal law (the “father’s assistance”), and from the law’s activity as unconscious *imago*, is not only possible but can endure. That is to say, the return in Echo’s voice resists either falling back on narcissistic words or falling back under the unassimilable judgment. Thus, here, the return in mythic voice distances the “self” from the miserable fate of Freud’s Oedipus (subject to the persecutor), from the “big narcissism” that appears, in Derrida, to overtake Freud’s oedipal dialectic, and from the negative view of narcissism. For, according to DeArmitt, Derrida’s Echo is a “little narcissist.”<sup>46</sup>

### The Return of Love in Mythic Voice

*Narcissus as Echo* in Kristeva. *Echo and Narcissus* in Derrida. One takes the watery image shimmering over the void into “the whole contrivance of imagery, representations, identifications, and projections” that fulfills narcissistic seeming and furnishes the space of imagination.<sup>47</sup> As for the other, with Derrida, “one knows that the relation to oneself, that Narcissus himself... precedes himself, answering only for himself, *only* from the resonance of Echo.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, both the sonorous rebounds of the words of the other (Kristeva) and their resonance (Derrida) have revealed themselves as a return in mythic voice. This brings us, finally, to the question of psychoanalysis and mythology that is present in a somewhat submerged way in DeArmitt’s book. For she cites Lacoue-Labarthe posing this question,

and doing so precisely in posing Narcissus and Echo *as* a question: “to refer to our mythology—I mean *psychoanalysis*—I would like to know (if this can be known) what happens when one goes back from Narcissus to Echo.”<sup>49</sup>

We have seen, with Derrida, that a return to Ovid’s Echo manifests the resonance of words that constitutes the self-relation in opening the passage to the other. We would add something further. Once DeArmitt brings Derrida’s rehabilitation of narcissism together with Kristeva’s, each mythic figure that returns to us in psychoanalysis presents a palimpsest. That is to say, a big narcissism shows the traces of a little narcissist. There is Kristeva’s little Narcissus “after” Oedipus, and Derrida’s Echo “after” Narcissus. Echo, too—I suggest—may present a palimpsest. Following Lacoue-Labarthe, we may ask what happens when we “go back” from the return *in her voice* to another return in mythic voice: briefly, to another moment in Kristeva, once she takes up the work of Melanie Klein.<sup>50</sup>

We find Kristeva returning to another scene of narcissism when she considers the significance of this analyst’s renowned treatment of an unspeaking child, whom we are told is largely devoid of affects, and whom one might today call autistic. Klein tells us that the child calls out to no one. We note, then, that here the resonance of words and, equally, the rhythm of sonorous rebounds are absent because neither the narcissistic call nor the mother’s gift is made. In accompanying the child in play to the frightening void and the “nameless dreads” that bar his psychic representations of mother and father, the analyst drew the precocious call to the other out of silence. What is important for us is Kristeva’s underlining of the *mythical* way in which Klein approached the unconscious (in speaking of trains—the big train “Daddy” and the little train “Dick”). This is not to set store by a simple circularity, going from Oedipus to Narcissus, from Narcissus to Echo, and then “back” from Echo to the classical Oedipus. For here, too, is a return *in* mythic voice. Kristeva writes that Klein gives the unconscious “a sort of name—in a mythical way.”<sup>51</sup> The return in mythic voice is affective resonance this time: a resonance with nameless dreads and with an unspoken and unspeakable appeal. Affective resonance leads to the expression of inhibited affects and draws out the call to the other; it enables the rise of trust and a child’s transition into the metonymic world of play. But of course that is another story.

Whether it is Echo’s “ruse” or the sounds of the Other or an analyst’s thoughtful kindness to a child—and be it viewed as verbal resonance and/or sonorous (rhythmic) reverberations and/or affective resonance, almost tactile—what is paramount is the loving affirmation. DeArmitt reminds us that, with Kristeva, one speaks of love only after the fact. The time of love is the “nontime” that is “both instant and eternity.”<sup>52</sup> Her readings of the Kristevan and Derridean rehabilitations of narcissism do not, then, simply send us back to psychoanalysis or deconstruction as the subject

of the movement of the aporias of narcissism in the Western tradition. Nor do they settle us in relation to one mythic figure as the substance of that movement. Rather, they tilt the subject toward taking shape and truly living from time to time, in the return—more than “one”—of mythic voice. All the while knowing them for their gift of illusory being.

All of this means that each rehabilitation of narcissism provides notice of its internal limits. In Kristeva we have found the Scylla and Charybdis lying within love and self-identity. For Derrida, it is “death in the end, which is the limit.”<sup>53</sup> The limit of the living and loving voice that is “in me” but just as much over there, out of reach. Death changes everything. Thus, if the return or resonance in mythic voice may resist the unassimilable judgment that one has failed the (mortal) other, this resistance is a support for, and not the evasion of, that part of the ethics of narcissism left to us in their premature departure. We may receive the inexhaustible memory that comes from and returns to our never-old Narcissi . . .

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- <sup>1</sup> Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
- <sup>2</sup> Pleshette DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism: A Case for an Im-possible Self-Love* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014) 57.
- <sup>3</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 63.
- <sup>4</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 79, 85-6.
- <sup>5</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 71.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 40.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 36 (my emphasis); DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 71-2.
- <sup>9</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 73.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 74.
- <sup>12</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 78.
- <sup>13</sup> Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 122. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 59, 75. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 33-4.
- <sup>14</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 57, 156 n.12.
- <sup>15</sup> Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 40. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 78.
- <sup>16</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 79.
- <sup>17</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 81.
- <sup>18</sup> Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 6. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 81.
- <sup>19</sup> Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 4. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 82.

- <sup>20</sup> De Armitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 156 n.12.
- <sup>21</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 91-2. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (London: Routledge, 1994), 98.
- <sup>22</sup> De Armitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 94.
- <sup>23</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Passions: An Oblique Offering," in *Derrida: A Critical Reader* (London: Blackwell, 1992), 11-12. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 93.
- <sup>24</sup> Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 110.
- <sup>25</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Mnemosyne," in *Memories: For Paul De Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 6. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 113.
- <sup>26</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 110.
- <sup>27</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 115.
- <sup>28</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 131.
- <sup>29</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 111.
- <sup>30</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 135.
- <sup>31</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), xi. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 135.
- <sup>32</sup> Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews* (London: Polity Press, 2002), 111. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 129, 131.
- <sup>33</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 107.
- <sup>34</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 132.
- <sup>35</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 99.
- <sup>36</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 132.
- <sup>37</sup> Derrida, "Mnemosyne," 37-8. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 134.
- <sup>38</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Harvest, 1993), 92. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 132.
- <sup>39</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other," in Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (eds), *Reading De Man Reading*, 61. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 134.
- <sup>40</sup> Derrida, *Rogues*, xi-xii.
- <sup>41</sup> *Derrida*, a film by Kirby Dick and Amy Zierman Kofman (Zeitgeist Films, 2002). DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 136-7.
- <sup>42</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 126.
- <sup>43</sup> Cited in DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 107.

- <sup>44</sup> DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 131.
- <sup>45</sup> Derrida speaks of resisting all subjectivization “even to the point of the interiorization-idealization of what one calls the work of mourning” in *Points...: Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford University Press, 1995). Cited in DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 131.
- <sup>46</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 98.
- <sup>47</sup> Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 42.
- <sup>48</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 164. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 125.
- <sup>49</sup> DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 71 (my emphasis).
- <sup>50</sup> Melanie Klein, “The Importance of Symbol Formation in the Development of the Ego,” in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (Virago 1988). Julia Kristeva, *Melanie Klein* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
- <sup>51</sup> Kristeva, *Melanie Klein*, 139-40.
- <sup>52</sup> Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 6. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 82.
- <sup>53</sup> Derrida, *Points*, 199. DeArmitt, *Right to Narcissism*, 96.