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Les voix narratives du récit médiéval

“Dont me revient ceste parole ?”

Echo, voice and citation in Le Lai de Narcisse and Cristal et Clarie

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« Dont me revient ceste parole ? » Echo, voice and citation in *Le Lai de Narcisse and Cristal et Clarie*

Abstract: Although Narcissus is a hugely influential figure in medieval depictions of unrequited love, less attention has been given to the figure of Echo as an emblem for poetic voice. A reading of the twelfth-century Narcisus et Dané and its reiteration within the thirteenth-century Cristal et Clarie traces the resonances of Echo in these two texts. In Narcisus et Dané, Echo can be seen and heard in the rhetoric of reflection and reciprocity voiced by the protagonists. This rhetoric is cited and parodied in Cristal et Clarie, indicating the central role of echoic citation in the composition of medieval romance narratives.

Résumé: Malgré la grande influence de la figure de Narcisse dans les représentations médiévales de l'amour fatal, on fait bien moins attention à la figure d'Écho en tant qu'emblème de la voix poétique. En considérant Narcisus et Dané, roman bref du XII^e siècle, et la réinscription de ce texte dans le roman Cristal et Clarie (XIII^e siècle), nous tentons d'écouter les résonances d'Écho. Dans Narcisus et Dané, l'on peut voir et entendre la nymphe ovidienne dans une rhétorique de la réflexion et de la réciprocité qu'énoncent les protagonistes. Cette rhétorique est reprise d'une manière parodique dans Cristal et Clarie, preuve du rôle principal de la citation dans la composition des récits courtois du Moyen Âge.

Introduction : Where is Echo ?

One of the most resonant figures for the voice inherited by the Middle Ages from Classical literature is Echo. In this article, I shall explore the way in which this cursed, snubbed nymph, whose bodily existence fades leaving only her voice, is both effaced from, and detectable in, a twelfth-century French reworking of the Narcissus myth and a thirteenth-century adaptation of this reworking. I shall argue that, between the lines of these narratives, we can see and hear Echo as a privileged figure for the representation of the spoken voice in writing, specifically literary writing and rewriting. As such, Echo can be read as partaking in the dialogue between writing and orality which characterises French literature in the early Middle Ages, and scholarship which addresses it. As she is translated and transported from the Latin poetry of the first century CE to medieval French literature, Echo metamorphoses from a character in a story of fatal love, to become a figure for the citational nature of medieval narrative.

Although the tale of Echo and Narcissus is a familiar one, it perhaps worth summarising Ovid's version of it before I go any further, since the authors of Middle Ages, not least in the texts I examine in this article, recurrently reinvent and retell this story. In book III of the *Metamorphoses*¹, Ovid relates that Echo is originally a

¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. by F. J. Miller, revised by G. P. Goold, Cambridge, MA and Cambridge, Eng, Harvard University Press, 1977, Book III, v. 339-510. References to this work will from now on be given parenthetically in the text of the article.

very talkative nymph, who keeps Hera talking while Zeus is canoodling with other nymphs. When Hera realises that she had been duped in this way, she curses Echo, making her able only to repeat the last syllables of others' speech. Meanwhile, Liriope, the mother of a lovely young man called Narcissus, is told by the blind seer Tiresias that Narcissus will have a long life as long as he does not know himself. Narcissus is loved and wooed by many male and female admirers, but proudly rebuffs them all, preferring to go hunting. Like so many others, Echo falls in love with Narcissus and follows him through the woods, unable to declare her love in any more eloquent way than by repeating Narcissus's rejections of her. Spurned, Echo wastes away, at first bones and voice, and then, as her bones turn to stone, she lives on only in voice. Meanwhile, Narcissus bends to drink at a smooth pool and falls in love with the reflection in the water. He realises too late that this is his reflection, and Tiresias's prediction is fulfilled. Rejecting the aural repetition he receives from Echo, Narcissus falls for another kind of repetition in his own reflection. He wastes away; naiads and dryads lament, and Echo echoes them. But when they look for his body, having prepared the funeral pyre, all they can find is a flower with a yellow centre and white petals.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the story and figure of Narcissus in the representation of love, especially doomed love, in the Middle Ages². The captivation figured in Narcissus's rapt gaze at his own reflection seems to infect and inflect a wide range of texts across the Middle Ages which deal with love, particularly its essential impossibility: an impossibility founded upon the unattainable desire for the beloved to know the lover as he or she truly is, and to reciprocate exactly the lover's desire. Narcissus's despairing lament, *iste ego sum* (*Metamorphoses*, III, 463), seems to encapsulate for authors in France, from the twelfth century onwards, the mortifying realisation that love (especially as it is mediated via literature) constructs and projects the beloved as an image of the lover. For Giorgio Agamben, Narcissus, as he is represented in medieval love literature, embodies the characteristically «phantasmatic» nature of love in the Middle Ages, in which «every profound erotic intention is always turned idolatrously to an *ymage*»³. Agamben makes it clear here that love by means of an *ymage* – the reflection, or phantasm of the object of love – is not an inauthentic love; rather it reveals the essentially melancholic nature of this version of love, which seeks to possess and fix the object of love precisely in the mode of its loss. In other words, it is via the image of an impossible love object that the melancholic medieval lover represents love to himself: Narcissus's transfixed, transfiguring gaze upon his own reflection becomes emblematic of this doomed yet poetically productive situation.

Agamben's work forges a link between medieval and modern uses of Narcissus, and he comments that «The Freudian idea of the libido [...] appears in

² See F. Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1967, L. Vinge, *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century*, Lund Gleerups, 1967, and J. Gilbert, ««I am not he»: Narcissus and Ironic Performativity in Medieval French Literature», *MLR*, 100, 2005.

³ G. Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. R. L. Martinez, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 82.

this perspective as a late but legitimate descendant of the medieval idea of love »⁴. In twentieth-century psychoanalysis, both Freud and Lacan call on the image of the desiring subject captivated and condemned by that which the subject perceives as an image of himself as an other. Just as Narcissus is a central, crucial figure to many medieval formulations of love and desire, narcissism is a foundational theory for much psychoanalytic scrutiny of desire and the relationship between the subject and the object, between self and other.

Of course, it is important to remember that the Narcissus of medieval literature and the narcissism of psychoanalysis address different concerns and different figures – indeed, this is impossible to forget, since it is a refrain of scholarship on the medieval Narcissus⁵. The popular version of psychoanalytic narcissism is self-love; whereas Narcissus in the Middle Ages becomes a figure for unrequited, and therefore fatal, love. Yet in neither the medieval nor the psychoanalytic context is there a clear distinction between, on the one hand, reading Narcissus as a character who loves himself or, on the other, reading him as a character who does not realise that the other that he loves is himself and therefore unattainable. As Simon Gaunt points out, « the distinction between medieval and modern thinking on Narcissus is less stark than most commentators suggest »⁶. What both treatments of Narcissus reveal is that the positions of self and other are interdependent and overlapping; the story of Echo and Narcissus precisely marks this overlap.

Louise Vinge presents a review of the depiction of Narcissus from Ovid and his influences, observing that Ovid seems to be first author to join the reflecting stories of Echo and Narcissus⁷. However, as Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet observes, « Rares sont les auteurs au Moyen Âge qui ont gardé les deux aspects de la légende, rares sont ceux, en fait, qui se sont intéressés à Écho pour elle-même »⁸. Echo's story is one of the transformation of body into voice: potentially a very fruitful metaphor for love poetry, as I aim to show in this article. However, in the literature of courtly love produced in medieval France, Narcissus tends to eclipse Echo in this function of representing love poetry to itself. For instance, in the *Roman de la Rose*, as David Hult points out, it is the fountain of Narcissus which heralds and represents the encounter with the allegorical fiction of the *Rose*⁹. And in Bernart de Ventadorn's

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁵ As David Hult reminds us, « The fascination with Narcissus has continued unceasingly since classical times and [...] it is itself an example of modern cultural narcissism to think that only the twentieth century has adequately uncovered the import of the myth. » *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First Roman de la Rose*, Cambridge, CUP, 1986, p. 263.

⁶ *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature: Martyrs to Love* Oxford, OUP, 2006, p. 172.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁸ « Écho et Sibylle, la voix féminine au Moyen Âge: Entre affirmation et extinction », *Le genre de la voix*, ed. S. Bahar, A. Fidecaro and Y. Foehr-Janssens, *Équinoxe*, 23, 2002, p. 84.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 263-300.

« Can vei la lauzeta mover », the song invoked is that of the lark and the poet, but Echo's voice is absent¹⁰.

However, Echo's traces haunt the verse narratives and poetry of medieval French texts ostensibly preoccupied with Narcissus. The presence of Echo is the subject of a question posed in the fifteenth century by François Villon, in his « Ballade des dames du temps jadis ». Villon muses on the fates of a number of women whose names have classical resonances.

Dictes moy ou, n'en quel pays,
Est Flora la belle Rommaine,
Archipiades ne Thaïs,
Qui fut sa cousine germaine,
Echo parlant quant bruyt on maine
Dessus riviere ou sus estan,
Qui beaulté ot trop plus qu'humaine.
Mais ou sont les neiges d'antan ?¹¹

His ballade is based on the model of the *Ubi sunt?* genre, a poetic mode which depicts and laments the passing of time and human mortality. However, as Jane Taylor's incisive reading of this poem remarks, the names of the lost, lamented ladies in this poem are chosen not necessarily for the associations they evoke, but for their euphony¹². In this sense, Echo, as the woman who became sound, is the crucial object for this enquiry.

A number of critics and theorists have echoed Villon in addressing the question of Echo's whereabouts, interrogating from a feminist standpoint the psychoanalytic formulations of Narcissism which write Echo out of the story¹³. Spivak reads Echo as an indication that a woman's voice can only echo the words of the patriarchy; according to Spivak's article, the female voice is always an assumption of a voice which is always-already imposed because it is all that is available. Echo, unable to speak in the first person of her desire, is a convincing figure for this idea.

¹⁰ Bernart de Ventadour, *Chansons d'amour*, ed. M. Lazar, Paris, Klincksieck, 1966, p. 180-3. On the use of mirror imagery and the reference to Narcissus in this lyric, see S. Kay, « Love in a Mirror : An Aspect of the Imagery of Bernart de Ventadorn », *Medium Aevum*, 52, 1983, and S. Gaunt, « A Martyr to Love : Sacrificial Desire in the Poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn », *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31, 2001, Gilbert, « I am not he ».

¹¹ François Villon, *Le Testament, Œuvres*, ed. A. Longnon, Paris, Champion, 1992, v. 329-36.

¹² *The Poetry of François Villon : Text and Context*, Cambridge, CUP, 2001, p. 71-9.

¹³ J. Mitchell, « Narcissism », in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Penguin, London, 1990, p. 30-41, A.-E. Berger, « Dernières nouvelles d'Écho », *Littérature*, 102 (*Échos et traces*), mai 1996, G. Chakravorty Spivak, « Echo », *New Literary History*, 24, 1993. In his reading of the Narcissus and « autoréférentialité » in medieval French literature, J.-C. Huchet omits any mention of the suppression of Echo in the *lai* of *Narcisus et Dané*. (*Littérature médiévale et psychanalyse. Pour une clinique littéraire*, Paris, PUF, 1990), p.60.

Villon's « Ballade des dames du temps jadis » ends with the haunting lines, « Qu'a ce reffraing ne vous remaine : / Mais où sont les neiges d'anten ? »¹⁴. All that remains of Echo is the sound of her voice, and all that remains of Villon's poetry is his refrain: the snows of yesteryear have melted into the « riviere » and « estan » over which Echo's voice – and Villon's – resonate. The « dames des temps jadis » may have vanished, and yet their traces can be heard in the rhyme and refrain of Villon's verse, exemplified by Echo. Christopher Lucken observes that rhyme sets up echoing patterns of anticipation and fulfilment from one line of poetry to another: « En effet, la rime n'est elle pas un des moyens privilégiés par lequel la langue, au moment même où elle se répète, se renouvelle [...] ? »¹⁵. The conclusions of literary critics who trace Echo's voice through medieval French poetry are summed up by Cerquiglino-Toulet: « la voix d'Écho, n'est-elle pas la voix de la poésie même ? »¹⁶. In the next two sections of this article, I shall trace this voice through two narrative poems: « la plus ancienne version française du récit d'Ovide et la plus infidèle »¹⁷ the short twelfth-century narrative entitled by its recent editors either *Narcisse* or *Narcisus et Dané*¹⁸, and a thirteenth-century parodic digest of romance tropes, *Cristal et Clarie*¹⁹. As Echo's story is adapted by these texts, she is written out as a named character, yet persists as a trope and a voice within their narrative.

Looking for Echo in Narcisus et Dané.

Echo is characterised by her physical absence, lingering in language where her body has been abolished²⁰. As its title indicates, the woman in *Narcisus et Dané* who falls so fatally for Narcissus is not the echoing nymph, but a very talkative

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, v. 355-56.

¹⁵ C. Lucken, « L'Écho du poème (« ki sert de recorder che k'autres dist ») », *Par la vue et par l'ouïe : Littérature du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance*, ed. M. Gally and M. Jourde, Fontenay-aux-Roses, ÉNS éditions, 1999, p. 49. The quotation in Lucken's title is taken from the lyric « Puis k'il m'estuet de ma doulour a poem by kanter » by Richard de Fournival (1201-60).

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 87. Similarly, Véronique Gély-Ghedira comments that « ce à quoi Junon condamne Écho n'est autre qu'une définition de la poésie », *La nostalgie du moi. Écho dans la littérature européenne*, Paris, PUF, 2000, p. 33-34.

¹⁷ S. Baumgartner, « Narcisse à la fontaine : du « conte » à « l'exemple » », *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 9 | 2002, [En ligne], mis en ligne le 05 janvier 2007. URL : <http://crm.revues.org/index70.html>. Consulté le 31 mars 2011.

¹⁸ *Narcisse in Pyrame et Thisbé, Narcisse, Philomena : Trois contes du XI^e siècle français imités d'Ovide*, ed. and trans. É. Baumgartner, Paris, Gallimard, 2000, and *Narcisus et Dané*, ed. and trans. P. Eley, Liverpool, Liverpool Online Series, 2002. Line references are taken from the Eley edition, and given parenthetically in the text of the article ; I shall also refer to this text by the title Eley gives it.

¹⁹ *Cristal und Clarie, altfranzösischer Abenteuerroman des XIII. Jahrhunderts*, ed. H. Breuer, Dresden, Gesellschaft für romanische Literatur, 1915.

²⁰ Gély-Ghedira calls the tales of Echo in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Longus's *Daphnis et Chloe* « Deux fables pour abolir un corps de femme », *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

princess named Dané²¹. Dané declares her love volubly to Narcissus, but is spurned just as Echo was. Narcissus goes on to fall in love with his own reflection, too late notices Dané, and they die in one another's arms.

Figures of reflection and echo recur throughout *Narcissus et Dané*. In the *Metamorphoses*, Echo ends up in the paradoxical situation of having her voice taken from her, yet surviving only as voice. The words she speaks to her beloved Narcissus can only repeat the words he uses to reject her.

*dixerat « ecquis adest ? » et « adest » responderat Echo.
hic stupet, utque aciem partes dimittit in omnis,
voce, « veni ! » magna clamat : vocat illa vocantem.
respicit et rursus nullo veniente « quid » inquit
« me fugis ? » et totidem, quot dixit, verba recepit.
perstat et alternae deceptus imagine vocis
« huc coeamus » ait, nullique libentius umquam
responsura sono « coeamus » rettulit Echo
et verbis favet ipsa suis egressaque silva
ibat, et iniceret sperato bracchia collo ;
ille fugit fugiensque « manus complexibus aufer !
ante » ait « emoriar, quam sit tibi copia nostri »
rettulit illa nihil nisi « sit tibi copia nostri ! » (Métamorphoses, III, 379-92)*

For Claire Nouvet, Echo's repetitions reveal the way in which speech is always riddled with superfluous meanings, and open to reinterpretation :

The echo is not a distortion which affects the intended meaning of a statement. It marks the impossibility of determining any such intended meaning, that is, the impossibility of connecting a statement to the intention of a speaking consciousness²².

Echo's voice, then, draws attention to the way in which our voices are never quite our own : this idea is taken in a different direction in *Narcissus et Dané*, in which Dané's voice is marked by both utterance and echo.

Whereas Ovid's Echo cannot properly be a subject in her speech, Dané's speech occupies more than one subject position. Her love for Narcissus is expressed in a number of lengthy monologues – or, more properly, internal dialogues²³, since Dané becomes her own interlocutor, arguing with herself, reprimanding herself and

²¹ On Ovid's Daphne as a possible model for Dané, see M. Thiry-Stassin, « Une autre source ovidienne du *Narcisse* ? », *Le Moyen Age*, 84, 1978.

²² « An Impossible Response : The Disaster of Narcissus », *Yale French Studies*, 79, 1991, p. 107.

²³ See F. Jappé, « Adaptation et création dans le conte de *Narcisse* », *Traduction, transposition, adaptation II, Bien dire et bien apprendre : bulletin du Centre d'études médiévales et dialectales de l'Université Lille III*, 14, 1996, and Eley's Introduction to her edition, p. 17.

interrogating her feelings and desires. Whereas Echo needs another person to be able to speak at all, Dané asks and answers her own questions.

Dont te vient or ceste parole ?
 Orains fus sage, or es fole !
 Veus tu par toi tel conseil prendre ?
 Dont ne te vient il mius atendre ?
 Fill' es de roïne et de roi :
 Segnor te donront endroit toi ;
 Auques t'estuet por çou souffrir.
 Et se il n'est a mon plesir ?
 Qu'es ce, Dané? Dont n'as tu honte ?
 Ses tu donques ke plaisir monte ? (ND, 261-74)

She questions the source of her speech (« Dont te vient or ceste parole ? » (261)), and later asks herself, « Qu'es ce, Dané, que tu redis ? » (375). Dané takes issue with herself, and with her own use of language, suggesting that, for all her loquacity, she is not dissimilar to Echo, in that she is not in control of the words she utters. Her speech, it is implied, has a source beyond her. Although Dané is not condemned to repeat whatever Narcissus says, she still seems to be compelled to speak words which are not her own.

In his book, *A Voice and Nothing More*, the Lacanian theorist Mladen Dolar explores the voice as an aspect of subjectivity which is forever foreign to the speaker.

The voice stems from the body, but it is not its part, and it upholds language without belonging to it, yet, in this paradoxical topology, this is the only point they share – and this is the topology of the *objet petit a*²⁴.

One of the most central, yet hardest to grasp, concepts of Lacan's psychoanalysis, the *objet a* is a means of expressing the object which is desired by the subject, and created by the subject's desire. It is therefore an object which exists only as the distortion of desire : that is why Lacan describes it as an object which exists as loss. It is something we fantasise as belonging to the object of our desire, but which has been imputed to our object of desire precisely by our desire. It is nothing made into something by the contours of desire, an empty space which nevertheless means the world. It is a concept which has much in common with Agamben's phantasm, but whereas the phantasm is inherently visual, figured by an *ymage*, the *objet a* can be figured as a gaze or a voice.

The gaze and voice are the *objet a* because they mark a privileged site outside of the subject where the encounter with the other takes place. However, that site is neither part of the other nor of the subject : it is an unknowable space in which the other sees, encounters or addresses the subject, and which the subject can never apprehend or incorporate. The voice and the gaze are nothing without physicality, capable of conveying desire and causing love, and yet they are nothing but an

²⁴ *A Voice and Nothing More*, London and Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2006, p. 73.

intangible exchange between the subject and the other²⁵. As Ovid tells it, then, the story of Echo is precisely about the gaze and voice as objects which mortify and mutilate lover and beloved, which cause and manifest love, yet mark the impossibility of the sexual relation.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus's gaze crystallises the *objet a*, as it forms an almost-tangible connection between himself and his reflection, which his gaze apprehends as the object of his desire, yet which is impossible to possess. Just as the gaze, according to Dolar, has eclipsed the voice in psychoanalytic enquiries into desire and subjectivity²⁶, Narcissus has eclipsed the importance of Echo in readings of the *Metamorphoses* from the Middle Ages to Freud. Dolar only gives a brief mention to the *Metamorphoses*²⁷, but I would argue that Ovid's mythical explanation of the aural phenomenon of the echo encapsulates the voice as the *objet a*. As Dolar makes clear, voice as the *objet a* should be conceived of as distinct from language, meaning and sense : it is the wordless, senseless, bodily aspect of speech (or silence) which gives us away and marks what Jacques Lacan calls « l'altérité de ce qui se dit »²⁸.

When she has been rejected by Narcissus, instead of wasting away to nothing but voice, Dané's voice splits, manifesting « altérité » to a sanity-threatening extent.

Ne sai que faç, ne sai u sui.
 Qui sui je donc ? Qui est mes pere ?
 Li rois est ore. Et qui ma mere ?
 Donc ne ses tu qui ? La roïne.
 Mençongne est, ains sui orfeline :
 Je n'ai ami, je n'ai parent,
 Je n'ai conseil de boine gent.
 Par Diu, si as : tu es Dané !
 Ai je donques le sen dervé ?
 Ja soloie je estre plus sage.
 Sui je devenue sauvage ?
 Que faz en bos ? Que sui ci quisse ?
 Je me contieng en male guise.
 Ce fait Amors. Qu'est amors ? Lasse,
 Ne sai ! Plus a droit le nomase
 Se je desisce derverie. (ND 594-609)

She questions her identity, parentage, motivation and soundness of mind, wondering whether the entity that has led her to this state is love or « derverie ». The melancholic madness which characterises Dané's speech is articulated in a loss of

²⁵ « It is something that cannot itself be present, although the whole notion of presence is constructed around it and can be established only by its elision » (Dolar, *A Voice*, p. 42). For some helpful remarks on the voice as *objet a*, see A. Lagaay, 'Between Sound and Silence : Voice in the History of Psychoanalysis', *e-pisteme*, 1, 2008.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁸ *Le Séminaire X : L'Angoisse (1962-63)*, Paris, Seuil, 2004, p. 318.

self, and the illusion that Narcissus can restore her to completeness. In other words, Dané is the first character in *Narcisse et Dané* to exhibit signs of phantasmic, Narcissian desire. Dané may have replaced Echo, but she also takes part in the deadly desire for reflection and reciprocation which is both triggered and thwarted by the gaze and the voice as love objects.

Stricken with passion for Narcissus, whom she has spotted from her tower, Dané muses that they are similar enough to be lovers, but not too similar for their relationship to be endogamous. She discusses their differences in rank in terms which suppress those differences.

Assés somes d'une maniere,
D'une biauté et d'un eage ;
Se nous ne soumes d'un parage,
Il est assés de haute gent,
Si ne soumes mie parent. (ND 342-6)

When she meets and propositions Narcissus in the forest, she uses similar rhetoric to attempt to convince him of their compatibility :

Car assés somes d'un aé
D'une maniere de biauté. (ND 482)

Narcissus is unconvinced by this argument, refusing to see himself in the image Dané offers him, just as the Narcissus of the *Metamorphoses* rejected the repetition proffered by Echo. Although he does not initially recognise his reflection as such when he looks into the « fontaine », Narcissus nevertheless echoes Dané's rhetoric by pointing out that he and his reflection are similarly beautiful : « Ne sui gaires mains biaux de toi » (ND 687).

Narcissus realises the error of his ways and remembers Dané – too late, he realises that she should have been his reflection, the image and object of his desire. This is reflected in the placing of cognates of « caitif » and « amer » in identical positions in consecutive couplets.

Certes, oïl, viaus la pucele
Que je trovai l'autrier si bele,
Ki se clamoit cative et lasse
Et me prioit que je l'amaisse.
Or me puis je caitis clamer
Por çou que ne la voil amer. (ND 936-42)

Like Thomas's Yseut, whom she resembles at the end of this *lai*, entwined in a deathly embrace with Narcissus, Dané dies because she came too late.

If the echoes of Echo can be heard in Dané's unhinged speech and the thwarted desires for reciprocity voiced by both protagonists, then Echo's body can also be seen in Narcissus's misrecognition. As he addresses his image in the water, he wonders whether what he can see is a nymph, fairy or goddess.

« Cose », fait il, « que laiens voi,
 Ne sai coument nomer te doi,
 Se dois estre ninphe apelee,
 O se tu es duesse u fee. » (ND 679-82)

Although Ovid's Narcissus rejects Echo's voice as the reflection of his love, we might see the Narcissus of the *Lai* misrecognising his image as Echo. Indeed, Narcissus's misrecognition of a goddess or fairy is itself an echo of the narrative's depiction of his earlier misidentification of Dané²⁹.

Tot droit a lui vint la pucele ;
 Cil l'esgarda, si la vit bele :
 Por ce qu'a tele eure est levee
 Cuide que ce soit diuesse u fee. (ND 447-50)

To return to Villon's question, « Where is Echo ? », we might find the most definite answer at this point in *Narcisus et Dané*. Dané is not Echo, but she is the echo of a reflection of a misrecognition of Echo: a fittingly elusive glimpse of the nymph whose body faded away into voice.

In her brilliant article, « I am not he », Jane Gilbert explores a number of examples of characters who identify with Narcissus and then swiftly disavow that identification³⁰. This disavowal, Gilbert argues, actually confirms the subject's identification with the figure of Narcissus, since it involves an illusory repudiation, a fantasy that it is possible to attain the beloved as completely as the lover desires. In other words, to identify fully with Narcissus, one has to mistake one's identification for a misidentification: one has to misrecognise one's misrecognition. Rather than echoing Narcissus's, *iste ego sum*, these medieval lovers declare, « I am not he » – and thereby reinforce their identities as lovers who can never attain the object of their desire, and yet fantasise that they can. If the subject splits itself into the subject and the object of the gaze, as is the case with Narcissus, then the subject which recognises can never quite be that which is recognised. Spivak points out the « grammatically precarious » nature of his moment of anagnorisis³¹: Narcissus is split, the *iste* and the *ego* simultaneously placing him in two different subject positions.

In a similar vein, Ovid's Narcissus finds it difficult to decide whether he is the agent of his attentions or whether he is acted upon, wondering *quid faciam ? roger anne rogem ?* (*Metamorphoses*, III, 465). The vacillation between the active and the passive verb figures the impossibility of Narcissus's situation. In his lament in *Narcisus et Dané*, Narcissus briefly tries to look on the bright side, observing that at least he is at one with the object of his desire; but here too grammar intervenes to emphasise the unspeakably difficult circumstances in which he find himself.

²⁹ Eley points out that the character of Dané is reminiscent of the fairy lovers of *lais* such as *Lanval*, *Graelent* and *Desiré*. *Op cit.*, p. 20.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*

³¹ « Echo », p. 24.

En moi est tot quanque je vueil,
 Et si ne sai dont je me doel :
 Je sui ce que je tant desir,
 Jou meïsmes me fas languir.
 Des que je ai çou que demant,
 Por quoi n'en fa ge mon talent ?
 Ne sai, car j'aim et sou amés
 Et çou que j'ain me raimme assés,
 Et n'est pas en menor esfroi,
 Si n'en poons prendre conroi.
 Poons ? Mes « puis », car je sui sous,
 Et ciste amors n'est pas de dous. (ND 909-20)

Narcissus is very close to persuading himself that he is in the perfect position, until he realises that he and his reflection are not two people and so cannot constitute a first person plural.³²

As they narrate their tortured desire in this *lai*, both Dané and Narcissus create precarious spaces of speech in which they can become two different speakers, two different subjects. They reflect one another in refracting their subjectivities into multiple speaking positions: both characters in *Narcissus et Dané* take on the characteristics of the lovers from Ovid's telling of the story of Narcissus and Echo, as both Narcissus and Dané become subject and object, articulating speech and its echo. It is this self-reflection and self-reflexivity which is appropriated by and incorporated into the thirteenth-century romance *Cristal et Clarie*, which borrows heavily via citation from *Narcissus et Dané*.

Citing and Reciting: Cristal et Clarie

Cristal et Clarie, whose very title recalls the fountain's reflective surface in which Narcissus is reflected and over which Echo resonates, is an affectionately parodic thirteenth-century take on twelfth-century romance conventions: a romp through the landscape and language familiar from Chrétien de Troyes and other romances. Cristal, a young knight, has a dream about a beautiful girl, falls in love with her without ever having seen her, and sets off to find her. Eventually, he arrives at Abilant, where Clarie lives: he has previously learned that Clarie is one of the three most beautiful women in the world, and seems to know that this is the woman he saw in his dream. However, Clarie is initially too proud to love Cristal, and spurns his suit. The narrative then borrows a rather off-colour piece from *Partonopeus de Blois* in which Cristal more or less forces himself on Clarie; thereafter Clarie realises that she is in love with Cristal. After some rather more consensual sex between the protagonists, Clarie persuades her father that she will have to marry Cristal, and the romance concludes with the celebration of their nuptials.

³² « His death is, in fact, caused by the impossibility of occupying both subject and object positions. The split is fatal and he floats between the two positions, just as he floats troublingly between genders. » Gaunt, *Love and Death*, p. 177.

Cristal et Clarie appropriates and incorporates lengthy extracts from earlier romances, including *Yvain, Erec et Enide* and *Le Conte du Graal*, as well as *Partonopeus de Blois*. In addition to *Narcissus et Dané*³³, it also quotes *lais* such as the *Lai du Conseil* and the *Lai de l'oiselet*³⁴. *Cristal et Clarie* differs from other medieval French texts which incorporate citations from other works, such as *Guillaume de Dole* or *La Chastelaine de Vergy*, in that it does not signal when it is about to cite, and a smooth transition is effected between the citing text and the cited, such that they are more or less indistinguishable.

Just as Echo was to be glimpsed in the words and bodies of the protagonists of *Narcissus et Dané*, so her effect on speech can be heard in the citation and rewriting of this text in *Cristal et Clarie*. As we saw earlier, Echo's responses to Narcissus in the *Metamorphoses* do not simply repeat his words, they reframe and recontextualise them, infusing them with new and poignant significance. Similarly, as I shall show in this last section, the thirteenth-century romance's reiteration of the speech of the twelfth-century tale's characters affords insights into the use and limits of the language of courtly love.

Once more, however, we might note another instance of literary history and criticism in which Narcissus eclipses Echo. In his study of the work of citation, *La Seconde main*, Antoine Compagnon cites Narcissus rather than Echo as one half of a hybrid model for the subject of citation – the uncertain, flickering space from which a citation is enunciated.

Le sujet de la citation est un personnage équivoque qui tient à la fois de Narcisse et de Pilate. C'est un indicateur, un vendu – il montre du doigt publiquement d'autres discours et d'autres sujets –, mais sa dénonciation, sa convocation sont aussi un appel et une sollicitation : une demande de reconnaissance³⁵.

Compagnon concentrates on the visual mode of citation rather than the vocal. To cite, Compagnon suggests, is at once to project and detect an image of oneself in the citation, but also to disavow it. Narcissus sees himself reflected in the surface of the new image, but Pilate troubles the waters by washing his hands of the authority the citation proposes, declaring, to echo Gilbert's words, « I am not he ». Recent work on citation in medieval literature by Rebecca Dixon, Sarah Kay and Adrian Armstrong points out that citation provides a means for medieval poetry to reflect on itself, and to frame itself as an object of knowledge and pleasure³⁶. For the echoic

³³ Eley suggests that these were taken from a lost manuscript of the *lai*. (*op. cit.*, p. 7).

³⁴ Reading *Cristal et Clarie* is described as a game of 'spot the literary allusion' in P. Eley, C. Hanley, M. Longtin and P. Simons, « *Cristal et Clarie* and a lost manuscript of *Partonopeus de Blois* », *Romania*, 121, 2003, p. 331 n. In a similar vein, Keith Busby argues, « What we are dealing with in *Cristal et Clarie* is a virtuoso performance of quoting, as well as allusive and evocative intertextuality, all within the framework of an easy-flowing and well-paced narrative of substantial proportions. » « *Cristal et Clarie*, a novel romance ? », in *Convention and Innovation in Literature*, ed. T. D'Haen, R. Grübel and H. Lethen, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, Benjamins, 1989, p. 88.

³⁵ A. Compagnon, *La Seconde main ou le travail de la citation*, Paris, Seuil, 1979, p. 40.

³⁶ R. Dixon, « Conclusion : Knowing Poetry, Knowing Communities », *Poetry, Knowledge and Community in Late Medieval France*, Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2008, ed. R. Dixon and

characters in *Cristal et Clarie*, however, the reiteration of extracts of *Narcissus et Dané* once more reveals the unstable nature of the voice in medieval romance, especially the female voice.

Not only does *Cristal et Clarie* echo, by citing, the words of *Narcissus et Dané*, it also depicts the love between the eponymous characters as grounded in the Narcissan desire for the phantasm. At one of the castles Cristal visits, he is greeted by thirty beautiful maidens. They implore him to stay with them, but he is determined to continue his quest for the beautiful woman he saw in his dream, whose loveliness continues to haunt him. As he rides away, Cristal is lost in thought, contemplating his dream woman. The description of his reverie, and the soliloquy it provokes, are a direct quotation from *Narcissus et Dané*.

Mais amors velt tostans torment,
 Qui c'onques aime loialment ;
 As gentieus cuers est fel et durs
 Et bons as sers et as tafurs.
 El cuer li entre la folie,
 « Haï ! dist il, tres doce amie,
 Or sui je ja d'amor mout sages,
 Mout m'en a apris mes corages.
 Je ne quit pas qu'il peüst estre
 Que j'en sêusse tant sans mestre.
 Amor me destrait et destruit,
 Qi dedens le cors m'art et quist.
 Il m'aprent tote sa nature,
 Et si me destrait sans mesure
 Ha, doce riens, qui si m'esprens,
 Se tu savoies quels torments
 Et quels paines sueffre por toi,
 Tu m'am(e)roies, si come je croi.
 Je mur en fin, n'i ai conseil. » (CC 1567-85)

This passage is a very close copy of the passage in *Narcissus et Dané* in which Narcissus addresses his reflection in the pool :

Mais Amors veut tos jors torment :
 As haus homes est fel et durs,
 Et buens as sers et as tafurs.
 Ja ne queraï, que que nus die,
 Qu'i ait el ciel nule baillie.
 Or es tu ja d'Amor mout sages !
 Qui t'an a tant dit ? Tes corages?
 Je ne cuit pas que ce puist estre,
 Que tu en saces tant sans mestre.

F. E. Sinclair, p. 215-24, and *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the Rose to the Rhétoriqueurs*, by A. Armstrong and S. Kay, with the participation of R. Dixon, M. Griffin, S. Huot, F. Nicholson and F. Sinclair, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2011, p. 150-5.

Amors est mastre qui me duist,
 Qui dedens le cors m'art et cuist :
 Il m'aprent tote sa nature
 Et si m'angousce sans mesure.
 A! douce riens qui si m'esprens,
 Se tu savoies queus tormens
 Et queus painnes jou ai por toi,
 Tu venroies parler a moi.
 Ge muir en fin, n'i a conseil. (ND 762-79)

Once again, this passage involves self-questioning as a means of exploring the nature of desire and derangement. Narcissus, who has not by this stage in *Narcissus et Dané* realised that he is gazing adoringly at his own reflection, nevertheless addresses himself in this speech as another person (« Or es tu ja d'Amor mout sages ! / Qui t'an a tant dit ? Tes corages ? » (ND 767-68)). By contrast, Cristal addresses the phantasm of Clarie, his dream lover whom he has not yet met, and muses about his torment in the first person (« tres doce amie, / Or sui je ja d'amor mout sages, / Mout m'en a apris mes corages. » (CC 1572-24)). This is a useful illustration of Agamben's notion of the phantasm: both Narcissus and Cristal are in love with an *yimage* – be it a reflection or a dream – which is ultimately a construction of the self.

In *Cristal et Clarie*, then, Narcissan desire is articulated in the form of an echo, a citation of the *Lai de Narcisse*. *Cristal et Clarie* appropriates Dané's speech in which she wonders about her identity and the source of her words. This soliloquy is now voiced by Clarie, who, after her night with Cristal, realises that she does indeed love him, and is tormented by this new feeling :

« He, chaitive, con je sui fole,
 Dont me revient ceste parole ?
 Voel je par moi tel conseil prendre ?
 Dont ne me vi[e]nt il mieus atendre,
 Que je par moi face folie,
 Dont je puisse perdre la vie ?
 Ne sai por coi que ce [me] monte,
 Mout exploite poi en cest conte. »
 Dont se porpense un sol petit
 A soi meisme, si a dit :
 « Qu'est ce qu'ai dit ? Qu'ai en pensé ?
 Mout par ai le cuer forsené.
 Fille es de roïne et de roi,
 Segnor te donra endroit toi,
 Alques t'estuet por ce soffrir.
 – Et se il n'est a ton plaisir,
 Qu'en feras tu, s'il ne te plaist ? »
 Quant ce od dit, si se retaist ;
 Dedens son cuer se tint por fole,
 Quant onques ot dit tel parole.
 « Qu'est ce, Clari(e) ? N'as tu dont honte ?

Ses tu donque que blasmes monte ? » (CC 8083-104)

The author of *Cristal et Clarie* adds a few lines to Dané's outburst to flesh out Clarie's position. Yet Clarie's question, « Dont me revient ceste parole? » is a very pertinent one in this context. This question articulates Dané's and then Clarie's inability to recognise themselves in their own words, but also expresses their descent from Echo. Rather than saying « I am not he », perhaps they are saying « I am she, Echo, and she is an impossible subject position, yet the only subject position which is possible for me » : they recognise that they can only ever misrecognise themselves in the words of others.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Echo can only repeat Narcissus's speech in her fruitless efforts to convince him to reciprocate her desire. In *Narcissus et Dané*, as we saw in the previous section, echoes of Echo can be heard in the thwarted desires for reciprocity voiced by both protagonists, as they employ the rhetoric of reflection in order to convince the object of their respective desires to return their love. Dané's speech to Narcissus attempts to portray them as mirror images of one another, and also insists on Dané's singularity and specificity.

Mes cueurs est mout por toi destrois ;
 Des ore mais est il bien drois
 Que tu aies de moi merci.
 Nel te mant pas, ains le te di ;
 Je pri por moi, nient por autrui.
 Esgarde, saces qui je sui !
 Je qui ensi paroil a toi
 Sui fille ton seignor le roi .
 Por t'amor pens et jor et nuit ;
 Amors m'a ça livré conduit,
 Amors me done hardement :
 N'i venisce pas autrement.
 Or ait merci, qui merci crie,
 Car en toi pent tote ma vie.
 Tu seus me peus santé doner :
 Mout nous poons bien entramer
 – Biaus sire, otroie moi t'amor,
 Rent moi santé, tol moi dolor ! –
 Car assés somes d'un aé
 D'une maniere de biauté. (ND 463-82)

Yet her insistence on their complementarity is, as we have seen, doomed.

Clarie is not the only female character in *Cristal et Clarie* to repeat Dané's words : two maidens – one who lives at the Castle of the Trembling Bridge (CC 1351-70), and another who is the niece of a fairy (CC 2433-44) – declare themselves to Cristal, voicing their desire in speeches which are collages of Dané's entreaties. The maiden of the Castle of the Trembling Bridge echoes Dané verbatim in attempting to persuade Cristal that she and he are alike : « Car asés somes d'un eé, / D'une maniere de biauté. » (CC 1369-70). However, each maiden echoes Dané in insisting on her royal status : « Jou qui sui qui parole a toi, / Saches que sui fille de

roi» (CC 1357-58 and 2441-42; cf. ND 469-70); and each borrows Dané's emphasis on the fact that they are speaking for herself, rather than sending a messenger to summon her beloved: « Nel te mans pas, ains le te di » (CC 1356 and 2438; cf. ND l. 466). In order to convince the object of their desire that their love is authentic and individual, all that these unrequited princesses can do, then, is to echo one another in citing another unrequited princess, who is a successor to Echo, who could only ever quote Narcissus. Just as all that Dané can use to persuade Narcissus of her love is a voice which is not her own, the princesses in *Cristal et Clarie* can only use the borrowed idiom of cited courtly romance to attempt to express their individual emotional authenticity and their identities as true lovers.

Conclusion : echoing romance

Echo's story is a reflection and echo of the story of Narcissus. Theirs is a double story of the way in which desire stages the encounter of the self within the other. Echo can only speak of her love using her beloved's words (words which are meant to reject and deter her); and Narcissus falls for himself in the guise of another person. Although she is absent from *Narcissus et Dané* and *Cristal et Clarie*, the resonances of Echo persist in the patterns of reflection, splitting and repetition evident in both French texts, as I have shown in this article. Echo and her avatars are figures for citation, showing that the same sounds, the same syllables can be reiterated and yet simultaneously inverted. Echo can transform a question into an assertion and a rejection into a declaration of love. These characters also demonstrate another Lacanian observation about the voice: « La voix répond à ce qui se dit, mais elle ne peut pas en répondre »³⁷.

The female characters who echo Echo figure the way in which the recording in writing of the spoken voice in courtly romance texts participates in the logic of citation. The only language available to Echo, Dané, Clarie and the nameless maidens is the codified and reiterative generic lexical field of courtly romance. Although they seek to insist upon their distinctive identity and the authenticity of their emotions, their utterances are constantly haunted by the realisation that their voices are not their own, and come from a literary space which precedes, surrounds and forms them. The 'poésie' which Echo has become is not, therefore, solely characterised by graceful rhythm and clever rhyme of medieval lyric poetry, but is also the octosyllabic romance narrative of *Narcissus et Dané* and the parodic collage of *Cristal et Clarie*. As I have shown in this article, the distinction between the voice of the character and the voice of the narrative is troubled by Echo and her resonances in early medieval French literature: the echoing of her voice weaves a narrative of its own which refracts Ovid's nymph into the resonating questions of several romances heroines. From a character who becomes nothing but voice, Echo is transformed into the voice of courtly love: the structuring rhetoric of this narrative genre.

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³⁷ Lacan, *L'Angoisse*, p. 318.