

De Copia

On Narcissism, Echo, and the Im-Possible Female Friendship

Erwa Plonowska Ziarek

Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy - Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française, Vol XXIII, No 2 (2015) pp 1-13

Vol XXIII, No 2 (2015)
ISSN 1936-6280 (print)
ISSN 2155-1162 (online)
DOI 10.5195/jffp.2015.703
www.jffp.org



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.



This journal is operated by the University Library System of the University of Pittsburgh as part of its D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program, and is co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Press

De Copia

On Narcissism, Echo, and the Im-Possible Female Friendship

Ewa Plonowska Ziarek

University of Buffalo

There are two interrelated questions that I would like to explore in the context of Pleshette DeArmitt's work. The first one pertains to the intellectual stakes of the eloquent style of her writing, its elegance and playfulness, which accompanies the philosophical order of argumentation. And the second one refers to the issue of female friendship. How can one discuss such friendship without resorting to merely biographical, historical, or autobiographical terms? If I could write an essay in honor of Pleshette DeArmitt and her work, I would call it "*De Copia: In Praise of Female Friendship*." Yet what kind of philosophical theories of female friendship could I possibly refer to? Perhaps to none. DeArmitt, whose life has created so many friendships, did not live long enough to write about friendship, at least not directly. And yet I would like to suggest that her captivating—the adjective that I use here deliberately—book, *The Right to Narcissism: A Case for Im-possible Self-Love*, leaves us traces of female friendship in her philosophical argument that narcissistic self-love is inseparable from the love of another.¹ Is this argument a sufficient starting point to talk about friendship among women? Or does it require a narrative and stylistic supplement to her philosophical case, which, as the title of *The Right to Narcissism* suggests, is also intertwined with an ethical, political, and legal case? What kind of tale is told by a woman philosopher, who, as Adriana Cavarero suggests, is also gifted with a certain ability of storytelling?²

After articulating the philosophical and ethical stakes of her revision of narcissism, DeArmitt, whose work is haunted by grief and mourning, nonetheless very quickly promises us something different, namely, that she will take us on an adventure which perhaps will be better expressed in narrative form. As she puts it, "we will sketch out the adventures of self-love."³ These adventures begin with her discussion of three scenes; from Rousseau's the *Second Discourse*, from Kristeva's *Nations without Nationalism*,

and from Derrida's *Rogues*. She invites us to read these cases of the familiar condemnations of narcissism, only to ask us to consider whether other tales of narcissism are possible: "Yet, this is only one version of Rousseau's famous morality tale. What if there were another?"⁴ And again, "Kristeva, as we will see, will offer another narrative about narcissism, one in which a right to a healthy self-love would not be opposed to a right to otherness."⁵

The proliferation of narcissisms discussed in this compact, elegantly written text—from solipsism to ecstatic transport toward the other; from bad to good narcissism; from primary to secondary; from the narcissism of life to the narcissism of death (to borrow André Green's formulation); from the narcissism of mourning to the narcissism of love—also requires multiple genres of writing, including an incredible virtuosity of foot work at the end. Echoing Sarah Kofman,⁶ these multiple philosophical, stylistic, and narrative registers of a woman's claim to "im-possible self-love" take issue with Freud's suspicion that women, though narcissistically wounded, already have too much of narcissism. Indeed, the question of the imbalance—excess or privation—of narcissism is the main concern of this book, which seems to suggest that finding the right dose, in the therapeutic and ethical senses of the word, is a difficult or impossible task, especially when women's rights are concerned.

In its rhetorical structure, the book dramatizes the predicament of a woman philosopher, who, like Echo, has no assurance that her text will be heard, and therefore must deploy all her eloquence in order to inaugurate a new story out of the limited resources at her disposal to captivate her readers' curiosity. In the great tradition of modernist defamiliarization, the text begins with a one-liner from Derrida, in which it is hardly possible to recognize Derrida: "The right to narcissism must be rehabilitated, it needs the time and the means."⁷ Indeed this provocative citational repetition is not only meant "to raise more than a few eyebrows,"⁸ especially from the Levinasian crowd, but through this defamiliarization, to suggest another story. The book's unfolding is an orchestrated oscillation between patience and curiosity, enticement and postponement, until in the end we finally encounter the main allegory of a woman's retelling of narcissism in DeArmitt's retelling of Echo's story. It is in this allegory that we can also hear certain echoes of female friendship.

The first major clue about an alternative tale of narcissism, which might shed some light on female friendship, occurs in a parenthesis, as if it were beside the point:

the traditional notion of narcissism (which is bound up with Ovid's influential myth of Narcissus and Echo, as well as with the Platonic distinction between being and seeming) undergoes a veritable metamorphosis, in which the love of self and love of the other can no longer be

thought of as mutually exclusive and must be understood as inextricably intertwined.⁹

The philosophical argument about the mutual interdependence between self-love and the love of the other is inseparable from this parenthetical invocation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which introduces for the first time the major female character—Echo—in DeArmitt's argument. Only if there are at least two characters and more than one story—Narcissus and Echo, for example—does the philosophical argument that the love of the self always already depends upon the love of the other make sense. The parenthesis smuggles in its protective wrapping Echo, who will eventually displace Narcissus altogether. Such displacement occurs in DeArmitt's rereading of Kristeva's *Tales of Love* as well as in her invention of Echo as a feminized allegory of deconstruction in the last chapter of the book, entitled "The Ear of Echo." Indeed as Kelly Oliver and Elaine Miller,¹⁰ among others, point out, Echo is the main figure in *The Right to Narcissism*. From the parenthesis to allegory, this oblique movement of the text toward Echo allows us to hear another title in the title of DeArmitt's book. The book could have been called *Echo's Right to Love*, or *Echo's Right to Friendship*. As we shall see, these acts of love and friendship are inseparable from Echo's, and DeArmitt's own, incredible rhetorical eloquence, for which Echo is ultimately punished.

The figure of Echo is central in DeArmitt's engagement with Kristeva's notion of primary narcissism. Even though it precedes the mirror stage and the symbolic order, primary narcissism, Kristeva argues, is already a triangular, unstable structure in which the emergence of an I is intertwined with two forms of alterity: on the one hand, the abjection/expulsion/devouring of the maternal body, which is the fantasmatic receptacle of the infant's death drive and magnet of its first projective identifications; on the other hand, the identification with, or transference to the place of the proto-third, which Freud calls the primary "father in individual prehistory."¹¹ Following Melanie Klein, Kristeva suggests that this primary magnet of transference might be better described as the fusion of maternal desire and linguistic sounds. In other words, "paternal" designates here "the dominant place of language in the constitution of *being*."¹² Needless to say, Kristeva's notion of primary narcissism, which underscores the entanglement of the emerging "I" with two forms of otherness, is the crucial theoretical linchpin of DeArmitt's own rehabilitation of narcissism. In both cases, the very emergence of the (not yet) subject is a drama of the separation from the alterity of the maternal body (or the real) and the transference toward the loving third, which is the "composite" figure of the imaginary as well as the semiotic prefiguring of the symbolic.¹³ By inscribing Echo on the level of primary narcissism, DeArmitt argues that such an inscription is a necessary consequence of Kristeva's privilege of "orality, vocalization, alliteration, rhythmicity"¹⁴ in this primary encounter with the otherness of language,

which precedes the visual structure of the mirror stage as well as the signifying structure of the sign. Since the Kristevan triangular structure of primary narcissism implies the infant's incorporation of the maternal/paternal voice, it "will have more in common with Ovid's Echo than the scopophilic Narcissus."¹⁵ As DeArmitt points out, the emerging proto-subject, "like or as Echo, catches the words, or simply the sounds, of the Other and delights in repeating, reproducing, and sending back the music that her ears have caught. In this archaic or primary identification, one finds a dominance of the oral—of the mouth, lips, and tongue."¹⁶ This oral delightful and playful incorporation of the patterns and sounds of the other is, according to DeArmitt, a kind of "primordial echoing."¹⁷

These joys of primordial echoing persist throughout our lives whenever we engage with linguistic play ourselves or appreciate rhythm, style, sound patterns, alliteration, or rhyme in the utterance/writing of somebody else. Following Kristeva, we can call these aspects of language, which persist beyond argument for communication, "poetic," "semiotic," and "embodied" aspects of the style. Consequently, the figure of Echo inhabits DeArmitt's book in a double way: first, on the level of the argument, Echo allows her to pinpoint the specificity of the primary transference, the loving identification, and the oral assimilation of the speech of the other—a transference that is a condition *sine qua non* of the emergence of the proto-subject. Second, I would argue, Echo persists as the stylistic and rhetorical eloquence of both DeArmitt's and Ovid's own writing.

By replacing Narcissus with Echo in the middle of her revision of narcissism DeArmitt turns the tables on us, reversing our expectations, before she explicitly announces such a reversal in her reading of Derrida:

The tables have now turned. The words that return to Narcissus, the sounds that reach his ears, are no longer his own. For Echo's "voice" has rendered his words foreign and unrecognizable, and Narcissus receives them as from another. It is he, Narcissus, who now hearkens to Echo's call *to come*. . . who is destined to echo her. In this strange turn of events, Derrida's Narcissus seems to be subject to the same sovereign injunction that binds Echo.¹⁸

Has DeArmitt just turned the tables on Derrida, rendered his words foreign and unrecognizable, while patiently and lovingly echoing his version of the story? Has she just invented a new feminist allegory of deconstruction in the figure of Echo, precisely "at the intersection of repetition and the unforeseeable"?¹⁹ In DeArmitt's own rhetorical cornucopia, Echo "is perhaps not simply a figure of a deconstructive self but also an exemplary figure for deconstruction itself."²⁰ This is a rather bold move. What does it mean in fact to treat Echo as an exemplar of the whole deconstructive enterprise and to select this rather marginal figure out of a plethora of other more prominent

tropes, literary allusions, and philosophical texts discussed by Derrida throughout his career—for example, Artaud, Hamlet, Kafka, Mallarmé, Ulysses, to mention just a few names and titles that have generated enormous secondary commentaries in the wake of Derrida’s readings? What kind of disfigurations and reconfigurations of the Derridean corpus would such a claim entail? Does DeArmitt propose to transfigure the Derridean discussions of reiteration, hauntology, immunity, friendship, democracy, hospitality, capital punishment, responsibility, etc., as versions of *echology*? This rather long list of questions, for which I do not have answers, is merely an indication of an enormous project that the last pages of *The Right to Narcissism* propose. And it is now up to us, her readers and friends, to pick up these threads and follow the lines of inquiry DeArmitt initiated.

The second intervention of DeArmitt’s reading of Derrida lies in her interpretation of the role of affect in the transformative acts of repetition. Sadness, lament, and despair are some of the affects that both Derrida and DeArmitt directly address in their discussions of mourning. But it seems to me that DeArmitt’s attention to the affective, or semiotic, resonances of the performative speech act is more pronounced, as it no doubt continues her reflections on semiotic orality from the chapter devoted to Kristeva’s *Tales of Love*. As DeArmitt reminds us in her reading of Echo, it is not just any act of repetition that makes a difference—ethical, political, or interpersonal—but rather such ethical transformations implicitly or explicitly, directly or indirectly, perform unanticipated declarations of love.²¹ Following Melanie Klein, as well as Kristeva’s interpretation of Klein—and DeArmitt was reading and teaching both of these writers—we could perhaps call such affective reiterations “transformative acts of reparation.” And conversely, we can easily recall or imagine a plethora of harmful repetitions which denigrate, humiliate, mock, or discredit other speakers. When we use the other’s words against him or her, these aggressive acts of repetition tear us apart. Often conveyed by subtle bodily gestures, an embrace, a hand on one’s shoulder, a smile or a hateful stare, these positive and negative affects—delight and despair, love and hate, and their unforeseeable, unconscious, ambivalent eruptions in repetitive speech acts—constitute both a challenge for and a possibility of ethics, since they foreground the fact that we are always already affected by an other. These semiotic, affective dimensions remind us that ego, as Kristeva calls it, first and foremost “*affectus est*.”²²

How could we credit DeArmitt’s inventive response to Derrida’s rethinking of narcissism and mourning? Perhaps we can follow her own example here. In her analysis of Kristeva, DeArmitt points out that Kristeva gives too much credit to Freud and does not sufficiently acknowledge the new directions of her own argument:

We highlight this point not to discredit Kristeva’s assertion that Freud shows us that narcissism is first and

foremost a structure but to give credit where credit is due. It is, we believe, the force and the creativity of Kristeva's own interpretation of Freud. . . which allows us to conceive of self-love "as a primary identity organization" that enables the emergence of a subject.²³

Indeed, we should give credit where credit is due: "echology" and affectivity disclose the creativity of DeArmitt's own interpretations of Derrida. And the subtle negotiation between Kristeva and Derrida implicitly taking place in her book is yet another intellectual adventure that DeArmitt promised us in the Introduction.

However, there is something else at stake in DeArmitt's generous credit of the import of Kristeva's work. Emphasizing the "originality and radicality"²⁴ of Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of self-love, DeArmitt's tribute to another female thinker is an act of female intellectual friendship. Women philosophers reading other women's works, finding sustenance in the force and creativity of other women's words, this practice, despite the institutionalization of Women's Studies at the universities, is still a relatively new phenomenon, especially in philosophy. And as we know all too well, this practice is still too limited and produces its own exclusions, which other marginalized women have repeatedly pointed out to white women scholars. In addition to these political, ideological, and philosophical limits of women's intellectual friendships, there is also a limit of the philosophical tradition and its discourse. This intersection between women's self-love and the love of other women that we call friendship has not yet found its philosophical vocabulary. In my search for the echoes of friendships among women, friendship which has been so generously given to me by DeArmitt and other women at SPEP, I, like Kelly Oliver and Elaine Miller, want to follow DeArmitt's rereading of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from the perspective of Echo. As DeArmitt points out in the closing line of her book, Echo's story has to be heard again, and perhaps each time otherwise: "In this allegory of Echo, one hears, if one listens well, another narrative of narcissism, which does not disavow mourning and opens itself to the experience of the other as other."²⁵

Encouraged by these words I listen again to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in search of another allegory. And what DeArmitt claims for the transformative power of love I want to claim for the rhetorical and ethical power of female friendship. What seems to be forgotten in the readings of Ovid's tale, which focus primarily on the exchanges between Narcissus and Echo, is indeed a story of female friendship that both inspires and calls for women's rhetorical eloquence, for their *copia*. Such a forgetting structures Derrida's interpretation of Echo as well, in so far as his interpretation foregrounds "the intersection of repetition and the unforeseeable,"²⁶ the possibility of inauguration out of repetition emerging between Narcissus and Echo. As Derrida writes, "everything in this famous scene turns around a call *to come*.

. . . 'Venit' says Narcissus; 'Come!' 'Come!' answers Echo. Of herself and on her own."²⁷ This generous reading, which grants a certain agency to Echo despite her predicament of truncated repetition, nonetheless seems to forget that Echo was a celebrated storyteller or musician, depending on the version of the myth. Like Scheherazade who used her art of storytelling to distract the power of the sovereign, Echo deploys her power of language in order to save her friends from the law of heteronormativity, its violence and punishment. Didn't she distract Juno, a feminine agent of heteronormativity, with her captivating words in order to enable other nymphs to escape the punishing wrath of the jealous wife/Goddess, and thus to flee from the double misfortune of a possible rape (since divine rape of women is such a prominent theme of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) and the punishment for that rape?: "when she[Juno] might have caught the nymphs lying beneath her Jupiter, on the mountain slopes, Echo knowingly held her in long conversations, while the nymphs fled."²⁸ When Saturnia realized this she said 'I shall give you less power over that tongue by which I have been deluded, and the briefest ability to speak.'"²⁹

If this part of the story is about "sovereign injunction," as Derrida suggests, if indeed jealous Juno is the figure of the sovereign at all, this sovereignty is at least for a short time suspended by the captivating power of prudent female speech, by Echo's "*longo sermone*"—a term meaning conversation but also wisdom, disputation, lecture. By undermining the power of sovereignty through her rhetoric, Echo suspends not only the law (of heteronormativity) but also the sovereign right to suspend the law as well as the right to punish. In other words, she suspends sovereignty itself. Thanks to her "*sermone*," Echo's act of friendship enables other Nymphs to flee from the jealous vengeance of the Goddess. Indeed, the correlative of suspended sovereignty held captive by female eloquence is the figure of flight, "*fugo*," one the most frequently repeated verbs in Ovid's tale of Narcissus and Echo. For example, Narcissus's question about Echo's flight from him evokes the successful flight of the Nymphs thanks to Echo's rhetorical power: "Why do you run from me (*me fugis*)?"—asks Narcissus." When it is Narcissus who flees from Echo, his flight from love is contrasted with the Nymphs' running away from injustice and punishment at the beginning of the poem. To stress the poetic import of these different modalities of flight in this poem, Ovid not only repeats "*fugo*," but in fact creates a poetic "Echo effect" of alliteration that calls attention to the thematic and rhetorical import of flight in his poem: "He runs from her, and running cries."³⁰ In particular what is at stake in the Echo story of the *Metamorphoses* is the contrast between the flight from love and the flight from law, if not from sovereignty itself, enabled by love.

Thus what interests me in this story of female friendship is not only the intersection between "repetition and the unforeseeable," or repetition and an ethical response, which Derrida analyzes, but rather the flight from the law,

the suspension of punishment, and the captivation of sovereignty by Echo's rhetorical *copia*. The allegory of female friendship among the nymphs is after all a story about fugitives from the law and the ethical substitution in the Levinasian sense, since it is Echo who takes the place of other nymphs and receives Juno's punishment in their stead. As a result of this punishment, received for the sake of other women, her rhetorical power, her "*potestas*," which indeed "outsmarted"³¹ the law of heteronormativity becomes "*parva*," very small.³² Consequently, the law and sovereignty attempt to reassert themselves through this truncation of female language and its diminished rhetorical power. As another great feminist reader of Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, in her text, "Echo," remarks, the story of Echo's punishment is different from that of Tiresias, because it is not supplemented by any gifts from Jupiter.³³ Echo loses her linguistic *potestas* but does not receive any other compensating gifts or abilities. And perhaps one symptom of this diminished *potestas* is a reframing of Echo's story within the heterosexual encounter with Narcissus. Nonetheless, despite her "*parva potestas*," Echo still confounds and surprises Narcissus, who is "astonished, and glances everywhere," just as Juno before him was "deceived" by Echo's voice.

As Spivak's deconstructive reading of Ovid reminds us, there are significant differences between the original Latin text and its English and French translations with respect to the phrases Echo herself repeats directly, and the reported speech of the narrator of the poem, who tells us about her repetition.³⁴ To put it ironically, different translators put different words in Echo's mouth. These differences matter to our interpretation of the poem since the multiple modalities of repetition—for instance, the relation between Echo's truncated repetition and the poetic repetition of sounds performed in the language of the poem—constitute the meaning of the text. Given the weight that Derrida gives to "*à venir*" in his reading of Echo, it is striking that it is precisely this phrase that is not directly repeated by Echo in Ovid's poem: Narcissus "shouts in a loud voice 'Come to me!' She calls as he calls."³⁵ By contrast, Derrida writes, "everything in this famous scene turns around a call to *come*. . . 'Veni' says Narcissus; 'Come!' 'Come!' answers Echo. Of herself and on her own."³⁶ Derrida's altered reading invents Echo's double response, which is missing in Ovid's text. It is precisely thanks to this inventive rewriting of the original that Derrida, of himself and on his own, grants Echo a possibility of the inauguration of speech. Ovid's lines—"voce *'veni'... vocat illa vocantem*"³⁷—are a magnificent example of echolalia and alliteration, which incorporates Echo's altering play with sounds into the poetic language of the *Metamorphoses*. Rather than responding on her own and by herself, Echo's echolalias are appropriated by Ovid's own poetic power. Following many of Ovid's readers, we can read "*vocat illa vocantem*" as a striking example of Echo's serving "as a model for the poet Ovid himself, her words echoing his own poetic project in the *Metamorphoses*, where he too creatively appropriates, translates and transforms the words and stories of others into a text that fully represents his own designs and

desires.”³⁸ This echoing effect of Ovid’s poetic language evokes and confirms DeArmitt’s reinterpretation of Kristeva’s primary narcissism, which precisely stresses the fact that the early delight in echolalia and sound patters, a testimony to the oral incorporation of the sounds of language, recurs as the semiotic aspect of literary language.

This discussion of whether Echo is a feminine figure of the inventive inauguration of a new speech act out of linguistic repetition, or whether she is merely a poetic model of Ovid’s own writing (and thus is an allegory of the male poetic language) echoes a long history of protracted and unresolved, perhaps unresolvable, disagreements about the status of Echo in Ovid’s tale. Is she a “passive” figure of a diminished capacity of female speech or is she “a creative force,”³⁹ which, to follow DeArmitt’s reading, deconstructs the very opposition between repetition and inauguration? By turning Echo into an allegory of deconstruction, DeArmitt does not resolve this ongoing debate, but, on the contrary, augments all the contradictions, ambiguities, and complexities that this figure presents for us.

These ambiguities pertaining to the status of Echo’s utterances in the wake of her punishment are reenacted in the last two lines that Echo repeats directly in Ovid’s poem. One of these lines, similar yet different to “*veni*,”⁴⁰ reads as follows: “*‘huc coeamus’ . . . ‘coeamus’ rettulit Echo,*”⁴¹ usually translated as “Let us come together.” The difference between Narcissus’s “*veni*”⁴² and “*coeamus*”, which Echo so gladly repeats, is that the latter phrase puts an emphasis on togetherness, being with, and coming together. “*Coeamus*” in Echo’s speech act signals both the possibility of an ethical relation to the other, being with the other, as well as an erotic sexual encounter. In this phrase, ethics cannot be separated from Eros, and Eros embraces ethics; indeed they come together in Echo’s speech. It is this inseparably intertwined sexual and ethical relation that Narcissus rejects with horror, and many philosophers, including Levinas, repeat a similar gesture after him. By splitting the ethical and the sexual apart, we are left with either asexual ethics or narcissistic love, incapable of a relation to alterity.

Because Narcissus is so confounded (“*deceptus*”)⁴³ by the unpredictable effects of Echo’s repetition, he not only rejects her amorous ethical discourse carved out of his own words, but, more importantly, he fails to acknowledge the possibility of a shared rhetorical eloquence she offers. This gift of Echo’s rhetorical eloquence is also lost in most English translations of the last phrase she repeats in Ovid’s text. At stake here is the meaning of the word “*copia*” in the last exchange between Narcissus and Echo—a key Latin term almost never rendered in English translations of the *Metamorphoses*. The Latin version of this exchange reads as follows:

*ante’ ait ‘emoriar, quam sit tibi copia nostri’;
rettulit illa nihil nisi ‘sit tibi copia nostri!’⁴⁴*

When in English translation of these two lines Narcissus says “May I die before what is mine is yours” and Echo answers him “*What’s mine is yours!*” in Latin we hear the repetition of “*tibi copia nostri!*” Resonating in the English adjective “copious” as well as in another well-known Latin noun “cornucopia,” “*tibi copia nostri*” refers not only to material plenitude or sexual pleasure but also to shared rhetorical and intellectual eloquence. In the Western rhetorical tradition, this reference to rhetorical and intellectual eloquence in the term “*copia*”⁴⁵ is suggested for example by Desiderius Erasmus’s famous treaty on rhetoric, “*De duplici copia verborum ac Rerum,*” (“On Copia of Words and Ideas”) or his “A Short Rule for Copiousness” (“*Brevis de copia praeception*”) [1518].⁴⁶

By connecting eroticism with intellectual eloquence, Echo’s most important act of enunciation⁴⁷ —“*tibi copia nostri!*”—takes place not through a mere repetition but through a double negation (“*nihil nisi*”) of Narcissus’s curse of death. This eclipse of the threat of death can be read in the context of Kristeva’s work as the transformation of the violence of the death drive into the linguistic power of the negative. This linguistic eclipse of aggression both anticipates the death of the two protagonists and grants them survival thanks to the semiotic and rhetorical eloquence of speech. However, I would like to suggest another performative effect of Echo’s erasure of Narcissus’s curse or perhaps of his unconscious death wish. By omitting “May I die,” Echo’s last words—“*tibi copia nostri!*”—perform the second act of suspension in the poem. As we recall, Echo’s story begins with the distraction of sovereignty for the sake of friendship, and it ends with the suspension of the threat of death—which is after all one of the sovereign prerogatives—in the name of love. Not only are these two acts of suspension intertwined, but also both of them depend upon different effects of Echo’s eloquence. Echo begins by captivating sovereignty by her “*longo sermone.*” Once this capacity is taken away from her, she deploys her truncated repetition in order to transform the narcissistic aggression of the death drive into linguistic negativity and omission. What these two acts of suspension enable are unpredictable, surprising acts of female friendship and acts of love. And perhaps friendship is one of the modalities of love.

These performative acts belong to Echo’s and DeArmitt’s capacious, bodily inflected copia, which is transmitted through their words to us, their readers. As we have seen, the interplay between “*copia*” and “*corpus*”, the first word of Ovid’s tale of Narcissus—“*Corpus adhuc Echo, non vox erat et tamen usum*”⁴⁸—is a crucial theme of the story as well as the stunning poetic effect of Ovid’s language. Despite her punishment and the withering away of her body, Echo’s enunciation opens the possibility of a flight from injustice, of a female substitution, and of a rhetorical/embodied/intellectual copia. If, following DeArmitt, I entertain the possibility of a deconstructive allegory in Ovid’s poem, it is an allegory of female intellectual friendship and embodied eloquence. This allegory is inspired by DeArmitt’s life and

work, which has left us such a remarkable legacy of both intellectual eloquence and life-sustaining friendships.

¹ Pleshette DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism: A Case for Im-possible Self-Love* (New York: Fordam University Press, 2014).

² Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (London: Routledge, 2000), 55-66.

³ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 2.

⁴ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 7.

⁵ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 10.

⁶ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 160-61.

⁷ From Derrida, *Right of Inspection*, qt. in DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 1.

⁸ *The Right to Narcissism*, 1.

⁹ *The Right to Narcissism*, 13.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Kelly Oliver's plenary address and Elaine Miller's lecture at Pleshette DeArmitt's Memorial Session at the Kristeva Circle Annual Conference, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, September, 2015.

¹¹ Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 27.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 16.

¹⁵ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 59.

¹⁶ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 73.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 137.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), xii.

²⁰ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 136.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 151-167.

²³ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 57.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ DeArmitt, *The Right to Narcissism*, 138.

²⁶ Derrida, *Rogues*, xii.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ 3:364, “illa deam longo prudens sermone tenebat;” All Latin quotations are from Ovid, *Metamorphoseon* (Virginia: Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library), Bk III:359-401, <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/sources/OviLMet.part3.html>.

²⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A.S. Kline (Virginia: Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, 2000), Bk III:359-401, <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph3.htm#476975712>. All subsequent English translations will be from this version.

³⁰ *Metamorphoseon*, 3:390, “ille fugit fugiensque.”

³¹ Derrida, *Rogues*, xii.

³² Ovid, *Metamorphoseon*, 3:367.

³³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Echo,” *New Literary History* 24:1 (1993): 17-43. doi:10.2307/469267. Spivak reads Echo as “the possibility of a truth not dependent upon intention” (24). The main question Spivak asks is about the possibilities Echo offers to feminists of color and proposes that Echo is the possibility of an undoing of “every act of cultural narcissism” (27).

³⁴ Spivak, “Echo,” 24-25.

³⁵ *Metamorphoseon*, 3:382, “voce 'veni!' magna clamat: vocat illa vocantem.”

³⁶ Derrida, *Rogues*, xii.

³⁷ *Metamorphoseon*, 3:382.

³⁸ Genevieve Liveley, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2011), 52.

³⁹ For a brief discussion of this debate, see Liveley, 52.

⁴⁰ *Metamorphoseon*, 3.382.

⁴¹ *Metamorphoseon*, 3:386-7.

⁴² *Metamorphoseon*, 3.382.

⁴³ *Metamorphoseon*, 3:385.

⁴⁴ *Metamorphoseon*, 3:391-392.

⁴⁵ Daniel Bender, “Copia,” in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times*, ed. Theresa Enos (New York: Garland, 1996), 149.

⁴⁶ Desiderius Erasmus, *Colloquies*, Vol. 1, trans. Craig Ringwalt Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁴⁷ cf. Liz Oakley-Brown, *Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England*, Studies in European Cultural Transition (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), who points out the possible translation of *copia* as power: “I give you power over

me.” In such a translation, Echo’s act of enunciation will be an act of subjection (104).

⁴⁸ *Metamorphoseon*, 3:359.