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**‘Echo I Live’: The Reception of the Mythological Figure  
of Echo in Early Modern English Drama (c. 1575-1634)**

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Versions of the myth: classical sources and moralising interpretations	2
The myth metamorphosed: the emblematic example of Gascoigne's <i>The Glasse of Government</i> . . . . .	9
'Music, wit, and oracle' . . . . .	21
<b>1 Echoes at the courts of Elizabeth I and James I</b>	<b>33</b>
1.1 Dialogic, musical and intertextual echoes in Elizabethan progresses and entertainments . . . . .	36
Gascoigne's <i>Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle</i> . . . . .	36
The Entertainment at Bisham . . . . .	42
The <i>Honourable Entertainment</i> at Elvetham . . . . .	45
Peele's <i>The Araygnement of Paris</i> . . . . .	49
1.2 Echoes and Harmony in the Jacobean masque . . . . .	55
'In form of an Echo': musical embodiments of harmony in Campion's masques . . . . .	56
'A mixture of profit no less than delight': echoes in the Jonso- nian masque . . . . .	62
1.3 'As in a truer glass': Echo and the image of the court in Jonson's <i>Cynthia's Revels</i> . . . . .	85
<b>2 A supernatural voice</b>	<b>102</b>
2.1 A bridge between Heaven and earth . . . . .	102
2.2 'The truest oracle on ground': prophetic Echo . . . . .	119

<b>3 ‘Because she is a woman’: Echo, a female voice</b>	<b>148</b>
3.1 Echo and female agency . . . . .	148
<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> : female agency and literary fame . . . . .	148
A ventiloquised female voice in Day’s <i>Law Tricks</i> . . . . .	164
3.2 Echo and misogynistic discourse . . . . .	168
The taming of a shrew: Middleton and Webster’s <i>Anything for a Quiet Life</i> . . . . .	173
Seductive female voices in Browne’s <i>Ulysses and Circe</i> and Wilson’s <i>Cobler’s Prophecy</i> . . . . .	178
<b>4 ‘In mockinge sorte and counterfayting wies’: Echo and early modern views on language</b>	<b>189</b>
4.1 ‘Words cheap’ . . . . .	191
4.2 Words that wound . . . . .	207
<b>5 Echoes of the myth of Echo in Shakespeare</b>	<b>215</b>
5.1 Mythological and literary echoes in <i>Venus and Adonis</i> . . . . .	216
5.2 Echoes, mirrorings, and doubles in <i>Twelfth Night</i> . . . . .	230
5.3 Disruptive echoes in <i>Othello</i> . . . . .	244
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>260</b>
‘Aeris et linguae filia’ . . . . .	260
A literary trope . . . . .	263
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>276</b>





# Introduction

The mythological figure of Echo enjoyed great popularity in the European literary tradition: she was referred to, appropriated, and creatively represented in a great number of works from the Middle Ages well into the twentieth century. The Renaissance vogue for imitating classical literature, and the prominence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the literary milieu of this period resulted in an even heightened interest towards the engaging figure of the nymph. The classics, and especially Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, were perceived as a sort of inextinguishable source of raw material from which characters and stories could be drawn and alluded to or re-elaborated in completely different narrative contexts. Of all the classical figures that were appropriated, Echo seems to have been particularly popular, as she is mentioned in a wide variety of literary genres, such as poems, plays, treatises, and prose fiction.<sup>1</sup> Not only was she alluded to, but her peculiar speech pattern was also turned into a poetic device. Echo-poems, which became particularly fashionable between the last decades of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, were generally devised as dialogues between the lyric 'I' and Echo, and their form fittingly mimics the nymph's way of communicating by repeating words previously uttered: they are poetic compositions

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<sup>1</sup>Interestingly, there are no allusions to the nymph in the famous emblem books of Alciato (first edition 1531, editions mentioned in this study 1546, 1591) and Whitney (1586). In both of them, one emblem is dedicated to Narcissus as the embodiment of self-love, but none of the two *subscriptiones* mention Echo. The nymph, though, is probably represented in the background of the *pictura* of Whitney's emblem and in that of the 1591 edition of Alciato's book (the two of them are very similar in design): the engravings shows Narcissus staring at his own reflection in a stream of water and, behind him, a figure stands beside a tree, with a raised hand, and looks towards him (Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Leiden: Officina Plantiniana, 1591), sig. F4v <<https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A91a069>> [accessed October 2019]; Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems*, ed. by John Manning (Aldershot: Scolar, 1989), p. 149).

in which the last syllables of a line are repeated at the end of the same line or on a new, independent one. Because of its dialogic form, this poetic device became unsurprisingly very popular in drama: in a great number of early modern plays, which will be examined in this study, a dialogue is staged between one of the characters and an offstage voice which impersonates Echo. The traditionally disembodied nymph is even re-embodied on stage in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1600). 'In wild woods, & in moist mountaines, / In high, tall valleys, & in steepye plaines, / Eccho I live' (ll. 469-70), exclaims the nymph in the academic play *Narcissus* (1602):<sup>2</sup> but Echo also lives and thrives in early modern English literature.

## Versions of the myth: classical sources and moralising interpretations

The most famous account of Echo's story is doubtlessly the one given by Ovid in the third book of his *Metamorphoses*. One of the reasons why Ovid's myth became particularly popular was that the poet had the original and hugely successful idea of linking the story of Echo with that of Narcissus, thus combining acoustic and visual reflection, and laying even more emphasis on the structural themes of the myth, such as specularity, duplication, and illusion.<sup>3</sup> His tale of Echo, though, is by no means the sole representation of the nymph in classical antiquity.

It can be broadly stated that there are two mythological traditions associated with the figure of Echo, one in which Echo is the spurned lover of Narcissus,

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<sup>2</sup>*Narcissus, A Twelfth Night Merriment*, ed. by Margaret L. Lee (London: David Nutt, 1893).

<sup>3</sup>For Ovid's clever duplication of the motifs of reflection and illusion see Gianpiero Rosati, *Narciso e Pigmalione, Illusione e Spettacolo nelle Metamorfosi di Ovidio* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2016), pp. 23-30; Maurizio Bettini and Ezio Pellizer, *Il Mito di Narciso, Immagini e Racconti dalla Grecia a Oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), p. 61; Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Ulisse e lo Specchio. Il femminile e la Rappresentazione di Sé nella Grecia Antica*, trans. by Claudio Donzelli (Roma: Donzelli, 1998), pp. 169-71.

the other in which she is a nymph beloved by Pan. Ovid interlaces Echo's story with that of Narcissus, and famously depicts her as a garrulous nymph who distracted Juno with lengthy talk so as to prevent her from discovering Jove's sexual encounters with other nymphs. As a punishment for having deceived her, Juno took away Echo's ability to initiate speech, compelling her to express herself by repeating words uttered by someone else. The nymph later fell in love with the disdainful Narcissus, who harshly rejected her. Heartbroken, Echo pined away until her body turned to stone and only her echoing voice was left (III.356-401).<sup>4</sup>

As for Pan and Echo, one of the most well-known accounts of their story is that offered by Longus in his *Daphnis and Chloe* (III.22-23).<sup>5</sup> According to Longus, Echo was an incredibly skilled singer and could play many musical instruments because she had been taught to sing and play by the Muses themselves. She was also so jealous of her virginity that she shunned all men. Pan grew envious of her musical virtuosity and angry at being rejected by her. He thus inspired frenzy into some herdsmen, who tore her to pieces and scattered the fragments of her dismembered body across the earth, but each fragment continued to sing. Taking pity on her, Gaia buried her limbs but preserved the melodious music produced by them, and the Muses gifted her with the ability to imitate every sound she hears even after her death. In other versions of the myth, Pan and Echo lived in perfect concord. In his *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius portrays the tender scene of Echo sitting in Pan's lap while the god teaches her to repeat all kinds of songs (V.25).<sup>6</sup> Other classical texts mention the progeny that these two lovers had: Iambe and Iynx are the names of the nymphs born of that union.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960-64), I, pp. 148-53. Further references to Ovid's poem and the translations which will be given are from this edition, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>5</sup>Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Anthia and Habrocomes*, *Xenophon of Ephesus*, ed. and trans. by Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 130-33. All further references are from this edition.

<sup>6</sup>Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. by John Arthur Hanson, 2 vols (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), I, pp. 296-97.

<sup>7</sup>For the sources where Echo's offspring is mentioned see August Friedrich von Pauly, Georg Wissowa,

These two traditions were both known in the early modern period. Ovid's myth of Echo and Narcissus was read in Latin and translated into the vernacular. In 1560, the anonymous author T.H. chose to translate that story out of all of the myths narrated in the *Metamorphoses*, and he published his translation, together with a moralising commentary on the myth, under the title *The Fable of Ouid Treting of Narcissus*. Golding's translation of the whole poem appeared in 1567, the one by George Sandys in 1632. There is also an Elizabethan version of Longus' *Daphnis et Chloe*: Angel Day translated the pastoral novel in 1587 using Jacques Amyot's *Les Amours Pastorales de Daphnis et Chloe* (1559) as his source.<sup>8</sup>

According to Hollander, Echo the beloved of Pan generally enjoyed a more favourable reception in post-classical literature than Ovid's Echo: 'it is in the milieu of Pan that Echo becomes a credential voice, associated with truth rather than with the qualities of the other Echo, the spurned lover of Narcissus [...] If Pan's Echo is lyric, Narcissus' is satiric', he argues.<sup>9</sup> While he is right about Pan's Echo, things appear to be more complicated when it comes to Ovid's nymph. The most famous allegorical interpretation of the figures of Pan and Echo is that of Macrobius, who, in his *Saturnalia*, associates Pan with the sun, and Echo, whom he loves, with the harmony of the heavenly spheres, whose movement is governed by the sun (I.22.7).<sup>10</sup> Echo is here the symbol of the highest and noblest form of harmony, and she testifies to the perfect concord of the universe. This reading was widely known in the early modern period, as it was mentioned by mythographers such as Comes, Cartari, and Giraldi, and, as

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and others, *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler; München: Alfred Druckenmüller, 1894-1964), V, pp. 1927-28; Friedrich Wieseler, *Die Nymphe Echo, eine Kunstmystologische Abhandlung* (Göttingen: Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1854), pp. 11-13 (n.26); Alessia Bonadeo, *Mito e Natura allo Specchio, l'Eco nel Pensiero Greco e Latino* (Pisa: ETS, 2003), p. 91.

<sup>8</sup>Susan L. Anderson, *Echo and Meaning on Early Modern English Stages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017), p. 20. As Anderson points out, George Thornley's translation only appeared in 1657 and not during the Elizabethan age, as Hollander claims (John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: a Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 8).

<sup>9</sup>Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>10</sup>Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, ed. and trans. by Robert A. Kaster, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), I, pp. 292-95. All further references and translations given are from this edition.

will be argued in the first chapter of this study, also drawn upon in several court masques of the Jacobean era, where Echo is associated with both musical and cosmic harmony.<sup>11</sup> Bacon also gives an allegorical interpretation of the myth of Echo and Pan that is once again laudatory of the nymph. Pan represents the natural world, and Echo, his wife, is ‘true philosophy which echoes most faithfully the voices of the world itself, and is written as it were at the world’s own dictation’<sup>12</sup> Echo is here the very embodiment of truth, it is a voice that reveals the secrets of the natural world.

If Pan’s Echo is mainly associated with harmony or truth, Ovid’s Echo receives the most diverse moralising or allegorical interpretations, ranging from entirely celebratory to utterly disparaging assessments of her story. Far from being necessarily ‘satiric’, as Hollander suggests, the lover of Narcissus was perceived as being a truthful voice just as Pan’s Echo. Farra, for instance, quotes the Pythagorean aphorism ‘spirando i venti adora Eco’ [‘while the winds breathe, adore Echo’] and explains its meaning by suggesting that the wind is a symbol of the spirit of God, and Echo is the *Bat Kol*, that is the voice of God.<sup>13</sup> The nymph emanates a ‘divino & beatifico splendore’ [divine and beatifying splendor] which has the power of elevating man towards God (p. 224v, translation mine). He then conflates this reading of Echo with Ficino’s allegorical interpretation of the figure of Narcissus (pp. 224v-225r): according to Ficino, Narcissus represents the human soul which, seduced by the ontologically inferior beauty of the body, neglects its own intellectual beauty.<sup>14</sup> By rejecting Echo, this imprudent man rejects the ‘divino spirito’ [divine spirit] which would have inspired his soul (‘discendente alla illustratione dell’animo nostro’), and becomes thus irredeemably

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<sup>11</sup>Natalis Comes, *Mythologiae, Sive Explicationum Fabularum* (Venice, 1568), p. 140; Vincenzo Cartari, *Le Imagini degli Dei Antichi* (Venezia: Giordano Ziletti, 1571), p. 136; Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *De Deis Gentium Varia et Multiplex Historia* (Basilea: Johannes Oporinus, 1548), p. 621.

<sup>12</sup>Francis Bacon, *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum*, in *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. by John M. Robertson (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 413-639 (p. 447).

<sup>13</sup>Alessandro Farra, *Settenario dell’Humana Riduttione* (Casal Maggior: Farra di Bartoli, 1571), pp. 224r-224v. The English translation of the Pythagorean aphorism is from Henry Reynolds, *Mythomystes* (London: George Purslowe, 1632), sig. P3v. All subsequent references to these two texts are given in brackets in the text.

<sup>14</sup>Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love*, ed. and trans. by Sears Reynolds Jayne (Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1985), pp. 140-41 (VI.17).

corrupted because of his absorption in earthly matters (p. 224v). This allegory was probably known in England: as will be pointed out in the second chapter of this study, Henry Reynolds, for instance, borrowed heavily on Farra's text in his *Mythomystes* (1632), so much so that some passages of his work almost seem *verbatim* translations of his source (sigs. P3v-P4r).

Ficino's Neoplatonic allegory is also alluded to in the *The Fable of Ouid Treting of Narcissus* (1560) and it seems to have strongly influenced T.H.'s own reading of the myth. In his moralising commentary, which is conspicuously longer than the translation itself, T.H. summarises some of the most widespread interpretations of Ovid's tale and then illustrates his own, whereby he hopes to demonstrate 'that Ouyd by this tale no follye mente', but rather aimed at delivering an important moral lesson.<sup>15</sup> The nymph is once again represented as a benign figure, one who has the power of saving those who listen to her. In T.H.'s reading, Narcissus is an arrogant man who prides himself too much on 'natures gyftes', not considering that those gifts have been given to him by God (sig. C2r). His fault is that of valuing 'what he hath' while neglecting 'what he is' (sig. D1r). This foolish man is not only too proud, but also disdainful, as he rejects Echo, who represents

one that wolde be glade  
With counsayle good to cause him for to knowe  
To make his witte bothe sober wise and sade  
That prides rewarde is to be made ful lowe. (sig. C2v)

Echo stands for 'good aduice', she is depicted as a good and loving friend who would have been able to instill wisdom into Narcissus, had he not pushed her away. In what is perhaps an attempt to redeem the nymph from the biased readings that had been given by previous commentators, such as Berchorius, the author explicitly specifies: 'Her nature is not to be full of talke / Not to deuice, but to aduice full well' (sig. C2v).

Echo could thus have saved Narcissus from death with her advice and even

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<sup>15</sup>T.H., *The Fable of Ouid Treting of Narcissus* (London: J. Tisdale, 1560), sig. B1v. All subsequent references to this work are given in brackets in the text.

his soul from perdition with her beatifying influence. According to Boccaccio, the nymph could also have rescued him from another kind of death: oblivion. In his influential *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*, he summarises the Ovidian myth and then infers its ‘moralis [...] sensus’ [moral meaning] (VII.lix.3).<sup>16</sup> In his allegory, Echo represents fame, which grants men a form of immortality. He explains: ‘nam per Echo, quae nil dicit nisi post dictum, famam ego intelligo, que unumquenque mortalium diligit’ [I think that Echo, who never says anything except for what has been said before, symbolises fame, which loves every mortal being] (VII.lix.3). Some men, like Narcissus, have little regard for their fame, as they are too deeply absorbed in worldly delights, whose ephemeral nature is symbolised by the water in which Narcissus beheld his own reflection. The price these men have to pay for not having cared to earn a good reputation while they were alive is being forgotten after their death.<sup>17</sup> Echo is associated with good renown also in the *Ovide Moralisé* (III.1465) and in Arnulphe D’Orleans’ *Allegoriae super Ovidii Metamorphosin* (III.5-6).<sup>18</sup>

Along with these sympathetic readings of Ovid’s Echo, there are also less favourable ones. Most famously, in his *Ovidius Moralizatus*, Berchorius lists three possible allegorical interpretations of Echo, which are all equally disparaging. The nymph is associated with flatterers who agree with everything that is said, with mockers who derisively repeat the words of others, and, lastly, with scolding women or quarrelsome servants who refuse to obey their husbands or masters and are utterly incapable of holding their tongues even where they are reprimanded by them.<sup>19</sup> According to Georgius Sabinus, Echo is instead not so

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<sup>16</sup>Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*, ed. by Vittorio Zaccaria, in *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. by Vittore Branca, 10 vols (Milano: Mondadori 1998), VII-VIII, pp. 11-1813. Translation mine. All further references are from this edition.

<sup>17</sup>Boccaccio’s allegorical reading is reported in the moralising commentary appended to T.H.’s translation of Ovid’s myth of Echo and Narcissus. The author is so faithful to his source that some of his sentences can almost be considered a vernacular translation of Boccaccio’s text (*The Fable of Ouid*, sigs. C1v-C2r).

<sup>18</sup>*Ovide Moralisé; Poème du Commencement du Quatorzième Siècle*, ed. by Cornelis de Boer (Amsterdam: J. Müller, 1915), p. 330; D’Orleans’ text is edited and printed in Fausto Ghisalberti, *Arnolfo d’Orleans un Cultore di Ovidio nel Sec. XII* (Milano: Hoepli, 1932), p. 209.

<sup>19</sup>Petrus Berchorius, *The ‘Ovidius Moralizatus’ of Petrus Berchorius: an Introduction and Translation*, trans. by William Donald Reynolds (Doctoral thesis, University of Illinois, 1971), p. 196. All further references are from this edition, page numbers are given in brackets in the text.

much a flatterer, but rather a boaster ('Echo allegorice significat iactantium').<sup>20</sup> Another utterly negative reading of Echo is that offered by Golding, who argues that the nymph who actively seeks amorous fulfilment is nothing but a bawd who deserves to be punished. Like T.H., Golding accompanies his translation with a moralising commentary (albeit a much shorter one), where he explains that

Narcissus is of scornfulness and pride a mirror clear  
Where beauty's fading vanity most plainly may appear.  
And Echo in the selfsame tale doth kindly represent  
The lewd behaviour of a bawd and his due punishment.<sup>21</sup> (Epistle of 1567,  
105-08)

His bias against the nymph emerges also in the translation itself, where Echo is disparagingly defined 'a babbling nymph', an 'elf' who detained Juno 'with her tattling talk' (III.443, 453).

Thus, early modern English authors who represented Echo in their literary works had more than one classical source available, and could even draw on two completely different versions of her story. The matter is even further complicated by the fact that the reception of the figure of Echo was also mediated by many different Medieval and Renaissance allegorical interpretations of that figure and moralising commentaries on the myth, which concurred to generate a multifaceted and even contradictory image of the nymph.<sup>22</sup> Lastly, echo-devices, in which the nymph plays a pivotal role, were very popular on the continent between the second half of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the sev-

<sup>20</sup>Georgius Sabinus, *Fabularum Ovidii Interpretatio* (Wittenberg: heirs of Georg Rhau, 1555), sig. D8v.

<sup>21</sup>All references to Golding's translation are from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Arthur Golding, ed. by Madeleine Foray (London: Penguin, 2002).

<sup>22</sup>The brief account that has been given of classical sources and of Medieval and early Renaissance readings of the myth does not intend to be exhaustive. I have selected those texts which were most likely known in the early modern period and which may have influenced the authors mentioned in this study. More detailed lists of classical and post-classical representations and interpretations of Echo have already been given: see for instance Louise Vinge, *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century* (Lund: Gleerups, 1967), pp. 55-151; Cécile Mauré, *Héritages et Réappropriations du Mythe d'Écho dans la Littérature Élisabéthaine* (Doctoral thesis, Université Paul Valéry, 2006), pp. 11-62.

enteenth, and some of them also seem to have influenced English authors: for instance, Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, which features a famous example of an echo-scene, was so popular that it was translated in English by Dymock, adapted into a Neo-Latin academic play performed at Cambridge (*Pastor Fidus*), and drawn upon by Brook as a literary source for his *Melanthe*. Thus, the coexistence of classical, medieval, and early Renaissance representations of Echo, the wide variety of allegories associated with her story, and the influence of continental models all contributed to provide early modern English authors with a plethora of material that they could draw upon and rework. The nymph emerged as a protean and multifaceted figure who could take on many different forms and be represented in the most disparate ways. Authors could emphasise the negative traits attributed to her or portray her as a benign character; describe her voice as heavenly or fiendish; associate her with womanly vices or with powerful female agency; depict her iterative speech pattern as a melodious sound or as a spiteful way of mocking someone. Her great metamorphic potential is fully capitalised upon by George Gascoigne, who not only portrays two antithetical figures of Echo in his *Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth Castle* (July 1575) and *The Glasse of Government* (April 1575), but also presents his readers with a very peculiar re-elaboration of the mythological nymph: indeed, in *The Glasse of Government*, Echo is radically different from his classical namesake, but closely modelled on the moralising readings of Ovid's myth.

## **The myth metamorphosed: the emblematic example of Gascoigne's *The Glasse of Government***

Gascoigne has generally been considered a pioneer of Elizabethan literature, as he experimented with a variety of literary genres and forms, and introduced

significant innovations upon which later authors frequently drew:<sup>23</sup> one of them was the echo-device. The echo-device seems to have appeared for the first time in English literature in Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth Castle*, performed in July 1575. According to Colby, 1575 is a surprisingly late date for the emergence of that literary trope, which had already been employed by a few authors on the continent.<sup>24</sup> Poliziano, for instance, wrote an echo-poem as early as the second half of the fifteenth century, and Du Bellay published a poem entitled *Dialogue d'un amoureux et d'Echo* in his *Recueil de Poesie* in 1549.<sup>25</sup> This led Colby to hypothesise that Gascoigne either 'copied it from earlier English poems which are now lost, or from foreign specimens which might easily have come to [his] attention'.<sup>26</sup> While it is hard to prove that previous echo-poems existed, it is not difficult to believe that the educated Gascoigne borrowed from Italian or French sources. He may also have transposed into the vernacular a poetic form which he had encountered in Latin and Greek texts (most famously in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). It is indeed possible to find some examples of echo-devices in the literature of classical antiquity, which are usefully listed by Lucas in his edition of *The Duchess of Malfi*: Lucas mentions Euripides' lost *Andromeda*, famously parodied by Aristophanes in his *Thesmophoriazusae*, the dialogue between Echo and Narcissus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Gauradas' echo-poem collected in the *Anthologia Palatina*, and Callimachus' epigram 28.<sup>27</sup> Of all these authors, though, only Ovid was doubtlessly familiar to Gascoigne, and perhaps also Aristophanes.<sup>28</sup> One of Gascoigne's most likely sources, which

<sup>23</sup>Gillian Austen, *George Gascoigne* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 6-7; Mauré, *Héritages*, p. 178.

<sup>24</sup>Elbridge Colby, *The Echo-Device in Literature* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1920), pp. 19-20, 32.

<sup>25</sup>Angelo Poliziano, Poem XXXVI, in *Stanze, Orfeo, Rime*, ed. by Davide Puccini (Milano: Garzanti, 1992), p. 16; Joachim du Bellay, *Recueil de Poesie* (Paris: Chez Guillaume Cavellat, 1549), p. 96. For a more comprehensive list of Gascoigne's continental predecessors see Colby, pp. 14-18 (unfortunately, pages 12 and 13, which were probably dedicated to Italian echo-poems, are missing from this reprint of Colby's work). One echo-poem in Italian is also transcribed in the 1571 edition of Cartari's *Imagini*, who ascribes it to Monsignor Barbaro, patriarch of Aquileia (pp. 137-38).

<sup>26</sup>Colby, *The Echo-device*, p. 32.

<sup>27</sup>John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, in *The Complete Works of John Webster*, ed. by Frank L. Lucas, 4 vols (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927), II, pp. 3-210 (pp. 195-96, V.iii.21n).

<sup>28</sup>For the reception of Aristophanes in early modern England see Matthew Steggle, 'Aristophanes in Early Modern England', in *Aristophanes in Performance, 421 BC-AD 2007: Peace, Birds and Frogs*,

has surprisingly been overlooked by scholars, was another echo-device in Latin: Gascoigne had probably come across Erasmus' 'Echo', a dialogue between a young man and Echo published in his *Colloquia*, in which Echo answers sometimes in Latin, sometimes in Greek.<sup>29</sup> In his *Glasse of Government*, Gascoigne has Phylautus utter a sentence which must have been true also for the author himself: 'My brother here and I have been taught first the rules of the grammar, after that we had read unto us the familiar communications called the *Colloquia* of Erasmus, and next to that the offices of Cicero' (I.iv, p.16).<sup>30</sup> This passage is useful not only in that it gives us information about the school curriculum of Gascoigne's time, but also in that it offers important evidence of Gascoigne's familiarity with the *Colloquies*, 'which were nearly omnipresent in Elizabethan education'.<sup>31</sup> Thus, if Gascoigne was the first English poet who wrote an echo-dialogue, that poetic device likely came to England through the mediation of Erasmus' *Colloquia*, with which he was so familiar. What is certainly true is that, after 1575, a plethora of echo-poems and dramatic echo-scenes appeared in print and on stage.

In *The Glasse of Government*, Gascoigne also engaged with the figure of Echo (but without writing an echo-device). The play was written a few months earlier than his *Princely Pleasures*, and it features 'Eccho, The Parasyte' among its *dramatis personae*. This is an intriguing case of creative re-use of a mythological character and it is emblematic of an attitude towards the figure of Echo that will emerge through this study: Gascoigne's rewriting of Ovid's Echo is indeed one of the most powerful examples of the fact that Echo was conceived as a protean

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ed. by Edith Hall and Amanda Wrigley (London: Legenda, 2007), pp. 52-65. Steggle argues that 'all of Aristophane's eleven surviving plays were in print by 1515' (p. 53) and that 'Aristophanes was both read and sometimes performed at English universities (p. 54)

<sup>29</sup>Desiderius Erasmus, *Colloquia*, ed. by L.E. Halkin, F. Bierlaire and R. Hoven, in *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodam*, ed. by C.M. Bruhel, L.E. Halkin, C. Reedijk, and others, 9 vols (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1969-2005), I.3 (pp. 555-58). English translation: Desiderius Erasmus, *Colloquies*, trans. by Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 796-801.

<sup>30</sup>George Gascoigne, *The Glasse of Government*, in *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, ed. by John W. Cunliffe, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907-10), II (1910), pp. 1-90. Further references to Gascoigne's work are from this edition.

<sup>31</sup>Gregory D. Dodds, *Exploiting Erasmus: the Erasmian Legacy and Religious Change in Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 89.

figure, which could be transformed, characterised in many different ways, and appropriated or alluded to for the most disparate ends. Contradictory readings of the nymph can even be found in works written by the same author, as is the case with Gascoigne himself, whose depiction of the Echo is much more favourable in *Princely Pleasures* than in *The Glasse of Government*, as will be soon demonstrated. Ben Jonson and Thomas Heywood also refer to Echo in several of their works and represent her in different ways. In the first chapter of this study it will be shown that Jonson associates Echo with harmony and edifying pleasures in his masques, but gives a more complex and perhaps even ambiguous depiction of the nymph in *Cynthia's Revels*. Just like Gascoigne, Heywood appears to consider Echo a versatile figure, apt to be referred to in a variety of different contexts: for instance, Echo encourages Ajax to commit suicide in *Iron Age I* (c. 1590-1612), whereas in *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels* (1635) her iterative speech is compared to the response that a faithful receives from God if he prays heartily to Him.<sup>32</sup>

In Gascoigne's *The Glasse of Government*, Echo undergoes such a radical and unconventional metamorphosis that the character who bears that name does not seem to have anything in common with the Ovidian nymph but the name itself. Most surprisingly, Echo is a male character. He has also not inherited Echo's lack of verbal articulation which compels her to repeat words uttered by someone else: Gascoigne's Echo is perfectly capable of initiating speech, and he even uses it skillfully in order to manipulate the truth and achieve his own purposes. Yet, in a play where nearly every character name is a speaking name, the fact that Echo

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<sup>32</sup>'Onely loud clamors make the Echo speake; / Whisper to her, and silence she'l not breake / Shee's to the Mute, mute: let thy voice sound hye, / And thou shalt heare her doubly make reply. / Why with close muttering lips then do'st thou pray? / [...] stretch thy lungs in clamor, and God then / Will answer and re-answer thee agen' (Thomas Heywood, *The Hierarchie of the blessed angells* (London: Adam Islip, 1635), sig. Dd4v). The echo in *Iron Age 1* (V.i. p. 344) will be analysed in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this study. Other passages in which Heywood alludes to Echo or echo are: *Brazen Age* (1613) and *Troia Britanica* (1609), where echoes reverberate the clamour of the noises of war, and *Gynaikeion* (1624), where Heywood relates different versions of the myth of Echo (Thomas Heywood, *The Brazen Age*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, ed. by John Pearson, 6 vols (London: John Pearson, 1874), III, pp. 165-256 (p. 175); Thomas Heywood, *Troia Britanica: or Great Britaines Troy* (London: W. Iaggard, 1609), sig. D6r; Thomas Heywood, *Gynaikeion* (London: Adam Islip, 1624), sigs. F1v, E4r, B3v).

is called as the famous mythological figure is hardly a coincidence. Lamia, for instance, is a harlot and she is fittingly named after a famous Athenian courtesan. The two virtuous sons are prophetically called Phylotimus and Phylomusus, which mean, respectively, lover of honor and lover of the Muses, whereas the two vicious one are called Phylautus and Phylosarchus, meaning self-love and lover of clothes. The defining traits of Severus, the strict Markgrave, and of Fidus, the faithful servant, are similarly indicated by their names. In this context, Gascoigne's choice to name one his characters Echo cannot but suggest that there is some kind of connection between that character and the mythological nymph. Echo's kinship with his mythological counterpart is indeed discernible in the play, especially if one takes into account both the often neglected first part of the Ovidian narrative, in which the nymph's cunning use of her eloquence earned her Juno's punishment, and the vast body of moralising commentaries on Ovid. In that respect, Gascoigne's *Glasse* is a perfect starting point for this study not only because it testifies to the great adaptability of Ovid's nymph, but also because it shows how and to what extent the heritage of Medieval and early Renaissance moralising readings of the myth could influence early modern literary depictions of Echo.

Gascoigne's Echo is a depraved character who approves of and even actively incites lewdness and sinful lust (I.v, p. 24). His 'approved freendes' are a harlot, Lamia, and her similarly lascivious aunt. He even promises to act as a pander for Lamia: 'And I faire Lady will stande you in some stead, to drive byrdes to the Net' (I.v, p. 25). This characterisation of Echo as a pimp may have been due to the fact that, at the beginning of Ovid's myth, Echo similarly endorses an adulterous affair, as she protects Jove's dalliance with other nymphs by using her verbal skills to detain Juno in long conversation so that she would not discover it. Gascoigne's play, which is a sort of moral allegory, repeatedly insists on the dangers of 'lewde company' (Argument, p. 5; II.ii, p. 44; IV.vii, p. 69), identified with Eccho and Lamia, who successfully corrupt the eldest sons of the burghers. Their victims are fittingly compared once again to 'careless byrds' that have been ensnared by 'these parasites, and bawdes' and their 'deceyptes'

(II.ii, p. 34). Echo is even more explicitly associated with lewdness later in the play, when Phylocalus, the father of one of the two beguiled boys, describes him as ‘one of the lewdest fellows in this town, a common parasite and a seducer of youth’ (III.v, p. 52). Such an explicit and reiterated insistence on Echo’s sexual depravity suggests that Gascoigne probably drew not only on Ovid’s narrative itself, but also on Golding’s harsh description of Echo’s conduct as ‘the lewd behaviour of a bawd and her due punishment’ (Epistle of 1567, 108).

Gascoigne’s Echo is also unsympathetically presented as a parasite, a flatterer and a liar, traits which had been attributed to Ovid’s Echo in allegorical commentaries on the *Metamorphoses* and in mythographical dictionaries. The Prologue of the play explains that the action is aimed at showing ‘what subtle snares these Sycophantes can use’ and ‘how soone the wise such crooked guyles discernes’ (p. 6). The blame is here plausibly cast above all on Echo, as it is him who seeks to lure the eldest brothers into lechery throughout the play, and who shows remarkable ability in lying and flattering. When Lamia laments that the *mores* of contemporary society are too strict and that she is unjustly taxed for her ‘wickedness’, Echo agrees with her and blatantly twists the truth in doing so: ‘they are both too curious and too much suspicio[n], for if they do but see two in bedde togyther, they will say that it was for to committe some wickedness, fye fye upon such tongues’ (I.v, p. 23). Later, he also flatters Phylosarchus in a very similar way, as he tries to convince him that Lamia is modest and has never received any man in her lodgings, and that, being a ‘gallant young man’, he may have a chance with her (II.iii, p. 37). Echo lies with the Markgrave as well and is described by him as a ‘parasite and flatteringe fellow’ (V.vii, p. 82). Flattery and falsehood are thus two defining traits of Echo’s personality, which he puts to full use in order to achieve his aim of living at the expense of others. That immoral ambition earns him the title of Parasite, attached to him as early as in the list of *dramatis personae*. His covetousness is revealed in an aside spoken after he arranged an encounter between Lamia and Phylosarchus: ‘out out doubt she shall be his, as long as his purse may be mine’ (II.v, p. 39). He later also convinces Dicke Drom to ‘share betweene us’ whatsoever Phylosarchus will

give him.

Flattery and parasitism are vices that had been attributed to Ovid's Echo as well: this marks a further point of contact between Gascoigne's character and his mythological namesake. It is Berchorius who most notoriously associates Echo with flatterers in his *Ovidius Moralizatus*: 'Say that Echo signifies flatterers who frequent mountains - that is prelates, forests - that is religious, rivers - that is secular and delicate people, and echo and shout about around them. If it happens that something is said by someone they are accustomed to respond to his words and repeat his statement as if it were holy' (p. 196). In other words, Echo can be compared with those who agree with everything people of high estate say, presumably in the hope of a comeback. The implication of opportunism is made explicit in the commentary attached to T.H.'s *The Fable of Ouid*. The author summarises the moralising interpretations of the myth given by other commentators, among which the association of Echo with flatterers:

But by thys fable some there be suppose  
That Ouyd mente to shewe the fauinge sorte  
Of flattringe folke whose vsage is to glose  
With prayers swete, the men of gretiest, porte  
And moste of welthe to whome the still resorte  
In hope to gete, refusing nought to lye  
The ende of speche as Ecco they applye. (sig. C1r)

His words clearly echo those of Berchorius, but he adds that flatterers repeat the words of wealthy men 'in hope to gete'. Interestingly, T.H.'s own laudatory reading of Echo as a honest counsellor appears to be parodied in Gascoigne's play by Pandarina's comment that 'Echo doth geve you good councell' (II.iii, p. 36). This impression is reinforced by Echo's promise, a few scenes earlier, to teach the brothers 'another lecture' (I.v, p. 25), which is antithetical to the virtuous precepts explained to them by Gnomasticus. In Gascoigne's play, Echo does give his interlocutors advice, but his advice is sinful and leads to corruption. Even parodic reversal thus points to a connection between Echo the parasite and the mythological nymph.

Even if Gascoigne's Echo is male and enjoys autonomous verbal articulation,

he can thus clearly be assimilated to the nymph of the *Metamorphoses* in that he seems to incorporate several of the most unfavourable traits which had been associated with her in post-Ovidian tradition. Such a dark depiction of Echo may have been due to the didactic purpose of the play and with Gascoigne's agenda to present himself as a repented prodigal son. Gaggero argues that *The Glasse* engages with the humanistic debate of whether pleasure is compatible with virtue and whether it can be a helpful tool in learning. The play, he explains, sides with the idea that pleasure cannot be reconciled to virtue, as it only leads to vice and loss of social status.<sup>33</sup> After his collection of poems *A Hundreth Sundry Flowres* had been confiscated for licentiousness in 1573, Gascoigne made deliberate attempts to persuade his audience that his writing had become moral, as is testified by the first dedicatory epistle to the second, expurgated, edition of that book, published in 1575 under the title *The Posies of George Gascoigne, Esquire*. In that epistle, Gascoigne dismissed his poems as mere 'vanities' of 'greene youth' which he 'had layde aside [...] to exercise [his] penne in morall discourses'.<sup>34</sup> *The Glasse* is informed exactly by that purpose: the author writes a didactic moral work in which the evil characters are punished and the good ones eventually thrive. In such a serious work, poetry, which is referred to as a polar opposite of 'morall discourse' in the *Posies*, fittingly has a problematic status. As Gaggero points out, the eldest brothers' errancy in *The Glasse* is presented in terms of rhetorical as well as moral errancy: 'Phylosarchus' pursuit of amorous pleasures is repeatedly conceived in terms of a pursuit of poetic pleasures'.<sup>35</sup> It is true that Gnomaticus seems to rehabilitate poetry when he suggests that the schoolboys put to verse the precepts he has taught them, but in fact he only accepts it as a useful tool in aiding memory (III.iii, p. 47). In his view, poetry is merely instrumental to a more noble purpose and

<sup>33</sup>Christopher Gaggero, 'Pleasure Unreconciled to Virtue: George Gascoigne and Didactic Drama', in *Tudor Drama Before Shakespeare (1485-1590)*, ed. by Lloyd Edward Kermode, Jason Scott-Warren and Martine van Elk (Hounds mills: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 167–94 (pp. 168-70).

<sup>34</sup>George Gascoigne, *The Posies*, in *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, I (1907), pp. 3-473 (p. 5). For Gascoigne's attempt to clear his reputation in the second edition of the *Posies* see Felicity A. Hughes, 'Gascoigne's Poses', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37.1, 1997, 1-19.

<sup>35</sup>Gaggero, p. 180.

it also has to conform to strict rules of *decorum*: in writing poetry, the boys have to avoid ‘tryfling allegories or pleasant fygures’, which ‘in serious causes are not most comely’ (III.iii, p. 48). By prescribing poetry without rhetorical figures, Gnomaticus is, in all respects, allowing them ‘a form of pleasure, that, paradoxically, has been drained of pleasure’, as Gaggero puts it.<sup>36</sup>

While the younger brothers obey their master, Phylosarchus indulges in writing love poetry for Lamia as a result of Echo’s allurements to court her (IV.i, p. 60). Echo is thus responsible of leading the youths down the path of moral degradation and despicable rhetorical pleasures. It is no coincidence that Echo should be the name of this tempter. The nymph Echo appears indeed to have been associated with poetry ever since classical antiquity. Longus states that the nymph was taught to sing and play by the Muses, goddesses of music, art, and poetry, and that it was by the Muses’ command that her voice survived after her death (III.23). Probably picking up on this tradition, Boccaccio situates her on mount Parnassus, the mount sacred to Apollo and home of the Muses: ‘Parnasi nympha potentissime’ is the epithet he gives her (VII.lix.2). Ghedira also detects close affinities between Echo’s speech pattern and poetic expression when she analyses Ovid’s account of her story. Juno forbids her the use of ‘soluta sermo’, associated by Ghedira with speech that is not limited by formal constraints or rigid prescriptions, namely with prose: ‘en conséquence ce à quoi Juno condamne Écho n’est autre qu’une définition de la poésie [...]. On peut donc admettre qu’Écho dans le poème d’Ovide figure la poésie en tant que forme’ [as a consequence, Juno’s punishment of Echo is nothing but a definition of poetry ... One can thus admit that, in Ovid’s poem, Echo symbolises poetry as form].<sup>37</sup> She then adds that by re-signifying Narcissus’ words, Echo ‘agit sur le language. Autant dire qu’Écho fabrique du language. Autant dire qu’Echo est poète’ [acts upon language. That is to say Echo fabricates language. That

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<sup>36</sup>Gaggero, p. 179.

<sup>37</sup>Veronique Gély-Ghedira, *La Nostalgie du Moi. Écho dans la Littérature Européenne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), pp. 33-34. Translation mine.

is to say Echo is a poet].<sup>38</sup>

The link between Echo and poetry is even more evident in early modern treatises on the arts of versification and rhetoric. Her iterative speech pattern reminded early modern theorists of several rhetorical figures of repetition, so much so that the word ‘Eccho’ was often mentioned to explain how a device worked or even chosen as its vernacular name. In his *Garden of Eloquence* (1577), published only two years after Gascoigne’s play, Peacham assimilates *anadiplosis* to a ‘resounding Eccoe’, and, in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), Puttenham names epalanepsis ‘the Eccho sound’.<sup>39</sup> Webbe illustrates ‘sundry kindes of rare deuises, and pretty inuentions’, among which he lists a device ‘vsed by some, who taking the last wordes of a certaine number of verses as it were by the rebound of an Echo, shall make them fall out in some prettie sence’.<sup>40</sup> He then provides an example drawn from Grange’s *Golden Aphroditis*, which is a variation on traditional form of the echo-dialogue. Echo was thus commonly associated with those ‘fygures’ against which Gnomasticus warns (III.iv, p. 48). Echoes are also acoustically very similar to rhymes, and rhymes, like rhetorical figures, are characteristic elements of poetry. As is often the case with echoes, rhymes are made of two words that have a similar sound but different meanings.

In these treatises, rhymes and repetitions are often associated with pleasure. Even if he never alludes to echo to illustrate the rhetorical figures he describes, Wilson insists on the fact that the repetition of words and sounds brings delight to the audience: one kind of ‘exornation’ that ‘beeing measurably vsed deliteth much the hearers’ is produced ‘when contrary things are repeated together, when

<sup>38</sup>Gély-Ghedira, p. 180. For the association of Echo with poetry see also Marks, who argues that the tale of Echo and Narcissus is ‘a fable of poetry’ and that ‘all poetry is echoic’ (Herbert Marks, ‘Echo and Narcissism’, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 61.3 (1992), 334-54 (p. 334); Hollander, who states that ‘it is inevitable that the trope of echo should come to stand for crucial questions about poetic language itself’ (*The Figure of Echo*, p. 21); Luccioni, who suggests that authors refer to Echo to represent poetic expression itself (Carine Luccioni, ‘Les Accents d’une Nymphé Plaintive: Écho, Miroir du Dire Mélancolique dans la Poésie de l’Âge Baroque (1580-1630)’, *Dix-septième Siècle*, 239 (2008), 285-309 (p. 285)).

<sup>39</sup>Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London: H. Iackson, 1577), sig. J3r; George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), sig. Z2r. All further references to Puttenham’s work are given in brackets in the text.

<sup>40</sup>William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poesie* (London: John Charlewood, 1586), sigs. G2r-G2v.

that once againe is vttered which before was spoken, when sentences are turned and letters are altered.<sup>41</sup> It is thus no surprise that Gnomasticus, whose educational methods do not involve pleasures of any kind, condemns the use of ‘pleasant fygures’, which are the spice of poetry (III.iv, p. 48). His bias against rhetorical devices appears to be even more justified if we consider that the figures of repetition could be associated not only with pleasure but even with wantonness, as is testified in the second edition of Peacham’s treatise (1593). When describing epanalepsis as ‘the Echo sound’, Peacham warns against repeating a word ‘without new matter as in wanton songs’.<sup>42</sup> He thus implies that such a rhetorical technique, so similar to echoic repetition, was typical of ‘wanton songs’, and hence that it was employed by those who wanted to indulge in licentious poetic pleasures.

Even if those treatises were published after Gascoigne’s play, they are still indicative of how rhetorical figures of repetitions were perceived in the seventies and eighties of the sixteenth century, that is to say during a period of time that is chronologically very close to Gascoigne’s work. Gascoigne might have himself recognised that echoic repetition sounded very much like a pleasant rhetorical device, one particularly appropriate for love poetry. If that were the case, it seems fitting that his Echo is the one who introduced the elder boys to erotic and poetic pleasures. Interestingly, if Gascoigne had come across the echo-device through continental literature, as has been hypothesised by Colby, he may also have associated Echo with those ‘Italian toyes [...] full of pleasant sporte’ which he puts in sharp contrast to his own ‘serious’ work in the Prologue of *The Glasse* (p. 6).<sup>43</sup> The radically biased reading of Echo offered in *The Glasse* is thus a result of the conflation of every derogatory trait attached to the Ovidian nymph from whom he takes his name and of the conscious rejection, in the play, of the pleasant musicality of poetry, rhymes, and rhetorical devices of which echo effects were a recognised example.

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<sup>41</sup>Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1553), sigs. Dd4r-Dd4v.

<sup>42</sup>Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence* (London: R.F., 1593), sig. H4v.

<sup>43</sup>Colby, p. 20.

Because of its poetic and musical quality, echoic repetition was instead a welcome resource in *The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth*, a lavish entertainment for the Queen whose aim was exactly that of eliciting the audience's wonder and delight. As will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter, the characterisation of Echo is completely different and much more favourable in that work, which has no didactic aim and is written with an entirely different agenda. Echo's disembodied voice answers the questions posed by the Savage Man, thus originating a spectacular special effect which would have entertained the audience. The nymph also repeatedly praises the Queen and helps the uncouth savage to recognise her as she approaches, thus playing an important role in his deferential submission to her.<sup>44</sup> These transformations of the figure of Echo in Gascoigne's corpus are due to the author's different poetic agendas and to his wish to presents himself in different ways to his audience. There is general scholarly consensus that Gascoigne devised a variety of literary *personae* of himself with the pragmatic purpose of attracting the attention of potential patrons. One of his favourite identity was that of the Reformed Prodigal, which he generally used in the works printed under his name and in his moralistic writings. At the same time, though, he also cultivated a more courtly *persona*, which was more useful when he wished to praise the Queen and seek her favour or patronage.<sup>45</sup> *The Glass* belongs explicitly to the first mode of self-presentation. Echo is here cast in an extremely negative light because his Ovidian progenitor was associated with poetry and rhetorical figures and perhaps also because of the continental origin of the echo-device: being closely related to Ovid's Echo, Gascoigne's character could not be redeemed in such a strictly moralising work which rejects pleasure and 'Italian toyes'. In another serious work, *The Steele*

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<sup>44</sup>George Gascoigne, *The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle*, in *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, II (1910), pp. 91-132 (pp. 96-100). All subsequent references to this entertainment are from this edition.

<sup>45</sup>Austen, *George Gascoigne*, pp. xi, 1-21, 216-17; Gillian Austen, 'Self-portraits and Self-presentation in the Work of George Gascoigne', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 14.1/ Special Issue 18 (2008), 2.1-34 (par. 4, 9, 34) <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/14-1/article1.htm>> [accessed January 2017]; Stephen Hamrick, "Set in Portraiture": George Gascoigne, Queen Elizabeth, and Adapting the Royal Image', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 11.1 (2005), 1.1-30 (par. 2-3) <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/11-1/hamrgasc.htm>> [accessed January 2017].

*Glasse* (1576), Gascoigne alludes once again to Echo, even if very briefly, and the nymph does by no means receive a more sympathetic treatment: the only reason why her name is invoked is to associate her with flattery.<sup>46</sup> The Reformed Prodigal was not a man who could find Ovid's nymph appealing. The courtly *persona* which Gascoigne fashioned for himself in lighter works had instead no reason to be biased against the poetic quality of the nymph's speech pattern nor – if he was acquainted with it – against the continental fashion of turning that speech pattern into a poetic form: the ability to write poetry and fluency in Italian and French were indeed skills that a courtier was proud to display.<sup>47</sup> Thus, in Gascoigne's *oeuvre*, the mythological figure of Echo is extrapolated from her original textual contingency, appropriated, rewritten, and heavily transformed to suit the pragmatic needs of the author: in that respect, Gascoigne's depictions of Echo offer an emblematic example of the standard practices that inform early modern *imitatio* of the classics.

## 'Music, wit, and oracle'

Echo undergoes many other metamorphoses, albeit often less radical than that of Gascoigne's Echo. The aim of this study is to analyse some of the most successful and most interesting of these literary transformations of the nymph in early modern literature, but especially in drama. Some of the traits attributed to the nymph, such as excessive talkativeness or the ability to predict the future, recur in several works and thus testify to the existence of shared readings of that mythological figure. This research tries to account for the existence of such widespread characterisations of the nymph while also analysing the specificities of each literary depiction of Echo.

<sup>46</sup>George Gascoigne, *The Steele Glasse*, in *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, II (1910), pp. 133–74 (p. 172).

<sup>47</sup>For Gascoigne's display of refined skills see Austen, *George Gascoigne*, p. 4; Austen, 'Self-portraits and Self-presentation', par. 34.

Given the popularity of the figure of Echo and of the echo-device throughout European literature, a great deal of scholarly attention has unsurprisingly been devoted to that mythological character and to the poetic technique that imitates her speech pattern. Vinge's encyclopedic *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature*, and Bettini and Pellizer's *Il Mito di Narciso* retrace the history of the reception of Ovid's myth of Echo and Narcissus. Their main focus is the figure of Narcissus, but in analysing several rewritings of his myth they also offer useful insights into the literary afterlife of the nymph who fell in love with him. Bettini and Pellizer explore classical sources, medieval rewritings of the myth, and Freud's reading of Narcissus, but do not include any early modern English text in their study. Vinge similarly covers an impressive time span and analyses an extraordinary number of texts from classical antiquity to the nineteenth century, but the vast scope of her research necessarily compels her to compress her treatment of the English reception of Echo and to undertake a selection of early modern material, thus excluding many literary works which will be analysed in this study.

Bonadeo focuses specifically on the figure of Echo rather than on Ovid's myth more in general. In her *Mito e Natura allo Specchio, l'Eco nel Pensiero Greco e Latino*, she offers a useful overview of the classical versions of the myth of Echo and illustrates how Echo and echoes were portrayed in the literature of classical antiquity. She devotes a chapter to the assessments of the nymph in Medieval and Renaissance allegories and in contemporary scholarly works (such as anthropological and psychoanalytic studies), but her study mainly focuses on Greek and Latin literature. Wieseler's erudite *Die Nymphe Echo* also examines the representation of the figure of Echo in classical literature: Wieseler lists what appears to be virtually every allusion to Echo in literature and representation of her in the visual arts. Ovid's Echo, in particular, has been the object of many scholarly studies. Lea Ritter-Santini's *La Favola di Eco* gives a valuable analysis of the kind of language which Echo speaks and into the effect it produces.<sup>48</sup> The

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<sup>48</sup>Lea Ritter-Santini, *La Favola di Eco: Langue et Parole*, in *Retorica e Critica Letteraria* (Bologna:

myth of Echo and Narcissus, though, has been mostly used as starting point to explore issues of personal identity, alterity, subjectivity, and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships: the studies of Lisa Käll, Claire Nouvet, Joan Scott, Anne-Emmanuel Berger, Jean-Pierre Vernant and Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, Alberto Borghini, and Ezio Pellizer are just some among all the works that focus on those issues.<sup>49</sup>

A comprehensive study on the reception of Echo in post-classical literature is Gély-Ghedira's *La Nostalgie du Moi. Écho dans la Littérature Européenne*. In her influential work, Gély-Ghedira aims at analysing the interaction between the subject and the echo answering to his/ her words in a great number of European texts so as to shed light on how that poetic dialogue generates 'cet *alter ego* qu'est le sujet lyrique' [that alter ego which is the lyric subject].<sup>50</sup> Her investigation is broad in scope, as it encompasses classical, Italian, French, English, Spanish, and German texts written by authors such as Wordsworth, Goethe, Gaspara Stampa, Valéry. She does consider several early modern English works, but, as was the case with Vinge, her aim is not that of investigating the reception of the figure of Echo in English literature.

The echo-device has also received a great amount of scholarly attention: Colby's seminal work, which has been mentioned above, traces the history and development of the echo-device in poetry and drama; Galand-Hallyn also illustrates the history of the echo-device from classical antiquity to the Renaissance but she focuses on poetry and devotes special attention to the uses of the echo-verse in French literature.<sup>51</sup>

There are also interesting studies on the figure of Echo in English literature,

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il Mulino, 1978), pp. 151-79.

<sup>49</sup>Lisa F. Käll, 'A Voice of Her Own? Echo's Own Echo', *Continental Philosophy Review*, 48.1 (2015), 59-75; Claire Nouvet, 'An Impossible Response, the Disaster of Narcissus', *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991), 103-34; Frontisi-Ducroux and Vernant, pp. 165-200; Alberto Borghini, 'L'inganno della Sintassi. Il Mito Ovidiano di Narciso (Met. 3, 339-510)', *Materiali e Discussioni per l'Analisi dei Testi Classici*, 1 (1978), 177-92; Ezio Pellizer, 'L'Eco, lo Specchio e la Reciprocità Amorosa. Una Lettura del Tema di Narciso', *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, 17.2 (1984), 21-35.

<sup>50</sup>Gély-Ghedira, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup>Perrine Galand-Hallyn, 'Des "Vers Échoïques" Ou Comment Rendre une Âme à Écho', *Nouvelle Revue du XVIe Siècle*, 15.2 (1997), 253-76.

but they all focus on slightly different aspects of the reception of the nymph than the present work. Hollander's influential *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* is a milestone on this subject. Hollander gives some fine readings of post-classical appropriations of Echo, but his main focus is echo as literary allusion: he devotes the first two chapters to acoustic echoes; he then analyses echo as a 'canonical formal scheme' and lists the rhetorical devices and poetic forms that sound like an echo;<sup>52</sup> lastly, he dwells on intertextual echoes in literature and especially in the works of John Milton. Loewenstein's *Responsive Readings, Versions of Echo in Pastoral, Epic, and the Jonsonian Masque* is another authoritative study on the reception of Echo in the early modern period. Loewenstein aims to 'account for the career of Echo' and 'analyse some of the mythopoeic motives in Jonson's dramaturgy'.<sup>53</sup> In his first two essays, he demonstrates that the 'career' of Echo is closely linked with pastoral, and, in the following ones, he focuses on the depiction of Echo in royal entertainments and especially in Jonson's masques. He also analyses the role of Echo in Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* and in Milton's *Comus*. While the first chapter of the present study is indebted to Loewenstein's ideas, the following ones broaden the area of interest to include other plays not related with the milieu of the court.

Recently, Susan Anderson published a book on Echo in early modern drama entitled *Echo and Meaning on Early Modern English Stage*. Anderson focuses especially on the musical effects produced by echo-devices in commercial and courtly plays. Since her aim is that of investigating how 'music and sound interacted with other elements of performance and what kind of meaning they conveyed', Anderson fittingly devotes greater attention to dramatic works in which Echo and echoes originate melodious songs or musical effects, such as *Cynthia's Revels* and court entertainments.<sup>54</sup> Other plays where Echo appears, such as *Maid's Metamorphosis* and *The Cobler's Prophecy*, are treated more

<sup>52</sup>Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 23.

<sup>53</sup>Joseph Loewenstein, *Responsive Readings: Versions of Echo in Pastoral, Epic, and the Jonsonian Masque* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 5.

<sup>54</sup>Anderson, *Echo and Meaning*, p. 4.

concisely. Lastly, Bardelmann devotes a chapter of her book *Eros and Music in Early Modern Culture and Literature* to the figure of Echo in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*: she analyses the relationship between Echo and Eros and argues that Shakespeare hints at polarised readings of the nymph to 'showcase the conflict between the vulgar and the Neoplatonic Eros'.<sup>55</sup> Bardelmann, though, focuses specifically on Shakespeare's allusions to Echo rather than on his reception Ovid's myth more in general, thus failing to fully recognise the complexities inherent in Shakespeare's re-use of the Ovidian tale as a source for his poem.

The most comprehensive among the critical investigations on the reception of Echo in early modern England is Mauré's unpublished doctoral thesis *Héritages et Réappropriations du Mythe d'Écho dans la Littérature Élisabéthaine*. Despite engaging with the very same subject, Mauré's work and the present study are different in methodology and in the selection of early modern material. Mauré looks at an impressive number of works (Elizabethan but also Jacobean) in which Echo appears: she mentions poems, masques, commercial plays, and treatises on rhetoric. Although she promises to analyse representations of Echo in poetry and drama, Mauré seems to dedicate a more substantial part of her study to poetry, on which her third chapter entirely focuses.<sup>56</sup> For instance, she looks at echo-poems by Barnes, Whatson, Spenser, and Fraunce, but she neglects academic plays such as *Melanthe* and *The Return from Parnassus*, or commercial ones such as *Old Fortunatus*. Other plays which are alluded to in her study are often treated very briefly, and others are only mentioned by their title. Thus, the present research does not overlap with that of Mauré in that it focuses on drama rather than poetry, and also in that it privileges detail over comprehensiveness. What our studies have in common is that a separate chapter is dedicated to the reception of Echo in Shakespeare, but even in that case, the plays and poems we analyse are not the same: while Mauré dwells at length on Shakespeare's numerous allusions to acoustic echoes of the sounds of hunting, I have not devoted

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<sup>55</sup>Claire Bardelmann, *Eros and Music in Early Modern Culture and Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 215-37.

<sup>56</sup>Mauré, *Héritages*, p. 8.

much space to them. I have instead preferred to focus on aspects that have been overlooked by Mauré and other critics, such as the association between echoes and intertextual allusion in *Venus and Adonis*, and Shakespeare's use of verbal echoes in *Othello*. Thus, while a second thesis on Echo in early modern English literature may seem redundant, it is in fact not so, especially if one considers how often the nymph was alluded to in this period and how multifaceted a figure she is.

Building on the vast body of criticism mentioned above, this study explores the afterlife of the figure of Echo in early modern drama, but, on some occasions, poems, treatises, sermons, and other prose works have also been examined so as to assess the dramatic appropriations of the figure of Echo within a wider literary context. The aim is to investigate which of the nymph's paradigmatic traits - either those which characterised her in the classical versions of her story or those attributed to her by later moralising interpretations of the classical myths - were most frequently drawn upon by early modern writers, and why some widespread characterisations of Echo emerged and gained popularity.

In order to do so, this study takes into account the influence of the classical sources of the myth which were available and their numerous moralising interpretations. It also tries to assess whether and how genre and form affected the representation of and functions attributed to Echo or echoes: it is reasonable to hypothesise, for instance, that the nymph plays different roles depending on whether she appears in courtly entertainments performed before the monarch, in misogynistic comedies, or in didactic works. Lastly, another important element that has not been neglected is the broader social and intellectual milieu in which the examined works were written: discussions on the nature of language, the taste of that period for specific rhetorical figures, social expectations on how a woman should behave, and the political background of courtly entertainments are all aspects that have been explored. This has helped to identify the cultural preoccupations that might have been projected on the figure of Echo in several plays and non-dramatic works.

The material that has been analysed includes echo-devices and allusions to

both Echo and echo. Although the aim is that of investigating the reception of the mythological figure of Echo, it has been impossible to separate Echo from echo. The most obvious reason is that the two of them are often confused by those who hear an echo: characters often converse with an echo as if they were talking with a living being before they realise that they are merely hearing an acoustic reverberation of their own voice. In other cases, it is useful to understand how acoustic and verbal echoes are employed or represented because these tend to be closely connected with the nymph even when she is not explicitly mentioned. Chapter two, for instance, shows that acoustic echoes were perceived as divine sounds which often came from heaven: this has to do with the mythological nymph in that she was allegorically interpreted as a reverberation of the voice of God. Looking at those allusions to acoustic reverberations thus helps to shed light on the characterisation of Echo in other early modern works and to gain a broader understanding of the meanings and roles attributed to the nymph in that period. For the same reason, this study also examines echoic speech even when it does not originate from Echo. In Day's *Law Tricks* and Shakespeare's *Othello*, for instance, characters speak as if they were an echo and, in the former play, this even produces a fully fledged echo-scene. Echoic language is the paradigmatic characteristic of the disembodied nymph who only exists as a derivative voice: hence, in a study on the figure of Echo, it is vital to investigate how echoic repetition is employed and represented by dramatists. The intent, though, is not that of studying the formal devices that enabled authors to mimic the sound of echo in themselves: that kind of critical investigation has already been carried out by Hollander and Nänny.<sup>57</sup> The focus is here not on poetic form and techniques, but on the figure of Echo: there are certainly many early modern texts where rhetorical devices of repetition, refrains, and reiterations of sounds and syllables appear and produce the acoustic effect of an echo, but analysing them would go far beyond the scope of this research; the

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<sup>57</sup>Max Nänny, 'Textual Echoes of Echoes', *SPELL : Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 7 (1994), 115-43.

material examined has been selected to include only literary passages in which Echo or echo are explicitly mentioned and play a significant role.

The time period covered in this study extends approximately from 1575, the year in which Gascoigne wrote his *Princely Pleasures*, to the thirties of the seventeenth century, when Milton's *Comus* with its silent Echo was performed (1634). A thematic division of the examined material has been preferred over a chronological one, as that seemed more suitable to the task of exploring shared readings of Echo in the early modern period and to compare representations of her in the works of different authors.

As has been pointed out above, Echo's iterative speech can be transformed into a rhetorical device which is particularly suitable for poetry. Small wonder that echo-devices appear in a great number of early modern poems and especially in love lyrics. It is very often the case that desperate or forsaken lovers lament their condition and Echo answers to their cries, thus either providing some consolation or exacerbating their sorrow. In Watson's *Tears of Fancie* (1593), for instance, the lover and Echo are united by grief: 'for both of vs were now in sorrow seated', and Echo is represented as 'redoubling sorrow with a sorrowing sound' (Sonnet 29).<sup>58</sup> The Echo in Percy's Sonnet 15 encourages the lyric 'I' to 'hope best' and suggests that he should kiss the 'evil-natured' woman for whom he is pining.<sup>59</sup> Watson employs the echo-device also in his *Hekatompathia* (1582), where a sort of competition is established between the lover and Echo, who both claim that their love is purer and their grief deeper (Poem 25).<sup>60</sup>

These poems are remarkably similar to dialogues, it is as if the reader were witnessing a conversation between two interlocutors. Echoic repetition has in-

<sup>58</sup>Thomas Watson, *The Tears of Fancie or Loue Disdained* (London: J. Danter, 1593), sig. C2r.

<sup>59</sup>William Percy, *Sonnets to the Fairest Coelia* (London: Adam Islip, 1594), sig. C2r. Echo gives amorous advice also in Barne's ironic Sestine 4 in *Partenophil and Parthenope*: she encourages her interlocutor to 'hold', 'pray', 'tempt', and 'praise' the woman he loves, and even suggests that he lies to her in order to win her affection (ll. (Barnabe Barnes, *Partenophil and Parthenope* (London: John Wolfe, 1593), sigs. S4r-S5r).

<sup>60</sup>Thomas Watson, *Hekatompathia* (London: John Wolfe, 1582), sig D1r.

deed the effect of transforming monologue into dialogue.<sup>61</sup> Even when the lyric ‘I’ in a poem or a character in a play clearly converse with a mere reflection of their own voice, that exchange takes the form of a dialogue between two speakers. Since dialogic interaction is a key element of drama, echo-dialogues are highly theatrical devices: as such, they were popular and extremely effective not only in poetry, but also on stage. On stage, the echo-device afforded many interesting creative possibilities: playwrights, for instance, could choose to stage a dialogue between a man and echo in many different ways. The echoes were frequently produced by an actor hiding offstage, thus creating the illusion of disembodied voice answering to the character on stage. This was a sort of special effect which could be used for spectacle or to create an uncanny atmosphere. Lopez fittingly defines the echo-device as a ‘kind of theatrical magic’<sup>62</sup> In other echo-scenes, which would have had different outcomes, a character would remain onstage but hide himself and pretend to be an echo so as to mislead or deceive his interlocutor. An echo-device could also be accompanied by music, as was often the case in court masques and royal entertainments, where echoic repetition contributed to produce sophisticated and melodious songs. On stage, echoes could be represented as eerie supernatural sounds or they could be used to elicit laughter by having them mock the person who converses with them. Moreover, echoes twist the meaning of the words they reverberate, thus giving rise to misunderstandings and equivocations that had a tangible effect on the plot. Echo-dialogues could thus be devised as elements that move the plot forward and not only as entertaining or spectacular scenes.

The existence of such a wide and stimulating variety of dramatic echo-scenes is the reason why drama has been chosen as the main object of this study. What happens when one of the *dramatis personae* in a play is a voice without a body

<sup>61</sup>This is noted also by Rosati, who calls the dialogue between Echo and Narcissus a ‘dialogue-monologue’ and suggests that Narcissus’ words become a dialogue when they are repeated and twisted by Echo (Rosati, pp. 31-32). See also Luccioni, who suggests that ‘la référence à Écho théâtralise le dire mélancolique’ [the reference to Echo theatricalises the melancholic lament] (p. 286).

<sup>62</sup>Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 102.

which interacts with other characters on stage? How can a disembodied voice influence the plot of a play? What are the effects of Echo's distorting speech pattern in a literary genre that relies on communication between characters? These are some of the questions that this study will try to answer.

The first chapter focuses on entertainments and masques performed before Queen Elizabeth and King James. In those spectacular dramatic works, echoes were often included in songs, where they formed melodious refrains. Echoic repetition has indeed an intrinsic musical quality, which made it particularly apt to be employed not only as a poetic form or a rhetorical scheme, but also as a musical device. In some performances, echoes were also generated by singers and musicians placed on different parts of the stage so as to create an even more sophisticated sound effect. The aim was that of catering for the refined tastes of the monarchs and eliciting their wonder. Although music is not the focus of this study, as that would require the competencies of a musicologist, the first chapter analyses echo-songs, but also echo-dialogues, in Elizabethan and Jacoeban courtly performances so as to show that echoes were indeed used to produce harmonious songs and musical effects, but also to deliver coded messages to the King or Queen.

In Jonson's masques, not only do echoes contribute to produce pleasant musical harmony, but they are also associated with heavenly harmony. Echoes were often conceived as celestial sounds in the early modern period, and they were even identified as manifestations of the voice of God. The fact that they are disembodied and unlocatable voices often induces those who hear them to think that they come from a supernatural being and to believe their words as if they were oracles. The second chapter focuses on representations of echo as the voice of a god and tries to account for the reasons why echoic reverberation is often endowed with oracular powers.

The third chapter leads the readers from heaven to the underworld, as it opens with an analysis of the echoes coming from the grave of the dead Duchess in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. In Webster's play, as well as in the other works explored in the chapter, echoic repetition is closely associated with female speech

as a way to exert agency. Echo's manipulation of language and re-signification of previously uttered words enabled her to overcome the restrictions imposed on her ability to speak: similarly, early modern women who refused to be silenced and displayed their exuberant verbal wit were actively transgressing the restrictive norms of behaviour prescribed to them. Bearing this in mind, the chapter focuses on Echo as the epitome of female agency negated and regained and, by taking into account the social and cultural milieu in which the examined plays were written, it investigates how Echo's iterative speech pattern is represented when it is adopted by or imposed on a woman.

If cultural debates over the role of women, such as the *Hic Mulier* controversy, likely influenced the characterisation of Echo and echoes in the plays, reflections on language and the status of the linguistic sign, which were pervasive in the early modern period, certainly did as well. In order to express herself, Echo generally alters the meaning of the words uttered by her interlocutor, attributing an alternative signified to a pre-existent signified. This can either produce a comic effect, as her answers rely on puns, witty wordplay, and equivocation, but it can also cast doubts as to the reliability of the linguistic sign. Deprived of a body, Echo also offers a perfect example of the performative quality of language, as she 'does things' with her words, that is she influences the plot merely by using and manipulating language. It is on Echo's use of language and on the strategies that enable her to re-signify the words she hears that the fourth chapter focuses.

After exploring how Echo's speech pattern produces 'music, wit, and oracle', to borrow the words of Shakespeare's Agamemnon (*Troilus and Cressida*, I.iii.74), the present study looks at how Shakespeare himself represents Echo and echoes in his *oeuvre* (Chapter 5).<sup>63</sup> The word 'echo' appears in several of Shakespeare's works, but the most significant allusions to the mythological nymph and to acoustic reverberation can be found in *Venus and Adonis* (1593), *Twelfth Night* (c. 1601-02), and *Othello* (c. 1602-03). *Twelfth Night* is so packed with

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<sup>63</sup>William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. by David Bevington (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1998).

echoes of Ovid's myth of Echo and Narcissus that it is certainly worth investigating the role of that mythical subtext within the play. In *Venus and Adonis*, Venus' 'woeful ditty' (l. 836) seems to be about to occasion an echo-song, which is yet abruptly interrupted by the narrator: Shakespeare thus interestingly refuses to draw on a poetic device that had previously been used in the epyllia written by Lodge and Clapham, and he also depicts echoes as bothersome and futile sounds.<sup>64</sup> *Othello* is very often neglected by scholars who studied the reception of the figure of Echo. The nymph is indeed never mentioned, nor is there an echo who answers to one of the characters. Yet, in the so-called 'temptation scene' (III.iii), the Moor accuses Iago of echoing his words, and the dialogue between the two of them, in which Iago repeats every words uttered by his master, bears close resemblance to an echo-scene. Verbal echoes proliferate throughout the play and, in this case, they are not merely annoying or useless, but rather take on an eerie quality. In these three works, upon which the fifth chapter mainly focuses, Shakespeare alludes to Echo and echoes in a remarkably original way, as he appropriates and creatively re-elaborates either the literary convention of the echo-device or Ovid's myth itself.

By investigating the reception of the classical figure of Echo in early modern England, this study hopefully offers a small contribution to the extremely useful task undertaken by several authoritative works on classical reception, which have shed light on the literary heritage available in this period and also on early modern habits of reading and re-using classical material.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Poems*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones and H.R. Woudhuysen (London: Cengage Learning, 2007). All further references to Shakespeare's poems are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

<sup>65</sup> Some among the most authoritative examples are: Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Robert Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Charles Martindale and Anthony Brian Taylor, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On Renaissance strategies of interpretation of classical myths more in general see Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961); Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).

# Echoes at the courts of Elizabeth I and James I

Mythological and fairy-tale elements were often combined in Elizabethan and Jacobean entertainments so as to create an idyllic pastoral atmosphere. Such lavish shows were meant to appeal to both the eye and ear and they thus made generous use of sensational visual and acoustic effects, among which were echoes. The presence of the nymph Echo and the acoustic reverberation of sounds and words were well-established *topoi* of the pastoral genre, and hence, they were also frequently drawn upon in courtly entertainments. Not only did echoes contribute to the creation of the pastoral setting of the show, but they were also employed to produce spectacular scenes: because of their nature as mysterious sounds coming from no visible source and generally unexpected by the hearers, echoes had the potential to elicit the audience's wonder. Echoic repetitions were also often employed in songs, which generally featured sophisticated musical effects and innovative techniques, such as the *cori spezzati*, so as to enhance the aural effect of echoing. Accompanied by such refined musical arrangements, echoes provided even greater acoustic pleasure.

The first royal entertainment where echoic repetition is used for spectacle is Gascoigne's *The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle*. The nymph Echo is here explicitly invoked, and she intervenes as an interlocutor in a dialogue. This would become Echo's privileged role in later plays performed on the academic and professional stage, whereas in other courtly entertainments the echo-device was more often turned into a song. Songs in which a line was reverberated by an echo became indeed incredibly popular in royal shows: these songs were

particularly melodious and hence appropriate for such a solemn occasion, and, in the Jacobean period, musical harmony was also loaded with political and philosophical implications. In some cases, the authors of courtly entertainments which took place after *Kenelworth* seem to have re-elaborated Gascoigne's echo-device not only because they recognised its potential to produce spectacular musical effects, but also because they wished to engage with Gascoigne's work itself: their explicit or implicit allusions to Gascoigne's dialogue thus originated a sort of echo of their predecessor's Echo. Echoes could thus be conceived as dialogic, intertextual, or musical, but, in the printed text, they also stood out as literary devices. An account of the entertainment was generally published after the show, and it provided descriptions of its visual and acoustic effects. On the page, the musicality of the resounding echoes could obviously not be heard and the echo-song necessarily appeared as a poetic device. Their characteristic harmoniousness was preserved, but it was conveyed through the means available to poetry, such as rhymes, assonances, and rhetorical figures of repetition. Echo-devices were devised by the author of the entertainment and they were thus the product of his poetic ability: once the compositor's effort of providing a musical arrangement for the device was no longer appreciable, echoes were restored to their literary dimension. The transition from stage to page thus transformed echoes from refined sounds to equally graceful poetic devices.

Interestingly, echoes can be even perceived as a metaphor of the very act of writing a textual account of the entertainment. In the text, visual representation necessarily gives way to verbal description, a process which reminds of Echo's gradual loss of her physical body until only her voice is heard: in both cases the verbal outlives the visual. Moreover, the main feature of an echo is that of reporting sentences previously uttered, thus reiterating the messages expressed and potentially prolonging their impact. A sentence could even be rebounded more than once, thus giving the acoustic impression of permanence and even of almost everlasting duration. Echoes thus temporarily rescue the utterances they reverberate from their ephemeral nature and delay the extinction of their sound. A theatrical performance is as contingent and short-lived as the pronunciation

of a sentence, but the written account of its events acts exactly as an echo. It reports a concluded performance and grants its diffusion and preservation beyond the immediate moment. Moreover, Anderson and Heaton have given evidence of the fact that the textual representation of the shows was often not faithful, but it rather entailed a process of selection, idealisation and concealment.<sup>1</sup> The printed text aimed at offering an idealised version of events and it thus omitted episodes which had caused embarrassment during the performance, or it emphasised the monarch's favourable reception of some of the shows. One of the accounts of the Kenilworth entertainment, for instance, relates that the appearance of the Savage Man startled Queen Elizabeth's horse, an incident which elicited unease and fear for the Queen's safety and which was consequently not reported in Gascoigne's official description of the show. Selection and alteration are the defining traits of Echo's speech pattern: the nymph repeats a selected portion of a sentence and often alter its meaning so as to achieve her own purposes. The construction of the author's intended messages in the printed accounts of the entertainments is thus strikingly similar to echoic repetition, so much so that it seems perfectly legitimate to describe those written descriptions as textual echoes of the live performance. Echo is thus an acoustic phenomenon in courtly shows, but it also has strong affinities with the written text. Since they could be employed as musical, poetic, and dialogic elements, echoes are thus particularly apt to appear in royal entertainments and court masques, which were 'hybrid' works that combined music, dialogue, and poetry.

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson focuses especially on the textual representation of Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures* (Susan L. Anderson, "A true Copie": Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures* and the Textual Representation of Courtly Performance', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 14.1 / Special Issue 18 (2008), 6.1-43 (par. 24, 36) <<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/14-1/article5.htm>> [accessed January 2017]; Anderson, *Echo and Meaning*, pp. 32-33). Heaton analyses the different versions, in manuscript and print, of Jacobean and Elizabethan entertainments (Gabriel Heaton, *Writing and Reading Royal Entertainments from George Gascoigne to Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)).

# Dialogic, musical and intertextual echoes in Elizabethan progresses and entertainments

## Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle*

In *Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle*, performed before Queen Elizabeth in July 1575, Gascoigne devised what is now considered to be the first echo-dialogue in early modern English literature. The author capitalises on the theatrical quality of that literary device and uses Echo's disembodied and offstage voice as a special effect. His echo-dialogue also fulfills other important functions: it contributes to the glorification of the Queen carried out throughout the entertainment, it carries a political message on behalf of the Earl of Leicester, and it also implicitly assists Gascoigne's quest for royal favour.

The Savage Man, who was played by Gascoigne himself, is puzzled at the sight of 'glorious dames' and 'sundry shows' and, desperate to find answers to his questions, he addresses Echo as 'friend' and asks her to help him (pp. 96-97). The Savage formulates his questions in a way that allows Echo to confirm or give emphasis to his thoughts. By repeating the words, 'joy', 'queen', and 'none', Echo reveals that the reason why 'all the people joy' is the arrival of a Queen, 'whose like was never none' (p. 97). Following this pattern of questions posed by the Savage and confirming answers uttered by Echo, their dialogue recapitulates the events of the previous entertainments and restates their allegorical meanings. Echo then helps the Savage Man to see and recognise the Queen, who stands right beside him.

Well, Eccho, tell me yet, howe might I come to see	
This comely Queen of whom we talke? Oh, where she nowe by thee.	
ECCHO	By thee.
By me? Oh, were that true, how might I see her face?	
Howe might I knowe her from the rest, or judge her by her grace?	
ECCHO	Her grace.
Well, then, if so myne eyes, be such as they have been,	
Methinkes I see among them all, this same should be the Queene.	
ECCHO	The Queene.

(pp. 96-97)

Echo thus facilitates the Savage Man's *anagnorisis* and consequent submission to the Queen. Throughout the dialogue Echo manages to help the Savage Man merely by repeating the last words of his speech unaltered.

Only on one occasion does she slightly modify his words, and she does so in order to promote the sponsor of the entertainments, the Earl of Leicester.

And who gave all these gifts? I pray thee (Eccho) say;

Was it not he who (but of late) this building here did lay?

ECCHO

Dudley.

O Dudley, so methought: he gave himselfe and all,

A worthy gift to be received, and so I trust it shall.

ECCHO

It shall.

(p. 99)

'Did lay' is transformed into 'Dudley', the name of the Earl of Leicester, which is then again repeated by the Savage Man, thus giving it even more emphasis through its reduplication. As Nashe recognises, Echo plays here the important role of reiterating compliments not only to the Queen but also to the Earl of Leicester.<sup>2</sup> Her answers repeatedly praise Leicester's generosity in bestowing rich gifts to the Queen, an insistence which betrays 'ungracious self promotion'.<sup>3</sup> Echo makes full use of her linguistic creativity, which she employs in several echo-dialogues to overcome the limitations of her derivative speech, only when she pronounces the name of Leicester, and in doing so she clearly delivers a political message. It has been argued that Leicester's agenda behind one of the entertainments he commissioned to Gascoigne, the masque of Zabeta, was that of persuading the Queen to renounce chastity and marry him.<sup>4</sup> By advertising the name of Leicester so openly and by praising him, Echo introduces the suit that would be developed in the following masque of Zabeta.

<sup>2</sup>Iliana Nashe, 'A Subject without Subjection: Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and *The Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth Castle*', *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 25.1 (1994), 81-102 (p. 98).

<sup>3</sup>Nashe, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>Austen, *George Gascoigne*, pp. 117, 128; Mauré, *Heritages*, pp. 115-16.

Interestingly, the Savage Man is not the only one who invokes the help of Echo. A nymph of Diana's train called Nichalis asks Echo to tell her where Zabeta is but Echo 'answereth not' (p. 113). Her presence may be suggested in 'the shaking of some leafe' (p. 113), but this time the nymph refuses to speak. Mauré explains this episode as Gascoigne's way to create 'une atmosphère mystérieuse et tragique' [a tragic and mysterious atmosphere],<sup>5</sup> but there is likely a more pragmatic reason behind this apparently trivial allusion to Echo. The masque of Zabeta stages a contention between Diana, goddess of chastity, and Juno, goddess of marriage, who both want to win Zabeta, obvious avatar of the Queen. Echo's refusal to help the goddess of chastity to find Zabeta is a sign that she is implicitly aligning herself with Juno, thus remaining faithful to Leicester's marital agenda, which she had previously championed. The presence of Echo in the show of the Savage Man and in the masque of Zabeta creates continuity between the two shows, one which praises Leicester and brings his name into the spotlight, the other which encourages Zabeta to follow Juno instead of Diana: within the whole plot of the *Princely Pleasures*, Echo thus implicitly advocates marriage and explicitly indicates the name of a powerful and worthy husband.

Critics have recognised that the interlude of the Savage Man is carefully constructed not only to promote Leicester's interest, but also that of Gascoigne himself.<sup>6</sup> *The Princely Pleasures* and its echo-scene offered him an opportunity to carry out one of his numerous attempts to win Elizabeth's favour in hope of receiving employment. The fact that Gascoigne himself played the Savage Man lends further weight to this claim. It has been argued that the author's agenda is pursued through the Savage Man's devout submission to the Queen and his complaint that he may 'not come in stately Court but feede in forrestes still', a complaint which betrays Gascoigne's desire to become part of the Elizabethan court (pp. 96, 100-01).<sup>7</sup> The echo-dialogue, though, appears as another ingre-

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<sup>5</sup>Cécile Mauré, 'De Voix-Off à Porte-Parole: Écho dans *The Princely Pleasures of Kenelworth de Gascoigne*', XVII-XVIII. *Revue de la Société d'Études Anglo-Américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles*, 62 (2006), 177-91 (p. 184). Translation mine.

<sup>6</sup>Austen, *George Gascoigne*, p. 123. See also Anderson, 'A true Copie', par. 25-30; Hamrick, par. 26.

<sup>7</sup>Austen, *George Gascoigne*, pp. 120-24.

dient of Gascoigne's self-advertisement. Echo is presented as the Savage Man's closest companion, as she is the only creature who responds to his pleas, but she also appears as a manifestation of his own thoughts. It has been pointed out above that her answers are mere reverberations of the Man's words, which confirm what he had already intuited rather than conferring new knowledge on him. It follows that the Savage Man is innately aware that the Queen is a deity to whom he must submit: Echo merely helps that awareness to emerge on a conscious level in a sensational scene of agnition. Despite playing the part of the uncouth savage, Gascoigne is careful not to debase his own image in the presence of the Queen and he designs his text so that he can actually bow to the Queen's authority spontaneously rather than having to be helped to recognise her magnificence by an external agent.

In the performance, the voice of the echo might have even been that of the Savage Man himself, and hence of Gascoigne. Austen envisions two possible ways of performing the echo-scene: an actor from off-stage may have replied to the Savage Man (as would later be common practice in dramatic echo-scenes), or it was even possible that Gascoigne used a trick similar to that described by Sidney in his *Old Arcadia* (c. 1580). In the second Eclogue, Philisides 'began an eclogue betwixt himself and the echo, framing his voice so in those desert places as what words he would have the echo reply unto, those he would sing higher than the rest, and so kindly frame a disputation betwixt himself and it'.<sup>8</sup> Austen suggests that Sidney may have been present at Kenilworth and his composition of the eclogue may have been influenced by Gascoigne's echo-scene.<sup>9</sup> If that is how the scene was performed, the external intervention of a voice-off was not required: Gascoigne would have modulated his voice in a way that it would produce the desired echo. The fact that The Savage Man repeats nearly every word reverberated by the echo before posing the next question may be due exactly to that peculiar way of staging the echo-scene:

Then tell thou me some newes;

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<sup>8</sup>Sir Philip Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 140.

<sup>9</sup>Austen, *George Gascoigne*, p. 122.

For els my heart would burst with griefe, of truth it cannot choose.

ECCHO

*Choose.*

*Choose?* Why? But thou me helpe, I say my heart will breake;  
And therefore, even of curtesie, I pray thee, Eccho, speake.

ECCHO

*Speake.*

I *speakē*? Yes that I will, unless thou be too coy  
Then tell me first what is the cause that all the people joy?

ECCHO

*Joy*

*Joy?* Surely that is so... (p. 97, emphasis mine)

Such a redundant reiteration could have helped the audience grasp what the echo had said in case its sound had not been loud or clear enough. In his description of the Kenilworth soundscape, Smith explains that the large trees without much undergrowth in the woods surrounding the castle ‘would form a relatively resonant space, potentially full of echoes’.<sup>10</sup> Gascoigne may have deliberately capitalised on the reverberating quality of the setting he chose for this show in order to have his words re-echoed. The naturally produced echo, though, would not have been very easy to control in an outdoor setting, thus making it more arduous to produce an intelligible echo-device: the Savage Man’s repetition of the words which were meant to be reverberated would have been a useful tool to ensure a correct production and audience’s understanding of the echo. The way in which the echo-scene was performed remains unfortunately matter of speculation. If no offstage voice intervened in the dialogue, then Echo would have been another of the mythological *personae* adopted by Gascoigne in the entertainments: Gascoigne would have given his voice to both the Savage Man and Echo. Echo, though, would still have been closely linked with the voice of the Savage Man even if another actor repeated his words from off-stage: not only did the nymph use his own words to answer to his questions, but the audience would also have recognised that the echo was meant to represent an acoustic reverberation of the Man’s own voice and words even if it was produced

<sup>10</sup>Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 76-77.

by a different actor. Thus, the opposition between the refined and knowledgeable voice of Echo and that of the ignorant Savage Man was ultimately illusory: both characters contributed to fashion the image that Gascoigne wished to give of himself in the show.

Despite playing the part of the uncouth savage, Gascoigne managed not to undermine his respectability and his appeal as a potential courtly poet. The echo-device enabled him both to display his poetic talent and to imply that he was not as ignorant and unrefined as he might have appeared when playing the part of the Savage Man. Like the Savage Man, he was willing to submit instantly to the Queen, but, unlike him, he needed no encouragement to do so, nor any help to recognise her authority. He was by no means ignorant of the world of the court, a trait which he had in common with Echo. Moreover, the echo-dialogue which he not only performed but also devised was a sophisticated and innovative poetic technique, which had previously appeared on the continent and which required skill in using rhetorical figures of repetition so as to create meaningful echo-answers. The ability to use pleasant poetic devices and the knowledge of the latest literary fashions, especially those which were gaining popularity on the continent, were qualities that a courtly poet should possess. As has been pointed out in the Introduction, Gascoigne was skilled at fashioning different *personae* of himself, which were carefully devised so as to gain him the favour of potential patrons: the Savage Man, who asks questions that are answered by an echo of his own words, appears thus to be a particularly successful example of Gascoigne's literary self-fashioning.

Gascoigne's magnificent *Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth* proved to be a model for other writers of royal entertainments: its echo-device, in particular, set a precedent for the anonymous authors of the shows at Bisham (1592) and Elvetham (1591), who both alluded to or appropriated it in their works. They must have recognised that the device was particularly apt to praise the Queen and to encode political messages in a less straightforward and hence more acceptable way. Heard for the first time at Kenilworth, Echo's disembodied and repetitive voice was soon established as one of the most common elements in the

'acoustics of courtly entertainment'.<sup>11</sup>

## The Entertainment at Bisham

At her arrival at Bisham, the Queen was again welcomed by a wild man who recounted of an encounter he had with Echo.<sup>12</sup> The man, 'fearefull of Musicke in the woods', asks what the source of that noise is and, like the Savage Man in Gascoigne's *Kenelworth*, his questions are answered by no-one but Echo:

I, it may be more stout than wise, asked, who passed that way? Was it he or  
shee? none durst answere, or would vouchsafe, but passionate Eccho, who saide  
Shee. And Shee it is, and you are Shee, whom in our dreames many yeares wee  
Satyres have seene, but waking could never finde nay such. (p. 43)

The resemblance of this passage to Gascoigne's echo-device is evident, even if the dialogue takes here place offstage. The reference to Echo becomes thus an intertextual allusion.

The insistent repetition of 'shee' may help to create the aural impression of an echo and, more importantly, it draws attention to the gender of the Queen before delivering an hyperbolic praise of her. This seems particularly appropriate in an entertainment with a marked gynocentric focus. There is scholarly consensus that the Bisham entertainment was designed with the twofold purpose of praising the Queen and bringing Lady Russell's two daughters to her attention, in hope that she would accept them as her maids of honour.<sup>13</sup> It has even been hypothesised that the author of the shows was Lady Russell herself.<sup>14</sup> Possibly written by a woman with the purpose of promoting the interest

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<sup>11</sup>Anderson, *Echo and Meaning*, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup>The text of this entertainment is printed in Jean Wilson, *Entertainments for Queen Elizabeth I* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1980). References to this work are to the page number of this edition.

<sup>13</sup>Wilson, p. 47; Alexandra F. Johnston, 'The "Lady of the Farne": The Context of Lady Russell's Entertainment of Elizabeth at Bisham, 1592', *Early Theatre*, 5.2 (2002), 71-85 (p. 71); Peter Davidson and Jane Stevenson, 'Elizabeth I's Reception at Bisham (1592): Elite Women as Writers and Devisers', in *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. by Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah Knight (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 207-26 (p. 208).

<sup>14</sup>Johnston, p. 72; Davidson and Stevenson, p. 216.

of two young ladies, the entertainment celebrates praiseworthy female qualities and promotes female authority. One of the most significant expressions of this eminently female point of view is the episode of Pan's docile submission to the Queen's feminine authority, which, as Anderson recognises, 'rewrites the myths of masculine dominance and revenge associated with him'.<sup>15</sup> Even if it is not explicitly referred to in that episode, the figure of Echo is nonetheless involved, especially because the learned audience of the entertainment would have easily associated her with Pan. In one of the numerous versions of the myth, the nymph was violently dismembered by Pan as a punishment for not yielding her virginity to him and for surpassing him in musical virtuosity. Her voice, which Pan had tried to silence, acquires instead a pivotal role in the entertainment, as it guides the wild man to recognise the authority of the Queen. Enlightened by Echo, the wild man, who had refused to honour both Sylvanus and Pan, kneels to the Queen and vows to 'followe' her (p. 44). Pan's traditional male dominance is here undermined, while Echo's agency is restored and used to endorse female authority.

The nymph is not only a character involved in this rewriting of the myth of Pan, but she can even be read as the very symbol of the author's appropriation and re-signification of mythological incidents and previous literary elements associated with exquisitely male values and agendas. Echo traditionally epitomises intertextuality and her derivative speech pattern provides a fitting metaphorical parallel for the re-elaboration of previous literary examples which is at stake in the entertainment. The symbolic meaning of the nymph's speech would be even more powerful if the author were Lady Russell herself, a woman borrowing from a preeminently male literary canon and radically subverting its meaning, just as Ovid's Echo had repeatedly altered the meaning of Narcissus' words. Mythological Echo and intertextual echo are significantly combined in the wild man's speech quoted above, which constitutes the most noticeable literary borrowing in the entertainment. This blatant literary echo was probably intended as a way

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<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *Echo and Meaning*, p. 29.

to display the high status of Lady Russell and perhaps to emphasise her intimacy with the Queen: the host ostentatiously shows awareness of what had happened at previous royal entertainments, which meant that she had either been there or she had read the printed account of the events.<sup>16</sup> Either way, she demonstrates familiarity with one of the most popular techniques of courtly praise.

This echo of Gascoigne's echo-device, though, was likely not a mere display of literary refinement, but it also appears to be one of the elements that contributed to Lady Russell's pursuit of her personal and political agenda. The Bisham entertainment was performed nearly twenty years after that at Kenilworth, when the Queen was older and her heyday was beginning to wane. The explicit allusion to one of the shows which she had witnessed at Kenilworth would have evoked a pleasant memory of a past entertainment in her honour which took place in the golden age of her reign: as Davidson and Stevenson suggest, the Queen was indeed 'of an age to find the past more comforting than the present'.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the author of the Bisham entertainment also distances himself from the work of his predecessor. Just as is the case with acoustic echoes, this literary echo is not a sterile repetition, but rather an original re-elaboration. The opening of this show, so similar to that of the Kenilworth entertainment, would likely have set up the expectation that an echo-dialogue was about to take place, especially in an audience that had become used to seeing and hearing that kind of device in royal entertainments. That expectation, though, is frustrated, as the wild man's conversation with Echo is merely reported. Their dialogue is also much shorter than the one which took place at Kenilworth, as the echo only answers 'shee' to the question of the wild man. Echoic repetition fulfills here the prudent purpose of drawing attention to the Queen's arrival and probably also to her gender, a purpose which was clearly much less likely to displease the Queen than that of the echo-scene at Kenilworth. That earlier dialogue between Echo

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<sup>16</sup>It is clearly highly speculative to hypothesise that Lady Russell had personally witnessed the entertainment at Kenilworth Castle. The fact that she had family connections with the Earl of Essex and was an influential member of the Elizabethan élite, though, indicates that this claim is not utterly implausible either.

<sup>17</sup>Davidson and Stevenson, pp. 219-20.

and the Savage Man was one of the devices through which Leicester's marital agenda had been advocated, and the intertextual allusion to it would likely have brought to the audience's mind not only the performance itself, but also the Queen's offense at the Earl's attempt to persuade her to abandon her chastity and marry him. The fact that author of the Bisham entertainment hints at that device but refuses to include it in his entertainment and chooses instead to report a very brief and expurgated version of it anticipates that the work commissioned by Lady Russell embraces a different position on that matter. Virtuous chastity is here celebrated rather than discouraged: the Queen is repeatedly praised for it, and the potential threat posed by Pan, traditionally depicted as lascivious, is neutralised. The wild man's reference to Echo seems thus to respond to Lady Russell's intention of evoking the memory of the Kenilworth entertainment in order to compete with it and succeed where it had failed, that is in winning the Queen's favour and hence her protection for her two daughters. The echo of Gascoigne's Echo was thus a way of pleasing the Queen by bringing before her eyes flashback of her glorious past while at the same time emphasising that the message of the entertainment had nothing to do with the outrageous suit that had previously angered her. It also served the purpose of displaying Lady Russell's high social standing, so as to reinforce the idea that her daughters were worthy to be appointed maids of honour. The meaning and function of which Echo is invested lies in this case not so much in her repetitive answer or in the musical effect which her speech originates, but rather in her being the very incarnation of intertextual appropriation and recontextualisation.

## **The Honourable Entertainment at Elvetham**

In Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures at Kenelworth*, Echo is introduced as the interlocutor in a dialogue. While the deviser of the Bisham performance turns Gascoigne's mythological Echo into a literary echo, it is on the potentialities of the nymph's speech to produce melodious acoustic effects that the authors of courtly entertainments more often drew upon. At Elvetham, for instance, echoic

repetition is incorporated in a song, thus converting Gascoigne's echo-dialogue into a musical device.

The importance of music in Elizabethan entertainments has been amply documented by Katherine Butler. Songs of praise were frequent in these shows, as they could be used to deliver compliments to the Queen in a more artful and entertaining way than through 'simple and at times quite stereotypical verses'.<sup>18</sup> Music was also an acceptable means through which authors could communicate political messages, requests, and sometimes even criticism to the Queen, as she would have been more likely to tolerate them if they were embedded in a song.<sup>19</sup> In this context, it does not seem surprising that the echo device in its dialogic form was replaced by an echo-song. At Elvetham, music was indeed a crucial element of the entertainment and its intended effect was that of impressing the Queen and displaying the Earl of Hertford's sophisticated taste.<sup>20</sup> The echo-song was probably the most sensational musical device included in the show, and it was meant to draw attention to the Earl's knowledge of the latest musical and literary fashions. It clearly imitated the elaborate echo-device introduced at the previous most lavish entertainment in honour of the Queen, that is Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures*, and it presented even greater complexity by being set to music, thus blatantly competing in magnificence with its predecessor. Its execution must have been impressive: three voices accompanied by a lute 'with excellent divisions' (ll. 501-02) sang from a boat in the pond and they were echoed by other singers and lutenists placed in other boats 'somewhat afar off' (ll. 503-04).<sup>21</sup> As Anderson recognises, this spatial arrangement of the singing voices was a clever way of combining the echo with the aural technique of *cori spezzati*,

<sup>18</sup>Katherine Butler, *Music in Elizabethan Court Politics* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), p. 148.

<sup>19</sup>Butler, *Music in Elizabethan Court Politics*, pp. 11-12, 147-48.

<sup>20</sup>Butler significantly takes the Elvetham entertainment as an example of the fact that in royal entertainments music was a way of communicating the status and the refined artistic taste of the patron (*Music in Elizabethan Court Politics*, p. 161).

<sup>21</sup>All references are from *The Honourable Entertainment Given to the Queen's Majesty in Progress, at Elvetham in Hampshire*, in *Renaissance Drama, An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments*, ed. by Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 143-54.

which enhanced the impression of echoing sound.<sup>22</sup> This style of performance was at the height of its popularity in Europe in the 1580s and 1590s and its use in the entertainment demonstrated the host's familiarity with innovative and sophisticated continental techniques.

The purpose of the echo-song was not only that of elevating the Earl of Hertford, but also that of celebrating the Queen. The text of the song appears in two different textual versions, one in Q1 and the other in Q3, both of which express hyperbolic praise of the Queen. The fourth line of each stanza is repeated by echoes, which do not alter but merely truncate the sentence so that the nearly-*verbatim* repetition emphasises the laudatory meaning of the line. In the song which appears in Q3, for instance, echoes draw attention to the fact that Elizabeth's 'Sacred Name' will be blessed with eternal fame:

'Tis dread Eliza, that fair name  
Who fills the golden trump of Fame.  
*Echo.* Trump of Fame.<sup>23</sup>

They later stress Elizabeth's uniqueness ('For like to her was never seen') by repeating 'was never seen'. Similarly, in the song printed in Q1, echoes reiterate the identification of Elizabeth as a 'Second Sun' (l. 510) and the idea that she 'doth bless the place' (l. 511). Echoes thus reverberate the compliments paid to the Queen in the song, thereby ensuring that they would be heard by the audience and giving them greater emphasis. Moreover, the Queen would probably have appreciated the song not only because it openly flattered her, but also because of its acoustic gracefulness. Unfortunately, the musical setting does not survive,<sup>24</sup> but the text gives explicit hints of the effect that the echo-song was expected to achieve: it was performed 'to please Eliza's ears with harmony' (l. 493). Even one of the echoic repetitions in the Q3 song, 'in sweet lays' (p. 144, ll. 511-14n), comments on the means used to flatter and entertain the

<sup>22</sup>Anderson, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup>Textual variants are printed at p. 144 (see ll. 511-14n).

<sup>24</sup>Ernest Brennecke, 'The Entertainment at Elvetham, 1591', in *Music in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. by John H. Long (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1968), pp. 32-56 (p. 44); *The Honourable Entertainment*, p. 110n.

Queen and draws attention to the melodiousness of the music.

Being included in a song, the echoes are necessarily much simpler on a textual level than those heard at Kenilworth: as has already been pointed out, their primary function is that of providing spectacular acoustic effects. The fact that they are conceived as musical rather than verbal devices, though, does not detract from their ability to participate in the construction of political meanings which takes place in the entertainment. Breight argues that, through the Elvetham entertainment, the Earl of Hertford tried to celebrate his lineage and advertise his family and his sons as potential successors to the throne of England.<sup>25</sup> To achieve those aims, he employed two complementary strategies: the lavish shows and the careful composition of the printed edition of the entertainment were meant to display the wealth and dignity of the Hertford family, and the insistent emphasis on sexual references and fertility imagery running throughout the entertainment served both to ‘rewrite the sexual history of Hertford and Lady Gray’ so as to clear the Earl of allegations of rape and to bring to the audience’s attention the fact that Hertford had two sons who had a claim to the throne.<sup>26</sup> What has not been noted is that the echo-song was a crucial element of that impressive spectacularity meant to advertise the power of the Earl’s family and it also contributed to reinforce the sexual motif running throughout the entertainment: the ideas of fertility and fruitfulness promoted elsewhere in the show are implicitly hinted at in the echo-song as well, and they are specifically referred to the Queen.

The Queen, who was generally equated with the virgin goddess Diana or Cynthia, is here more often depicted as Venus, and she is insistently identified as the source of fecundity and sexual energy in nature. Some of the lines reverberated by the echo in the echo-song printed in Q1 seem to stress this association. The song celebrates the fact that the presence of the Queen has brought about ‘another springtime’ (l. 507), spring being the time of fertility and re-

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<sup>25</sup>Curt Breight, ‘Realpolitik and Elizabethan Ceremony: The Earl of Hertford’s Entertainment of Elizabeth at Elvetham, 1591’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 45. 1 (1992), 20-48.

<sup>26</sup>Breight, pp. 25-26, 32-37, 43-44.

generation in nature. Her beauty fertilises the soil and it is fittingly compared with a ‘second Sun’, a praise which is reverberated by the echo (ll. 509-10): the echo thus emphasises the sun-like, vivifying power of Elizabeth’s presence. The second and last echo of this ditty stresses the idea that the Queen ‘with her beams doth bless the place’ by reverberating the line ‘doth bless the place’ (ll. 514-15): in the context of the song, the emphasis seems to be placed once again on the capacity of the queen to confer prosperity upon the lands she visits. The theme of increase is also touched upon in the echo-song in Q3, where the ‘heavenly lamp’ of the queen is said to ‘increase our climes delight’ (p. 144, ll. 511-14n). If Breight’s argument holds true, associating the queen with fertility and sexuality was a way of getting a political meaning across: sexuality was cast as a positive force, and the fruits it produced, among which the Earl’s own sons, were necessarily lawful and worthy of honour. The echo-song was thus involved in the construction of that message. As was the case in the entertainment at Kenilworth, echoes voice the praise of the Queen and promote the political agenda of the host at the same time.

### Peele’s *The Araygnement of Paris*

*The Araygnement of Paris* (c. 1583-84) is a play rather than a progress entertainment and its structure is thus necessarily very different from that of the shows examined in this chapter. However, it was performed before the Queen with the intent of celebrating her and it does present some features in common with the traditional royal entertainments. One of the distinctive features of royal entertainments was that the monarch’s intervention in the show was often required; some degree of interaction between the monarch and the actors was contemplated. In Peele’s play, the Queen was similarly involved in the performance, even if briefly, when the actors bestowed the golden apple upon her sitting in the audience. Moreover, music was an essential element of royal entertainments and it is no less important in Peele’s play. The similarities between this play and other royal entertainments thus encourage a comparison of

such works even if they belong to different genres. Among those resemblances can also be included the insistent use of echoes and the functions which they carry out: as was the case in many other courtly performances analysed in this chapter, echoes are once again responsible for providing musical entertainment, praising the monarch, and expressing implicit serious meanings.

Echoes and repetitions thrive in *The Araygnement of Paris*: the story of the mythological nymph is reported by Juno, some of the songs are reverberated by echoes, and lyrical refrains are numerous. In a play which combines mythological and pastoral elements such as Peele's, the frequent allusions to Echo and to the phenomenon of echoing are perfectly appropriate. The Ovidian nymph was one of the most popular figures of classical mythology, but she appeared so frequently in pastoral poetry and drama that she rightfully became one of its constitutive elements. Moreover, Longus' version of the Echo myth portrays the nymph in a typically pastoral atmosphere, wandering with such cohorts as Pan and his satyrs. Peele thus appropriates a figure which could easily fit into the play's mythological and pastoral setting.

The musical quality of echoing is immediately brought to the fore in an eminently pastoral scene. As Flora announces the arrival of Pallas in Elysium, the shepherds, the woods, and Clio rejoice and celebrate the goddess. Clio's 'sweet songs of Pallas prayse' ring through the woods (I.iii.162), and that detail introduces the idea of echoing developed a few lines later.<sup>27</sup> Pomona draws attention to the singing of birds and emphasises its harmonious sound by calling it a 'melody / a charme of birdes' (I.iii.163-64). Pan immediately exhorts her and Flora to 'bestowe an Echo to their songe' (I.iii.166) and a stage direction confirms that his request has been fulfilled by announcing: 'an Echo to their song'. Echoes thus play a part in the eulogy of Pallas and they are associated with harmony and pleasant music.

In Act III, scene V, another song is echoed: a group of shepherds 'replie'

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<sup>27</sup>George Peele, *The Araygnement of Paris*, ed. by Mark Benbow, in *The Life and Works of George Peele*, ed. Charles T. Prouty, 3 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), III, pp. 3-131. All subsequent references are from this edition.

(723 [stage direction]) to Thestilis' lament at having been rejected by the man she loves. They repeat nearly every line of her song and an elaborate pattern of end rhymes, internal rhymes, and repeated words in consecutive lines enhances the effect of acoustic reverberation. The tune goes on for fourteen lines and a stage direction comments: 'The grace of this song is in the Shepherds Ecco to her verse' (III.v.742-43 [stage direction]). This stage direction has attracted the attention of scholars because of its 'nondramatic nature',<sup>28</sup> but its interest lies also in its confident association of echoes with pleasing musicality. Thestilis' ditty cannot be identified as a regular echo-song in the manner of that heard at the Elvetham entertainment, as its lines are repeated by the shepherds rather than by Echo, but the effect it was meant to have was probably the same: echoes are once again used to add grace and harmony to the song. That musical repetition was identified as a melodious effect is testified by the fact that other songs in the play make insistent use of refrains and repeated lines. In Paris' and Oenone's song in Act I, scene IV, whole stanzas are repeated and two lines are used as a refrain (288-313), and Helen's Italian tune later in the play features the anaphora of 'Si Diana' (II.ii.497-508).

The echoes in *The Araygnement of Paris* seem thus to be used as ornamental musical devices, but they also implicitly contribute to deliver a serious moral and celebratory message. The play has been classified by Benbow as an expository work on the theme of beauty, which dramatises the academic debate on 'whether majesty, wisdom, or love is the most beautiful'.<sup>29</sup> Expository drama entails the presentation of ethical questions and *The Araygnement of Paris* seems indeed to be informed by a didactic aim. Love is clearly presented as a disruptive force: Paris' passion for Helena led to the catastrophic Troy war, Oenone is deserted by Paris, Colin dies for unrequited love, and even the unresponsive Thestilis is condemned by Venus to suffer for love. This moral message was probably instrumental to the final glorification of Queen Elizabeth. Drawing on

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<sup>28</sup> *The Araygnement of Paris*, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> *The Araygnement of Paris*, pp. 45-46.

a traditional motif in the iconography of Elizabeth, the Queen is here depicted as an emblem of female chastity, utterly impervious to the unsettling power of love: by showing that love can have disastrous consequences and awarding the golden apple to the Virgin Queen, Peele seems to be flatteringly endorsing her sexual politics.

In this context, the echoes to Thestilis' song deserve further scrutiny, as they constitute another element in the play through which the moralistic warning against love is conveyed. Marx points out that some lines in Thestilis' song refer to a slightly different situation when they are repeated by the shepherds and their meaning is consequently altered: 'in their mouths her words become a judgment on herself, and ironic "Ecco", caused by the changed context'<sup>30</sup> This effect is achieved through a technique of re-signification which is typical of echo-devices: Echo often repeats her interlocutor's words *verbatim* but alters the referent which they originally designated. In this case, the 'Crooked Churle' (III.v.721 [stage direction]) with whom Thestilis is in love is the object of her sentences, but the shepherds are obviously thinking of her as the referent of their repetitions, thus turning her words against herself. 'Cruel farewell' (III.v.731), 'Most cruel thou, of all that nature framed' (III.v.733), 'Cruel disdaine soe live thou named' (III.v.735), are all moral judgments against Thestilis when they are uttered by the shepherds, who clearly take the side of Colin. Thestilis' lines are all repeated with no alteration but one: 'And let me dye of Iphis paine' (III.v.738) is changed into 'A life too good for thy disdaine', an utter departure from the original line which only preserves its last rhyming syllable. This choice reinforces the indictment of Thestilis, as it emphasises that Colin died because of her and that she received her due punishment. Echoes are thus not mere musical ornaments but they have a semantic and contextual meaning which serves to remind that love is responsible not only for Thestilis' suffering but also for Colin's tragic death.

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<sup>30</sup>Joan C. Marx, "Soft, Who Have We Here?": The Dramatic Technique of *The Old Wives Tale*, *Renaissance Drama*, 12 (1981), 117-43 (pp. 140-41).

The unhappy love affair between Colin and Thestilis is another example of unrequited love that adds to those alluded to in the plot strand that deals with Oenone and Paris. When Paris asks Oenone to sing a song for him in Act I, scene V, the woman lists a series of classical myths drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as possible subjects (250-79). Nearly all of those myths involve annihilating love, illicit sexual drives or blinding lust, and they all have tragic consequences. The choice of myths obviously serves to anticipate the fate of Oenone and Paris' love story but it also presents instructive moral examples of the ruinous potential of love and desire. Narcissus is one of the mythological characters mentioned by Oenone, and the brief allusion would probably have been sufficient to evoke the equally unfortunate story of Echo in the audience's mind.

The myth of Echo is then explicitly mentioned in the next scene, where the nymph is described in anything but laudatory terms. Act II opens with Juno's narration of the punishment she had inflicted on Echo as a consequence of her complicity in Jove's dalliances with some nymphs. The goddess lays emphasis on the nymph's talkativeness and on her trickery:

Shee was a nymphe indeede, as Pallas tels,  
A walker, such as in these thickets dwells:  
And as shee tolde what subtil jugling prankes  
Shee playde with Juno, so she tolde her thankes:  
A tatling trull to come at everie call,  
And now foresooth nor tongue nor life at all. (II.i.322-27)

The attribute 'tattling' reminds of Golding's description of her as a 'babbling nymph', excessively prone to 'tatling talk' (III.443, 453). The myth of Echo becomes thus not only a story of tragic love but also one of deception which follows the other negative mythical examples mentioned by Oenone in the previous scene.

Mythological characters and stories are presented ambiguously throughout the play. As Beard explains, the stature of the 'Olympian crew' is diminished: the goddesses are deceptive and moved by vanity; Pallas is more warlike than wise; and Venus is reduced to 'Venus Vulgaris', with no trait left in common

with ‘Venus Urania’.<sup>31</sup> The gods are by no means more dignified: Jove is the butt of Juno’s jokes in Act II, scene I; Mars is remembered only for his infidelity; and, in the last act, they all decline responsibility by avoiding to choose which of the goddesses deserves the apple and delegating the duty to Diana. The myths referred to by Oenone also signal a subversion of the humanistic rhetoric of exemplarity in that they present negative models rather than moral *exempla*. In this context, the biased reading of the figure of Echo is hardly surprising.

The mythical world of the play is deliberately portrayed as flawed so as to prepare the way for the redemptive intervention of Elizabeth in the last scene: the dispute between the capricious gods is solved only when reality breaks into the artistic fiction, that is when Diana awards the golden apple to Queen Elizabeth. The appearance of Elizabeth in the fiction thus restores order and harmony in a world that is anything but idealistic.<sup>32</sup> The figure of Echo is included in the mythic universe of the play and she thus contributes to show that the real world presided over by Queen Elizabeth is to be preferred over myth and pastoral. At the same time, though, the acoustic phenomenon associated with her helps to coat this message in a melodious and aesthetically pleasant artistic form.

Musical echo and mythological Echo appear thus to be effectively combined in Peele’s expository play. The acoustic echoes in the pastoral strands of the plot tend to receive a more favourable treatment in that they contribute to the graceful harmony of the songs and serve as implicit judges of Thestilis’ behaviour, thus reinforcing the moralising warning against love which lies at the core of the play. The mythological Echo also participates in this didactic aim, but she does so by providing a negative paradigm, an example which should not be followed.

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<sup>31</sup>Richard L. Beard, *The Dramatic Art of George Peele* (Doctoral thesis, Emory University, 1974), pp. 54-57.

<sup>32</sup>See also Beard, p. 53.

## Echoes and Harmony in the Jacobean masque

The acoustic spectacle that echoes were able to produce was appreciated and capitalised upon not only in the entertainment at Elvetham and *The Araygnement of Paris*, but also in Jacobean masques. In those performances, music continued to be an essential and meaningful component of the echo-device. Echo-songs and echoic music were so frequently employed that they can be almost considered as conventional elements of this theatrical genre, where they seem to fulfil a symbolic and structural function. The form of the Jacobean masque was more codified than that of Elizabethan entertainments, especially after Ben Jonson introduced significant innovations to the genre: masques generally displayed a potential threat to the stability of the fictional world they depicted, and concluded with the restoration of order and concord. That idyllic fictional setting was equated with James' court and kingdom, and hence the final celebration of order in the masque had a clear panegyric function: the underlying implication was that James' kingdom was equally peaceful and harmonious and that the King was to be praised for that. Music played a key role in this strategy of royal praise. Orgel suggests that music was the 'audible representation' of that harmony which crowned the entertainments, and Parry similarly argues that through the melodious music of his *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses* (1604), Samuel Daniel 'intended to symbolise the harmony of James' rule in Britain', a claim which can legitimately be applied to many other courtly performances of the same period.<sup>33</sup> Featuring as musical effects or refrains in songs, echoes were constitutive elements of the music of the masque and they thus contributed to its encomiastic function. Echo-songs were even often employed as musical accompaniments to the resolution of the plot of the masque, thus emphasising with their melodious sound the felicitous restoration of order. The association of echoes with order and concord was also motivated by one of the most popular allegorical

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<sup>33</sup>Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 44; Graham Parry, 'The Politics of the Jacobean Masque', in *Theatre and Government under the Early Stuarts*, ed. by J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Sherwing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 57-117 (p. 91).

readings of the mythological nymph Echo: as has been briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, Macrobius glossed Pan as the sun ('solem se esse') and Echo, his beloved, as 'harmoniam caeli, quae soli amica est quasi sphaerarum omnium de quibus nascitur moderatori' ['the heavens' harmony, which is beloved of the sun, who governs all the spheres from which this harmony arises] (*Saturnalia*, I.22.7). Echo is here cast as an emblem of the highest form of harmony, that is the music produced by the heavenly spheres: for that reason, the acoustic reverberations which she personifies are all the more appropriately used in the court masque to symbolise the social and political harmony achieved in the plot. Echoes are thus perfectly integrated in the codified structure of the Jacobean masque on both a formal and symbolic level: not only is their musicality a fitting acoustic complement to the final triumph of harmony, but they are also the very emblems of that harmony.

### **'In form of an Echo': musical embodiments of harmony in Campion's masques**

Ben Jonson draws on Macrobius' allegorical reading of Echo in his royal entertainments, where he repeatedly presents the nymph and the acoustic phenomenon associated with her as the symbols of harmony on a political and metaphysical level. Campion also associates echoes with harmony, but in this case the association is motivated not so much by allegorical readings of the nymph but rather by the pleasant musical effects that echoes produce. Kastendieck explains that Jonson and Campion had antithetical attitudes towards the masque as a form: while Jonson considered it as a serious literary genre endowed with important didactic potential, Campion 'conceived a masque to be a musical festival with songs and dances of many varieties'.<sup>34</sup> This assertion seems to slightly underestimate Campion's attempts to deliver political messages in his work, but it is certainly true that music and dances were of primary import-

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<sup>34</sup>Miles Mervin Kastendieck, *England's Musical Poet, Thomas Campion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 181.

tance in his masques.<sup>35</sup> The poem ‘To the Reader’, appended to *Lord Hay’s Masque* (1607), clearly suggests that the main aim of Campion’s shows was that of entertaining the audience:

Neither buskin now, nor bayes  
Challenge I: a Ladies prayse  
Shall content my proudest hope.  
Their applause was all my scope,  
And to their shrines properly  
Revels dedicated be:  
Whose soft eares none ought to pierce  
But with smooth and gentle verse.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike Jonson, Campion is content with pleasing ladies and offering them ‘smooth and gentle verse’: his intention is not so much that of educating his audience and readers, but rather that of entertaining them, especially by relying on the musicality of his poetry and of his songs. Campion was indeed not only an accomplished poet, but also a skilled composer, and he thus unsurprisingly paid special attention to the musical arrangements of his masques. Kastendieck points out that ‘his three masques testify to a fancy for spectacular musical extravaganzas’:<sup>37</sup> among the devices and techniques which contributed to that musical spectacle were certainly echoes. The nymph is never alluded to in Campion’s masques and the word ‘Eccho’ is used only to describe specific sound effects. The mythological background of echoes appears thus to be utterly neglected by

<sup>35</sup>The critical debate around *Lord Hay’s Masque* clearly testifies to the fact that the masque did have a serious political message. The conflicting positions in the debate can be adequately represented by Lindley ad Curran: while the former argues that the masque has a balanced and slightly critical attitude towards James’ handling of his project to unite England and Scotland, the latter contends that it is instead an ‘uncompromising assertion of British propaganda’ (David Lindley, ‘Campion’s *Lord Hay’s Masque* and Anglo-Scottish Union’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 43.1 (1979), 1-11; David Lindley, *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments, 1605-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 221; Kevin Curran, ‘Erotic Policy: King James, Thomas Campion, and the Rhetoric of Anglo-Scottish Marriage’, *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 7.1 (2007), 55-77 (p. 57)).

<sup>36</sup>Thomas Campion, *The Description of a Maske, Presented before the Kinges Majestie at White-Hall on Twelfth Night last, in Honour of the Lord Hayes*, in *The Works of Thomas Campion*, ed. by Walter R. Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), pp. 203-30 (p. 228). All subsequent references are from this edition.

<sup>37</sup>Kastendieck, p. 182.

the poet and composer, who clearly prefers to focus on the musical quality of echoic reverberation.

Musical repetition was one of Campion's favourite poetic techniques, and he often employed it to emphasise the emotions he wished to convey.<sup>38</sup> This seems to be the case in *Lord Hay's Masque*, where the echoic music helps to convey the mood of blessed gracefulness and harmony established in the plot. Repetitions and refrains proliferate in the songs: the refrain 'strowe about, strowe about' (p. 215), the threefold repetition in the transformation song (pp. 222-23), and the reiteration of the phrase 'kindly farewell, farewell' (p. 226), are just some among other possible examples. Echoes are also explicitly alluded to in Campion's printed account of the music of the performance. When the three Knights of Apollo, who had been metamorphosed into plants by Diana, are restored to their human shape, a group of Sylvans plays and sings a festive chorus

*in manner of an Echo* seconded by the Cornets, then by the consort of ten, then by the consort of twelve, and by a double Chorus of voices standing on either side, the one against the other, bearing five voices a peece, and sometime every Chorus was heard severally, sometime mixt, but in the end altogether. (p. 223, emphasis mine)

As soon as this song ends, the Sylvans begin to play a second song, which is once again

*taken in form of an Echo* by the cornetts, and then catch't in like manner by the consort of ten; sometime they mingled two musickes together, sometime plaid all at once; which kind of *echoing musicke* rarely became their Silvan attire. (pp. 223-24, emphasis mine)

Echo is the 'form' in which the song is performed, and 'echoing' an adjective attributed to the music. Lindley hypothesises that Campion is here describing the technique of *cori spezzati*, which were popular in Renaissance music.<sup>39</sup>

Campion's description of the entertainment thus reveals how the songs were performed, but it also implicitly suggests how the author intended his echoic

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<sup>38</sup>Kastendieck, pp. 165-70.

<sup>39</sup>Lindley, *Court Masques*, p. 224 (l. 444n).

music to sound and how it was supposed to affect the audience. His account of the first song continues with the remark that its ‘kinde of harmony [...] could not but yeeld great satisfaction to the hearers’ (p. 223). Echoes are thus associated with musical harmony, which is aimed at giving ‘great satisfaction’ to the audience. After the second song, Campion observes that echoic music inspired an unparalleled elegance in the dance performed by the masquers (pp. 223-24), an assertion which suggests that musical echoes are once again involved in the construction of aesthetic pleasure for the audience. Music ‘in form of an Echo’ also helps to create the idyllic pastoral atmosphere of the masque, as Campion significantly underlines its appropriateness to the Silvans’ attire (p. 224): the author must have been aware of the plethora of echoes resounding in pastoral poetry and drama, and he may have considered echoic sound effects to be particularly suitable for the songs played by the Sylvans. Echoing music is used also in the final song and it concludes the show (p. 227), thus leaving the audience with that impression of magnificent spectacle that the masque had tried to achieve.

One of the songs in *Somerset Masque* (1613) probably relied on echoes as well. Echoes are not explicitly mentioned in this case, but Walls persuasively claims that the text of ‘While Dancing Rests’ indicates that the song would have had a musical echo at the close of each stanza:<sup>40</sup>

While dancing rests, fit place to musicke graunting,  
Good spe’s the Fates shall breath, al enuy daunting,  
Kind eares with ioy *enchaunting, chaunting*.

*CHORUS Io, Io, Hymen*

Like lookes, like hearts, like loues are linck’t together:  
So must the Fates be pleas’d, so come they het her,  
To make this Ioy *perseuer, euer*.

*CHORUS Io, Io, Hymen*

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<sup>40</sup>Peter Walls, ‘Insubstantial Pageants Preserved: the Literary and Musical Sources for the Jonsonian Masque’, in *Jonson and Shakespeare*, ed. by Ian Donaldson (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 202-18 (p. 208).

Loue decks the spring, her buds to th' ayre exposing,  
Such fire here in these bridall Breasts reposing,  
We leauw with charmes *enclosing, closing*.<sup>41</sup>

The setting of this song survives as a solo ‘ayre’, without provisions for a chorus or for echoes, but the truncated repetition of the last word of each stanza lends weight to Wall’s hypothesis, as it suggests that the music was quite heavily altered when it was adapted for a solo performance.<sup>42</sup> There is here a correspondence of sound and words and the structure of the last lines resembles closely that of an echo-song. The same strategy of re-signification of the preceding word employed in echo-devices characterises these repetitions. In the first stanza the echo emphasises the idea that the ears of the audience will be charmed by ‘chaunting’: the gerund ‘chaunting’ seems to have the function of indicating the method through which which the action of ‘enchaunting’ will be achieved. The echo thus comments on the very song in which it is inserted and stresses its mesmerising quality. The second echo complements the wish that the newlyweds’ joy may ‘persever’ by focussing on the duration of that happiness, which will hopefully last for ‘ever’. Echoes thus reinforce and enrich the meaning of the joyful hymn.

Songs which featured echoic repetitions were indeed spectacular but they also contributed to the construction of the political messages delivered in the masque. Most evidently, echoes participated in the masque’s final celebration of harmony, which, as has been pointed out above, had blatant political connotations. Indeed, Campion always placed his echo-songs towards the end of the masque, when the conflicts or obstacles in the plot had been overcome. In *Somerset Masque*, the song quoted above followed the Knights’ first dance, which could only take place after the disruptive effects of an evil spell cast on them had been neutralised. Similarly, the two re-echoed choruses in *Lord Hay’s Masque*

<sup>41</sup>Thomas Campion, *The Description of a Maske: Presented in the Banqueting Roome at Whitehall, on Saint Stephens Night Last, at the Mariage of the Right Honourable the Earl of Somerset*, in *The Works of Thomas Campion*, ed. by Walter R. Davis (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), pp. 263-86 (p. 274).

<sup>42</sup>Walls, p. 208.

were heard when concord between Apollo and Diana was re-established. When Diana's anger was appeased, the goddess forgave the Knights of Apollo for their sexual assaults against her nymphs and allowed the restitution of their human bodies. The transformation of the Knights was significantly followed by the two choruses, and their words acclaimed Apollo:

Again this song revive and sound it hie:

Long live Apollo, Brittaines glorious eye. (p. 223)

This praise was undoubtedly meant as a compliment to James, who was the true 'glorious eye' watching over Britain. As is suggested by the previously quoted stage direction, such words were sung and repeated from several parts of the stage, a technique which was probably meant to symbolise that whole world (fictional and real) was re-echoing with the praise of the King. Echoes thus reverberated and hence emphasised the homage to the King, contributing to depict him as a god-like monarch ruling over a unified Britain. Their importance as panegyric elements, though, is also suggested by the fact that their musical execution and its ensuing melodious effect constituted an ideal model for the marital, national and political union promoted in the entertainment. The masque was staged in 1607, when intense parliamentary debates over Scottish naturalisation were taking place, and it was commissioned for the marriage between a Scottish courtier and an English noblewoman. It concludes not only with the celebration of their marriage night but also with the reconciliation of Apollo and Elizabeth, mythological avatars of the Scottish King James and the English Queen Elizabeth.<sup>43</sup> A political message of support to the King's project of uniting England and Scotland is thus clearly implied in the entertainment, and echoes contribute to its construction. As Anderson explains, 'the masque's reiterative music exemplifies the unifying power it eulogises': just as the indi-

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<sup>43</sup>For the political meanings of this masque see Martin Butler's article, which argues that the masque does not fail to acknowledge the difficulties of creating a unified Britain, but tries to dispel anxieties about it by showing that the specific national identities of England and Scotland would not be lost as a consequence of the Union (Martin Butler, 'The Invention of Britain and the Early Stuart Masque', in *The Stuart Court and Europe*, ed. by R. Malcolm Smuts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 65-85 (pp. 72-73). See also Curran, who claims that Campion is resolutely supporting Anglo-Scottish union (pp. 56-57).

vidual sounds played by different musicians brought together on stage combined to form a perfect harmony, so would James rule over a harmonised union of nations.<sup>44</sup> The musical symphony produced by sounds coming from different parts of the stage was thus a fitting accompaniment to the masque's final resolution and also a powerful acoustic symbol of the political union of England and Scotland. As the sounds produced by each individual musician, the two nations would retain their distinctive national identities, but the combination of their specific characteristics would produce a harmonious whole. Divested of their mythological aura and conceived as entertaining musical devices, echoes thus still played a part in the celebration of King James I.

### **'A mixture of profit no less than delight': echoes in the Jonsonian masque<sup>45</sup>**

Songs which employ echoic refrains feature in several of Ben Jonson's masques, as do references to Echo herself.<sup>46</sup> Like Campion, Jonson employs echoes as melodious sounds which added grace to the songs of his masques, but he also considered them as sophisticated poetic devices. Loewenstein explains that those who commissioned a masque expected both visual and acoustic spectacle to be provided, and echoing was an appropriate acoustic effect to be used for that purpose. Its popularity was also due to the Vitruvian revival stimulated by the recovery of the *De Architectura* and the publication of the 1486 *editio princeps*, which gave impulse to the pursuit of 'baroque' acoustic effects in the theatres, such as echoes

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<sup>44</sup> Anderson, *Echo and Meaning*, p. 74.

<sup>45</sup> A modified version of this section, translated into Italian, has been published as 'Echi alla Corte di Giacomo I: Usi dell'Eco nei Masque di Ben Jonson', in *Attraverso lo Specchio: l'Immagine, il Doppio, il Riflesso*, ed. by Sonia Maura Barillari and Martina di Febo (Aicurzio: Virtuosa-Mente, 2019), pp. 187-202.

<sup>46</sup> Echo-songs in the masques were probably accompanied by music but unfortunately no musical setting for any of them survives (Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness*, ed. by David Lindley, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. by David M. Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), II, pp. 503-28 (p. 523, l. 258n). All subsequent references to *The Masque of Blackness* are from this edition. In his article, Walls also explains that the original music of royal entertainments is only rarely preserved (pp. 207-08).

and reverberation.<sup>47</sup> The indoor setting in which Jacobean entertainments were performed, that is the banqueting house at Whitehall, was a perfect location to produce such fashionable effects: the room would have been highly resonant, probably more than the woods and outdoor sites where the shows devised for Elizabethan progresses were performed.<sup>48</sup> Dramatists might have been aware of the acoustic properties of the banqueting hall, and they may even have counted on them to enhance the spectacular quality of their echo-devices: if adequately performed, the words repeated by the echo may have been gracefully reverberated by the wooden walls so as to multiply the number of echoes heard. Despite their strong connection with the acoustics and architecture of the performance space, echoes were provided not so much by the theatrical designer but rather by the poet and the composer, who used poetic devices or musical techniques in order to produce them. Loewenstein suggests that in Jonson's masque, for instance, Jones does not seem to have taken responsibility for any of the echoic effects, leaving the 'burden of courtly echoing' to Jonson.<sup>49</sup>

For his part, Jonson was happy to claim echoes as linguistic devices, literary tools that belonged primarily to the poet.<sup>50</sup> His enthusiastic appropriation of echoes can be explained in the light of his bias against the excessive visual display offered by Jones and his continued attempts to demonstrate the superiority of his poetry over his rival's stagecraft.<sup>51</sup> Echoes are sounds that lack a physical source of origin and, as such, they could be used as suitable acoustic counterparts to Jones' visual spectacle. By skillfully employing them to write sophisticated echo-songs and echo-dialogues, Jonson had the chance to showcase his own poetic virtuosity, whose products were no less appealing and impressive than the stage designs crafted by his rival. It is true that songs which feature echoic refrains

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<sup>47</sup>Loewenstein, pp. 59-61.

<sup>48</sup>Smith, *The Acoustic World*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>49</sup>Loewenstein, pp. 59-60.

<sup>50</sup>Loewenstein, p. 61.

<sup>51</sup>For the Jonson-Jones quarrel see D. J. Gordon, 'Poet and Architect: The Intellectual Setting of the Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 12 (1949), 152-78; Stephen Orgel, 'The Poetics of Spectacle', *New Literary History*, 2.3 (1971), 367-89; Richard Finkelstein, 'Ben Jonson on Spectacle', *Comparative Drama*, 21.2 (1987), 103-14.

owed their sophistication to their musical accompaniment as well as to their poetic text and that their music was obviously written by a composer rather than by the poet. Yet, it is likely that Jonson nonetheless conceived them primarily as poetic devices. He considered the masque to be a serious literary genre rather than a mere spectacular show, and he meticulously prepared all his entertainments for publication:<sup>52</sup> he was thus probably aware that the melodious quality of echo-songs could be preserved on the printed page only through the formal and stylistic means available to poetry. In other words, he was the one who had to devise effective echo-devices, which had to be both meaningful and acoustically pleasant even without their musical setting.

Jonson thus fittingly made full use of echoes, which feature in his masques not only as ornaments but often also as key elements in the codification of the political messages which underlay the whole entertainment. When analysing the role of the nymph Echo in *Oberon* (1611), Mauré emphasises its pleasant and recreational aspect only: Echo participates in the creation of a pastoral world which is ‘l’image du jeu et de la légèreté’ [an emblem of playfulness and lightness], and her dialogue affords ‘un premier divertissement’ [a first occasion for amusement].<sup>53</sup> It is true that the elaborate echoic refrains and double reverberations devised by Jonson would have impressed his audience, but the poet took his royal entertainments too seriously to be content to use echoes as mere divertissements. He strongly believed in the edifying potential of his masques, an idea which he expresses in his preface to *Love’s Triumph Through Callipolis* (1631). In that introductory text, he explains that his aim is to ‘make the readers Understanders’ and that ‘all Representations [...] ought always to carry a mixture of profit, with them, no less than delight’ (1).<sup>54</sup> It is thus more reason-

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<sup>52</sup>That Jonson considered his masques to be literary works is demonstrated by Dolora Cunningham, ‘The Jonsonian Masque as a Literary Form’, *ELH*, 22. 2 (1955), 108-24; Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, pp. 61-67, 105-06, 187; Heaton, pp. 227-33.

<sup>53</sup>Mauré, *Héritages*, pp. 128-29 (translation mine). The author also recognises the potential of echoes to elicit the audience’s wonder by creating ‘un moment mystique et poétique’ [a mystic and poetic moment] (pp. 135-36).

<sup>54</sup>Ben Jonson, *Love’s Triumph through Callipolis*, ed. by James Knowles, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, VI, pp. 319-41.

able to believe that Echo has a substantial function in the symbolic structure of his masques. To grasp this function, we need to be aware of the plethora of moral interpretations which the figure had accumulated and which Jonson could have easily appropriated to serve his didactic purposes.

Because the musical and poetic aspects of echoes are preeminent in the masques, in many of them the mythological figure of Echo does not seem to come into play at all. Wheeler, for instance, dismisses the echoes in *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) and the *The Masque of Beauty* (1608) as having ‘no mythological value’.<sup>55</sup> And yet, among Jonson’s sources for his masques were the popular mythographical dictionaries of Cartari and Giraldi, which provided allegorical interpretations of the figure of Echo. Jonson was certainly aware not only of those works, but also of many other moralising readings of the myths of Echo and Narcissus, and of Echo and Pan, and it is difficult to imagine that he completely neglected them when writing his echo-songs. Moreover, the figure of Echo is explicitly alluded to in *Oberon, Pan’s Anniversary* (1621), and *Entertainment at Highgate* (1604). The mythological nymph and especially the vast body of allegorical meanings traditionally associated with her are indeed implied in Jonson’s use of echo-songs, even in those masques where the mythological heritage of echoes seems absent. Such moralising interpretations are exactly what enables the author to use echoes to reinforce the didactic and complimentary meanings of his works. When he mentions or alludes to Echo, Jonson generally draws on the myth of Pan and Echo rather than on the Ovidian tale of Narcissus. The nymph beloved of Pan had often received more favourable assessments than her Ovidian counterpart in mythological dictionaries and allegorical commentaries, and she was thus more suitable to the panegyric intent of Jonson’s entertainments. Pan’s Echo was also closely associated with the pastoral, and hence her presence helps the author to recreate a bucolic setting, with which the court of James I could be flatteringly identified.

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<sup>55</sup>Charles Francis Wheeler, *Classical Mythology in the Plays, Masques and Poems of Ben Jonson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), p. 87.

As has been pointed out above, music was involved in the construction of the idyllic world of the masques: melodious music was conceived as the acoustic representation of harmony, which eventually thrived in that idealised setting. Echo-songs, in particular, were the most suitable heralds of harmony not only because they were part of the musical provision for the masques, but also because echoes had an obvious and evident connection with the mythological nymph allegorised by Macrobius as ‘harmoniam caeli’. Jonson’s explicit references to the *Somnium Scipionis* in *The Masque of Beauty* and *Hymenaei* (1606) suggest that he had some familiarity with Macrobius.<sup>56</sup> He never alludes to the *Saturnalia* explicitly, but even if he had no direct knowledge of that work, he would have had access to Macrobius’ interpretation of Echo through the mythological dictionaries of Giraldi and Cartari, both of which explicitly refer to it.<sup>57</sup> It is therefore likely that the association of Echo with harmony was in Jonson’s mind when he wrote his echo-songs.

A brief allusion to Echo in the early masque *A Private Entertainment at Highgate* suggests that the conception of echoes as melodious sounds was already present in embryonic form. Maia promises that if the King and Queen ‘please to come again’ (l. 116), they will be received by plenty of pastimes and entertainments in their honour.<sup>58</sup> The satyrs, fawns, sylvans and panisks will dance

And cleave the air with many a shout  
As they would hunt poor Echo out  
Of yonder valley, who doth flout  
Their rustic noise. (ll. 125-28)

Echo refuses to align herself with the ‘rustic noise’ of the wood creatures and she rather mocks them. She has been stirred by them to join in the revels, but

<sup>56</sup>Ben Jonson, *Hymenaei*, ed. by David Lindley, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, II, pp. 657-712 (Jonson’s Marginalia, p. 704, 25n); Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Beauty*, ed. by David Lindley, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, III, pp. 227-50 (Jonson’s Marginalia, p. 250, 36n). All subsequent references to *The Masque of Beauty* are from this edition.

<sup>57</sup>Cartari, p. 136; Giraldi, p. 621.

<sup>58</sup>All references are from Ben Jonson, *A Private Entertainment at Highgate*, ed. by James Knowles, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, II, pp. 483-98.

she indirectly undermines their chaotic celebrations. Epitome of harmony and producer of sophisticated sound effects in the later masques, we would expect her to rebound the ‘tender’ and ‘well-tuned’ voices of the nymphs (ll. 130-32), which constitute an evident antithesis to that of the satyrs. Echo thus participates in the entertainment offered to the King, but she implicitly represents a refined sound which does not combine well with the shouting of the satyrs. In the following entertainments, this idea evolves and echoes are formalised into sweet-sounding echo-songs, aural manifestations of that harmony celebrated in the masque.

An analogous depiction of the mythological Echo appears in *Oberon*: the epithets attributed to the nymph are apparently derogatory, but a more attentive consideration of the source of such criticism is helpful to requalify Jonson’s characterisation of the nymph. The masque opens in a woodland scene. A satyr tries to summon his companions by blowing a cornet ‘but was deceived by the echo’ (l. 8), and so he comments ‘I doubt it was the vain / Echo did me entertain’ (ll. 16-17).<sup>59</sup> His suspect is confirmed when he tries again and his cornet is again re-echoed:

I thought ’twas she. – Idle nymph, I pray thee, be  
Modest, and not follow me.

I nor love myself, nor thee. (ll. 18-21)

The adjectives ‘vain’ and ‘idle’ remind of Golding’s disparaging depiction of the ‘babbling’ Echo, and the exhortation to ‘be modest’ seems to be equally reminiscent of his moralising interpretation of the nymph as a ‘bawd’ (III.443). The fact that the satyr alludes to Narcissus (‘I nor love myself, nor thee’) reinforces the idea that Jonson is drawing on unsympathetic allegorical readings of the Ovidian nymph. Yet, the satyr belongs to the world of the antimasque, where misrule and disorder thrive: his authority thus vacillates and his assessment of the nymph has to be received with a critical eye. In the antimasque, the satyrs take part in ‘antic’ (ll. 27, 205) dances and sing bawdy songs which represent

<sup>59</sup>All references are from Ben Jonson, *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, ed. by David Lindley, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, III, pp. 711-43.

antithetical principles to those of decorum and geometrical order embodied in the music and dances of the main masque. The satyr's assessment of Echo is thus necessarily flawed by his unruly nature: there can be no affinity between him and the nymph who traditionally epitomised celestial harmony. It is indicative in this respect that the echo represents for the satyr an unfamiliar and slightly uncomfortable sound, which he opposes to the reassuring voice of his companion:

Ay, this sound I *better* know:

List! I would I could hear mo'. (ll. 24-25 emphasis mine)

While he wished Echo to be silent, he is relieved at hearing a kindred voice answering to him. His reaction at hearing the echo suggests that the principle of order and decorum symbolised by Echo and that of boisterous revelry incarnated by the satyrs are incompatible until the disorderly inhabitants of the woods are finally assimilated in the harmonious world of the masque.

The association of echoes with harmony is significantly more evident in the masques where echo-songs appear, such as *The Masque of Blackness* and its companion piece, *The Masque of Beauty*. In both of them, Jonson employs songs reverberated by double echoes. In *Blackness*, the beautiful daughters of the river Niger embark on a journey to a land called 'Britannia' because they have been told that the King who rules over it has the power of turning their black skin to white. When they arrive on the island, a disembodied voice from the sea tries to dissuade them from dancing with the men of England during the revels:

Come away, come away,

We grow jealous of your stay.

If you do not stop your ear,

We shall have more cause to fear

Sirens of the land, than they

To doubt the sirens of the sea. (ll. 251-56)

The social dance takes place despite the warning, and the dancers are ultimately separated by a second song featuring echoic refrains. While the sea-voice urges

the daughters to abstain from the revels, the echoes appropriate its words and contradict them:

FIRST TREBLE	Daughters of the subtle flood, Do not let earth longer entertain you;
FIRST ECHO	Let earth longer entertain you.
SECOND ECHO	Longer entertain you. (ll. 261-64)

The echoes elide the negation and turn the voice's last sentence into a positive statement which exhorts the Daughters to be responsive to the Englishmen on the shore. The admonition "Tis to them enough of good, / That you give this little hope to gain you' (ll. 265-66) is similarly transformed into an invitation to 'Give this little hope to gain you' (l. 267). As Loewenstein convincingly recognises, the sea-voice relents in its 'advocacy of absolute, virgin withdrawal' after hearing the meanings expressed by the echoes, turning its dictates into a strategy of prudent courtship:<sup>60</sup>

FIRST TREBLE	If they love
SECOND TREBLE	You shall quickly see;
FIRST TREBLE	For when to flight you move
	They'll follow you, the more you flee. (ll. 269-72)

By encouraging the Ethiopians to dance with the Englishmen, echoes act as advocates of a synergistic interaction between different and apparently discordant elements, thus living up to the symbolic meaning attributed to them by Macrobius. They both anticipate and promote the assimilation of an utterly exotic element into a domestic setting, whose harmony might have been otherwise disrupted by it.

The transformation of the African women and the final resolution of the plot are only achieved in *The Masque of Beauty*. The Daughters of Niger appear on stage with their skin already whitened, and they make their triumphal entrance on the Throne of Beauty, an elaborate stage machine designed by Inigo Jones. The machine had a studied allegorical meaning, explained by Jonson in his

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<sup>60</sup>Loewenstein, p. 99.

printed account of the show. It was built on three levels: on the first stood the masquers; on the second one could see allegorical figures representing the ‘elements of beauty’ (l. 148); and on the last, an image of Harmonia towered over the whole construction (ll. 180-01). Beauty was hence clearly not intended as a merely aesthetic concept: the canonical whiteness gained by the Ethiopians symbolised the restoration of Platonic Beauty, a philosophical concept which was ultimately equivalent to that of Harmony. As Gordon recognises, the whole allegory lying at the core of the entertainment was embodied in the moving throne: ‘the figure of Harmony, in which the image of beauty is summed up, emphasizes how the whole conception of the Masque is based on that Pythagoro-Platonic tradition which the Renaissance inherited from the Middle Ages, and particularly from Macrobius’.<sup>61</sup> The triumph of order over the non-normative heterogeneity that had been presented in *Blackness* is thus signalled visually by Jones’ device, but also acoustically by an echo-song, performed right after the Throne of Beauty was set in motion. Echoes are thus Jonson’s response to Jones’ setting and they also emblematise restored harmony.

As has been pointed out above, the fictional world of the masque was conceived as an idealised image of James’ court and kingdom: the representation of an idyllic setting characterised by perfect harmony was hence a compliment to the country and to the King, who was credited with the ability to secure order in the body politic. Echoes were both symbols of harmony and pleasant sounds which helped to celebrate its final achievement in the masque, and, hence, they clearly played a pivotal role in this rhetoric of royal praise. Moreover, in both *The Masque of Blackness* and *The Masque of Beauty*, they also facilitated the very identification of the theatrical fiction with the real world of the court and kingdom, upon which the celebration of the monarch relied. The interpenetration of fiction and reality found visual and symbolical expression during the revels: when the masquers descended from the stage and chose

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<sup>61</sup>D. J. Gordon, ‘The Imagery of Ben Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness* and *The Masque of Beautie*’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943), 122-41 (p. 137). For the Neoplatonism of Jonson’s masques see also James Phillip Lucier, *The More Remou’d Mysteries: Neoplatonic Epistemology in the Masques of Ben Jonson* (Doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 1962).

their dancing partners among the noblemen and noblewomen in the audience, the gap between the idealised fiction and the real court was bridged. In *The Masque of Blackness*, the echo-song urged the Daughters of Niger to remain on the dance floor, where the courtly audience sat. In doing so, they promoted and prolonged the laudatory overlap between fictional setting and real world, thus confirming their importance in the compliment to the monarch.<sup>62</sup> In *Masque of Beauty*, echoes fulfill a similar function by resorting to deictics. The first echo-song celebrates the present by comparing it with an ideal past when the world was brightened by Love:

When Love at first did move  
From out of chaos, brightened  
So was the world, and lightened,  
As now!

FIRST ECHO                  As now!  
SECOND ECHO                  As now!  
Yield, night, then, to the light,  
As blackness hath to beauty;  
Which is but the same duty.  
It was for beauty that the world was made,  
And where she reigns Love's lights admit no shade.

FIRST ECHO                  Love's lights admit no shade.  
SECOND ECHO                  Admit no shade. (ll. 217-27)

Another echo-song concludes the masque and it similarly equates the present with the paradise of classical mythology. Its chorus recites: ‘So all that see your beauty’s sphere / May know th’Elysian Fields are here’, to which the double echoes answer ‘Th’Elysian Fields are here / Elysian Fields are here’ (331-35). ‘Now’ and ‘here’ in the two songs indicate, for the actors, the time and place of the dramatic action they were immersed in, but, for the audience, they could simultaneously refer to their own spatial and historical contingency. This

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<sup>62</sup>Loewenstein evocatively defined the mythological nymph as ‘patron of liminality’ (p. 5) and ‘genius of difficult transition’ (p. 122): it seems thus particularly fitting that the acoustic phenomenon associated with her presides over the merging of fiction and reality.

iterated use of deixis creates a powerful connection between the fictional and the historico-political circumstances, thereby suggesting that James' kingdom was as flawless and idyllic as the world depicted in the masque. Ancient exemplar and historical contingency, imaginary *locus amoenus* and tangible place of the court are thus all held together in those echoic lines.

Harmony was intended not only as social order, granted by the assimilation of the Daughters on Niger into the British court, but also as cosmic harmony. Jonson explains that the eight allegorical figures standing on the Throne of Beauty in the *Masque of Beauty* represented the eight revolving spheres of the heavens, whose movement was governed by divine Harmony. The first echo-song, quoted above, participated in the construction of that allegory by celebrating the capitulation of blackness to beauty as a transformation which characterised the whole cosmos as well. Love was indeed presented as an entirely positive force, capable of imposing order on chaos and brightening the world with its light. Love and Beauty were even responsible for the creation of the world itself: 'it was for beauty that the world was made' (l. 224), as Jonson puts it. The idea that harmony would triumph in the macrocosm as well as at court had already been prefigured in *The Masque of Blackness*. The Daughters of Niger were repeatedly associated with water, and the sea-voice justified their incompatibility with the men of England on the grounds that 'they are but earth' (l. 276) and 'what you vowed was water' (l. 279). Echoes contradicted that voice and instead advocated the interaction of apparently incompatible natural elements, thus promoting elemental concord. The revels which followed the echo-song brought together not only men and women, Englishness and foreignness, but also earth and water. Echoes thus encouraged the merging of diverse elements, which results in a perfectly harmonised *concordia discors* on both a social and cosmic level. The slightly eroticised invitations to dance uttered by echoes were thus utterly cleared of any possible obscene implication: the interaction of blackness and whiteness was presented as legitimate and even fruitful, and the very echoes which expressed that idea were described as being issued by a fountain called 'chaste delight' (l. 112). The traditional allegations moved to Ovid's Echo of

being a bawd were utterly subverted.

The representation of the cosmos as an orderly entity was another strategy which enabled Jonson to compliment James' rule. In the Renaissance, the political order was often considered to be the earthly expression of the cosmic order, which meant that cosmic harmony could be easily equated with political harmony. The concord of the universe, which involved the harmonisation of different natural elements such as water and earth, was virtuously reproduced in the Jacobean court and kingdom as depicted in the masques, where dissimilar people could successfully interact. Echoes were the most appropriate heralds of cosmic harmony, as they were traditionally linked with the celestial sound of the heavenly spheres, but in the masques they were also employed to promote and emphasise the fulfillment of social and political harmony: by performing that twofold function, echoes endorsed the flattering association of celestial order with that of James' kingdom. In the masques where Jonson inserts echoic refrains, echoes signal the triumph of harmony, which is social, political, and metaphysical at the same, and which serves as an encomium to the King.

Complimenting the King for his ability to bring harmony to his kingdom had important political implications in this period. As Parry explains, James had entreated the Parliament to approve his project to unite the Crown of England and Scotland throughout the sessions of 1605 and 1606, and the royal entertainments devised in those years were generally supportive of his political efforts. The idea of a unified British identity was generally celebrated as a virtuous 'social, political and metaphysical condition'.<sup>63</sup> *The Masque of Blackness*, performed in 1605, was certainly a significant example. Butler argues that masques illustrated the monarch's ability to overcome forces that threatened or resisted his authority: he claims that it was 'through the dismissal of outsiders' that masques 'instilled in performers and audience a collective sense of kingship'.<sup>64</sup> Yet, the encomi-

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<sup>63</sup>Parry, pp. 89-90.

<sup>64</sup>Martin Butler, 'The Masque of Blackness and Stuart Court Culture', in *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*, ed by Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. and Patrick Cheney (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 152-63 (p. 159).

astic strategy employed in *Masque of Blackness* and *Masque of Beauty* entailed assimilation rather than expulsion or estrangement. The monarch was hailed for his miraculous power to enact the metamorphosis of the Ethiopian women, who were thus successfully integrated rather than simply banished. If the King had the capacity to harmonise the utterly exotic within the domestic sphere, he could all the more unite England and Scotland. As has been hopefully demonstrated, echoes actively contributed to the construction of the laudatory political messages expressed in the two masques.<sup>65</sup>

The panegyric function of echoes is even more explicit in *Pan's Anniversary*. The restoration of harmony marked once again the felicitous culmination of the masque and it was brought about by an almighty ruler. Pan, who was one of King James' favourite mythological doubles, is celebrated for having transformed Arcadia into a *locus amoenus*. A shepherd happily observes that Pan's music 'made your commonwealth a harmony' (l. 122), a remark which seems to be a clear allusion to 'the Orphic idea that Pan's music embodies the universe's underlying concords' (ll. 119-22n).<sup>66</sup> One of the sources upon which Jonson likely drew was Macrobius. Jonson interestingly portrays James as Pan in other of his works, such as *Oberon* and poem 79 in *The Underwood*, and he also repeatedly associated him with the sun:<sup>67</sup> in *The Masque of Blackness*, Sol is surpassed in splendour by a 'greater light' (ll. 150-55), implicit figuration of James, and in *Oberon* the solemn rites are presided over by the moon which similarly 'borrows from a greater light' (l. 303). This twofold representation of James as both Pan and the Sun recalls Macrobius' allegorisation of the mythological figure of Pan, which reinforces the praise of the monarch: by drawing on Macrobius, Jonson

<sup>65</sup> *The Masque of Beauty* was likely meant to be performed the year after *Blackness*, that is when the King was still deeply engaged in his negotiations with the Parliament, but it was probably delayed because the wedding masques *Hymenaei* and *The Lord Hay's Masque* were performed in 1606 and in 1607 respectively.

<sup>66</sup> All references are from Ben Jonson, *Pan's Anniversary*, ed. by Martin Butler, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, V, pp. 445-61.

<sup>67</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Underwood*, ed. by Colin Burrow, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, VII, pp. 69-295 (p. 246, n.79). For the association between the King and Pan in *Oberon* see Martin Butler, 'Ben Jonson's *Pan's Anniversary* and the Politics of Early Stuart Pastoral', *English Literary Renaissance*, 22.3 (1992), 369-404 (pp. 374-75).

implicitly credits James with the same power over every living being which was the prerogative of his mythological counterpart. The prominence of that allegorical subtext in the glorification of the King can be one of the reasons behind the insistent presence of echoes in the masques written in his honour: if Echo is depicted by Macrobius as the harmony produced by the movement of the heavenly spheres, and Pan as the Sun which presides over that movement, echoes appear as the perfect heralds of the magnificence of the Pan-like King of Britain.

In *Pan's Anniversary*, the nymph Echo is also explicitly mentioned when the priests invite the masquers to dance with the ‘fays’ and ‘nymphs’ in the audience ‘till the applause it brings/ wakes Echo from her seat/ The closes to repeat’ (ll. 176-78). Echo promptly replies to the priests and continues to repeat their last lines unaltered

PRIESTS	Echo, the truest oracle on ground,
	Though nothing but a sound,
ECHO	Though nothing but a sound,
PRIESTS	Beloved of Pan, the valley’s queen,
ECHO	The valley’s queen,
PRIESTS	And often heard, though never seen.
ECHO	Though never seen. (ll. 180-86)

The fact that Pan and his music are identified as sources of universal concord and Echo is called ‘beloved of Pan’ and ‘valley’s queen’ unmistakably points to Macrobius’ allegorical association of the nymph with harmony. Moreover, Echo is awakened right before the beginning of the revels and her collaboration is requested by the priests. By reverberating the ‘closes’ of the song which accompanies the revels, the nymph actively participates in the masque’s most important dance, which was generally aimed at celebrating the defeat of a potential threat to the social order and the ensuing restoration of harmony. The melodious music which Echo contributes to create and the orderly dance typical of the revels would provide a strong contrast to the unrefined dancing of the Boeotians in the antimasque, which represented the potentially disruptive force that had to be neutralised. The political meaning behind this narrative pattern that culminated in the appeasement of conflicts was once again a compliment

to the King. James' s project of creating a unified throne of Great Britain had already fallen through in the 1620 and hence the King was now praised not so much for his ability to harmonise different entities, but rather for maintaining peace in his kingdom.

Echoes appear to be have a laudatory function even before Echo is evoked: the appearance of the nymph is indeed only the climactic point of a series of repeated refrains that solicit nature to participate in the praise of Pan. Echoes are thus not only flattering symbols of harmony, but they also reverberate and propagate the praise of King James, represented in the fiction as Pan. The first hymn has four stanzas which celebrate Pan as the best leader, singer, hunter, and shepherd. A refrain is repeated by a chorus after each stanza: 'Hear, O you groves, and hills resound his praise' (ll. 135, 143) is heard after the first and third, and 'Hear, O you groves, and hills resound his worth' (ll. 139, 147) after the second and fourth. The hymn concludes with a chorus which sings the invocation: 'And while his powers and praises thus we sing, / The valleys let rebound, and all the rivers ring' (ll. 148-49). Such petitions to the groves, hills, valleys, and rivers clearly engage with the idea of echoing. The verbs 'rebound' and 'resound' are Jonson's version of a formula used in his literary source, Spenser's *Epithalamion* (1594), which alludes explicitly to echoic reverberation: as in Jonson's masque, the refrain 'that all the woods shall answer and your Echo ring' (l. 18) is repeated in the poem with slight alterations at the end of each stanza.<sup>68</sup> Jonson's reference to echoes in his hymn to Pan is complemented on a formal level by the formulaic repetition of parallel sentences, on which the four stanzas are built. His combined use of parallelism and of rhetorical figures of repetition, such as anaphora, epistrophe, and epanalepsis enhances the effect of echoic reverberation and it also contributes to the musicality of the poem. The agreeable acoustic effect that such echoic lines produce may be seen as anticipating and reinforcing the association of Echo with harmony drawn by the priest later in the text.

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<sup>68</sup>All references to *Epithalamion* are from *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. by J. C. Smith and E. De Sélincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), pp. 579-84.

Reverberating a sound implies prolonging its duration; hence, the fact that the praise of the monarch is re-echoed suggests that it is bound to resound not only through space, but likely also through time. Echoes can thus be fittingly conceived as emblems of durability and, once again, this role is motivated by widespread allegorical interpretations of the mythological nymph. Loewenstein and Hollander explain that ‘persistence [...] is one of Echo’s distinguishing traits’, and the nymph was therefore repeatedly associated with Fame, especially literary fame.<sup>69</sup> As early as in Horace’s *Odes*, echoes help the Muse Clio to make the names of men and gods resound on Helicon, Pindus, or Haemus (*Odes* I.12, 3-6), or they amplify the praise of great Maecenas (I.20, 6-8).<sup>70</sup> Echo is later explicitly identified with good reputation ('bonam famam', 'bone renom mee', 'famam [...] que unumquenque mortalium diligit') in the *Ovide Moralisé* (III.1465), Arnulphe D’Orleans’ *Allegoriae super Ovidii Metamorphosin* (III.5-3), and Boccaccio’s *Genalogie Deorum Gentilium Libri* (VII.lix.3).

In the light of this longstanding tradition, with which Jonson was likely acquainted, it seems plausible that the echoic reverberations alluded to in *Pan’s Anniversary* may also stand for the transmission of the King’s worth to posterity. The presence of Spenser’s *Epithalamion* as a hypotext in the masque also lends weight to this hypothesis. In his poem, Spenser seems to hint at the association between echoes and poetry as a form of art that has the power of immortalising people. He opens his poem with an invocation to the Muses, who have ‘adorne[d]’ other men ‘worthy of [their] gracefull rymes’ (ll. 1-3), and emphasises the prestige of their art by stating that the greatest men aspire ‘to heare theyr names sung in [their] simple layes’ (l. 5). He then asks for their assistance in task of celebrating his bride and uses the verb ‘resound’ to designate the action he intends to perform through his poetry ('helpe me mine owne loves prayses to resound' (l. 14)). The poet concludes the invocation to the Muses by proclaiming his intention to sing so that ‘The woods shall to me answer and my Echo ring’ (l. 18). In this context, his re-echoed song in praise of his bride

<sup>69</sup>Loewenstein, pp. 15-16; Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup>Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. by Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

is probably intended to perpetuate her memory and that of their wedding day. The echoes, though, are asked to be silent when night falls and the newlyweds withdraw to consummate their marriage:

Now it is night, ye damsels may be gon,  
And leaue my loue alone,  
And leaue likewise your former lay to sing:  
The woods no more shal answere, nor your echo ring. (ll. 311-14)

Silence and ‘sacred peace’ (ll. 353-54) are repeatedly invoked to protect the privacy of the moment. In the next two stanzas, the poet prays Diana, Juno, Hebe, and Hymen to grant them offspring: it is only when that felicitous event takes place, that echoes will be allowed to resound again (‘*Til which we cease your further prayse to sing, / Ne any woods shal answer, nor your Echo ring*’ (ll. 407-08, emphasis mine)). Acoustic reverberations are thus unfitting for a private and intimate moment, but they are desirable and explicitly invoked in contexts of public celebration and praise. In Jonson’s masque, which was intended to celebrate the King before his court and to extend his praise to a wider audience through the published text, echoing may presumably retain this association with publicity.

Jonson draws more explicitly on the association of Echo with fame in an earlier masque, *The Masque of Queens* (1609), which proves his familiarity with the aforementioned allegorical heritage. The masquers appear in triumphant chariots, accompanied by a song which incites the audience to acclaim the vision:

Help, help all tongues, to celebrate this wonder;  
The voice of Fame should be as loud as thunder.  
  
Her house is all of echo made,  
Where never dies the sound;  
  
And as her brows the clouds invade,  
Her feet do strike the ground.  
  
Sing then, Good Fame, that’s out of Virtue born:  
For who doth Fame neglect, doth Virtue scorn.<sup>71</sup> (ll. 599-606)

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<sup>71</sup>All references are from Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Queens*, ed. by David Lindley, in *The Cambridge*

The house of Fame ‘is all of echo made’ and it incessantly resounds with voices and songs of compliment. Fame is characterised as ‘good’ and it is firmly grounded on Virtue: the masque insists on the idea that only those who are truly virtuous achieve lasting reputation. Jonson draws his description of the House of Fame from a long iconographic tradition which includes Ovid, Virgil, and Chaucer, but he is careful to suppress all the potentially ambiguous characteristics of ‘fama’. While Ovid’s House of Fame is the home of ‘falsehoods mingled with the truth’ (*Metamorphoses*, XII.54), and in Chaucer it similarly hosts ‘every speeche, [...] every soun, / Be hyt eyther foul or fair’ (II.832-33), the House of Fame portrayed by Jonson is only populated by Virtue.<sup>72</sup> This redemption of renown casts echoes in an entirely positively light: rather than reverberating vicious and virtuous actions indiscriminately, they must necessarily perpetuate the praise and ‘good fame’ of worthy individuals. Among such individuals are of course the Queen and the King. In the House of Fame the ‘glories of Bel-Anna’ are proclaimed (l. 374), but her magnificence is presented as a reflection of the splendour of James, a

most royal and most happy king,  
Of whom Fame’s House in every part doth ring  
For every virtue. (ll. 391-93)

Because the House of Fame has been described as being made of echoes, saying that the reputation of the King ‘rings’ in every part is perfectly equivalent to saying that it is echoed throughout the House. The underlying idea is that when a name is metaphorically reverberated, it is blessed with eternal fame.

It is the prerogative of poets to immortalise men and echoes are thus closely linked with their art. Heroic Virtue describes the House of Fame as

Built all of sounding brass, whose columns be  
Men-making poets, and those well-made men

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*Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, III, pp. 281-349.

<sup>72</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, *The House of Fame*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry Dean Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 347-74. See also *Aeneid*, IV.188-90 (Virgil, *Aeneid*, in *Virgil*, ed. and trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G.P. Goold, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999-2000), I, pp. 261-597; II, pp. 2-367. All further references are from this edition).

Whose strife it was to have the happiest pen  
Renown them to an after-life, and not  
With pride to scorn the muse, and die forgot. (ll. 344-48)

Poets are the architectural and metaphorical pillars that support the palace, entirely made of resounding brass. Echoes and poets are thus portrayed as foundational elements of the House of Fame: mutually interdependent, they cooperate in the glorification of praiseworthy men.

It is frequently implicit in Jonson's use of echoes as reverberating the praise of someone that without the poet such echoes would not exist. Just as acoustic echoes are derivative sounds produced by the reverberation of an original noise or voice, the immortalising echoes in *The Masque of Beauty* and *The Masque of Queens* are originated by the poet's activity. In *The Masque of Beauty*, the praise of the Ethiopians' worth is re-echoed through the air because it is celebrated by Linus and Orpheus: the two legendary poets sing encomiastic hymns and two fountains 'strike the air to echo what they sing' (ll. 115-26). In *The Masque of Queens*, echoes and 'men-making poets' (l. 345) are the substance of which the House of Fame is built, which suggests even more powerfully that poets and the reverberation of their encomiastic words have the power of eternalising men. The Spenserian refrain appropriated in *Pan's Anniversary* also reinforces the impression that echoes are sounds over which the poet has control. As has been recognised above, it is the lyric I in the poem who establishes when echoes should resound or be silent. Moreover, the poet empowers himself by stating that he will continue to praise Hymen and Hebe only if they comply with the condition to bless his marriage with progeny:

Grant that it may so be.  
Til which we cease your further prayse to sing,  
Ne any woods shal answer, nor your Echo ring (ll. 406-08).

If the poet does stop singing, echoes will not ring. Jonson may have been influenced by Spenser's insistence on the poet's command of echoes and on his authority to choose who to celebrate. His familiarity with Spenser's text suggests that he too might have seen echoes as allies of the poets, ready to propagate the praise only of those individuals whom the poet wished to eulogise.

The poets' faculty to control echoes and to decide whose praise they should propagate places great responsibility on them, a responsibility which Jonson was happy to accept. It has widely been recognised that Jonson strongly believed in the Renaissance idea that poets had an important social role: their duty was to educate their audience and reform their society, thus contributing to bring splendour to their country.<sup>73</sup> Because of the moral and social importance of their work, poets had the moral obligation to eternalise only those who truly deserved it. As is repeatedly suggested throughout *The Masque of Queens* only virtuous individuals should be allowed to achieve literary fame: the 'men-making' poets in the House of Fame have rightly secured an 'after-life' only to 'well-made' men (ll. 345-48).

Not even the King was entitled to receive unconditional praise. The poet's educational mission was not put aside when he wrote masques in honour of the monarch. Talbert has argued that the intent behind the masques is not so much that of flattering, but rather of *laudando praecipere*. 'Praise can be counsel, not flattery, and is fitting for an address to great persons', he explains.<sup>74</sup> His hypothesis is corroborated by Jonson's own statement in his introduction to *Love's Triumph Through Callipolis*, briefly mentioned above. He argues that

all Representations, especially those of this nature in court, public Spectacles, either have been, or aught to be the mirrors of man's life, whose ends ought always to carry a mixture of profit, with them, no less than delight.<sup>75</sup> (l. 1)

Through his masques, Jonson does indeed hold a mirror before the Jacobean court which both reflects its virtues and magnificence but also shows a virtuous model of conduct. This attitude is best exemplified by the author's insistent idealisation of the kingdom as a place blessed by perfect harmony. One of

<sup>73</sup>See for instance Alexander Leggatt, *Ben Jonson, His Vision and His Art* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), pp 74-118; Ernest William Talbert, 'The Interpretation of Jonson's Courtly Spectacles', *PMLA*, 61.2 (1946), 454-73 (pp. 468-71); Marcus, p. 30.

<sup>74</sup>Talbert, 'The Interpretation of Jonson's Courtly Spectacles', p. 458.

<sup>75</sup>In the preface to the printed edition of *The Masque of Queens*, Jonson similarly declares his intention to produce a work 'answerable to the dignity of their person' (l. 3) and the ensuing choice of 'a celebration of honourable and true fame, bred out of virtue' (ll. 4-5) as its argument. He then affirm his belief in the 'rule of the best artist to suffer no object of delight to pass without his mixture of profit and example' (ll. 5-6).

the most important qualities that monarchs should possess is the capacity to maintain order in their kingdom, an idea which was powerfully advocated when James was praised by Jonson for ruling over a peaceful nation. The rhetoric of *laudando praecipere* thus potentially enabled Jonson to compliment James and exhort him to ensure that peace may always thrive in his reign at the same time.

Echoes also contributed to the instruction of the monarch, and fittingly so, since they were key elements in the celebration of social and political harmony. Not only were they closely connected with the idea that poets are needed in order to give everlasting fame to the King and his reign, but they also acted as reminders of one of the most important conditions that kings had to fulfill in order to earn the poet's praise, that is the preservation of that idyllic harmony of which they were a symbol. In *Pan's Anniversary*, for instance, acoustic echoes reverberated the words of praise for the King and they were closely associated with divine concord. In the same work, the nymph Echo was also defined as 'the truest oracle' (180), an appellative that may implicitly signal that the idyllic vision of harmony constructed through Echo and echoes could be an anticipation of the future as well as a representation of the present. If echoes contributed to celebrate James' kingdom as a place where concord thrived, the fact that they had oracular powers could imply that such a heavenly scenario was also a wishful vision of the future. If that were the case, the figure of Echo would have enabled Jonson to express the desire that peace may last and hence to encourage the king to continue his virtuous policies.

A similar strategy was employed in *The Masque of Beauty*, where the echoes seem to transform of the lines 'It was for beauty that the world was made / And where she reigns Love's lights admits no shade' (ll. 226-27) into an admonition to the King. The first echo, 'Love's lights admit no shade' (l. 228), can be interpreted both as a neutral exposition of a philosophical maxim and as a warning that if beauty was to reign over the kingdom no metaphorical shade could be tolerated. If the polysemy was intended, the second meaning becomes predominant in the second echo, 'admit no shade' (l. 229). The omission of the subject transforms the verb into an imperative and the warning consequently

takes on the force of an urgent entreaty.

In poem 79 in *The Underwood*, the praise and moral instruction are meant for Charles I. In this case Jonson uses a poem rather than a masque, but he draws heavily on material from *Pan's Anniversary*. The poem has strong affinities with the masque in its subject matter, aim, and method. It was composed as a New Year's gift to King Charles I in 1636 and, as Burrow argues, it reminds the new King of his father's pacific policies, thus implicitly encouraging him to continue in his footsteps.<sup>76</sup> The same refrain found in *Pan's Anniversary*, 'Hear, O you groves; and, hills, resound his praise/ worth' (ll. 23, 31), is repeated. Henrietta Maria is also celebrated behind the *persona* of Mira and once again echoes propagate her praise: 'Rivers and valleys, echo what we sing' (ll. 26, 35). Towards the end of the poem, though, a figure even more excellent than Pan is presented: Charles is hailed as an even greater monarch than James. The swains are invited to haste to behold and pay homage to this god, whose praises they will then 'report unto the woods, / That they may take it echoed by the floods' (ll. 52-53). Echoing is thus again invoked to celebrate the monarch and, in the next stanza, the idea that 'Pan has been transcended' (l. 54n) is interestingly signalled by the emphatic verbal repetition "'Tis he, 'tis he' (l. 54). The whole stanza is then reproduced *verbatim* at the close of the poem (ll. 66-69). The encomium of Charles is thus reverberated not only by the elements of nature, but also by the stylistic devices employed by the poet. The literary echo of his own previous work then enables Jonson to compare Charles with his father and to remind him of the idyllic concord that characterised his reign. When Charles is acclaimed as an even better monarch, the praise clearly acquires hornative function as well: Charles is implicitly spurred to imitate his virtuous father so as to fully earn that compliment. Echoes, acoustic, poetic and intertextual, thus help the poet to glorify Kings but also to show them how they should behave, as was the convention in works of advice to the ruler. Such acoustic and poetic devices are perfectly integrated in the rhetoric of *laudando praecipere* upon which

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<sup>76</sup> *The Underwood*, p. 246, n.79. All references are from this edition.

Jonson draws.

The traditional moralising readings of the mythological nymph are helpful in this case as well, as they seem to validate Jonson's use of echoes to celebrate and instruct the monarch. The anonymous T. H. significantly glosses the nymph as a good adviser (sig. C2v), and Boccaccio allegorises her as a potential saviour (VII.lix). As has been pointed out in the Introduction, Boccaccio blames the beautiful boy for scorning Echo and associates him with the worldly man who does not care about his fame. Echo would have saved Narcissus from oblivion, had he listened to her instruction. In Jonson's masques, echoes offer advice to James aimed at helping him earn immortal fame, just as the nymph would have done for Narcissus according to the allegorical interpretations of their myth. Jonson's entertainments are thus 'mirrors to instruct the spirit' held before the Jacobean court,<sup>77</sup> but they are also disseminated with echoes, acoustic reflections that complement the function of the visual ones.

As has hopefully been shown, Jonson employs echoes with considerable coherence throughout his courtly entertainments. Echoes recur in his masques not only because of the harmonious musical effects that they generated, but also because they could be charged with more or less implicit allegorical meanings, which were often the ones that had been traditionally attributed to the mythological nymph. Echo-songs were among the elements through which Jonson both praised the monarch and the harmony that characterised his kingdom, and simultaneously fulfilled what he felt was his role as an artist: that of reforming the court and delivering moral instruction. A strikingly similar function is attributed to the nymph Echo in *Cynthia's Revels*.

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<sup>77</sup>Orgel, *The Poetics of Spectacle*, p. 368.

## ‘As in a truer glass’: Echo and the image of the court in Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels*

*Cynthia’s Revels* is a play and it clearly does not have the same structure as a masque or a royal entertainment. Yet, it is useful to compare it with the works analysed in this section both because it has similarities with the masque form, and because its main purpose appears to be similar to that of Jonson’s courtly entertainments. For instance, Anderson suggests that Jonson uses music to facilitate the identification between fictional characters and noble audience members, a strategy which anticipates the technique adopted in the Jacobean masques.<sup>78</sup> More importantly, the play focuses on the court and on its status: it represents a fictive version of Queen Elizabeth’s court, and scrutinises the conduct of its inhabitants. It has even been hypothesised the play may have been performed not only at the Blackfriars Theatre but also at court before Queen Elizabeth herself, although no conclusive evidence has been presented.<sup>79</sup> As was the case with Peele’s *Araygnement of Paris*, *Cynthia’s Revels* is thus indeed different from a masque, but its inclusion in this chapter is justified by the fact that it is useful to compare its themes, aims, and the means through which those aims are achieved with those of other courtly entertainments devised by Ben Jonson.

While in the masque echoes were preeminently acoustic phenomena employed as refrains in songs because of their musicality, the acoustic and mythological dimension of Echo are perfectly amalgamated in *Cynthia’s Revels*. In a play, the dialogic exchange between characters is generally more important than music or spectacle and hence the figure of Echo appears here as a *dramatis persona* who converses with other characters. Jonson even introduces a significant in-

<sup>78</sup>Anderson, *Echo and Meaning*, p. 55; Loewenstein also argues that the structure of the play, especially in the folio version, had traits in common with the Jonsonian masque (p. 84).

<sup>79</sup>Ben Jonson, *Cynthia’s Revels*, or *The Fountain of Self-Love* (Quarto Version), ed. by Eric Rasmussen and Matthew Steggle, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, I, pp. 429-547 (p. 431); Loewenstein, p. 78; Leah S. Marcus, ‘Jonson and the Court’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, ed. by Richard Harp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 30-42 (p. 31).

novation by re-embodying the nymph on stage and restoring her capacity to speak autonomously. Her traditional association with pleasant acoustic effects, though, is not neglected, as the nymph is made to sing one of the play's most graceful songs. The characterisation of the nymph is complicated also because it is the result of Jonson's conflation of a variety of allegorical interpretations of both the Ovidian myth and the story of Echo and Pan: sympathetic readings of the nymph are alluded to alongside other traditional derogatory assessments of some of her characteristic traits, such as her loquacity. The nymph is thus a more ambiguous character than in the masques, and her representation has understandably elicited considerable scholarly debate.

Such disagreement chiefly concerns how the nymph's blunt reproach of Cynthia's behaviour should be read. When Echo is granted permission to speak, she dares denigrate Cynthia for her punishment of Actaeon and Niobe, which she perceives to be a 'sharp revenge' disproportionate to their crimes (I.ii.82-87).<sup>80</sup> Mercury then harshly silences her:

Stint thy babbling tongue, fond Echo.  
Thou profan'st the grace is done thee.  
So idle wordlings, merely made of voice,  
Censure the powers above them. (I.ii.92-95)

At a first glance, the nymph appears thus to be ungrateful towards her superiors, blasphemous, and, implicitly, also presumptuous. Her words are dismissed as the mere idle rant of a fool. Not only is the adjective 'babbling' derogatory per se, but it also echoes Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* (III.443), where the nymph is famously cast in a negative light. Echo's disobedience towards her superiors also recalls Berchorius' negative allegorical reading of the classical nymph. This episode has polarised the opinions of critics: among those who give a negative assessment of the nymph's behaviour are Thron and Talbert, whereas Hollander and Loewenstein both associate her with truth and poetry; Danson argues more moderately that she 'is more sympathetic than most of the

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<sup>80</sup>All references are from the previously quoted edition of Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*.

others'.<sup>81</sup> In order to assess Jonson's characterisation of Echo in *Cynthia's Revels* it is important to consider factors such as his depiction of Cynthia and of the courtiers, and the influence that the traditional allegorical interpretations of the figure of Echo exerted on his depiction of the nymph.

Mercury's harsh reaction against Echo's criticism of Cynthia does not necessarily imply that the nymph is wrong or that she is a vicious character. As has been recognised by scholars, Cynthia is not depicted as an entirely irreprehensible ruler in the play. Her punishment of Niobe and Actaeon is considered to be excessively cruel by many of her subjects, so much so that she feels the need to justify herself in the last act of the play (V.v.95-110): her justice is thus ambiguously presented as divine but also violent. Her discernment is also cast into doubt by the fact that she entrusts her vicious courtiers with the task of organising the revels, a decision which betrays the possibility that she was unaware of their misconduct and flawed morals. She even fails to see through their disguise when they dance in the masques, an episode which has been interpreted by Barkan as a sign of her vulnerability: the unlicensed intrusion of Cupid and the corrupt courtiers in her 'sacred bowers' (V.v.105) represents a 're-enactment of Actaeon's presumption', which she has been unable to prevent.<sup>82</sup> Even her claim of being perpetual and immutable ('For we are no less Cynthia than we were / Nor is our power, but as ourself, the same', V.v.120-25) appears to be covertly questioned by Hesperus's famous song 'Queen and huntress, chaste and fair'. The song draws attention to the natural cycle of the moon, whose brightness is by no means everlasting, but it can rather be appreciated solely once the sun has set and is even threatened by the 'envious shade' of the Earth, which

<sup>81</sup> Michael E. Thron, 'Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*: Multiplicity and Unity', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 11.2 (1971), 235-47 (pp. 242-45); Ernest William Talbert, 'The Classical Mythology and the Structure of *Cynthia's Revels*', *Philological Quarterly*, 22.3 (1943), 193-210 (pp. 196-97, 202); Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 17; Loewenstein, p. 80; Lawrence Danson, 'Jonsonian Comedy and the Discovery of the Social Self', *PMLA*, 99.2 (1984), 179-93 (p. 182).

<sup>82</sup> Leonard Barkan, 'Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis', *English Literary Renaissance*, 10.3 (1980), 317-59 (p. 335). Clare also comments on this scene, which she takes as a testimony of the 'discrepancy between what we hear and what we see of Cynthia' in the play (Janet Clare, 'Jonson's "Comical Satires" and the Art of Courtly Compliment', in *Refashioning Ben Jonson: Gender, Politics and the Jonsonian Canon*, ed. by Kate Chedzoy, Julie Sanders and Susan Wiseman (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998), pp. 28-47 (p. 41)).

can ‘interpose’ and obscure the moon (V.iii.7-12).<sup>83</sup>

The moon goddess Cynthia or Diana was famously one of the favourite *personae* of Elizabeth I. In the last decade of her reign a growing ambivalence gathered around the use of such image: as Hackett has exhaustively explained ‘the moon was a dualistic image, with a dark side as well as a bright side, which enabled apparent celebration of Elizabeth as a quasi-divine icon to incorporate negative undertones of criticism’.<sup>84</sup> This seems to be the case also in Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels*, in which Elizabeth is at the same time praised and implicitly blamed through the figure of Cynthia.<sup>85</sup>

The boldest and most direct criticism of Elizabeth in the play is represented by Echo’s disapproval of how her mythological surrogate treated Actaeon. It is generally agreed that behind the figure of Actaeon lies a topical allusion to the Earl of Essex, who had recently fallen in disgrace with Elizabeth because he had burst into her bedchamber and surprised her before she was fully dressed, exactly as Actaeon had violated Diana’s privacy while she was bathing.<sup>86</sup> Whether Actaeon deserved such a harsh punishment from Diana in Ovid’s story was still a debated topic in the Renaissance, and Jonson draws on this tradition of interpretations of Ovid to question Elizabeth’s treatment of her once favourite.<sup>87</sup> Ovidian myth becomes thus a ‘vehicle for articulating concerns about the unaccountability of monarchy and the relationship between power and justice’, to put it in Rasmussen and Steggle’s words.<sup>88</sup> The celebration of Cynthia/ Elizabeth is slightly undermined by a sense of injustice and dissatisfaction which emerges throughout the play, and hence, if the play is considered in its entirety and

<sup>83</sup>For a more detailed reading of this passage see Loewenstein, pp. 87-88.

<sup>84</sup>Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen. Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1995), p. 176.

<sup>85</sup>That criticism of Elizabeth and her court was implied in Jonson’s play has been recognised by Clare, who labels it as a ‘mixture of satire and uncertain courtly compliment’ (p. 37), and by Rasmussen and Steggle (*Cynthia’s Revels*, p. 437). Barton also argues that Jonson was probably feeling uneasy with Elizabeth’s rule (Anne Barton, ‘Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia’, *ELH*, 48.4 (1981), 706-31 (pp. 719-20)).

<sup>86</sup>*Cynthia’s Revels*, pp. 436, 539 (V.iv.100n), Barkan, ‘Diana and Actaeon’, pp. 333-35.

<sup>87</sup>The fact that Jonson was probably close to the Essex circle lends weight to this reading. Proofs of this connection are given by Rasmussen and Steggle (*Cynthia’s Revels*, pp. 436-37).

<sup>88</sup>*Cynthia’s Revels*, p. 437.

within the political and intellectual milieu of the last years of Elizabeth's reign, Echo's indictment of Cynthia does no longer appear to be the unmotivated rant of a foolish babbler. The nymph acts as a mythological counterpart of Cynthia, who limits her moral authority and offers another perspective on her actions.

Echo also embodies an alternative and more virtuous model of behaviour to the one of the narcissistic courtiers. Echo and Narcissus are complementary but also antithetical figures already in Ovid's myth: they represent, respectively, reflected sound and reflected image, eager love and stubborn resistance to love, interest towards others and self-absorption. Jonson reproduces this kind of antinomic relation by appropriating Echo as a character and attributing unequivocally narcissistic attitudes to the courtiers, who appeared self-absorbed even before drinking from the fountain of Self-Love. The concept of self-love dominates the play: it is personified in the character of Philautia, but it also affects the other courtiers. Amorphus, above all the others, seems to be closely modelled on Ovid's Narcissus: in Act I, scene IV, he flatters Asotus and tells him that he is 'another myself in mine eye' and that he is 'enamoured on [Asotus'] beauties' (103-04). Asotus is thus clearly presented as a reflection of Amorphus, an impression reinforced by the fact that the audience is told that he 'sweats to imitate [Amorphus] in everything' (II.iii.79). Amorphus also implicitly depicts himself as a second Narcissus when he boasts that he 'never sojourned or rested in that place or part of the world where some great and admirable fair creature died not for [his] love' (IV.iii.197-98): his Ovidian counterpart similarly acknowledged 'amarunt me quoque nymphae' (III.456) ['me too the nymphs have loved']. He also narrates the story of Lady Annabelle, which bears some resemblance to the myth of Echo and Narcissus: like Echo, the lady yearned for his love, and eventually died for it. Finally, in Act V, Scene V, Amorphus clearly states that he prefers admiring himself over Cynthia (34-35), thus emulating Narcissus' self-absorption.

To such a cohort of narcissistic characters is opposed Echo, who incarnates an antithetical paradigm by being dissociated, explicitly or implicitly, from those courtly behaviours and values satirised in the play, such as self-love, flattery, and

babbling. Interestingly, the pejorative traits attributed to the nymph by Mercury and Cynthia seem more apt to describe the narcissistic courtiers. The accusation of being a babbler, for instance, should be directed against the courtiers rather than against Echo, as their speeches are often frivolous if not utterly meaningless. It is clear that they take relish in using empty words when they play ‘substantives and adjectives’, a game that is indeed almost an exercise in detaching meaning from words. During that episode, Asotus echoes the words of Amorphus and Hedon, but his repetitions are sterile and empty, and his choice of adjectives borders on the nonsensical:

AMORPHUS Give forth your adjective with the rest; as prosperous, good, fair,  
sweet, well.

HEDON Anything that hath not been spoken

ASOTUS Yes, sir, ‘well-spoken’ shall be mine. (IV.iii.80-83)

While Echo has regained her ability to speak autonomously and uses it to deliver assertive messages, the courtiers often appropriate someone else’s words in a way that deprives them of meaning. Cupid’s description of Moria as one who learns a new word and repeats it so often that it spoils the meaning of her sentences is also emblematic of that tendency (II.iv.10-13). The courtiers’ proneness to brainless parroting thus casts them as negative versions of Echo, as anti-models that are radically unlike the nymph who spoke in the first Act of the play.

When the courtiers praise Cynthia and Arete they once again utter nothing but empty and hypocritical words. Anaides professes to honour Arete ‘that is held the worthiest lady in the court’ with ‘observance and respect’ (IV.iv.20-21) but, in the following scene, he is immediately ready to disown his assertions, as he scorns her and calls her ‘sodden nymph’ (IV.v.34-35). The same happens with the other courtiers, who compliment Cynthia but later reveal that they would never change to be her, as they love themselves better (IV.v.23-25). Flattery was one of the vices with which Echo was associated in moralising commentaries on Ovid, such as Berchorius’ *Ovidius Moralizatus*, but Jonson’s Echo explicitly distances herself from such reprehensible behaviour and ascribes it to Narcissus instead. She blames him for having looked into such a ‘flattering mirror’ (I.ii.29) as the fount in which he drowned, and significantly adds that Self-Love, which he

incarnates, and ‘sleek Flattery’ are ‘twin-born sisters’ (I.ii.37-38). By praising Cynthia without actually admiring her, the corrupt courtiers make themselves guilty of that blameworthy behaviour of which Narcissus is accused. Their blinding self-absorption and their proneness to flatter their superiors serve as a perfect testimony of Echo’s claim that self-love and flattery are so closely related that if ‘you sever one, the other dies’ (I.ii.36-39). The fact that some of the negative characteristics traditionally attributed to Echo are here transferred onto the narcissistic courtiers contributes to establish Echo and the courtiers as antithetical models of behaviour.

Self-love, flattery, and sterile repetition thus thrive at Cynthia’s court but do not characterise Echo. The nymph seems instead to embody the very idea of Truth. When she is given the possibility to mourn for Narcissus’ death, she laments that if she could have been ‘private’ with Narcissus

She would have dropped away herself in tears  
Till she had all turned water, that in her,  
As in a truer glass, thou mightst have gazed,  
And seen thy beauties by more kind reflection. (I.ii.31-35)

The idea that Echo would have offered a ‘truer glass’ to Narcissus seems to be largely influenced by Neoplatonic interpretations of Ovid’s myth, which identify Narcissus as a representation of the human soul which neglects heavenly beauty because it is lured by earthly pleasures. As has been explained in the Introduction, Ficino is famously one of those authors who drew on the myth of Narcissus to illustrate how the human soul, torn between the beauty of God and that of the body, can fatally lose its connection with the divine. Narcissus chose to contemplate his shadowy image in the pool, which symbolises material beauty, rather than devoting his attention to heavenly origin of his soul. His soul thus became too deeply absorbed in the materiality of the body, so much so that it lost its purity (*Commentary on Plato’s Symposium*, VI.17).<sup>89</sup> Farra

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<sup>89</sup> Jonson would likely have been acquainted with Ficino’s theories, which were also summarised in the commentary to the earliest translation of the Narcissus myth by the anonymous T.H. (*The Fable of Ouid*, sigs. D3r-D4v).

appropriates Ficino's reading and adds his own interpretation of Echo as the voice of the divine spirit, who would have taught Narcissus to recognise the intellectual beauty of his soul. Echo would thus have shown him a more truthful image than that reflected in the pool; she would have encouraged him to love 'le immagini delle essenze e virtù divine' [the images of the divine essence and virtue of things] instead of the earthly shadows which he admired (pp. 224v-25r, translation mine). In *Cynthia's Revels*, the opposition that Echo draws between the 'true' reflection which she would have offered and the deceptive one shown in the pool appears to be indebted to this Neoplatonic tradition. Interestingly, Farra also describes Echo's providential intervention as the action of reflecting: when the Holy Ghost descends upon men, he explains, it 'reflects', thus offering a glimpse of the divine Unity ('lo spirito di Dio [...] muove la mente, indi eccita la ragione, e toccata la immagine o idolo *riflette*, e per i medesimi gradi ritorna all'unità intellettuale [...] *Riflettendo*, e ritornando indietro alla somma unità ci rivolge', emphasis mine). That elevating reflection is called Echo, he clarifies ('questa reflettione chiamano i Theologi simbolici ECHO') (pp. 224r-224v). Like Jonson, Henry Reynolds, who would later re-elaborate Farra's Neoplatonic allegorisation of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, also seems to establish a dichotomy between the pool of water in which Narcissus saw his own image and the more beneficial reflection that Echo is capable of offering: his reading of Echo as the 'Reflection of this diuine breath, or Spirit vpon vs' is borrowed from Farra, but the author also defines the fount in which Narcissus admired himself a 'trech'rous mirhor' (sigs. P3v, N4v). It seems thus that the traditional Neoplatonic interpretation of Ovid's myth was likely to evoke the image of two mirrors of antithetical quality which appears in Jonson's play.

That Jonson was probably drawing on that allegorical tradition is also suggested a few lines later, when Echo complains:

Why did the gods give thee a *heavenly* form  
And *earthy* thoughts to make thee proud of it?  
Why do I ask? 'Tis now the known disease  
That beauty hath, to bear too deep a sense

Of her own self-conceived excellence  
Oh, hadst thou known the worth of *heaven's rich gift*  
Thou wouldst have turned it to a *truer* use. (I.ii.40-46 emphasis mine)

The antithesis ‘heavenly’-‘earthy’, the reference to Narcissus’ excessive awareness of his beauty, and the recurrence of the idea that he should have beheld his higher gifts are all elements which point to the Neoplatonic allegory. In *Cynthia’s Revels*, Echo thus presents herself as a herald of truth, one who would have been able to save Narcissus.

This depiction of Echo has implications for the rest of the plot. Like Narcissus, the courtiers are deeply engaged with materialistic concerns: they are vain, conceited, excessively preoccupied with their physical appearance, and eagerly fond of money, fashionable clothes, and cosmetics. The true object of Jonson’s criticism thus is not so much Cynthia, but rather the court: the flawed moral conduct of its inhabitants requires reformation. Emulous of Narcissus’ own attitude and at risk of replicating his tragic fate, the courtiers need a truthful voice like that of Echo, one able to show them, as if in a ‘truer glass’, how corrupt they have become. By bluntly criticising Cynthia, who has clearly failed to guarantee virtuous behaviour at her court, and by warning the audience that narcissism leads to perdition, Echo shows that an alternative is possible. The dichotomy between Echo and narcissism is established in the first scene of the play but it is relevant to Jonson’s whole dramatic construction: Echo and Narcissus become symbols of truth and of reprehensible moral conduct respectively.

As as been suggested above, Jonson assigned himself the role of social reformer. He also believed in the hierarchical notion that the court was a model of behaviour for the whole commonwealth: the conduct and moral character of the monarch and of his/ her entourage set a standard for the whole country. If monarchs wanted to rule over a virtuous country, they and their courtiers had to behave virtuously themselves. It was thus fitting that the poet who wished to reform society should start by showing how the ideal court should be. That is exactly what he aims to do in his *Cynthia’s Revels*. The play is a satire of the Elizabethan court, but Jonson conceived satire to be ‘socially corrective and

beneficial to the state'.<sup>90</sup> His work thus exposes the deficiencies of the English court, but it does so in order to instigate a positive social transformation. The didactic aim of the play and the identification of the court as a role model are both made explicit in the dedication to King James' court appended to the Folio version of the play (1616).<sup>91</sup>

TO THE SPECIAL FOUNTAIN OF MANNERS, THE COURT

Thou art a bountiful and brave spring, and waterest all the noble plants of this island. In thee, the whole kingdom dresseth itself, and is ambitious to use thee as her glass. Beware, then, thou render men's figures truly, and teach them no less to hate their deformities than to love their forms; for, to grace there should come reverence; and no man can call that lovely which is not also venerable. It is not powdering, perfuming, and every day smelling of the tailor that converteth to a beautiful object, but a mind, shining through any suit, which needs no false light either of riches or honours to help it. Such shalt thou find some here, even in the reign of Cynthia (a Crites, and an Arete). Now, under thy Phoebus, it will be thy province to make more; except thou desirest to have thy source mix with the Spring of Self-Love, and so wilt draw upon thee as welcome a discovery of thy days as was then made of her nights. (Dedication, 1-13)

The court is defined as a 'fountain of manners' and, as such, it should be inhabited by men endowed with pure minds. The play, implies its authors, teaches exactly that lesson, as it opposes corrupt courtiers who only care about their external appearance and virtuous ones who have no interest in earthly matters. Jonson then even explicitly exhorts James' court to grasp that message and to accept only virtuous men as its members.

If the play was performed before Queen Elizabeth, it would have fulfilled a similar function as the court itself did for the commonwealth: it would have worked as a 'glass' in which her court could see its own reflection and 'dress itself' according to it. Indeed, the vices of the courtiers would have been exposed so

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<sup>90</sup>Clare, p. 44.

<sup>91</sup>Ben Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels, or the Fountain of Self-Love* (Revised Scenes from the 1616 Folio), ed. by Eric Rasmussen and Matthew Steggle, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, V, pp. 1-100.

as to prompt them to change, and a more positive vision of the reformed court would have been shown and praised so as to encourage emulation. In that case, while Jonson's later masques offered an idealised depiction of the court which was meant to be imitated, *Cynthia's Revels* can be seen as a non-deforming mirror which gave back an authentic reflection of the court; it balanced praise and criticism. Since there is no proving evidence that *Cynthia's Revels* was actually performed at court, though, it is safer to assume that it was written for the commercial theatre: the play had an important educative potential also on the stage of the Blackfriars, a potential that hinged once again on the notion that the court was meant to be a role model for the commonwealth. Ridiculing the foppish and narcissistic courtiers may have been a way of discouraging the audience from imitating that kind of court manners, while the final reward of the honest courtiers, Arete and Criticus, would have established them as virtuous models of behaviour. The non-idealised representation of the court offered in the play was meant to raise awareness of its moral failings so as to prevent them from spreading in the commonwealth.

Echo is the one who first voices criticism of the monarch and who draws attention to the narcissism that thrived at her court, and for that reason, she appears to be a more ambiguous character in the play than in the masques, where she contributed instead to praise the monarch. Her indictment of Cynthia, though, is constructive, as it is part of Jonson's didactic strategy, which entailed displaying the errors of the court, and then praising its final redemption and complimenting the virtuous courtiers.

Final redemption (of the court and of society more in general) is indeed possible if the authority of poets is recognised and their teachings are valued: in the play, moral reformation is eventually achieved through the masque devised by Criticus, who is a poet and an intellectual, and has often been identified as a fictional double of Jonson himself. Cynthia is here represented in a more favourable light: not only is she explicitly praised, but she also recognises Criticus' worthiness and is ready to reward him. She then orders that the morally corrupt characters, who have been exposed during the masque, be punished so

as to restore both virtue and her authority at court. Echo and Criticus thus work together to reform society. Jonson wisely entrusts the useful but potentially dangerous task of indicating the errors of the monarch to the mythological figure who is then immediately silenced, while his fictional double carries out the less controversial function of satirising the foibles of the courtiers and then praising the queen and helping her restore order. It is particularly appropriate that the intellectual and deviser of the masque should cooperate with Echo, as the nymph appears to be associated with language and acoustic musicality, which are the tools of the playwright *par excellence*.

The preface to *Cynthia's Revels*, for instance, anticipates that the play will offer 'words above action' (20), thus immediately declaring that the privileged medium of expression will be the spoken word as opposed to visual display. In this context, it is likely no coincidence that the first important moral message of the play is voiced by Echo, who was traditionally the epitome of pure voice. The fact that the nymph is repeatedly represented a figure antithetical to the narcissistic courtiers also suggests that she likely represents voice and language, as the courtiers are instead linguistically inept and prone to extravagant visual display.<sup>92</sup> This hypothesis is corroborated when Echo's singing voice is associated with the divine harmony of the spheres. After Echo's first monologue, Mercury bids her:

Begin, and more to grace thy cunning voice,  
The humorous air shall mix her solemn tunes  
With thy sad words; strike, Music, from the spheres,  
And with your golden rapture swell our ears. (I.ii.61-64)

Jonson draws here on Macrobius' allegorical reading of the nymph as heavenly harmony, just as he would later do in his masques. Echo offers a sublime acoustic performance which would have charmed the audience, filling their ears with

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<sup>92</sup>The opposition between acoustic sublime and visual display reminds of the dichotomy traced by Jonson in his aesthetic theory regarding the masques. In *Hymenaei*, for instance, Jonson identifies Jones' spectacular devices as the ephemeral body of the masque, and his own 'most high, and heartie inventions' as its soul, which the noblest part of any living being (ll. 4-13). The representation of Echo in *Cynthia's Revels* seems to anticipate this idea.

'golden rapture'. Two of the narcissistic courtiers, Hedon and Amorphus, also try to sing a song, but music and poetic composition are clearly not among their talents. As Chan points out, Hedon's words are simply an accumulation of banalities, the music is similarly 'a string of affective devices and musical clichés', and the rhyme he uses are conventional.<sup>93</sup> Echo is thus the one who can logically explain the deficiencies of the court and who can delight the audience with music. Her song is the first brief occasion in the play where perfect harmony is achieved at Cynthia's fractured court. By contrast, the courtiers are significantly compared by Criticus to 'a sort of jarring instruments', 'all out of tune', only capable of producing discordant sounds because they are too similar in their follies (IV.vi.10-11). Echo is thus part of the verbal and musical world of the play, which is identified by Jonson as the element of the representation which has the ability to elevate those who lend their ears to it: while visual images lead Narcissus and the courtiers to perdition, Echo's ethereal voice is potentially able to elevate and redeem them.<sup>94</sup> Echo is thus a sort of symbolic figure of Jonson's own art, and it shares its corrective power.

Despite her association with sound, Echo is temporarily restored to her physical shape. Loewenstein justifies this apparent inconsistency by arguing that Jonson chose to re-embody the nymph so as to deliver an 'ethical critique' by casting doubt on the widespread idea that the embodied past leads to virtue.<sup>95</sup> Yet, the figure of Echo did not necessarily alienate the audience's sympathy, and her criticism of Cynthia seems to be legitimate rather than indicative of her 'petty hybris'.<sup>96</sup> therefore, it is questionable that Jonson's depiction of the nymph was meant to undermine the Elizabethan rhetoric of exemplarity. Echo's embodiment seems rather to be motivated by her association with literary cre-

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<sup>93</sup>Mary Chan, '*Cynthia's Revels* and Music for a Choir School: Christ Church Manuscript Mus 439', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 18 (1971), 134-72 (p. 137). Later, she refers to the 'complete stupidity' of Amorphus' and Hedon's songs (p. 142). Anderson also underlines the difference between Echo's music and the 'fatuous song of the courtiers' (*Echo and Meaning*, pp. 59-60).

<sup>94</sup>See also Hollander, who suggests that 'the figurative mirror of language, of text, would have allowed the youth to perceive his beauty "by more kind reflection" than mere visual image could provide' (*The Figure of Echo*, p. 17).

<sup>95</sup>Loewenstein, p. 90.

<sup>96</sup>Loewenstein, p. 60.

ation. Jonson's Echo is the product of his conflation and rewriting of several versions of her story and even of their many allegorisations: echoes of Ovid, Golding, Macrobius, Neoplatonic allegories, and perhaps even Berchorius, can be recognised in Jonson's characterisations of the nymph. The varied literary past of the classical nymph is revived in the Jonsonian epigone, but not in a passively imitative way: her unprecedented re-embodiment testifies to a desire for originality and creative innovation. By restoring her corporeal shape, Jonson inverts the Ovidian metamorphosis which left her bodiless and voiceless: in doing so, he creates a new version of the nymph, who is cleverly adapted to a new medium, the theatre. Drawing from a wide range of sources on the myth of Echo, Jonson creates a complex and original dramatic character. The nymph's physical embodiment can thus be read as a metaphorical representation of the embodiment of past literature into a new, original text.

Imitation is a central theme in the play and once again two contrasting models are represented: while Echo incarnates constructive imitation, courtiers exemplify on more than one occasion sterile imitation or even plagiarism. In Act III, scene V, Asotus not only imitates Amorphus' physical postures and gestures, but he also repeats speeches that Amorphus has prepared for him (19-23, 35-58), thus behaving as a dull visual and acoustic echo of his mentor. Both of them also incorporate a great number of textual references in their speeches, for instance to Homer, Kyd, Ortuñez de Calahorra, which are often misapplied or completely decontextualized. Preoccupations with literary imitation also include anxieties towards plagiarism, a concern with touched Jonson personally.<sup>97</sup> In Act III, scene II, Anaides and Hedon plan to spoil Criticus' reputation in the court by accusing him of plagiarism: 'I'll give out all he does is dictated from other men; and swear it too, if thou'l ha'me, and that I know the time and place where he stole it' (45-47). Yet, it is not the virtuous Criticus who makes himself guilty of plagiarism, but rather the narcissistic courtiers, who have no inhibition about stealing someone else's words. In the long addition to Act III, scene I in the

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<sup>97</sup> *Cynthia's Revels*, p. 490 (III.ii.45n); Ian Donaldson, "The Fripperie of Wit": Jonson and Plagiarism', in *Plagiarism in Early Modern England*, ed. by Paulina Kewes (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 202-28.

Folio, for instance, Amorphus advises Asotus to steal Crites' phrases (Criticus in the quarto): 'A quick nimble memory will lift it away, and, at your next public meal it is your own' (33-34). Creative imitation is presented in the play as the mark of the true poet, while plagiarism and dull repetition as that of the poetaster. Criticus, the poet and scholar in the play, draws on several classical sources but his borrowings are not motivated by the inability to shape and express his own thoughts. The same cannot be said for the other courtiers, who are interestingly defined as rhymers or poetasters on more than one occasion. Moria, in particular, is compared to poetasters and described as a sort of shallow and unproductive version of Echo:

A lady made all of voice and air, talks any thing of any thing. She is like one of your ignorant poetasters of the time, who, when they have got acquainted with a strange word, never rest till they have wrung it in, though it loosen the whole fabric of their sense. (II.iv.10-13)

The expression 'male all of voice and air' reminds of Ausonius' definition of the mythological figure of Echo as 'Aeris et Linguae [...] filia' ['daughter of Air and Speech'] (Epigram XXXII, 3).<sup>98</sup> Moreover, by foolishly repeating the words she learns, she inevitably evacuates them of their meaning, thus producing a sort of empty echo of such words. Set against such negative exemplars of empty-headed or even dishonest repetition, the character of Echo stands out as the felicitous product of Jonson's thoughtful imitation of classical mythology and of more recent literary sources. This seems particularly appropriate, considering that the nymph can easily be seen as the epitome of creative appropriation herself: condemned to repeat other people's words, the nymph still managed to use them to express new meanings. If the dim-witted courtiers are mere rhymers and plagiarists, Echo, who is contrasted with them throughout the play, is instead the very embodiment of true and elevating poetry.

*Cynthia's Revels* marks the beginning of Jonson's repeated engagement with

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<sup>98</sup>Ausonius, *Ausonius*, ed. and trans. by Hugh Gerard Evelyn-White, 2 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1961), II, pp. 174-75. All subsequent references are from this edition. The epigram was probably known in early modern England, as it was often quoted or translated by later authors and commentators (Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 9).

the figure of Echo and the functions he attributes to the nymph are not too dissimilar from those fulfilled by the acoustic echoes employed later in his masques. Echoes are musical and poetic devices, considered by Jonson to be closely connected with his own art. Like his own art, they had to be used to entertain but also to educate those who listened. Endowed with sapiential value according to a longstanding Neoplatonic tradition, echoes congruously play an important role in delivering moral instruction and paraenetic political advice throughout Jonson's corpus.

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In Elizabethan entertainments and Jacobean masques, Echo and echoes establish a sort of dialogue with the monarchs before whom the show is performed. Their role is often that of praising the monarch but also that of delivering implicit messages which require an effort of decodification. They were perfect for that delicate task because they offered the possibility of ambiguity. On some occasions, most evidently in Jonson's masques and in Gascoigne's *Kenelworth*, echoes are closely linked with the voice of the author: in the first case they are poetic elements skillfully employed by the deviser of the masque, and in the second they are physically produced by the author himself, who was an actor in the entertainment. At the same time, though, echoes are disembodied sounds that may give the illusion of coming from no specific source. Despite being often associated with the authorial voice, echoes are actually heard by the audience as acoustic reverberations produced independently of the volition of the speaking subject. Those disembodied, unlocatable, and apparently accidental sounds offered thus a safe and viable opportunity to engage with political issues as they could create ambiguity as to whether the author of the show was to be held accountable for the potentially inconvenient words uttered by the echo. For that reason, the echo-device enabled authors to convey their patron's or their own intended messages, while also prudently concealing their agency at the same time. Echoes were indeed employed to explore the Queen's sexual customs and even implicitly suggest that she should marry, to support the author's plea for

patronage, or to emphasise the monarch's dependence on the poet in order to have his name bequeathed to posterity.

In Jonson's masques, in particular, flattery and instruction were closely intertwined, and echoes participated in both. Phenomena of acoustic reflection, they were the appropriate complement of the idealised mirror image which was presented to the court through the masque. Not only did they produce harmonious songs which contributed to the idyllic atmosphere of the fictional world, but they often even facilitated the flattering identification of that perfect world with the Jacobean court and kingdom. By praising the court, echoes also contributed to Jonson's strategy of *laudando praecipere*, and helped to deliver moral instruction.

The voice of echoes thus often advised monarchs, but it could also implicitly judge their conduct. Judgment even turned into true dissent in *Cynthia's Revels*. In that play, Echo retains her educative function but this time she frankly exposes the vices contaminating Elizabeth's court rather than praising it. In entertainments, masques and plays engaging with political issues, Echo and echoes thus paradoxically seem to enjoy considerable freedom of speech.

# A supernatural voice

## A bridge between Heaven and earth

If in royal entertainments Echo often prescribes behaviour to monarchs it is because she is often considered to be a sapiential voice, a divine sound that can elevate those who lend their ears to it, including the highest political authority of the nation. In their aforementioned Neoplatonic commentaries on the myth of Echo and Narcissus, Farra and Reynolds even associate the nymph with the Bat Kol, that is the voice of God, which guides men and redeems their souls. Echo represents ‘the Reflection of this diuine breath, or Spirit vpon vs; or (as [the Cabalists] interpret it) -the daughter of the diuine voice; which through the beatifying splendor it shedd & diffuses through the Soule, is justly worthy to be reuerenced and adored by vs’ (sig. P3v).<sup>1</sup> According to Reynolds, the classical myths contain wisdom and those who look for truth can grasp important lessons from them:

I remembred my selfe of the Fable of their Narcissus, which I had diuerse yeares since, put into Eughlish: and finding it not voide of his meaning, no lesse then those other the like documents deliuerner in Fables by the wise Auncients for the worlds instruction; I was not vnwilliug to annexe it (together with a short obseruation vpon it) to the former Treatise: to the end the worthy louer of Trueth finding in but this one among a million of their fables, somewhat he perhaps before, heeded (or vnderstood) not, (though a tale frequently read by euery body) he might the lesse erre in his search of humane knowledge. (sig. M3v)

The tale of Narcissus teaches that he who ‘stops his eares to the Diuine voice,

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<sup>1</sup>See also Farra, pp. 224r-24v.

or shutts his harte frō diuine Inspirations' dooms himself to 'eternall obliuion, and the dij inferi' (sigs. P3v-P4r).

In early modern England, echoes are associated with the voice of God also in religious predication. God's answers to the prayers of the faithful are often described as echoes from heaven resounding in their hearts or souls. Denison, for instance, urges every Christian to pose the question: 'Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? who shall rest vpon thy holy hill?', and they will receive an answer from God 'as it were an eccho frō heauen'.<sup>2</sup> In another work, the same author explains that those prayers 'sent forth of a sanctified heart' shall 'return from heauen with a comfortable eccho vnto your souls, like Noahs Doue with an oliue branch into the Arke'.<sup>3</sup> Sanderson similarly imagines that God 'not only by the word of his Power bestoweth a blessing upon the Creature: but also causeth the Echo of that word to sound in our hearts by the voyce of his Holy spirit, and giveth us a sensible taste of his goodness to us therein'.<sup>4</sup> Echoes are thus depicted as intermediaries between God and human beings: men cannot communicate directly with God, but they can hear His voice and words as a reflection, as an echo coming from Heaven.

Not only was Echo allegorised as the Bat Kol, but she was also associated with Christ, the mediator between men and God *par excellence*. According to Stephen Gardiner, it is the voice of Christ rather than that of God which reverberates in the heart of the faithful. Human beings can understand 'a true Eccho' of God's mysteries, 'for the original truth, procedeth of Christes wordes, the true sound wherof, redoundeth in good mens brestes, being apte and mete to receyue the same'.<sup>5</sup> In other words, what they can grasp is an echo, a reflection of God's truth, which is conveyed by the word of Christ. Christ's prayers are also described as a superior version of the echoes produced by the echo stoa at Olympia in Willet's treatise *Thesaurus Ecclesiae* (1604): while only seven echoes

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<sup>2</sup>John Denison, *A Three-Fold Resolution* (London: Richard Field, 1608), sig. Bb5v.

<sup>3</sup>John Denison, *Foure Sermons* (London: T. Snodham, 1620), sig. Q1r.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Sanderson, *Two Sermons Preached at Paules-Crosse London* (London: B. Alsop and T. Fawcet, 1628), sig. F4v.

<sup>5</sup>Stephen Gardiner, *A Detection of the Devils Sophistrie* (London: Ihoñ Herforde, 1546), sigs. N6v-N7.

can be heard in Olympia, the voice of Christ can resound seventy-seven times, and it also ‘cōtinually sounds in the eares of God & reboundeth to vs’.<sup>6</sup> The voice of his prayer generates an everlasting echo, which reaches God and the faithful. Interestingly, in Giambattista Marino’s *Dicerie Sacre*, the nymph Echo is even alluded to as a metaphorical representation of Christ himself: the Italian author suggests that Echo is a ‘bella metafora [...] per dichiarare in parte la generazione del Verbo’ [a pleasant metaphor which partially illustrates the generation of the Word].<sup>7</sup> He explains that Echo is pure voice, and a voice is nothing but the expression of an idea formed in the mind. Christ is the Word, that is to say he is the medium through which the will of God is communicated to men. Both Christ and Echo are thus physical manifestations of otherwise inaccessible intellectual thoughts. Moreover, Christ always reciprocates the everlasting love of his father just as Echo always returns the words of those who speak to her. Marino also draws on the comparison between Christ’s voice and the echo within the walls of the stoa in Olympia, thus establishing one last analogy between the Logos and Echo: Christ spoke seven times before he died on the cross, seven like the echoic reverberations produced by the ‘Heptaphonon’ in Olympia (pp. 329-31).

Echoic reverberation was thus compared to the way in which God and Christ communicate with human beings, but it was also mentioned to describe the symmetrical reaction of the faithful to God’s call:

The elect being called, with speede he answereth, and commeth to the Lord, and his hart being ready, giueth a strong and a loud echo to the voice of the Lorde. This echo wee see in Dauids heart: *when (saith he) thou saidest, seeke ye my face: mine heart answered vnto thee, O Lord, I wil seeke thy face.* And God himself speaketh the same of his children, Zacha. 13. 9. *They shall call on my name, and I will heare them: I will say, it is my people,* (nowe marke the echo) *and they shall say, the Lord is my God.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Willet, *Thesaurus Ecclesiae: That is, the Treasure of the Church* (London: John Legat, 1604), sig. A2v.

<sup>7</sup> Giambattista Marino, *Dicerie Sacre*, in *Dicerie Sacre e La Strange degli Innocenti*, ed. by Giovanni Pozzi (Torino: Einaudi, 1960), pp. 67-441 (p. 330). Translation mine.

<sup>8</sup> William Perkins, *A Treatise Tending vnto a Declaration Whether a Man Be in the Estate of Damnation or in the Estate of Grace* (London: R. Robinson, 1590?), sig. B2v.

In this treatise, not only does Perkins compare the heart's response to God to an echo, but he also draws his readers' attention ('now marke the eccho') to the parallel and hence somehow echoic verbal structure used in Scripture to describe God's words and the faithful's answer ('it is my people', 'the Lord is my God'). The echo is here thus rhetorical as well as acoustic. Henoche Clapham seems to push this kind of echoic structure even further with the result that his brief description of the communication between God and his creature appears as a concise version of an echo-dialogue, where the soul repeats God's words *verbatim*: 'Saith Christ to thy soule, My loue: let thy soule turne backe (as by Eccho) the same note, My loue'.<sup>9</sup> Going back to the quotation from Perkin's text, the author paraphrases and combines Psalm XXVII and a passage in Zecharia 13: in doing so he likely draws on Calvin's *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (1557), where the two scriptural passages are also conflated.<sup>10</sup> Calvin's work is also explicitly cited as a source in Jackson's *David's Pastorall Poem* (1603), where the author alludes once again both to the reciprocal bond of allegiance between God and his people, and to the idea that David's soul answers 'like an Eccho' to God's request to seek his face.<sup>11</sup> The image of the faithful's heart answering to God as readily as an echo, though, is not in Calvin, whose allusion to echoing is instead referred to the reverberation of God's voice in the soul of the Christian: 'Vox dei, in animis nostris, non secus atq[ue] echo in cōcavis locis, resonare debet' ['the voice of God ... ought to resound in our hearts like an echo in hollow places'], recites the passage in Calvin, which is also reported by Jackson.<sup>12</sup> Jackson thus juxtaposes Calvin's comparison between the voice of God and echoic reverberation to his own employment of the exact same analogy

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<sup>9</sup>Henoche Clapham, *Three Partes of Salomon his Song of Songs, Expounded* (London: by Valentine Sims, 1603), sig. O1r.

<sup>10</sup>John Calvin, *Commentarium in lib. Psalmorum* (pars I), in *Joannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. by Edouard Cunitz, Johann-Wilhelm Baum, Eduard Wilhelm Eugen Reuss, 58 vols (Braunschweig: C.A. Schwetschke, 1863), XXXI (Psalm XXVII.8, pp. 275-76). All quotations in Latin are from this edition.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas Jackson, *Davids Pastorall Poeme: or Sheepeheards Song* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1603), sig. N7r.

<sup>12</sup>Calvin, *Commentarium*, p. [2]76. The English translation is from John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ed. and trans. by James Anderson, 5 vols (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), I, pp. 457-58; Jackson, sig. N7r.

to describe the faithful's reaction to that divine voice. The fact that echoes are simultaneously associated with God's speech and with the response of His people conveys the idea of mutuality between them, an idea which had been emphasised also by Calvin.<sup>13</sup>

In religious texts, echoic reverberation seems thus to provide a useful paradigm to describe the communication between God and humankind. An echo is produced only when a sound hits a surface whose physical properties make it particularly apt to reflect sound. Just as the echo depends on an external sound source, so must the faithful wait for God's invitation before he can answer: 'a sinner is like the Echo which cannot speake first, but must answere a voice: God must call before before we can come: hee must speake first, and then we aunswere', explains Samuel Gardiner.<sup>14</sup> Baynes similarly argue that 'as an Echo cannot resound any thing to vs, till wee haue first spoken vnto it: so till our God hath spoken his blessings to vs, we cannot resound blessing to him'.<sup>15</sup> Not every solid surface yields an echo and neither does God's voice reverberate in the soul of every human being. Perkins makes it clear that those who are called by God and answer to him as readily as an echo are 'the elect'. In the passage from *A Detection of the Devil's Sophistry* quoted above, Stephen Gardiner similarly emphasises that the sound of Christ's words 'resoundeth' only in the hearts of those who are 'apte and mete to receyve the same' (sig. N7r). Acoustic and divine reverberation alike can only take place if the recipient of the sound is fit to resonate. The hearts and souls of the faithful are thus imagined as a sort of echo-chamber which remains silent until it is reached by God's words: those words then start to reverberate within it and elicit an echoing answer.

This pattern is significantly condensed in Greenham's powerful metaphor,

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<sup>13</sup>The aforementioned quotation from Calvin, for instance, concludes with the sentence: 'ut ex mutuo concentu emergat invocationis fiducia' (*Commentarium*, p. [2]76) ['that from this mutual concord there may spring confidence to call upon him' (*Commentary*, p. 458)]. A few lines earlier, the author also uses the similar expression 'mutuum Prophetae cum Deo colloquium' (*Commentarium*, p. 275) ['a mutual conversation between God and the prophet' (*Commentary*, p. 457)].

<sup>14</sup>Samuel Gardiner, *The Portraiture of the Prodigal Sonne* (London: P. Short, 1599), sig. O4v.

<sup>15</sup>Paul Baynes, *A Commentarie vpon the First Chapter of the Epistle of Saint Paul, Written to the Ephesians* (London: Thomas Snodham, 1618), sig. E2r.

whereby the very communication between God and man is defined as a ‘sweete Eccho, which is between the Lord and our consciences’.<sup>16</sup> If both the sound produced by God’s words and the prompt answer offered by the faithful could be compared with echoic reverberation, their constant and mutual dialogue could fittingly be conceived in terms of a ‘sweet echo’. The image of echo seems thus to have been considered particularly apt to represent a personal and unmediated relationship between God and the faithful, an idea upon which Protestantism placed particular emphasis.

Echoes also reveal to God what corrupt human beings would perhaps wish to keep hidden from him. Humfrey, for instance, writes a dialogue between Job and Zophar, and has the latter declare to his friend that ‘there is no shelter therefore for the euil dooer’ because ‘if there be none to witnesse against him, the Heauens, and earth themselues will lay him open, the Stones and Walles crye out against him; the Rocks, Woods, & Mountaines, where he wandereth, wil giue forth an Eccho for the bringing of his wickednesse to light’.<sup>17</sup> Echoes thus expose the wickedness of evil human beings, making it impossible for them to elude God’s punishment. Similarly, in Nash’s *Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem* (1613), echoes repeatedly denounce Jerusalem’s guilt. God called Jerusalem, causing ‘her streetes and al her hie places’ to be ‘filled with the ecchoes of [his] voyce’.<sup>18</sup> The city undoubtedly heard that divine summon, as even its turrets ‘received his echo into them’ and echoed it back again so that ‘the Cryer might knowe they attended the wordes which he spake’ (sig. E2v). The citizens, though, chose to ignore God’s call, leaving the divine echo produced by the walls and stones unheeded, and hence causing it to turn into an incriminating sound that ‘shall eccho vnto God for sharpe punishment against you’ (sig. E2v). A powerful indictment, ‘thou wouldest not’, reverberates as a consequence, revealing Jerusalem’s shameful turning away from God:

<sup>16</sup>Richard Greenahm, *A Third Addition of Grave Covnsells and Divine Directions*, in *The Workes of the Reverend and Faithfull Seruant af Iesus Christ M. Richard Greenham* (London: Thomas Snodham and Thomas Creeede, 1612), sigs. F2r-G5v (sig. F4v).

<sup>17</sup>Richard Humpfrey, *The Conflict of Iob* (London: William Iaggard, 1607), sig. R4v.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Nash, *Christs Teares over Ierusalem* (London: George Eld, 1613), sig. E2v. Further page references to this texts are given in brackets.

And let any but reade rehearse this sentence, *O Ierusalem, Ierusalem, how often would I haue gathered thy chyldren together, as the Henne gathereth her Chickins, the echo shall replye, But they would not. They would not. Thou wouldest not indeede.* And no damnation hast thou *but thou wouldest not.* I offered thee peace, *but thou wouldest not:* I offred thee to repent & be baptized, *but thou wouldest not:* I offred thee (if thou labourdst and wert loden) to ease thee, *but thou wouldest not:* I offerd thee to aske and thou shouldst haue, *but thou wouldest not:* To knocke and it should be opend, *but thou woldst not.* Great euils shalt thou endure, *for thou wouldest not.* Great euils did I say? alas little euils, compared to the euils I must endure onely for these 4. words, *But thou wouldest not.* [...] The cry of thee Ierusalem, (the second Sodom) that *thou wouldest not, in Gods eares is doubled.* (sigs. E2v-E3r, italics in the text, bold added for emphasis)

The explicit allusions to echo are combined with insistent repetitions of the sentence ‘thou wouldest not’, thus establishing a correspondence between the content of the passage and its formal expression. Echoes are here heralds of God’s voice, proofs that his call has been heard but ignored, and also haunting sounds which reiterate an accusation. Among so many mentions of echoes, the verb ‘doubled’ clearly refers to the same acoustic effect, and hence echoes also bring to God’s ears the words of rejection spoken by his people. Echoes thus act as God’s emissaries, propagating his words on earth, and also revealing the response of his creatures. Indeed, echoes report to God not only the sins of his creatures, but also their prayers. Abbot, for instance, explains that ‘publike prayers are much worth, which comming ioyntly from whole congregations, will echo vp to the heauen, and pierce the clouds and sky’.<sup>19</sup> In the early modern period, echoes were thus associated with the communication between God and men, but they were also regarded, more generally, as sounds which facilitates the interaction between heaven and earth: acting as a sort of bridge between those two realms, echoes enabled God’s voice to resonate on earth, or ascended to heaven with news of the good or evil deeds done by human beings.

In most of the sermons and religious texts cited so far in this chapter, the

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<sup>19</sup>George Abbot, *An Exposition Vpon the Prophet Ionah* (London: Richard Field, 1600), sig. A8r.

word ‘echo’ is only mentioned as a seemingly casual allusion and it refers to the acoustic phenomenon rather than the mythological nymph. Despite this, those allusions are still useful to shed further light on the reception of the figure of Echo, as they testify to a shared perception of echoes as sounds that have a sacred aura and that epitomise the mutual exchange between men and God. This is certainly one of the factors which justify the widespread characterisations of Echo as a divine interlocutor, one that prophesies the future, reveals the Truth, provides access to God’s message, and comforts the faithful.

In his poem ‘Echo in a Church’, Edward Herbert imagines a fully developed dialogue between Echo and a man who seeks God. The speaker seeks consolation and the remission of his sins and an echo provides solemn answers to his anxious questions:

When shall my troubled soul, at large

Discharge

The burden of her sins, oh where?

*Echo* Here.

Whence comes this voice I hear?

Who doth this grace afford?

If it be thou, O Lord,

Say, if thou hear my prayers when I call.

*Echo* All.

And wilt thou pity grant when I do cry?

*Echo* I.

Then though I fall,

Thy Grace will my defects supply,

But who will keep my soul from ill,

Quench bad desires, reform my Will?

*Echo* I will.

O may that will and voice be blest,

Which yields such comforts unto one distrest,

More blessed yet, would’st thou thy self unmask,

Or tell, at least, who undertakes this task.

*Echo* Ask.

Then quickly speak,

Since now with crying I am grown so weak,

I shall want force even to crave thy name,

O speak before I wholly weary am.

*Echo* I am.<sup>20</sup>

The echo suggests that the place where sins are remitted is the Church and, more importantly, that the Church is the place where the believer can hear the voice of God. The echo identifies itself as the celestial entity who hears every prayer and guides the faithful's soul onto a virtuous path ('I', 'I will'). When the speaker asks that consoling voice to reveal its true identity, the voice gives an apparently tautological answer: 'I am'. Yet, with those two words the echo is actually indicating the Old Testament name of God, revealed to Moses on the Sinai.<sup>21</sup> The poem seems thus to represent a more intimate reenactment of the Sinai epiphany: just as the Lord manifested himself to Moses on 'holy ground', so his voice is now heard in the holy Church; just as he promised to deliver his people from the affliction of Egypt, so he now reassures the faithful that he will give him comfort. The echoic voice offers a sort of enigma to its listener, which can only be deciphered by the initiate: the Christian must understand that the tetragrammaton is being alluded to in the answer 'I am' and hence recognise that he is in the presence of the Lord.

Herbert's representation of God's voice as an echo may create perplexities in the readers of the poems, who may not deem such a derivative sound to be an appropriate vehicle for the words of the Lord: Rickey, for instance, suggests that 'one may quarrel with Edward Herbert's dramatizing God as an echo of man,

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<sup>20</sup>Edward Herbert of Cherbury, *The Poems English and Latin of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, ed. by Moore G.C. Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 47-48.

<sup>21</sup>Mary Ellen Rickey, *Utmost Art: Complexity in the Verse of George Herbert* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 34.

although the answers of the voice are impressive enough.<sup>22</sup> This objection can be easily refuted if we bear in mind that it was by no means unusual to associate the sound of echo with the voice of God, and especially with the faithful's act of understanding and internalising His words, which were imagined as reverberating in men's hearts or souls. The poem may indeed be read as an intimate dialogue between the faithful and his own conscience, but it is a conscience which is inspired by God and imbued with his words. Moreover, if there is an echo of the Sinai episode in this poem, the author may have been drawing on the idea expressed in that biblical passage that God can 'be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say' (Exodus, 4. 12):<sup>23</sup> if God can teach what to say, he can also guide the faithful to formulate the questions so that they generate the right answer when reverberated by the echo. The fact that God expresses himself through an echo is thus not necessarily a belittlement of his words as a subordinate reflection, as God both originates and guides his dialogue with the faithful.

Echo is interestingly associated with the Church also in Donne's sermon preached at Whitehall in 1624. Donne represents the Church and the Scriptures as complementary vehicles which enable the faithful to gain access to the Word of God and grasp its true meaning:

The Scriptures are Gods Voyce; The Church is his Eccho; a redoubling, a repeating of some particular syllables, and accents of the same voice. And as we hearken with some earnestnesse, and some admiration at an Eccho, when perchance we do not understand the voice that occasioned that Eccho; so doe the obedient children of God apply themselves to the Eccho of his Church, when perchance otherwise they would lesse understand the voice of God, in his Scriptures, if that voice were not so redoubled unto them.<sup>24</sup>

The Church helps the faithful to interpret the Scriptures, thus acting as an echo

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<sup>22</sup>Rickey, p. 35.

<sup>23</sup>*The Bible*, Authorised King James Version, ed. by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>24</sup>John Donne, *Sermon No.11: Preached at Whitehall, March 4, 1624 [1624/5]*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, 10 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953), VI, pp. 223-40 (p. 223).

of the Word of God which is reported in those sacred texts. The echo is thus once again imagined as a sound that mediates the Word of God, making it accessible to human beings.

The idea that the echo may be the interlocutor of an inward dialogue can be found not only in Herbert's 'Echo in a Church' but also in Swift's collection of religious meditations, which he interestingly entitles *The Divine Echo* (1612). He imagines such devotional texts as dialogues 'betweene a second or a Divine Diogenes and Echo', whom he metaphorically identifies with 'a Christian and his Soule'<sup>25</sup> In the dedicatory epistle the author explains his choice to 'write thus phantastically [...] of an Echo' (sig. A4v) by describing how

the Christian soule doth suddenly returne backe and answer like the Eccho, or  
rather I may say more truely like a voice from heauen, vnto what he demaundeth  
of her, directly giuing the last sound of the word. (sig. A4r)

Most of his meditations conclude with a questions addressed by the Christian to his soul, and his last word is re-echoed so as to provide an answer. For instance, the soul answers 'all things' when the speaker asks 'tell mee my soule what may his hands doe, which haue made both heauen and earth, the sea and land and therin both great and small things'; it teaches the faithful that men can offend God by 'omitting' to do what He prescribed as well as by 'committing' forbidden deeds; and it wisely explains that the man who 'spends his daies idly, and doth not passe his time well' is bound to 'Hell' (sig. E6r). The speaker shows acquaintance with the Word of God contained in the Scriptures not only because his own soul solves his theological doubts, but also because he gathers and comments biblical passages as he develops his meditations. Once again, the faithful can find answers within himself once he has internalised God's message: the Word of God reverberates in his soul and is embedded in his own words. This notion is pivotal in George Herbert's 'Heaven'.

In 'Heaven', the lyric I asks for spiritual guidance and is once again answered

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<sup>25</sup>John Swift, *The Divine Echo, or Resounding Voice from Heauen* (London: W. Stansby, 1612), sig. B1r. All subsequent page references are given in brackets.

by an echo.<sup>26</sup> He wishes to find someone who ‘will show [him] those delights on high’, and the echo responds ‘I’, thus offering to help him bridge the gap between himself and Heaven.

O who will show me those delights on high?

*Echo. I*

Thou Echo, thou art mortall, all men know.

*Echo. No.*

Wert thou not born among the trees and leaves?

*Echo. Leaves.*

And are there any leaves, that still abide?

*Echo. Bide.*

What leaves are they? impart the matter wholly.

*Echo. Holy.*

Are holy leaves the Echo then of blisse?

*Echo. Yes.*

Then tell me, what is that supreme delight?

*Echo. Light.*

Light to the minde: what shall the will enjoy?

*Echo. Joy.*

But are there cares and businesse with the pleasure?

*Echo. Leisure.*

Light, joy, and leisure; but shall they persever?

*Echo. Ever.*<sup>27</sup>

Unlike in Edward Herbert’s poem and Donne’s sermon, echo is here associated with Scripture rather than the Church. The classical nymph Echo appears to be the protagonist of the dialogue, but it becomes immediately evident that Herbert’s Echo is actually a Christian rewriting of the famous mythological figure. The speaker’s statement ‘thou art mortall, all men know’ suggests that

<sup>26</sup>Rickey suggests that Edward Herbert’s echo-poem may have antedated that of his brother, George Hebert (p. 24). If that was the case, George Herbert was probably inspired by his brother’s idea.

<sup>27</sup>George Herbert, *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 655–58. All subsequent references to Herbert’s poems are from this edition.

he thinks that his interlocutor is the mortal nymph who died for love in the myth narrated by Ovid. Similarly, his question ‘wert thou not born among the trees and leaves?’ hints at the pastoral setting in which Echo was generally placed.<sup>28</sup> His interlocutor, though, contradicts him, as it reveals that the man is not speaking with a mortal being and that the leaves where that voice abides are holy and eternal, unlike those of a wood. The lyric ‘I’ thus understands that Echo refers to the Bible’s holy leaves, which are indeed the ‘echo’ of heavenly bliss, that is to say the medium through which men can get a glimpse of the beatitude of Heaven. He thus realises that he is hearing the voice of God, which is famously echoed and eternalised in the Scriptures: the Scriptures were inspired by God, they contain his Word, which is expressed in human language so as to be intelligible to his creatures.

As was the case with Edward Herbert’s poem, critics have debated on the essence of the echoing voice, and some of them have argued that it is a mere reverberation of the speaker’s own words.<sup>29</sup> That, though, does not undermine the divine nature of that disembodied sound. Weibly has convincingly explained that Herbert believed that the divine Word exists within men, and, in order to be able to hear it, they have to listen carefully to their own heart. The poet himself suggests that man is ‘so brave a Palace’ built by the Lord who dwells therein,<sup>30</sup> and, for that reason, ‘his Word breathes within human words’, as Weibly beautifully phrases it.<sup>31</sup> Just as the lyric ‘I’ in ‘Echo in a Church’ has to listen carefully to the reverberation of his own words to know the truth, so the speaker in Heaven can find edifying answers to his questions embedded in his

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<sup>28</sup>Wilcox points out that the first version of the poem presents the words ‘woods’ instead of ‘trees’. She argues that ‘woods’ was another reference to the wood nymph Echo: the word was then changed into ‘trees’ to reinforce the link with Psalm 1. 3 (*The English Poems of George Herbert*, p. 657, l. 5n.).

<sup>29</sup>Helen Vendler, *The Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 227; Janis Lull, *The Poem in Time. Reading George Herbert’s Revisions of ‘The Church’* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1990), p. 134; *The English Poems of George Herbert*, p. 656.

<sup>30</sup>Herbert, ‘Man’, in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, pp. 330-36 (l. 50).

<sup>31</sup>P. S. Weibly, ‘George Herbert’s “Heaven”: The Eloquence of Silence’, *George Herbert Journal*, 4.2 (1981), 1-9 (p. 6). Vendler similarly argues that the poem implies that men have to listen to themselves in order to find God (p. 227).

own utterances, an idea which is effectively demonstrated by the employment of echoic repetition as a poetic device.

As in sermons and religious treatises analysed above, the echo emblematises the dialogue between God and man, it serves as a paradigm of the intimate and mutual exchange through which men can hear the Word of God and answer appropriately. Once again, the truthful message of God echoes within the faithful's soul, who immediately starts to re-echo it.<sup>32</sup> The speaker repeats most of the words uttered by the echo: when the echo confirms that it was born among the 'leaves', he utters that same word in his following two questions. From those lines on, the questions posed by the man generally incorporate the words that had just been spoken by the echo, such as 'holy' and 'light', until he finally recapitulates the three most important terms that constitute the revelation offered by the echo, 'light, joy, and leisure'. The dialogue between God and man is thus represented as reciprocal exchange in which one echoes and the other echoes back, it takes the form of a 'sweete Eccho, which is between the Lord and our consciences', as the Reverend Richard Greenham puts it in his aforementioned doctrinal text (sig. F4v).

By communicating with men and revealing his Word in the Scriptures, God employs human language and demonstrates that His message can be adequately expressed through that medium. In Herbert's poem, though, God's language appears to be a sort of ameliorated version of that employed by the lyric 'I', one that captures the essence of things and discloses the profound relationship between words and hence between the referents designated by them. Its echoic form is illuminating in this respect. Echo generally deconstructs words 'into their hidden but operative ultimae', a process which seems particularly fruitful in Herbert's poem.<sup>33</sup> The echoes that answer to the speaker's questions eliminate the superfluous elements in his sentences, enabling him to get to the core of God's message: as Lull explains, 'the emblematic verbal process of [Herbert's]

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<sup>32</sup>This has also been noted by Weibly (pp. 6-7).

<sup>33</sup>Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 12.

echo poems [...] works by pairing away the parts of the words that are not the Word'.<sup>34</sup> When God's undiluted Word is allowed to emerge, the faithful can more easily understand His truths and mysteries. The echoic answers in the poem enable its readers and the lyric 'I' to grasp that the essence of supreme delight is God's light, and reveal that the pleasure which will be enjoyed in Heaven consists in joy and leisure. 'Ever' not only confirms that light, joy, and leisure will endure, but also conveys the theological truth that the state of heavenly bliss is everlasting.

This 'trimming' of words is an essential feature of Herbert's poetic style: 'his *modus operandi*', Asals argues, is that 'of anatomizing the letter, of carving, serving, and pressing it for significance'.<sup>35</sup> This is evident also in 'Paradise', a poem whose form bears close resemblance to the traditional echo-verse. In each tercet, the final word of each line is repeated, but its first letter is clipped away (grow/ row/ ow), so that the rhyming words produce the effect of a reverberated echo. Words are connected through this echoic device, as one is embedded in the other.

What open force, or hidden CHARM  
Can blast my fruit, or bring me HARM,  
While the inclosure is thine ARM

Inclose me full for fear I START  
Be to me rather sharp and TART  
Then let me want thy hand and ART.<sup>36</sup> (ll. 4-9)

These 'cuttings' of words 'rather heal then rend', as Herbert puts it, because they once again enable a salvific message to emerge. 'Harm', for instance, is neutralised by God's 'arm' both visually on the page, as it is literally broken down to form that word, and on the level of meaning, as God protects the faithful from danger. In the same way, the fear that makes the faithful start is dispelled by

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<sup>34</sup>Lull, p. 133.

<sup>35</sup>Heather Asals, *Equivocal Predication: George Herbert's Way to God* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>Herbert, 'Paradise', in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, pp. 463-65.

God's art, and the phonetic association of 'art' and 'tart' reinforces the semantic content expressed in those two lines, which imply that God's intervention ('hand and art') is desirable even if it may seem harsh. That idea is explained in the next stanza, where the members of the Church are likened to trees which God 'prune[s]' and 'pare[s]' (l. 11) so that they can bear even more fruit. It is God's anatomising art that the poet appropriates when he lends his voice to Him: the poet 'prunes' his own words so that they can bear a salvific and mysterious fruit, the Word of God.

Echoes also activate multiple meanings of a single word and create punning connections between linguistic signs, thus consequently disclosing the hidden relationships that there exist between the things signified. Asals points out that 'Herbert does not pun to confound but to unfold the mysterious truth':<sup>37</sup> that purpose animates his breaking down of words as well. In 'Heaven', 'light' (l. 13) is not only linked with 'delight' (l. 14) but it also has a double meaning itself, as it may function as a noun, meaning luminescence, or as an adjective, meaning not heavy, both of which make sense in this context.<sup>38</sup> A cluster of meanings is similarly exposed by the repetition of 'leaves', a word which denotes the natural foliage, the pages of the Bible, and, as Wilcox notes, can also work as a verb, 'suggesting that a natural echo would not "abide"'.<sup>39</sup> The phonetic similarity between 'leisure' and 'pleasure' also reinforces their semantic connection, drawn in the poem by defining leisure as a particular kind of pleasure. Moreover, in order for 'bliss' to rhyme with 'yes', the word must be pronounced as 'bless': the echo-rhyme brings hence into play even meanings which are not explicitly in the text, thus suggesting a virtually infinite chain of connections among words and among things themselves. This implicit or explicit linking of different signs reflects the idea that things, as well as signs, are interrelated in the perfect totality of God's Creation. As Herbert himself claims in 'Providence', 'all things that are though they have sev'rall wayes, / Yet in their being joyn with one advise

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<sup>37</sup>Asals, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup>*The English Poems of George Herbert*, p. 657 (ll. 13-14n).

<sup>39</sup>*The English Poems of George Herbert*, p. 657 (l. 6n).

/ To honour thee' (ll. 145-47).<sup>40</sup>

Among the early modern views of language was the idea that the relationship between signs and things was motivated, that the very essence of the thing was contained in its name. Language was considered to be a gift of God, who gave things their name.<sup>41</sup> It was thus not uncommon that preachers used puns as a way to disclose fundamental religious truths: Read, for instance, analyses the sermons composed by Andrewes and argues that the author employed puns because every phonetic link between words is the ‘evidence of a divinely instituted linguistic order’.<sup>42</sup> Because of the exact correspondence between linguistic signs and things, the apparently fortuitous relationship between different words which was evidenced through puns actually testified to the order of God’s creation, it revealed that each element of the cosmos belonged to a perfectly harmonised whole designed by God. The poet’s art should thus imitate the ‘art’ of God, which entails ‘pruning’ and severing but also joining beings into a perfectly harmonised creation: the poet could grasp the secrets of God by drawing connection between words, by ‘pruning’ and anatomising words until they yielded further meanings. He thus fittingly employed a kind of language which does not separate and individuate but rather ‘joyns’.

Echoic lines enable Herbert to do just that, as they create punning relationships between different words and even resonate with meanings not explicitly present in the text. They are a combination of the ‘pruning’ and punning devices distinctive of Herbert’s religious poetry. Through that formal device, the poet is able to show that the Word of God abides within men and is embedded

<sup>40</sup>Herbert, ‘Providence’, in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, pp. 415-27. For Herbert’s use of *paronomasia* in other poems of his collection see Judith Dundas, ‘Paronomasia in the Quip Modest: From Sidney to Herbert’, *Connotations*, 2.3 (1992), 223-33. Dundas selects several examples of puns in Herbert’s poetry, but does not analyse the punning effects produced by the re-echoed words in the poems analysed in this chapter.

<sup>41</sup>Jonathan Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice in the Renaissance* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p. 40; Molly M. Mahood, *Shakespeare’s Wordplay* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 169.

<sup>42</sup>Sophie Read, ‘Puns: or Serious Wordplay’, in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. by Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 81-94 (p. 87). For the revelatory nature of puns see also: Walter Redfern, *Puns*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 59, 61, 75, 113; Mahood, p. 170; Hope, p. 40

in human language. In ‘Heaven’, the echoes dispel the doubts of the speaker because they employ a more essential kind of language, one that clarifies and reveals the connections that exist between things. The echo thus serves as a symbol of the communication with God and the possibility to gain access to his truth; it exemplifies how God’s message can be perceived and understood, and how language itself enables men to come to discover it.

## ‘The truest oracle on ground’: prophetic Echo

In the devotional texts analysed above, echo is frequently mentioned to describe the reverberation of God’s voice in the world or in the soul of the faithful, or as a sound that helps to bridge the gulf between Heaven and earth. The Christian prophets were men who listened to that divine echo, which gifted them with the ability to foretell the future. Goodwin draws on the Talmud (*Sanhedrin*, 1) and explains that ‘after the latter Prophets Haggai, Zacharie, and Malachie were dead, the holy Ghost went vp, or departed from Israel. Howbeit they had the vse of a voice or Eccho from heauen’.<sup>43</sup> Earlier in the text, he briefly expresses the same concept and associates the voice of God with echo even more explicitly by alluding to the rabbinic notion of the Bat Kol, glossed once again as ‘an Eccho from heaven’ (sig. M3v). A prophet thus owes his ability to reveal the truth to the voice of God echoed from Heaven, which manifests itself to him.

Acoustic echoes and the figure of Echo retain their prophetic quality also when they are not associated with the Christian God. Jonson, for instance, places the classical nymph in a pastoral and pagan setting and defines her ‘the truest oracle on ground’.<sup>44</sup> An echo is the repetition of the last word uttered by someone and it seems thus a repetition of a past instant, it appears to be linked with the past rather than with the future. Yet, echoic reverberation was

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<sup>43</sup>Thomas Goodwin, *Moses and Aaron* (London: John Haviland, 1625), sig. Dd1v.

<sup>44</sup>*Pan’s Anniversary*, l. 180.

nonetheless credited with prophetic power in the poetry, prose and drama of the early modern period. In many echo-dialogues, Echo is ready to respond to those who are looking for answers, and is sometimes even explicitly invoked by them: she frequently reveals truths unknown to or unrecognised by her interlocutor, and even prophesises future events. The fact that Echo is frequently oracular has been noted by critics, but the modalities through which she fulfils that prophetic function and the literary tradition behind that widespread depiction of her deserve further scrutiny.<sup>45</sup>

Echoes had been surrounded by a sacred aura of divinity ever since classical antiquity. Ausonius even identifies the nymph Echo as a goddess: ‘ignotamque oculis [...] deam’ [‘goddess whom eyes never saw’] (Epigram XXXII, 2) she defines herself when she addresses the foolish painter who tries to paint her likeness. His epigram was often translated and drawn upon in the early modern period, and it was likely to his representation of Echo that both Linche and the anonymous author of *The Problemes of Aristotle* (1595) refer when they state: ‘it is read, that she was a goddesse’ and ‘Some doe idly fable that shee is a goddesse’.<sup>46</sup> The nymph, though, was more often perceived to be an intermediary between gods and men rather than a goddess herself; echoes were the vehicles or reverberations of the voice of the gods.<sup>47</sup> As Crippa points out, the melodious echo of bronze cauldrons and that produced by the sacred oak at the oracular site of Dodona were considered to be a manifestation of Zeus, who possessed the prophetess enabling her to know his will.<sup>48</sup> The importance of echoing at that oracular site is revealed by Philostratus the Elder, who refers that a bronze statue of Echo could be found there, and it embodied the reverberating sound

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<sup>45</sup>Ghedira, pp. 196-201; Mauré, *Heritages*, p. 66, Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup>Richard Linche, *The Fountaine of Ancient Fiction* (London: Adam Islip, 1599), sig. N2v; *The Problemes of Aristotle* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldgraue, 1595), sig. I4r. Linche explicitly cites Ausonius as his source a few lines later, and translates his epigram into an English sonnet (sig. I4v).

<sup>47</sup>Bonadeo p. 80 (n. 15). Ghedira also suggests that ‘Écho parle pour un dieu. Derrière elle se cache Pan, ou Éros, ou la Terre’ [Echo speaks for a God. Behind her voice is hidden that of Pan, Eros or the Earth] (p. 199, translation mine. See also p. 211).

<sup>48</sup>Sabrina Crippa, ‘La Voce e la Visione. Il Linguaggio Oracolare Femminile’, in *Sibille e Linguaggi Oracolari. Mito, Storia, Tradizione. Atti del Convegno Macerata - Norcia 20-24 Settembre 1994*, ed. by Ilenia Chirassi Colombo and Tullio Sepplilli (Pisa, Roma: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 1998) pp. 159-89 (p. 171).

incessantly produced by the bronze vessels dedicated to Zeus (II.33.21-25).<sup>49</sup> Echoes were heard not only at Dodona, but probably also at the oracular site of Delphi, as is reported in Justinus' *Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum*, translated in English by Arthur Golding. Justinus describes the temple of Apollo at Delphi, which was situated on Mount Parnassus, and explains that on the side of that mountain there was a cavity 'in formam theatri' [shaped as a theatre], where every voice and sound 'resonare solet' [is prone to resound] (XXIV.6.8).<sup>50</sup> In Golding's translation, the acoustic reverberation described in detail by Justinus is significantly identified with the echo: 'the sound beateth and reboundeth in such wise vpon the stones from one to another, that the Echo is hard double and treble'.<sup>51</sup> That reverberation, adds Justinus, struck simple and ignorant people with awe, making them think that the god was among them. This suggests once again that rebounding and apparently sourceless sounds could be easily taken to be a sign of the presence of a god and, as such, they were considered to be ominous.

Fittingly, the answers given by Echo are compared to the Apollonian oracle in the poem 'Sitting alone upon my thought in melancholye moode'.<sup>52</sup> The lyric 'I' witnesses a dialogue between Echo and Anne Vavasour, in which the nymph reveals the name of the man beloved by the lady, Edward de Vere, and reassures her that she is worthy of his love. After reporting the dialogue between them, the narrator comments: 'To her how Echo told the truth as 'twere Phoebus' oracle' (l. 22). This is obviously a simile aimed at emphasising the truthfulness of Echo's words rather than suggesting that her words are inspired by the Delphic god, but it is still an important evidence of the fact that the nymph's answers could be associated with pagan oracles also in the early modern period. Echo appears to

<sup>49</sup>Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines*, ed. and trans. by Arthur Fairbanks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), pp. 268-69.

<sup>50</sup>Marcus Junianus Justinus, *Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum*, ed. by Alice Borgna (2011) <<http://digilibit.lett.unipmn.it/opera.php?id=DLT000321>> [accessed December 2019], translation mine.

<sup>51</sup>Marcus Junianus Justinus, *Thabridgment of the Histories of Trogus Pompeius*, trans. by Arthur Golding (London: Thomas Marshe, 1564), sig. P5r.

<sup>52</sup>References to this poem are from Steven W. May, 'The Poems of Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex', *Studies in Philology*, 77.5 (1980), 1-132 (pp. 38-39).

be more closely linked with Apollo's prophetic power in Sabie's *Flora's Fortune* (1595). The 'fate-præsaging god' reveals to Flora that her beloved Cassander, whom she believes to be dead, is in fact alive.<sup>53</sup> His prophecy, written on a scroll, is ambiguous, as it lacks punctuation marks: 'Cassander liues not drownd is he in seas' (sig. B3r). Flora fails to understand it and wonders whether it means 'Cassander liues: not drownd is he', or 'Cassander liues not: drownde is he' (sig. B3r). Having opted for the more pessimistic reading, she wanders in the fields where she tends her flocks, sobbing and moaning for her loss, until Echo answers to her 'dolefull words' (sig. B4r). The dialogue follows the conventions of this form: the voice of the nymph is heard in a pastoral setting, it consoles a maid who is pining for love, and the nymph presents herself as someone who is equally distressed. Flora, though, also asks her: 'Why tell good Eccho, liues my Cassander? how should I / ioy, if thou shuldest tel me that he liues', to which Echo answers 'he lives' (sig. B4r). The nymph thus replicates the function of the Apollonian oracle, as she gives Flora answers as to the fate of her beloved. Her words are also no less ambiguous than those of the oracle: Flora accuses the nymph of having told a lie and voices her conviction that 'the sea had him doubtles, it had, and it hath', which echo apparently confirms by repeating 'it hath' (sig. B4v). Echo does not help to solve the riddle posed by Apollo's prophecy, but rather reinforces its obscurity by giving contradictory answers. The meaning of both the oracle and Echo's words depends on how they are interpreted by Flora, who has to insert a punctuation mark in the first case, and decide which of the two conflicting statements is true in the second. As will be later pointed out, the necessity for careful interpretation is a trait which echoic answers and oracular responses have in common.

Echo is explicitly associated with the voice of a god in Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1590).<sup>54</sup> In Act IV, Scene VIII, Silvio's tirade against love is interrupted

<sup>53</sup>Francis Sabie, *Flora's Fortune* (London: Richard Ihones, 1595), sig. B2v. All subsequent page references are given in brackets.

<sup>54</sup>All references to this text are from Giovan Battista Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido*, ed. by Elisabetta Selmi with an introduction by Guido Baldassarri (Venezia: Marsilio, 1999). All the given translations are mine.

by Echo, who predicts that we will very soon the victim of that force against which he is speaking. Silvio wants to know who his interlocutor is and asks:

Chi sè tu che rispondi?  
Echo, ò più tosto Amor, che così d'Echo  
Imita il sono? (69-71)

[who are you? Echo or Love, who imitates the sound of Echo?]

Echo answers ambiguously ‘sono’, which means both ‘sound’ and ‘I am’. Silvio assumes that he is hearing the voice of the god Cupid, and asks for confirmation that his interlocutor is the son of Venus himself. The echo answers ‘esso’ [he], and, a few lines later, it fittingly claims to be ‘Dio [...] del mondo’ [the God of the world] (IV.viii.70-87). The dialogue ends with another explicit reassertion of the divine nature of the echo, which reverberates the word ‘divino’ in response to Silvio’s accusation of being nothing but a drunken fortune-teller (‘Vedi come se’ stato oggi indovino / Pien di vino - Divino’, IV.viii.119-20). The echo does seem to have a superior knowledge of future events, as it reveals not only that Silvio will eventually love a woman, but also the very day of his encounter with her, her name, and even the way in which he will fall in love. Such inexplicable and extremely detailed foreknowledge reinforces the impression that that disembodied voice belongs indeed to a celestial being. Echo’s prophecy comes true just a few lines later: Silvio immediately falls in love with Dorinda, whom he has wounded with his bow in that very wood, exactly as had been foretold by Echo.

In his *Annotazioni* (1602), Guarini draws attention to the oracular function played by Echo in that scene and apparently tries to anticipate objections as to the scene’s lack of verisimilitude. The author compares Echo with the oracle of the goddess Diana, who had revealed that the curse sent by the goddess upon Arcadia would only end when two youths of godly descent marry:

ed era ben ragionevole, se Amarilli, e Mirtillo, soggetto principale della favola, ebbero la voce solidale dell’oracolo, che predicesse i loro accidenti, che anche Silvio e Dorinda, soggetto episodico, avessero la vana voce d’una Echo, che dei

loro fosse indovina.<sup>55</sup>

[Since the future events concerning Amarilli and Mirtillo, who are the protagonists of the main story, were foreseen by a sympathetic oracle, it is reasonable that also those concerning Silvio and Dorinda, who are the subjects of the subplot, be predicted by the voice of a vain Echo.]

Although the adjectives ‘solidale’ and ‘vana’ seem to imply a hierarchy between the truthful and beneficial oracle of the goddess and the idle voice of Echo, their ability to foresee the future are presented as equally reliable. Guarini then explains why that episode should not be dismissed as utterly incredible and hence unfitting for a ‘poema drammatico’ [dramatic poem], as he call his *Pastor Fido*:

Che poi sia verisimile, che Amore possa antivedere il successo di Dorinda, e di Silvio, e servirsi dell'Echo per manifestarlo, a me par chiaro per quello, che credevano i pagani de' loro Iddij, e del sapere del Demonio, il quale da tutti vien creduto che per mezzi naturali, possa antivedere e predir alcune cose future. (p. 124)

[The fact that Love foresees the future happiness of Silvio and Dorinda and employs the echo to reveal it is obviously plausible because of the beliefs held by the pagans on their gods and our knowledge on the Devil, who is deemed to be able to predict some future events through natural means.]

Guarini interestingly acknowledges that the pagan gods were believed to be able not only to foresee future events but also to communicate with human beings through natural phenomena such as the echo. Thus, even if the moderns are aware that an echo is nothing but the acoustic reverberation of a speaker's own voice, as Guarini specifies a few lines later, it is perfectly appropriate that in the play's pastoral setting that natural sound delivers the message of the god of Love.

Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* had an enthusiastic reception in England, as it was translated into English in 1602, and into Latin for the Cambridge academic stage, where it was performed between 1602 and 1605.<sup>56</sup> The Latin version

<sup>55</sup>Giovan Battista Guarini, *Annotazioni*, in *La Questione del 'Pastor Fido'*, ed. by Andrea Gareffi (Roma: Vecchiarelli Editore, 1997), pp. 1-205 (p. 124).

<sup>56</sup>Giovan Battista Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido: or The faithfull Shepheard. Translated out of Italian into*

of the echo-scene draws an even more straightforward connection between the echoing voice and the god Cupid by eliminating the ambiguity created in the Italian text by the homonyms ‘sono’ (I am) and ‘sono’ (a sound):

Tu quis es qui respondes? Ecchone an  
Qui Ecchus sonum imitavis amor? *Amor.*<sup>57</sup>

[Who are you who answers to me? Echo  
or Love who imitates the sound of Echo? *Love.*.]

There is here no doubt as to whether the echo might be a mere natural sound, as it clearly affirms to be the voice of Love itself, which reaches Silvio in the form of an echo. In the plot devised by Guarini, Echo thus acts as the messenger of Venus, a role which could not be more appropriate for the nymph. In Ovid’s narrative, Echo did indeed love so fervently that she died for it, thus becoming an icon of the immense power of that force.

Guarini’s *Il Pastor Fido* seems to have influenced also Brooke’s *Melanthe*, a Neo-Latin play performed at Trinity College Cambridge in 1615 on the occasion of King James’s visit. No direct source for the plot of Brooke’s play has been found, but Bolton has convincingly suggested that both the atmosphere and many elements of the plot, among which the dialogue between Alcinous and Echo, may have been drawn from Guarini’s work.<sup>58</sup> The dialogue with Echo

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*English*, trans. by John / Charles (?) Dymock (London: by Thomas Creede, 1602). For the date of *Pastor Fidus*, the Neo-Latin play performed at Cambridge, see *Pastor Fidus / Parthenia/ Clytophon*, ed. by Margaret J. Arnold, Renaissance Latin Drama in England 10 (Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1990), p. 1. Nelson suggests that the play was composed in 1604 (Alan H. Nelson, *Records of Early English Drama: Cambridge*, 2 vols (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1989), II, pp. 914-15 (p. 915)).

<sup>57</sup> *Pastor Fidus*, ed. by Margaret J. Arnold, ll. 2803-04. The following translation is mine.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Brooke, *Melanthe: a Latin Pastoral Play of the Early Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Joseph S. G. Bolton (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1972), p. 64. Brooke may also have attended the performance of *Pastor Fidus*, even if there are no surviving records that confirm this hypothesis. He remained at Trinity College from 1596 to 1615, and the play was performed at King’s College. While Paine suggests that the audience was composed only of members of King’s College, other critics have argued that the performances of academic plays could be private or public, and that the public ones were attended by members of the Universities and even by local townspeople and their wives (Douglas Paine, “Heigh! Vale Oxonium! Veni Hinksay!” The Scholar and the Rustic in Neo-Latin Pastoral Comedy’, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 33 (2006), 135-53 (p. 140); Howard B. Norland, ‘Neo-Latin Drama in Britain’, in *Neo-Latin Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Bull, 2013), pp. 471-544 (p. 473); *Pastor Fidus*, p. ii). Moreover, on the Trinity College manuscript appears the name William Quarles, who was probably the owner of the manuscript. Nelson hypothesises that the manuscript belonged to one William Quarles, member of

takes place in Act II, scene II, when Alcinous voices his disappointment at the fact that Palemon, the father of his beloved Melanthe, has ordered that his daughter marry the dim Nicander. Echo catches his words and predicts the future of his love for Melanthe by answering to his questions:

ALCINUS Ego, an Nicander, dignior virtute? ECCHO Tute.

ALCINUS Quis tu, qui respondes? An effaris Caeli plebiscita? ECCHO Ita.

ALCINUS An erit illa mea, pro quâ cor meum perit? ECCHO Erit.

ALCINUS Effare apertè, An Melanthen possedebo meam? ECCHO Eam.

ALCINUS Ah quando fiet hoc? aut quo die? ECCHO Hodie. ALCINUS Hodie?  
ECCHO Hodie.

ALCINUS Quo Deorum fiat effato. ECCHO Fato. ALCINUS Nempe certissimo.  
ECCHO Imo.<sup>59</sup>

ALCINUS At quae via decernitur huic Amori? ECCHO Mori.

ALCINUS An vt amore fruamur excedendum è vitâ? ECCHO Ita.

ALCINUS Quae spes illum manet, in amore qui moritur? ECCHO Oritur.

ALCINUS An aliquis moriens liber erit ab interitu? ECCHO Tu.

ALCINUS In Orco positum quid me revocabit indidem. ECCHO Idem.

ALCINUS Ah haec mihi contingent immerenti? ECCHO moerenti. ALCINUS  
Et nescio? ECCHO Nescio.

ALCINUS At oh — ECCHO Oh.<sup>60</sup> (563-75)

[ALCINUS Who is greater in virtue, Nicander or I? ECCHO You.

ALCINUS Who are you that answers? Are you voicing heavenly decrees? ECCHO It  
is so.

ALCINUS Will she be mine, for whom my heart perishes? ECCHO She will.

ALCINUS Tell me honestly, will I enjoy my Melanthe? ECCHO She.

ALCINUS When will that be? On what day? ECCHO Today. ALCINUS Today?  
ECCHO Today.

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St John's from 1564 to 1618 (p. 915): if that was the case, his signature suggests that manuscript copies of academic plays could circulate outside the college which produced them. Brooke may thus easily have had some knowledge of *Pastor Fidus*, whether directly or by hearsay. What he had certainly learnt by the publication of Dymock's translation and the adaptation of Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* for the academic stage with such close chronological proximity was that the Italian play was a popular and promising subject. This may have prompted him to turn to it as a wealthy source for plot, characters, and situations.

<sup>59</sup>'Quo Deorum fiat effato' and 'Nempe certissimo' are probably questions rather than assertions although they are not followed by a quotation mark in the quarto and in Bolton's edition of the play.

<sup>60</sup>All references to Brooke's play are from *Melanthe*, ed. by Bolton. Translations are mine.

ALCINUS By the decree of whose God will this happen. ECCHO Fate. ALCINUS. A most secure fate. ECCHO Deeply.

ALCINUS And what path has been laid out for this Love? ECCHO To die.

ALCINUS Should we depart from life in order to enjoy love? ECCHO It is so.

ALCINUS What hope remains to him who dies for love? ECCHO He rises.

ALCINUS Is there a dying man who will escape dissolution? ECCHO You.

ALCINUS That which shall call me back from Hades dwells in that place. ECCHO The same.

ALCINUS Is this what is going to happen to me undeserving? ECCHO Through suffering. ALCINUS And am I unaware? ECCHO I am unaware.

ALCINUS And oh — ECCHO Oh.]

Ambiguity is once again a distinctive trait of Echo's oracular predictions. The nymph reassures Alcinus that he is destined by fate to be with Melanthe, but tells him that before they can enjoy their love they will have to go through death and resurrection. Her words prove true, as both Melanthe and Alcinus will drink a love potion which kills them but which also has the power to bring them back to life. At this stage, though, the prophecy is still obscure to Alcinous, who repeatedly expresses his incredulity.

Although the source of the echo-device in *Melanthe* has been identified by scholars, the extent to which it influenced Brooke has not been adequately recognised. The narrative context of the echo-dialogues in Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* and in Brooke's *Melanthe* is clearly different: while Silvio harshly denigrates Love and takes pride in his being utterly impervious to its allurement (IV.viii.68-120), Alcinus suffers for love and interrogates Echo on his chances of winning Melanthe. Brooke thus appropriates the more traditional *topos* of Echo as the interlocutor of grief-stricken lovers who seek her help or consolation. Yet, there are also striking affinities between the two scenes, and some of the verbal exchanges between the echo and the two young men are so similar that they can almost be regarded as verbal parallels.

When he hears the echo catching his words, Silvio asks: 'Chi se' tu che rispondi?' (IV.viii.69); Alcinous similarly exclaims: 'Quis tu, qui respondes?' (II.ii.564). Both of them also want to know when Echo's predictions will become true and repeat the question twice:

SILVIO Quando sarà che 'n questo cor pudico

Amor alloggi? — Oggi.

Dunque sì tosto s'innamora? — Ora. (*Il Pastor Fido*, IV.viii.98-100)

[SILVIO When shall Love dwell in this uptight heart? — Today.  
So shall I fall in love so suddenly? — Suddenly.]

ALCINUS Ah quando fiet hoc? aut quo die? ECCHO Hodie.

ALCINUS Hodie? ECCHO Hodie (*Melanthe*, II.ii.567)

They also ask Echo in what way the prediction will eventually come true:

SILVIO Chi farà forza in questo al voler mio? — Io.

*E come?* E con qual'armi? E con qual arco? Forse col tuo? — Col tuo. (*Il Pastor Fido*, IV.viii.106-08, emphasis mine)

[SILVIO Who will force my will to this? — I.  
And how? And with what weapons? And with what bow? Perhaps with yours? — With yours.]

ALCINUS At quae via decernitur huic Amori? ECCHO Mori (*Melanthe*, II.ii.570).

One last parallel between the two dialogues, even if a less compelling one, is that the echo confirms the identity of the woman who will be loved by Silvio and Alcinus:

SILVIO Dorinda forse, o bambo,

vuoi dir in tua mozza favella? — Ella. (*Il Pastor Fido*, IV.viii.103-04)

[Do you mean Dorinda, in your broken speech, oh fool? — She.]

ALCINUS Effare apertè, An Melanthen possedebo meam? ECCHO Eam. (*Melanthe*, II.ii.566).

These textual echoes suggest that Brooke probably read Guarini's work in Italian. The fact that his first two plays, *Adelphe* and *Scyros*, are both adaptations of Italian plays, indicates that he likely had sufficient knowledge of the language. Brooke may have read Dymock's translation and used it alongside the original, but he seems to have relied more extensively on Guarini's text. For instance, while Dymock substitutes the word 'oggi' [today] (IV.viii.99) with 'straight' (sig. M3r), Brooke uses the term 'hodie', which is in the original but not in the transla-

tion.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Dymock compresses Silvio's questions as to the way in which the prophecy shall be fulfilled: he eliminates Guarini's 'e come?' [and how?] (IV.viii.108) and has Silvio ask solely 'what weapons wilt thou use?' (sig. M3r). Brooke's 'quae via' is semantically closer to Guarini's 'come' than to Dymock's more specific allusion to the weapons that Love will employ, and thus, if Alcinus' question on the unfolding of future events is an echo of Guarini's dialogue, it is modelled on the original text rather than the translation. What is especially relevant for this study, though, is that Brooke seems to have been influenced by Guarini's echo-scene and, if that was the case, he may have borrowed from that source the idea of representing Echo as a manifestation of the prophetic voice of a god: in *Melanthe*, Echo does indeed present herself as a messenger of Fate and claims to report heavenly decrees.

Just as was the case in *Flora's Fortune*, the prophecy uttered Echo is also a restatement of a Delphic oracle, which is mentioned by Alcinus in Act I, scene, IV (163-70). Both oracles foretold that people would return from the dead, and that prophecy eventually comes true. Echo's oracular ability is thus once again implicitly equated with that of Apollo. The supernatural nature of that disembodied voice also comes to the fore in the last Act of the play, in which Echo is briefly mentioned. Montanus celebrates the preparatory rites before executing Melidorus: he invokes Diana and offers wine and libations to placate her anger. A stage direction describes a chorus of priests singing in the proscenium and two other stage directions, written next to Montanus' prayers, recite 'Cui alias in Rupe tanquam Eccho nonnullas voces reddit' [To this someone else repeats many words like an echo from the cliff] and 'Cui saepe respondet vt Eccho alias chorus e Rupe' [To this another chorus answers like an echo from the cliff] (V.ii.1764-66 [stage direction]). Not only are his solemn words repeated by echoes, but he also integrates those very echoes in the ritual by stating: 'Tuque ECCHO nostras duplicato preces' [And you Echo redouble our prayers], a sentence which

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<sup>61</sup>All references to Dymock's translation are from Giovan Battista Guarini, *Il Pastor Fido: or The faithfull Shepheard*. Signature numbers are given in brackets.

he repeats three times after every petition to Diana (V.ii.1766, 1769, 1772). The priest seems to be requiring Echo's active intervention in the rite, as if her repetition of his words could validate his prayers. Echoes thus act once again as intermediaries between heaven and earth, and are fittingly invoked to give strength to the supplications of the faithful. Moreover, this iterated calling of Echo is itself an echo, which, being repeated at regular intervals, creates the aural effect of a litany and contributes to the solemnity of the rite. Bonadeo notes that echoes often appeared in scenes of *planctus* and explains that repetition was an essential element of liturgy and religious rituals.<sup>62</sup> Brooke may thus have drawn exactly on that link between repetition and ritual when he devised the last echo-scene of his play.

Spectacle was one the most important ingredients of academic drama, and the echo-scenes in *Melanthe* were among the elements that would elicit the audience's wonder.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, the introduction of a voice coming from no visible source which was even able to foresee future events would have enabled early modern dramatists to create a mysterious and impressive atmosphere. Echo's disembodiment was thus probably one of the main reasons behind the frequent representation of Echo as an oracle in early modern literature. Interestingly, the metamorphosis into mere voice was the common fate of Echo and the Sibyl, as is noted in a sermon published in 1636.<sup>64</sup> Even if the Sibyl could also communicate her responses in written form, the language she used was closer to oral discourse, and, more in general, it was her prophetic voice that was considered to be her paradigmatic trait, as is suggested by the fact that voices of both the Eritrean and the Cumaeian Sibyl were believed to have survived even after their death.<sup>65</sup> The oracles of the Pythia at Delphi were also delivered orally. Prophetic ex-

<sup>62</sup>Bonadeo, pp. 128-29. De Martino also emphasises the importance of stereotyped repetition of refrains and formulas in Greek ritual lament (Ernesto De Martino, *Morte e Pianto Rituale dal Lamento Funebre Antico al Pianto di Maria* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1975; repr. 2002), pp. 183, 189).

<sup>63</sup>For the importance of spectacle in academic drama see *Melanthe*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>64</sup>Jasper Fisher, *The Priest's Duty & Dignity* (London: T. H[arper], 1636), sig. C4v.

<sup>65</sup>Giovanni Manetti, 'Strategie del Discorso Oracolare: la Scrittura', in *Sibille e Linguaggi Oracolari*, pp. 53-74 (p. 70); Crippa, pp. 164-65.

pression appears thus to be ‘un canto, un soffio, una musica, che attraversa le zone visibili e invisibili’ [a song, a breath, a piece of music, which travels across visible and invisible realms], as Crippa puts it:<sup>66</sup> Echo, a voice without a body, can hence legitimately earn the title of oracle.

Another trait that the Sibyl and Echo have in common is that they are both said to have been fostered by the Muses: Plutarch states that the first Sibyl was raised by them on Helicon (398.9), and Longus writes that Echo was raised by the nymphs and taught to play and sing by the Muses until she reached her maidenhood (III.23).<sup>67</sup> The Muses were themselves linked with prophecy, as is suggested not only by their role as mentors of the first Sybil, but also by the fact that Delphi was an important centre for their cult as well as for that of Apollo. Parke points out that the two cults were closely related at that oracular site: Apollo and the Muses were venerated simultaneously, and the Olympian god himself was called ‘Musagetes’, leader of the Muses.<sup>68</sup> According to Roux, the Muses also played an important role in the divinatory process, as they contributed to inspire the Pythia through the river Cassotis, an oracular spring whose water was drunk by the prophetess.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, in his *Theogony*, Hesiod describes the Muses as being capable of ‘telling of what is and what will be and what was before’ (ll. 38-39), an ability which they also conferred to the poet inspired by their divine voice (ll. 30-31).<sup>70</sup> Longus’ description of Echo’s upbringing establishes an important connection between her and the Muses, which was interestingly drawn upon by later authors. As has been mentioned in the Introduction, Boccaccio calls Echo ‘Parnasi nympha potentissime’ (VII.lix.2),

<sup>66</sup>Crippa, p. 165, translation mine.

<sup>67</sup>Plutarch, *Moralia*, ed and transl by Frank Cole Babbit, Harold Cherniss, F. H. Sandbach and others, 15 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), V, pp. 280-81.

<sup>68</sup>W.H. Parke, ‘Apollo and the Muses, or Prophecy in Greek Verse’, *Hermathena*, 130/131 (1981), 99-112 (pp. 105-06). See also Georges Roux, *Delphes. Son Oracle et Ses Dieux* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1976), pp. 187-88.

<sup>69</sup>Roux, pp. 188, 141-44. For the connection that may have existed between the Muses and the oracular response see also Lisa Maurizio, ‘Narrative, Biographical and Ritual Conventions at Delphi’, in *Sibille e Linguaggi Oracolari*, pp. 133-58 (pp. 151-53). Parke links the cult of Muses at Delphi with the fact that the Delphic oracles were often delivered in verse (p. 104).

<sup>70</sup>Hesiod, *Theogony*, ed. and trans. by Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

and Loewenstein also points out that, in the 1648 edition of his collection of echo-lyrics, Johann van der Döes even elevates her to the status of tenth Muse: ‘Echo, quae novem regens musis, ceu decimam comitem addidit’.<sup>71</sup> This association of Echo with the Muses may also have been facilitated by the fact that the Muses were originally thought to be nymphs, and that was probably known in early modern England, as is demonstrated by the definition of the word ‘Muses’ given by William Thomas in his dictionary: ‘Muse, the muses, or nymphes’.<sup>72</sup> The Muses and Echo thus belonged to the same class of beings. If we bear this context in mind, the fact that Echo could be equated with the goddesses of poetic and prophetic inspiration emerges as another important element that may help to account for the oracular ability often attributed to her.

Another reason why the nymph was often conceived as an oracle may be that her iterative speech appears to have many features in common with oracular responses. Echo can only speak in response to someone else’s words, she can only *answer* to what has been said.<sup>73</sup> The echo is thus fittingly mentioned in Rider’s Latin dictionary *Bibliotheca Scholastica* (1589) in the entry ‘to answere’: the author specifies that ‘to aunswere againe as the echo doth’ can be translated into Latin as ‘respondeo, resono, assono’.<sup>74</sup> The noun corresponding to the verb ‘respondeo’ is ‘responsum’, a word which designates oracular pronouncements (‘responsum oraculi’): Baret, for instance, translates that word as ‘an answere, or oracle’.<sup>75</sup> Because of this almost synonymous relation between ‘echo’, ‘answer’, ‘response’, and ‘oracle’, Echo could be easily imagined as giving answers that could also be oracular pronouncements. Compelled to answer and unable to initiate speech, the nymph is the responsive voice *par excellence* and, as such, she is particularly apt to act as an oracle, as that entails providing answers to

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<sup>71</sup>Loewenstein, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup>William Thomas, *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammer* (London: Thomas Bertheletsig, 1550), sig. X3r.

<sup>73</sup>As Berger and Gabara note, the Ovidian Echo does not merely repeat, she rather answers to Narcissus’ call (‘responderat’). See Anne-Emmanuelle Berger and Rachel Gabara, ‘The Latest Word from Echo’, *New Literary History*, 27.4 (1996), 621-40 (p. 631).

<sup>74</sup>John Rider, *Bibliotheca Scholastica* (London: Joseph Barnes, 1589), sig. A7v.

<sup>75</sup>John Baret, *An Alvearie or Triple Dictionarie* (London: Henry Denham, 1574), sig. D6V.

those asking for them.

Providing answers is exactly what Echo does in Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War* (c. 1586-89).<sup>76</sup> In act III, scene IV, Marius converses with an echo, which reverberates segments of his words from off-stage (39-50). The setting of the scene is a solitary place in the Numidian mountains, a fitting dwelling for the mythological wood nymph. It has been recognised that Lodge's echo-scene is very similar to that in Wilson's *Coblers Prophecy*,<sup>77</sup> but, while in Wilson's play the nymph mocks her interlocutor and her answers are devised to elicit laughter, Lodge's echo-scene rather heightens the pathos of the situation, and the echo provides pleasing consolation to the protagonist. Marius introduces Echo as a sympathetic interlocutor who is capable of easing his sorrow:

And friendly Echo answering to my talks  
Rebounds the accents of my ruth again.  
She, courteous nymph, the woeful Roman pleaseth,  
Else no consorts but beasts my pain appeaseth. [...]  
She answereth to my questions even and morrow,  
Whose sweet rebounds my sorrows to remove,  
To please my thoughts I mean for to approve. (III.iv.29-38)

He then addresses her as 'sweet nymph', 'kind and gentle Echo' (III.iv.39). When she answers to him, Echo keeps faith to Marius' laudatory description of her: her repetition of the personal pronoun 'I' in reply to Marius' question 'What help to ease my weary pains have I?' can be read as a promise that she will give him the help he needs. Throughout the dialogue the nymph reverberates the last syllables of Marius's phrases with little or no alteration, but she nonetheless gives meaningful answers. When Marius laments that he is 'with deepe despaire late overtaken wholy', for instance, Echo contradicts him by repeating 'o ly'

<sup>76</sup>The play was published for the first time in 1594 but composed much earlier, probably between 1586 and 1589. For a discussion on the dating of the play see Thomas Lodge, *The Wounds of Civil War*, ed. by Joseph W. Houppert (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), pp. xii-xiv (all references to the play are from this edition); Charles Walters Whitworth, *The Literary Career of Thomas Lodge, 1579-1596: Studies of the Plays, Prose Fiction and Verse* (Doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 1978), pp. 14-22; Eliane Cuvelier, *Thomas Lodge: Témoin de Son Temps (c.1558-1625)* (Paris: Didier Érudition, 1984), pp. 204-09.

<sup>77</sup>Whitworth, p. 24.

(III.iv.44), thus reassuring him that not all hope is lost. That prompts Mario to ask her whether the heavens will ever be appeased and the nymph encourages him once again by confirming ‘appeased’ (III.iv.45). Like many oracles, she then gives a vague answer to Marius’ question as to how he can assuage his ‘smart’ by simply repeating ‘art’ (III.iv.46). That single word is open to multiple interpretations: Marius chooses to identify it with warfare, as he confesses that ‘nothing better fits old Marius mind then war’ (III.iv.47). After recognising that his mind is filled with thoughts of war, he asks Echo: ‘then full of hope, say Echo, shall I go?’, and she repeats ‘go’ (III.iv.48), which is indeed the obvious reverberation of the last syllable of his words, but which may also be interpreted as an incitement to fight. Marius certainly understands it that way and he now explicitly asks for a prediction of his future fate: ‘is any better fortune then at hand?’. Echo gives an affirmative answers to his question: ‘at hand’ (III.iv.49).

Marius recognises the illusory nature of the reverberations he has heard, as he dismisses the dialogue as a ‘pleasing folly to a pensive man’ (III.iv.51). He then resolves to rest under a tree and wait ‘the end that fate alloteth’ (III.iv.52-53). And yet, the prophetic quality of those echoic answers is very soon revealed. The auspicious echo-dialogue anticipates the arrival of Young Marius in the next scene, who delivers the good news that an army has been gathered so that he and his father can take revenge against Sulla: encouraged by the sight of his son as well as by Echo’s exhortations, Marius resolves to go to Rome. Moreover, Echo’s prophecy that the heavens will not hinder Marius and that better fortune is at hand is indeed fulfilled: Marius does march on Rome and his military enterprise is successful.

It is also interesting to note that, later on in the play, the Genius who announces Sulla’s death delivers a prophetic speech which is interspersed with verbal repetitions and rhetorical figures of repetition. Anadiplosis, antimetabole, and identical rhymes are insistently used in the space of eight lines: the lines ‘Numina parcarum iam fera precipiunt. / Precipiunt fera iam parcarum numina’ [The cruel Fates predict] (V.v.302-02), for instance, have an antimetabolic structure and feature anadiplosis. Similarly, ‘Elysium petis, ô foelix!’ [you are bound

for Elysium, oh blessed one] (V.v.305) is repeated as ‘Et foelix, ô petis Elysium’ (V.v.308). This is clearly a display of rhetorical *copia*, and its effect would have been that of making the speech sound solemn, but it probably also made it sound echoic. It is implausible that the author was consciously drawing a connection between the echo-scene and the Genius, but it is still significant that in this play verbal echoes or highly echoic speeches are often prophetic.

According to Crippa, prophetic expression often had an echoic quality: phonetic play such as alliteration, assonance, and the repetition of phonetic segments were characteristic features of prophetic discourse.<sup>78</sup> The fact that echoes retain their mysterious aura and their ability to disclose the truth even when they are dismissed as a mere illusion, a ‘pleasing folly’, can indeed be explained in the light of the intrinsic qualities of echoic speech. The kind of language generally spoken by Echo has much in common with that of prophetic utterance not only on a phonetic but also on a semantic level. Oracles, for instance, are ambiguous and require careful interpretation, exactly as the truncated and decontextualised answers given by Echo. According to Maurizio, one of the major sources of oracular ambiguity was the employment of etymological wordplay and homonyms.<sup>79</sup> That punning language generated a ‘superabundance of meaning’, an expression used by Maurizio to describe the fact that oracles could elicit multiple interpretations.<sup>80</sup> Echo similarly relies on homonyms and homophones in order to be able to communicate despite her inability to speak autonomously: homonyms enable her to express meanings not intended by the original speaker, and homophones to utter new words phonetically similar to those pronounced by her interlocutor. When she re-signifies words previously spoken, Echo often introduces ambiguity in the discourse. The new meaning attached by Echo to a sentence does not simply replace that intended by the original speaker, but it of-

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<sup>78</sup>Crippa, p. 172.

<sup>79</sup>Maurizio, p. 141. See also Crippa, who argues that sibylline oracles are marked by lexical and syntactical obscurity (p. 180). Interestingly, Ahl associates puns with oracular discourse by suggesting that Ovid ‘often claims the title of vates, “seer” or “prophet”, and with that title the ability to speak in oracular double entendre’ (p. 41). The strong link between puns and oracular discourse has been analysed also by Redfern, pp. 35-40.

<sup>80</sup>Maurizio, p. 139.

ten adds to it, compelling the listener to disambiguate. In Ovid, for instance, the verb ‘coeamus’ (III.386-87) repeated by the nymph retains the original meaning ‘let us meet’, but it is also charged with more erotic undertones, which Narcissus fails to understand until the nymph tries to embrace him. The notion of ‘superabundance of meaning’ used by Maurizio to define oracular ambiguity seems thus particularly apt to describe Echo’s language as well, which often shows that multiple meanings can be attached to one phonetic signifier.

Echo’s way of speaking can also be compared with the prophecies of the Cumaeian Sibyl in that both produce a fragmentation of the syntactic structure of sentences. In Book III of the *Aeneid*, the Sibyl is said to prophesise by writing ‘notas’ and ‘nominas’ [‘signs and symbols’] on leaves (l. 444), which she arranged so as to form her response (ll. 445-46). When the wind scattered them, though, her prophecy became unintelligible and the Sibyl refused to rearrange the leaves, thus leaving the consultants frustrated (ll. 458-52). The prophetess thus signifies by relying on the combination of separate linguistic units, a combination which is yet easily disrupted. When the linear sequence of signs is lost, signs remain isolated and that leads to semantic obscurity. Echo’s phrases are similarly made of isolated words, often not inserted into a complete sentence, and this equally produces ambiguity. The nymph only repeats a segment of a previously uttered sentence, and neglects the linear sequence of the original message. The sign, lifted from its original context, is as obscure as that written on the Sibyl’s scattered leaf.

‘Oracles do not play by the rules of ordinary signification’, as Maurizio puts it,<sup>81</sup> and neither does Echo. Both use a special kind of language which follows different rules, tends to be ambiguous, and requires interpretation. The importance that such linguistic similarities likely had in the association of echoes with oracular utterances is evidenced by the fact that echoic speech itself is often characterised as prophetic, even when it does not come from the mythological nymph or from a natural reverberation of sound. Echoes can thus become a way

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<sup>81</sup>Maurizio, p. 142.

of modulating one's language, a kind of expressive mode which enables to convey or disclose secret meanings. In Grange's *Golden Aphroditis* (1577), for instance, echoes are not only acoustic effects, but also artificial devices produced by the protagonist, who is eager to find out if his beloved will eventually reciprocate his affection.

As he is talking to himself and imagining the words he should tell his beloved, N.O. hears 'Dan Eccho (never sleeping)' who reverberates the last syllable of his sentences.<sup>82</sup> He promptly 'note[s] the sense thereof' because he deems it important 'to the Prognostication or foreshewing of things to come' (sig. I1r). Echoes are thus explicitly linked with prophecy, and, indeed, the syllables which they reverberate reveal the fate of N.O.'s courtship of the beautiful maid A.O. if they are correctly interpreted:

God graut I may preuayle: for wordes I wil not spare.	spare
What: shoulde I spare to speake or not?	not
But will she heare, and graunt me therevnto?	to
What then should let at large to speake?	speake
I graunt: I will most boldy trie obeying thee:	thee
For Fortune sayeth aduenture winnes the game.	game
Thus if Dan Eccho telles me as it is:	is
Then hope doth say, feare not, the game is wonne	wonne.
(sig. I1r)	

As N.O. realises, the re-echoed words form a meaningful and prophetic sentence only if arranged consecutively: 'Spare not to speake thee game is wonne'. Another dialogue between N.O. and the echo takes place immediately after the former, and the encouragement to 'shielde well thine harte with hope' emerges from it in the exact same way (sig. I1v).

From her room, A.O. overhears everything and decides to intervene: 'shee replied with a shrill and hollow voyce [...] which N.O. (supposing it to haue bene the oracle of Apollo ) in steede of an Eccho resounded the latter sillable

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<sup>82</sup>John Grange, *The Golden Aphroditis* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1577), sig. I1r. All subsequent references to this text are given in brackets.

himselfe' (sig. I1v). In order to grasp other oracular meanings embedded in the word he hears, N.O. takes the place of the acoustic echo previously heard and starts to repeat the last segment of the sentences uttered by A.O. He even believes that he is hearing Apollo's oracle and he interestingly tries to decode that alleged prophecy by re-echoing it, probably because he considers echoes to be foreboding. A.O.'s message is already encouraging as it is, as she reassures 'For whom yu louest I dare report they wil requite thy loue', and then even reveals her identity: 'For I am she I say againe that will requite thy Payne' (sig. I1v), but the two sentences originated by the combination of the re-echoed words of her speech confirm and reinforce her meanings: 'In stede of hope, loue shall requite thy Payne: / I for thy loue will render loue againe' (sig. I2r).

The echoes appear as highly artificial not only because in the last two echo-dialogues N.O. is producing them, but also because he turns echoic reverberation into a written device: at first he 'noted verbatim the clipping sounde of Eccho' (sig. I1r), and then, when he decides to 'resound' the last syllable of A.O.'s words himself, what he does is take note of her lines 'with his penne, in manner of Ecchoes replication' (sig. I1v). The echo thus gives origin to a sort of acrostic riddle, in which the last syllables of each line spell out a hidden message if read vertically. While written texts are generally read horizontally, the echo-poems composed by N.O. require both horizontal and vertical reading in order to be understood at all their levels: the transposition of acoustic echoes into written form shows thus even more clearly that in Grange's work echoes yield meaning, but they do so by flouting the conventions of standard signification, exactly as was the case with oracular responses. Jolles interestingly explains that oracles are often expressed in the form of a riddle so that only those who are able to understand the peculiar language in which they are expressed can grasp their secret revelation.<sup>83</sup> In Grange's romance, the encrypted language of prophetic

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<sup>83</sup>The person who interrogates an oracle, explains Jolles, has to be proven worthy of receiving the revelation of the god he is interrogating, and his test consists in showing that he can decode the oracle's encrypted language, accessible only to the initiate: for this reason, 'the form of the riddle necessarily inserts itself, as an ambiguity, between the oracle and its foreign questioner, the uninitiated asker' (André Jolles, *Simple Forms*, trans. by Peter Schwartz (New York: Verso, 2017), p.

utterance is constituted by echoic replies: N.O. is able to use and understand that language and hence he obtains a reliable ‘diuination’ (sig. I1v).

The supernatural aura of echoes is lost when they are represented as verbal repetitions purposely written down on paper by the protagonist, and any possible connection with the voice of a god is also excluded. And yet, those repetitions are still ominous because echoic language is itself perceived as prophetic, regardless of whether it is heard, written, natural, or artificial. That echoes were associated with oracular expression because of their peculiar way of conveying meaning is suggested also by the fact that in *Maid’s Metamorphosis* (1600) and in Peele’s *Old Wives Tales* (c. 1592-93) that kind of language is probably adopted by characters who want to reveal the truth or even deliver a false prophecy without exposing their identity.<sup>84</sup>

The echo-scenes in those two plays are remarkably similar: the context in which both episodes are introduced is that of a search for a lady lost in the wood, and in both of them the boys who are looking for her appeal to Echo for directions. Such similarities, together with other analogies in the language and plot of the two plays, led scholars to suggest that the anonymous author of *Maid’s Metamorphosis* was influenced by Peele’s earlier work.<sup>85</sup> Another interesting resemblance between the two plays concerns the way in which the echo-scenes may have been performed: while the echo was generally heard from offstage, in these two cases, one of the characters may have remained on stage hidden from his interlocutors in order to impersonate the echo. Binnie explains that

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109). Roux also notes that literary oracles were generally written in verse and they often took the form of a riddle (p. 160). Those poetic oracles were probably inauthentic but they still usefully suggest that prophetic language was perceived as enigmatic as early as classical antiquity.

<sup>84</sup>Peele’s play was published in 1595 but the date of its composition has elicited scholarly debate. Both Hook and Binnie take 1588 as terminus *a quo* and 1594 as terminus *ad quem*; Binnie then suggest 1593 as a possible date of composition (George Peele, *The Old Wives Tale*, ed. by Frank S. Hook, in *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, ed. by R. Mark Benbow, Elmer Blistein and Frank S. Hook (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 299-443 (p. 311); George Peele, *The Old Wives Tale*, ed. by Patricia Binnie (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 5-6). For an exhaustive summary of the arguments that have been put forward for the dating of the play see *The Old Wives Tale*, ed. by Hook, pp. 303-11.

<sup>85</sup>Martin Wiggins, *British Drama, 1533-1642: a Catalogue*, 8 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012-), IV, p. 200; S. R. Golding, ‘The Authorship of *The Maid’s Metamorphosis*’, *The Review of English Studies*, 2.7 (1926), 270-79 (p. 272) .

David Blostein's production of *Old Wives Tale* (Toronto, 1969) had Sacripant hide in the woods and pretend to be an echo in order to lure the brothers into his bower.<sup>86</sup> This may well have been how Peele intended the scene to be performed, given that Sacripant is a deceptive character who intends to capture the two brothers. If that was the case, Peele introduced a popular innovation in the performance of echo-scenes on the early modern English stage, which was then adopted by other dramatists.

In *Maid's Metamorphosis*, Ioculo similarly ventilates the hypothesis that Aramanthus is actually echoing his and Ascanio's words.<sup>87</sup> Ioculo is irritated by the echoic answers and Ascanio tries to calm him down: 'Stay Ioculo, it is the Echo Boy / That mocks our grieve, and laughes at our annoy' (Act IV, p. 143), but Ioculo replies: 'Stay maister, I haue spied the fellow now, that mockt / vs all this while: see where he sits' (Act IV, p. 144), and points to Aramanthus, sitting close by. Ioculo has clearly no proof to accuse Aramanthus of being the one who parroted their words, but the fact that Echo is referred to as 'Eccho Boy' may be read as a hint that suggests that Icoulo is right. Aramanthus was impersonated by a boy actor and the audience would have recognised his voice if he played the echo. This peculiar appellative for Echo does clearly not offer compelling evidence alone: even if it was produced from offstage, Echo's voice would still have been that of a male actor. The epithet 'boy' referred to the nymph may simply be another of the numerous playful winks at the practice of cross-dressing scattered in the play.<sup>88</sup> Yet, in a previous allusion to Echo in the play, Ascanio shows awareness that the nymph is traditionally female:

And yet I feare to call vpon thy name,  
The pratling Eccho, should *she* learne the same,  
The last words accent *shiele* no more prolong  
But beare that sound vpon *her* airie tong. (Act II, p. 118, emphasis mine).

The change in the gender used to refer to Echo in the echo-scene suggests that

<sup>86</sup> *Old Wives Tale*, ed. by Binnie, p. 59 (n. 413.1).

<sup>87</sup> All references to this play are from *Maid's Metamorphosis*, ed. by Arthur Henry Bullen, in *A Collection of Old English Plays*, 4 vols (London: Wyman & sons, 1882), I, pp. 101-64.

<sup>88</sup> See for instance Act IV (p. 146), Act IV (p. 151), Act V (p. 154).

the author may have deliberately intended to draw the audience's attention to the fact that it was Aramanthus who played the role of Echo. Unfortunately, though, the staging of the majority of the echo-scenes in this period remains largely matter of speculation.

Interestingly, both Aramanthus and Echo reveal to Ascanio that he will soon find Eurymine, but their prophecies are cryptic. Aramanthus is a hermit who can foretell the future, but, in Act III, we see him unveiling the truth in riddles. Frisco, Mopso, and Ioculo seek his help, and he promises to 'graunt the thing you doo beseech' but warns them: 'for the teares of Louers be no toyes, / Ile tell their chaunce in in parables to Boyes' (p. 141). In the next Act, he uses his art to help Ascanio and he once again reveals the truth in an ambiguous way: he informs him that 'whom you affect so much, is but a Boy' (Act IV, p. 146), but then he apparently contradicts himself when he reassures him that 'your Lady you may finde' (Act IV, p. 147). This inconsistency does not pass unnoticed by Ioculo, who comments ironically: 'A Lady and a Boy, this hangs well together: / Like snow in haruest, sun-shine and foul weather' (Act IV, p. 147). Ioculo repeatedly shows impatience at the hermit's enigmatic language: when he first meets Aramanthus, he challenges him: 'If ye be good at Rimes and Riddles, old man, expound me this' (Act III, p. 140) and, later, he laments that the hermit's words are merely a 'a Riddle[...] some antick Iest' produced by his 'cunning' (Act IV, p. 146).

Echo's prophecy is as cryptic as those uttered by Aramanthus. In Act IV, Ascanio is desperately looking for Eurymine in the wood and invokes 'some Satyre then, or Goddesse of this place / Some water Nymph' who may 'vouchsafe me so much grace / As by some view, some signe, or other sho, I may haue knowledge if she lives or no' (p. 142). The echo catches his words and falsely replies 'no'. It then confirms that answer by repeating the word 'so' in response to Ascanio's request to 'record it once more if the truth be so'. Yet, when Ascanio rephrases his question: 'how, that Eurymine is dead, or lives?', Echo answers truthfully: 'lives', and then goes on to reveal that his beloved is 'neere' but she is concealed from Ascanius' 'thirstie eies' by a 'disguise' (Act IV, pp.

142-43). Eurymine is indeed near, as she very soon enters on stage, and she is also disguised in that she has been transformed into a boy by Apollo.

Echo does give the correct answers, but only when she is asked the right questions, a feature which may again be associated with oracular expression: being able to formulate an effective interrogation was an essential requisite for those who consulted oracles. Harrison suggests that there was a correlation between the question posed by the consultant and the oracle's answers: 'on many occasions', he explains, 'oracles followed the promptings of their consultants'.<sup>89</sup> This characteristic is typical of echoic expression as well, as echoes cannot but respond to the cues of their interlocutors. Those peculiar oracles actually take that trait to the extreme, as they repeat the very words of their consultants: thus, when Ascanio ends his sentence with 'no', the echo reverberates 'no', but when he ends the same question with 'lives', the echo gives back a more hopeful verdict. This draws attention to the problematic nature of oracular echoes. As echoes repeat the last words that have been pronounced, those who hear them could deliberately phrase their words so as to elicit the answer they were hoping to get, thus undermining the idea that those sounds are prophetic. In Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, for instance, Philisides speaks in a way that enables him to obtain the desired echo, and the Savage man impersonated by Gascoigne may have done the same.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, though, echoes are unexpected and unpredictable, as they reverberate only a selected segment of the words previously uttered and endow them with meanings unintended by the interlocutor. The impossibility to control what the echo will reverberate is exactly what leads those who hear it to perceive it as a supernatural and independent sound, and hence to read its words as omens. That perception would even be facilitated if another person pretended to be the echo while remaining hidden from sight, as might have happened in *Maid's Metamorphosis*: in that case, the words of the first speaker would have been repeated by another voice, thus making it more difficult for him recognise

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<sup>89</sup>Thomas Harrison, 'Oracles and Divination', in *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 125.

<sup>90</sup>See Chapter 1, section 1, above.

them as his own. In any case, even if Ascanio's words were reverberated by a natural echo, the final result is that the echo gives contradictory answers when asked different questions, just as was the case in *Flora's Fortune*.

Prophetic speech is characterised as obscure throughout the play. If Aramanthus impersonated the echo, that derivative speech pattern would have provided him with a useful linguistic strategy which enabled him to continue to utter his oracles in the form of a riddle. Even if he was not responsible for echoing Ascanio's words, it would hardly have gone unnoticed that Echo's revelations are as ambiguous as his own. Unlike in Peele's *Old Wives Tales*, though, ambiguity is here not an instrument of deception, but it is rather aimed at creating suspense and entertaining the audience. Aramanthus' riddles are mysterious but never misleading, and he does not seem interested in beguiling Ascanio and Ioculo at any point of the play. As far as the echo-dialogue is concerned, the two initial false answers given by the echo, other than being a direct consequence of Ascanio's questions, are meant to have a comic effect. Echo's contradictory answers leave Ioculo and Ascanio disoriented and wary of her words, so much so that Ioculo accuses the echoing voice of lying. This triggers a humorous verbal contest between Ioculo and the echo, in which each claims that the other is not telling the truth:

IOCULO Let me be hangd my Lord, but all is lyes.

ECCHO Lyes.

IOCULO True, we are both perswaded thou doest lye.

ECCHO Thou doest lye.

IOCULO Who I?

ECCHO Who I?

IOCULO I thou.

ECCHO I thou. (Act IV, p. 143)

This exchange bears some resemblance to a comic dispute between Ioculo, Mopso, and Frisco in Act III, which relies on similar linguistic mechanisms:

IOCULO What hast thou found Frisco?

FRISCO A couple of crack-roapes.

IOCULO And I.

MOPSO And I.

FRISCO I meane you two.

IOCULO I you two.

MOPSO And I you two. (p. 137)

In both these scenes, the same accusation is bounced from one character to the other, thus producing a comic effect which is achieved chiefly through verbal repetition. As will be shown in greater detail in the fourth chapter, echoic repetition relies on peculiar linguistic strategies which can be used not only to give ambiguous oracular answers, but also to mock the interlocutor. In the echo-scene quoted above, the comedy is enhanced by the pun ‘Ay’- ‘I’ implicit in the line ‘I thou’, which repeated by both Ioculo and Echo: the second person pronoun follows what can be heard as a first person pronoun, thus producing a nonsensical and comically contradictory statement. Moreover, the ‘thou’ in echo-dialogues is often merely the speaking ‘I’, whose own voice is reverberated and brought back to his own ears: I and thou can hence indeed overlap in this kind of verbal exchanges. Even if it was Aramanthus who impersonated the echo, the line ‘I thou’ would still create ambiguity as to the subject of the sentence and elicit laughter.

The consequences of the dialogue with the echo are amusing rather than dangerous, and the voice finally reveals the truth. Echo’s words can hence not be dismissed as entirely deceptive, as Mauré suggests by placing this scene on the same level as that in *Old Wives Tale*.<sup>91</sup> The situation in Peele’s play is very different: echoic language betrays the two brothers and puts them in danger. The sinister implications of the words reverberated by the echo would have been immediately evident to the audience if Sacripant was responsible for producing that sound, as they would have recognised the voice of the wicked magician.

The two brothers see Delia in the woods, but Sacripant immediately hides her in his bower. They thus start to call her, but only an echo answers to their

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<sup>91</sup>After claiming that in *Maid’s Metamorphosis* the words of Echo are unreliable, she argues that ‘Écho is également une fausse pythie dans *The Old Wife’s Tale*’ [Echo is equally a false oracle in *The Old Wives Tale*] (*Héritages*, pp. 270-71).

words. It tells them that Delia is near and that they will find her, but it also leads them straight into Sacripant's bower and it falsely reassures them that they will safely reach her:

SECOND BROTHER Call out, Calypha, so that she may hear.

And cry aloud, for Delia is near.

ECHO Near.

FIRST BROTHER Near! O, where? hast thou any tidings?

ECHO Tidings.

SECOND BROTHER Which way is Delia, then? or that, or this?

ECHO This.

FIRST BROTHER And may we safely come where Delia is?

ECHO Yes.<sup>92</sup> (ll. 418-26)

Following the directions given by the echo, the brothers are captured by Sacripant. Peele thus turns the echo into a false prophet, thus subverting not only the traditional moralising reading of Echo as a good adviser, but also the *topos* of attributing oracular authority to her words. Prophecies tend to have an ambiguous status in the play: while the one uttered by the echo is deceitful, that offered by Erestus is phrased as a riddle and is completely misinterpreted by the two brothers. Before entering Sacripant's bower, the Second Brother echoes Erestus' words to give himself courage:

'Start not aside for every danger,

Be not afeard of every stranger;

Things that seeme, are not the same'

[...]

Then brother draw thy sword and follow me. (ll. 429-35)

He interprets the riddle as an exhortation to enter the wizard's hiding place and is hence led to danger by it as well as by the echoes he has just heard. As was the case in classical antiquity, prophetic language is enigmatic in Peele's play as

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<sup>92</sup>All references are from Peele, *The Old Wives Tales*, ed. by Binnie.

well, and it can also be deceitful.<sup>93</sup>

Even more than the anonymous author of *Maid's Metamorphosis*, Peele seems thus to draw attention to the unreliability of echoic repetition both because an echo can twist the meaning of a sentence and because the repetition of a word lifted from its original semantic context is often ambiguous. Just as Erestus' prophecy, echo's answers require careful interpretation in order to yield revelatory meanings.

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In the fourth and fifth chapters of this study it will be shown that, because of its flouting of the rules of ordinary signification, echoic language often has the effect of mocking or even endangering those who listen to it. That peculiar kind of language had also much in common with oracular discourse, and that may have been one of the reasons why echoes are often associated with prophecy in many early modern plays and romances. Characters are often inclined to interrogate Echo so as to find out unknown truths or even future events even if they realise that the echo is a mere acoustic effect. Echoes are represented as having oracular powers even when they are included in comic scenes whose main aim is that of eliciting the audience's laughter. Echoic language was indeed so closely associated with prophetic expression that it could even be appropriated by characters hiding on stage to reveal the truth or even to mislead their interlocutors.

Echoes were often represented as prophetic not only because their way of expressing meanings was similar to that of oracles, but also because echoes are perceived as disembodied, ethereal voices which can be easily taken to be those of gods or other supernatural entities. Their mysterious nature and their readiness to answer when one speaks make them particularly apt to function as intermediaries between gods and human being, or as a symbol of the mutual

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<sup>93</sup>The Muses, for instance, can say 'many false things' (*Theogony*, l. 27), and the prophetic bee-maidens dwelling on the Parnassus utter falsehoods if they are deprived of their honey (Roux, p. 184).

relationship between the Christian God and the faithful. Like gods, Echo and echoes inspire men and disclose the future course of events. Being often regarded as sounds able to bridge the gap between worlds as distant as heaven and earth, echoes could fittingly also be perceived as eerie voices which convey the words of the dead.

# ‘Because she is a woman’: Echo, a female voice

## Echo and female agency

### *The Duchess of Malfi*: female agency and literary fame

A supernatural and prophetic voice is famously the one coming ‘from the Duchess’s Grave’ in Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1613-14, published 1623). In act V, scene III, Antonio and Delio contemplate the ruins of an abbey and hear an echo reverberating from its stones. Antonio notices that the echo sounds like his wife’s voice, and the disembodied voice confirms his impression by repeating ‘I, wife’s voice’ (V.iii.26).<sup>1</sup> At this point, Antonio is still not aware that the Duchess has been killed by her brothers, Ferdinand and the Cardinal of Aragon, and he has agreed to visit the Cardinal at his palace in order to seek reconciliation with him. The trust he places in the Cardinal is dangerously naive, as the ruthless man has already planned to kill him. The echoic voice warns Antonio of his impending fate and joins his friend Delio in trying to dissuade him from meeting the Cardinal:

DELIO Come, let’s us walk farther from ’t.

I would not have you go to th’ Cardinal’s tonight:

Do not.

ECHO Do not.

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<sup>1</sup>All references are from John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by Leah S. Marcus (London: Methuen, 2009).

DELIO Wisdom doth not more moderate wasting sorrow  
Than time. Take time for 't; be mindful of thy safety.

ECHO Be mindful of thy safety.

ANTONIO Necessity compels me.

Make scrutiny through the passes  
Of your own life, you 'll find it impossible  
To fly your fate.

ECHO Oh, fly your fate.

DELIO Hark! the dead stones seem to have pity on you,  
And give you good counsel.

ANTONIO Echo, I will not talk with thee,  
For thou art a dead thing.

ECHO Thou art a dead thing. (V.iii.27-38)

Not only does the echo anticipate events to come but it also implicitly reveals that the Duchess is dead:

ANTONIO My duchess is asleep now,  
And her little ones, I hope sweetly. O Heaven,  
Shall I never see her more?

ECHO Never see her more. (V.iii.39-41)

The fact that the Duchess' ghostly voice takes the form of an echo enhances the uncanny atmosphere of the scene: as has been shown in the previous chapter, the disembodied sound of an echo was often identified as a voice coming from another, unearthly realm. Moreover, echoes suggest persistence, and hence they are particularly fitting to represent a form of survival, to evoke the possibility of overcoming the boundaries imposed by death. Echoes are interestingly linked with the voice of the dead also in *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1626): when the author describes the burial traditions in Cumana, he reports that 'they beleue that the Soule is immortall, but that it eateth and drinketh about in the fields where it goeth, and that it is the Eccho which answereth when one calleth'.<sup>2</sup> Despite

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<sup>2</sup>Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (London: William Stansby, 1626), sig. Hhhh1v.

its eerie quality, the otherwordly echo of the Duchess' voice is characterised as benevolent, willing to 'give [...] good counsel' in order to save Antonio's life. Antonio, though, does not listen to Delio's advice nor does he take the echo seriously, and he finds his death as a consequence.

Chalk suggests that what Antonio hears is not the Duchess' spectral voice, but only 'the reverberation of his own voice returning back to him in distorted form'.<sup>3</sup> Lewis adopts a similarly sceptical view in arguing that the Duchess does not become the 'echoing, subjective voice itself', but she should rather be associated with the inanimate physical matter of the ruins themselves, which is unable to produce language.<sup>4</sup> Yet, far from being an empty repetition lacking linguistic agency, the echoing voice shows a remarkable ability to express its own meanings by employing different strategies of re-signification of a previously uttered sentence, which were common in many early modern echo-dialogues. The echo truncates Antonio's sentences and manages to convey meaning in spite of disrupting their conventional syntactic structure, an achievement which implies a conscious selection of the segment which will be repeated. This ability to select significantly enables the voice to make a strong assertion of its identity: by severing the letter 'm' from the possessive adjective 'my', the echo introduces the pun 'Ay/ I' which both confirms Antonio's suggestion that the echoing voice is that of his wife and emphasises its subjectivity, signalled by the personal pronoun 'I'.

The echo is also able to signify by altering the referent of a previously uttered sentence: for instance, when Antonio tells the echo 'thou art a dead thing', the echo repeats his words *verbatim* but it seems to refer them to Antonio, thus making one last attempt to warn him that he is about to die. A similar example is offered at the beginning of the dialogue, when Antonio muses on the inevitable decay of churches and cities and considers that they 'must have like death that

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<sup>3</sup>Brian Chalk, 'Webster's "Worthyest Monument": The Problem of Posterity in *The Duchess of Malfi*', *Studies in Philology*, 108.3 (2011), 379-402 (p. 399).

<sup>4</sup>Sarah Lewis, ‘“(From the Duchesse Grave)”: Echoic Liminalities in *The Duchess of Malfi*’, in *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. by Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 263-85 (p. 283).

we have' (V.iii.19): he uses the personal pronoun 'we' to refer to human beings in general, but when the prophetic echo catches his words it likely has a more specific referent in mind: 'we' indicates in this case both the Duchess, who has been murdered, and Antonio, who will soon share her fate. The impression that echo is not a passive, hollow reverberation of sounds is reinforced by the fact that, unlike in many other early modern echo-dialogues, it manages to speak even if its interlocutors refuse to engage in direct dialogue with it. Antonio is speaking to Delio and the Duchess' voice not only interrupts them, but also intervenes despite Antonio's resolute assertion: 'Echo, I will not talk with thee' (V.iii.37). Even if they 'walk farther from it' (V.iii.27), as Delio suggests, they cannot be rid of the echo, which continues to catch and repeat their words. It is as if that sound were not a mere acoustic reverberation produced by and necessarily confined to its physical place of origin, that is the 'piece of a cloister' which 'gives the best echo' (V.iii.4-5), but rather a more autonomous kind of voice, one determined not to be silenced.

The fact that this persistent voice is female is of primary importance in this play. The figure of Echo was often considered to be the epitome of female voice in the early modern period, and it was often referred to in order to explore issues of female agency, and the relationship between gender and vocal expression.<sup>5</sup> In two didactic texts on marriage and household government published in the 1590s, echoes are mentioned as emblems of verbal restraint and demureness, and women are encouraged to take them as examples of virtuous vocal expression. The key ideas is that 'the ornamēt of a woman is silence' and hence maids who aspire to be good wives should imitate echoes in speaking as little as possible: 'as the Eccho answereth but one word for manie which are spoken to her; so a

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<sup>5</sup>Danielle and Elizabeth Clark investigate male appropriation of female speech and refer to Echo as figure which problematises the connection between voice, gender and literary production (Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, '*This Double Voice*: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 4-5). Dunn and Jones count Echo among the universal 'cultural icons that figure the mythic relationship between gender and vocality' (Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 3).

maides answer should be a word as though she sold her breath'.<sup>6</sup> In texts not informed by educative aims, though, echoic voices were not always perceived as passive or derivative. On the contrary, echoic language is more often associated with the exertion of female agency and it indicates that a woman has been able to overcome the limitations imposed on her speech.<sup>7</sup>

In Breton's *The Strange Fortunes of Two Excellent Princes* (1600), for instance, a woman deliberately employs echoing as a mode of expression in order to reveal her feelings to her beloved prince without breaking the rules of female decorum. Princess Bilanta is in love with Prince Pinello, who is staying as a guest at her father's court. She conceals her passion for him until, one day, she sees him walking in the gardens of the palace and decides to follow him outside without revealing her presence. In a 'close walke neere vnto the greene alley where the Prince was walking' she meets one of her attendants and she confesses her secret passion for the prince to her in order to ease her sorrow.<sup>8</sup> Even if the two women are still hidden from the prince's sight, he overhears their conversation and, 'with a voice lowde enoughe to be heard of them that were so neere', he laments that he has been vanquished by love and reveals that the object of his affection is Bilanta (sigs. C3v-C4r). He then wonders whether she 'maie be affected otherwise then I know', at which she breaks her silence and replies 'no' (sig. C4r). A sort of echo-dialogue takes place between the two, in which he purposely asks questions to gauge her feelings and she replies by echoing his words:

What quothe the young Prince, is there here such an eccho? The Ladie againe replied, oh. The young Prince amazed at this eccho, went on with this speech:

<sup>6</sup>Henry Smith, *A Preparatiue to Mariage* (London: Thomas Orwin, 1591), sigs. D1v-D2r. The same idea is expressed in nearly identical words also in R[obert] C[leaver], *A Godlie form of Householde Gouernment* (London: Felix Kingston, 1598), sigs. G5r-G5v.

<sup>7</sup>Clarke also looks at the afterlife of the figure of Echo in order to assess the role of female speech within the rhetorical culture of the early modern period and notes that the nymph embodies the paradoxes inherent in early modern perceptions of female speech: while Echo represents garrulous and empty female speech, there is always a suspicion that her speech pattern may in fact stand for rhetorical agency. Clarke, though, focuses especially on Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Mary Wroth's *The Countess of Mountgomery's Urania* (Danielle Clarke, 'Speaking Women: Rhetoric and the Construction of Female Talk', in *Rhetoric, Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. by Jennifer Richards and Alison Thorne (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 70-88).

<sup>8</sup>Nicholas Breton, *The Strange Fortunes of Two Excellent Princes* (London: P. Short, 1600), sig. C3r. All further references are given in brackets.

Oh that I knew Bilanta indeede would regard my loue; she answeared loue: Loue  
quoth the Prince, but whome doeth she meane? I would I knewe his name; she  
answeared name: name quoth the Prince, but who maie it be? If it be one onelie,  
shee answeared onelie: Onelie quoshe hee, onelie happie in déede, would so were  
Pinello; she made answere Pinello. (sig. C4r)

The device is the same as that employed by Grange in his *Golden Aphroditis*, and it requires the combination of the re-echoed words so as to form a meaningful and revealing sentence: ‘Oh loue, name onelie Pinello’ is the phrase obtained by the prince. Throughout this scene, which culminates in the encounter of the two lovers in the garden, Bilanta appears determined to behave according to the traditional norms of female conduct: she tries to hide her emotions and show modesty and reservation. As she had earlier concealed her love for him, she now conceals the ‘content’ she feels at hearing that he reciprocates her feelings (sig. C4v). She then humbly downplays the compliments he pays to her, and deems herself unworthy of him. There is no coquettishness or seductiveness in the smiles she gives to the prince, which are rather described as ‘modest’ (sig. C4r). The only occasion in which the self-restrained Bilanta allows herself to confess her feelings to the prince is paradoxically when she echoes his words. By pretending to be a disembodied voice resounding in the air, the maid can deliver her message without exposing her identity and hence without taking full responsibility for it. Moreover, echoing provides her with a means to reveal and conceal her meanings at the same time, as the re-echoed words have to be arranged into a sentence in order to make sense: Bilanta encodes her potentially compromising message in a sort of riddle instead of openly expressing her love. Echoing becomes thus an instrument of self-assertion, one which enables a woman to circumvents the limits imposed by gender norms and to voice her feelings without compromising her virtue.

A woman’s speech was regarded with suspicion in early modern England, her tongue was considered to be her weapon.<sup>9</sup> Women were required to speak

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<sup>9</sup>Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind*

sparingly and compliantly, otherwise they were labelled as scolds. In her seminal study, Luckyj has shown that silence was equally problematic. A woman who refused to speak was reproached for being stubborn, defiant, and ill-tempered. Silent women evaded male control, they were unfathomable and hence potentially dangerous.<sup>10</sup> Conduct books, explains Luckyj, fittingly recommended for women ‘not silence but carefully circumscribed speech’.<sup>11</sup> A woman could thus exert her agency not only through her speech, as is generally assumed, but also through her refusal to speak. It follows that any attempt to limit her action should focus on depriving her both of unrestricted speech and of the possibility to remain silent. That is exactly the effect of the punishment inflicted by Juno on Echo. By condemning her to repeat words uttered by others, the goddess took away her ability to articulate speech autonomously and also compelled her to answer every time someone speaks: Ovid explicitly presents her as a nymph who ‘nec reticere loquenti, nec prior ipsa loqui didicit’ [could neither hold her peace when others spoke, nor yet begin to speak till others had addressed her] (III.357-58). When the nymph also loses her body as a result of her consuming grief, her agency appears to be even more seriously diminished: her voice is all that is left of her, and her defective speech is the sole surviving site of her subjectivity.

Juno’s punishment thus apparently relegates Echo to a position of impotence and passivity. Yet, passivity was not the trait for which she was generally remembered in the early modern period. In Ovid’s poem, the nymph manages to express her desire for Narcissus despite her lack of autonomous speech. Echo repeats words previously said but also shows a remarkable ability to re-signify them in order to voice her thoughts and feelings. Her personal freedom is thus only apparently suppressed by her linguistic ‘mutilation’ and the prohibition to

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<sup>10</sup> 1540-1620 (Brighton: Harvester, 1984), pp. 207-08, Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester; Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1983), p. 107.

<sup>11</sup> Christina Luckyj, ‘A Moving Rhetoricke’: *Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 58-62.

<sup>11</sup> Luckyj, p. 62.

remain silent: her meaningful utterances are a sign of her enduring vocal agency. For that reason, Echo and echoic speech could be easily associated with female agency negated and regained. That seems to be case in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, where the tragic heroine shares with the mythological nymph the ability communicate in spite of attempts to repress and control her.

Throughout the play the Duchess is portrayed as an assertive woman, who evades the suffocating control of her brothers and marries against their consent and against social custom. She wants to have full control over her private life and her sexuality and is also aware of her political role, to which she proudly appeals when she is imprisoned 'I am the Duchess of Malfi still' (IV.ii.137). Her brothers, though, constantly try to isolate her, limit her action, and put her in a passive role, both on a political and on a personal level. This process notoriously culminates with the imprisonment of the Duchess, who is now completely confined, tortured, and murdered. The furious words blurted out by Ferdinand when he discovers that the Duchess got married are emblematic of her brothers' urgency to control her. Ferdinand warns his sister that he will kill her husband if he finds out his name, and admonishes her to 'cut out thine own tongue / Lest it bewray him' (III.ii.107-08). While he is suggesting that the only way the Duchess has to keep her husband's name secret is to cut out her tongue, his warning seems indicative not so much of the Duchess' alleged verbal incontinence, but rather of his own male fantasy to silence her, a fantasy which he eventually tries to fulfil by having her killed. Even after her death, though, the Duchess defies her brother's attempts to suppress her agency by managing to communicate with Antonio. Her voice, taken away from her but still able to convey meaning, fittingly takes the form of an echo.

Interestingly, Ferdinand's macabre advice to cut out her tongue evokes the memory of a mythological figure who fell victim to male violence, Philomel. The story of Philomel, who was raped by her brother-in-law and had her tongue cut out to prevent her from confessing the crime, is another story of male oppression in which a woman is not only violated but also mutilated, silenced, and apparently rendered impotent and inoffensive. Like the Duchess, though, Philomel found a way to regain a limited but effective ability to express herself:

she managed to reveal what had happened to her by weaving a tapestry that represented the event and sending it to her sister. The Duchess is thus more or less explicitly associated with two mythological figures who were notoriously the emblems of female resistance to attempts to rob them of their agency, Echo and Philomel. The two Ovidian exemplars were often linked in early modern England. One among other possible examples is Nicholson's *Acolastus* (1600), where both Echo and Philomela are portrayed as listening and answering to the desperate lamentations of a grief-stricken lover:

The showres which daily from mine eyes are raining,  
Draw the dum creatures to a sympathie:  
Poore Philomele that sings of rauishment,  
Forgets her tune to listen my complaint.  
[...]  
Let me but sigh and say, She is vnkind,  
Echo replies aloude, She is vnkind.<sup>12</sup>

When they are mentioned together, Echo and Philomel are generally referred to as emblems of consuming grief: theirs are famously story of extreme suffering and hence the mere evocation of their name was often sufficient to enhance the pathetic tone of the text. Yet, the two figures have more in common than just their tragic fate: their speech is taken away from them, their language and their bodies are mutilated (one is raped and the other gradually withers away until only her bones remain), but they both manage nonetheless to communicate. Webster was probably aware of those similarities if he had the figure of Philomel in mind when he imagined Ferdinand fantasise about cutting the Duchess' tongue. In many respects, both Echo and Philomel are indeed fitting mythological counterparts of his Duchess of Malfi.

Echo is obviously associated with the Duchess in a more explicit way by having the latter speak as an echo. The remarkable ability of her echoing voice to manipulate language, which has been analysed above, contributes to characterise

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<sup>12</sup>Samuel Nicholson, *Acolastus his After-Witte* (London: Felix Kingston, 1600), sig. D2r. For other examples of the association between Echo and Philomel see Mauré, *Héritages*, pp. 254-57.

the Duchess as a determined, strong woman. The political and sexual agency which she exerted while she was still alive are somehow replaced by her agency over language in the echo-scene, which suggests that she is still the assertive woman she used to be. The fact that echoes convey the voice of the late Duchess appears thus as an important element in the play's portrayal of this female figure.

The Duchess' strong personality has provoked unflattering critical assessments. Jardine, in particular, argued that male interpretation of female actions influenced audience response: the Duchess would thus have been seen through her brother's eyes and judged according to their patriarchal set of values.<sup>13</sup> The play presents her as a lusty widow, who only marries in order to satisfy her voracious sexual desire and embraces modest resignation only when she loses control of the outcomes of her action. Her death represents a punishment for her breach of sexual decorum and public order, a 'ritual chastisement' aimed at exorcising the spectre of female strength.<sup>14</sup> Jardine's reading of the Duchess prompts her to include Webster's play among the numerous denunciations of the 'not-woman' which appeared in the literature of this period, even if not among the most misogynistic ones.<sup>15</sup> Gibbons offers a more balanced appraisal of the Duchess, recognising that she is represented as 'young, beautiful, noble, articulate and witty', but also as proud and wilful. He also suggests that her 'sexual wantonness' is evoked by Webster's use of crude images to describe her female body, especially when heavily pregnant.<sup>16</sup>

As Marcus points out, though, there is evidence of the play's reception in early performances that indicates that audience sympathy was with the Duchess.<sup>17</sup> For instance, Middleton's commendatory poem in the 1623 quarto claims that no one who had seen the play could help weeping for the Duchess:

For who e'er saw this duchess live and die,  
That could get off under a bleeding eye?<sup>18</sup> (ll. 17-18)

<sup>13</sup>Jardine, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup>Jardine, pp. 71-77.

<sup>15</sup>Jardine, pp. 93-94.

<sup>16</sup>John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by Brian Gibbons (London: Methuen, 2014), p. xii.

<sup>17</sup>*The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by Marcus, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup>The poem is printed in *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by Marcus, p. 123-24.

Her sexuality is explored in the play, but it does not appear as disgusting or unnatural. It is rather Ferdinand's attitude towards sex and especially his obsession with controlling his sister's sexual life that are twisted and disturbing.<sup>19</sup> Her imprisonment and torture are not so much a reassuring punishment of a woman who has threatened patriarchal order, but they rather establish the Duchess as a tragic heroine and confirm her image as a self-possessed woman. That Webster did not intend to offer a negative moral judgment of the Duchess' behaviour is also suggested by the fact that his characterisation of his female protagonist is far more positive than that of his source, Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*. Painter's account of the Duchess' story is aimed at teaching the moral lesson that:

bicause a woman being as it were the Image of sweetenesse, curtesie & shame fastnesse, so soone as she steppeth out of the right tract, and abandoneth the sweete smel of hir duety and modesty, besides the denigration of hir honor, thrusteth her self into infinite Troubles, causeth ruine of sutch whych should bee honoured and praysed, if Womens Allurementes solicited theym not to Folly.<sup>20</sup>

Painter's Duchess is hence the sole responsible of her own ruin, and she is accordingly cast as a condemnable example of unbridled lust. The author insistently repeats that she married only to satisfy the 'tickling instigations of her wanton flesh' (p. 10) and that she foolishly let her carnal desires prevail over reason. She is mentioned alongside other negative examples of sexually licentious women, such as Semiramis and Pasiphae, whose stories are examples 'induced for to eschue & auoid' (p. 28). Webster clearly revises his source material in order to present his audience with a more sympathetic female figure. A significant example is offered by the fact that the narrator of Painter's novel compares the Duchess to 'a female wolfe or a lionesse' (p. 28), which are both emblems of sexual greed: this comparison is absent in Webster's play, and the association with a wolf is actually displaced onto Ferdinand, who is affected by lycanthropy. Moreover, the Duchess in Painter's novel laments being 'more fonde and foolish

<sup>19</sup>Woodbridge contrasts Webster's depiction of the Duchess' healthy sexual drive with Ferdinand's pathological revulsion of sexuality (pp. 259-60).

<sup>20</sup>William Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure*, ed. by Joseph Jacobs, 3 vols (Hildesheim: George Olms, 1968), III, pp. 3-43 (p. 4). All further references are from this edition.

than ever Narcissus was', whereas Webster's heroine has nothing in common with the self-absorbed boy and is instead linked with the self-assertive Echo.

If the Duchess is freed from the blame of being a lascivious woman, her association with Echo is probably not motivated by readings of the Ovidian nymph which emphasise her sexual licentiousness, as Lewis seems to imply. Lewis distinguishes quite sharply between two different versions of Echo upon which early modern authors could draw: on the one hand, there was the chaste nymph of the Homeric hymns, on the other the sexually voracious lover of Narcissus represented by Ovid.<sup>21</sup> She then argues that Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* is one of the very few plays of the period which relies on both versions of Echo and does so in order to challenge 'the early modern construction of the moral polarities of female sexual behaviour'.<sup>22</sup> In her reading, the Duchess would be linked with both personifications of Echo.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the dichotomy she delineates between the two versions of Echo does not seem representative of the many varied readings of the nymph in early modern literature. The Ovidian nymph, for instance, was by no means perceived only as lascivious: alongside Golding's moralising interpretation of the nymph as a 'bawd', there were authors who emphasised the nymph's responsiveness and readiness to help, or others who depicted her as one who could have saved Narcissus. Indeed, if Webster had any allegorical or moralising interpretation in mind, it would have been more likely Farra's identification of Echo as Narcissus' potential saviour or TH's reading of her as a true friend and good adviser: like Echo, the Duchess' echoic voice 'gives [Antonio] good counsel' and tries to save his life. In other words, Webster is probably not drawing on the figure of Echo because she unashamedly voiced her sexual desire for Narcissus. As has been pointed out above, he seems rather interested in the nymph's vocal agency, which he projects onto the Duchess by having her voice resound like an echo after her death.

Another reason which may have led the playwright to represent his Duchess's

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<sup>21</sup>Lewis, pp. 268-76.

<sup>22</sup>Lewis, p. 273.

<sup>23</sup>Lewis, pp. 273, 276.

otherworldly voice as an echo is that the mythological nymph was often identified as an emblem of Fame, as has been explained in the first chapter. Fame is one of the most important issues which the play explores. Ferdinand, for instance, expresses his preoccupation that the Duchess' reputation will be marred if she re-marries:

Now hear me -  
You live in a rank pasture, here i'th' court;  
There is a kind of honeydew that's deadly;  
'Twill poison your fame. (I.ii.221-24)

The Duchess herself values her own fame. When she confesses to Cariola that she has chosen a husband, she urges her to keep the secret as both her life and her reputation depend on that: 'To thy known secrecy I have given up / More than my life — my fame' (I.ii.265-66). Later in the play, Bosola praises Antonio and he brings up the notion of fame once again:

For Antonio,  
His fame shall likewise flow from many a pen,  
When heralds shall want coats to sell to men. (III.ii.299-301)

Antonio is so full of good qualities that his name will be remembered in posterity. Throughout the play, lasting reputation is repeatedly presented as a reward for virtuous conduct. When Bosola accepts Ferdinand's commission to spy on the Duchess, he deliberately renounces to any pretence of future fame, which he trades for money and power: 'let good men, for good deeds, covet good fame / Since place and riches oft are bribes of shame' (I.ii.205-06). Fame, he recognises, is a privilege reserved for good people who act virtuously.

In the last act of the play, Bosola repents of all the wrongs he has done but he shows awareness that he is irredeemably tainted. When he is about to die, he muses: 'we are only like dead walls, or vaulted graves / That, ruined, yields no echo' (V.v.95-96). By using the personal pronoun 'we', Bosola is likely referring to men who are as evil and corrupt as himself rather than to humankind in general. In the play, he never appears to be so sceptical as to believe that the life of every human being is worthless and doomed to dissolve into nothing.

On the contrary, he had earlier alluded to the fact that at least good men can hope to earn lasting reputation. His awareness that not everyone deserves the same end emerges also in his last speech when he contrasts his own death with that of ‘worthy minds’: ‘mine is another voyage’, he recognises. (V.v.101-03). Because of his former association of good deeds with fame, the image of graves and walls yielding no echo may be read as another allusion to the impossibility for evil men to achieve fame, metaphorically represented as an echo: as acoustic reverberation is only produced when physical objects are undamaged, so does good reputation require moral integrity.

In the last lines of the play, Delio confirms the dichotomy between men who deserve fame and those who do not:

These wretched, eminent things  
Leave no more fame behind 'em, than should one  
Fall in a frost, and leave his print in snow,  
As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts  
Both form and matter. I have ever thought  
Nature doth nothing so great for great men  
As when she's pleased to make them lords of truth.  
'Integrity of life is fame's best friend,  
Which nobly, beyond death, shall crown the end.' (V.v.111-19)

Bosola, Ferdinand, and the Cardinal, whose bodies are still visible on stage, are dismissed as wretched things which will be soon forgotten. Fame is only achieved by those who preserve their ‘integrity of life’. Among them can certainly be included the Duchess, who is consistently presented as a noble and heroic woman. Bosola’s apparently casual image acquires thus a deep resonance: it both helps to associate echoes with fame and reinforces the opposition between the morally corrupt characters of the play, unworthy of an afterlife and unable to echo, and the virtuous Duchess, whose voice did echo after her death.

The play’s insistence on fame and on the necessity to earn it thus encourages us to see the echo of the late Duchess’ voice as a symbol of her well-deserved renown. This conclusion has been reached also by Neill, who suggests that Webster’s echo-scene ‘emblematises the Triumph of Fame through Fame’s agent,

poetry'.<sup>24</sup> He supports his argument by analysing the play's numerous allusions to graves, monuments, and ruins, but the allegorical interpretations of the nymph Echo as good reputation, which were well-known in the early modern period, also lend weight to his hypothesis.

The lasting fame earned by Duchess is not confined to the fictional world of the play: the literary quality of Webster's work ensures that her story will not be forgotten. The three commendatory poems by Middleton, Ford, and Rowley printed in the 1632 Quarto all credit Webster's poetry with the power of eternalising human beings. His tragedy is identified as his 'monument', his 'work of fame', the 'masterpiece' that will consign its author's name to posterity.<sup>25</sup> His work is deemed to be immortal: as such, it grants eternal fame to its author, but plausibly also to the characters whose story he has so skillfully narrated. Rowley, for instance, praises Webster for his outstanding portrayal of the Duchess:

I never saw thy Duchess till the day  
That she was lively bodied in thy play  
How'er she answered her low-rated love,  
Her brother's anger did so fatal prove!  
Yet my opinion is she might speak more,  
But never in her life so well before.<sup>26</sup>

The Duchess' voice had been heard before, but, according to Rowley, she had never spoken as beautifully as in Webster's tragedy. Not even during her life could her eloquence match that of Webster's fictional character: the playwright's artistic representation is even more impressive than the historical figure herself. These lines seem thus to imply that if the Duchess gains eternal fame, what will likely be remembered is the powerful version of her portrayed by Webster.

Chalk engages with Neill's influential study and contradicts his theory by claiming that Webster did not believe in the possibility of being immortalised by monuments or works of art. To prove his point he gives an interpretation of the

<sup>24</sup> Michael Neill, 'Monuments and Ruins as Symbols in *The Duchess of Malfi*', in *Drama and Symbolism*, ed. by James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 71-87 (p. 73).

<sup>25</sup> *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by Marcus, p. 123 (ll. 2, 5, 8), p. 126 (l. 7).

<sup>26</sup> The poem is printed in *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by Marcus, p. 125.

echo-scene which is antithetical to the reading suggested in this chapter. Chalk argues that the echo of the Duchess' voice 'serves to deny rather than confirm her transcendence'.<sup>27</sup> in his opinion, that noise sounds eerily like the Duchess but it is just a distorted reverberation of Antonio's own voice. He also comments on Bosola's image of the dumb walls and graves, which he counts among the hints given in the play that the characters are doomed to sink into oblivion, just as are human beings in general.<sup>28</sup> As has been argued above, though, the echo does seem to be a ghostly manifestation of the Duchess' voice: it has an agency of its own and speaks independently of Antonio, who cannot control or silence it effectively. As for Bosola's remark, it suggests that Ferdinand, the Cardinal and himself will be forgotten, but that is because they did not deserve fame: that simile is thus aimed not so much at expressing utter scepticism towards the possibility of achieving literary immortality, but rather at establishing a distinction between those who deserve to be eternalised and those who do not.

As has hopefully been shown, an accurate analysis of the famous echo-scene in Webster's play is revealing of how the Duchess should be assessed. Echoic language encourages the audience to assimilate the Duchess to the nymph Echo, with whom she shares the destiny of having become a disembodied but meaningful voice. For that reason, it may be useful to read her echoic lines bearing in mind not only the story of that mythological figure, but also its allegorical interpretations. By choosing echoes as a means of expression for the late Duchess, Webster seems to emphasise her enduring vocal agency. The play's allusions to echoes also contribute to characterise the Duchess as a virtuous woman who deserves immortal fame unlike many of the other characters in the play. Her voice thus persists in the play as an acoustic echo, but it is also a metaphorical echo which suggests that she has been rescued from oblivion.

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<sup>27</sup>Chalk, p. 399.

<sup>28</sup>Chalk, p. 400.

## A ventiloquised female voice in Day's *Law Tricks*

Webster's Duchess is not the only woman on the early modern stage whose voice is represented as an echo able to communicate even after her death: in Day's *Law Tricks* (c. 1604, published 1608) an echo is heard inside the tomb of a noblewoman, and it is believed to be the voice of her ghost. Unlike in Webster's tragedy, though, the echo is here not a supernatural sound, but rather a trick improvised by Horatio's clever page in order to beguile his master. Horatio and Lurdo try to kill the Countess with poison, but the page, who is the son of an apothecary, gives her a sleeping potion instead. In Act V, the Countess is asleep in her tomb, watched over by the page. When Horatio visits her tomb, soliloquising on the fact that he has repented for his deed, the page hides himself. Unseen, he starts to answer to Horatio by echoing his last words and makes him believe that he is speaking with the ghost of the dead Countess, who wants to take revenge on him. The page amplifies Horatio's sense of guilt by telling him that the Countess has suffered 'huge wrongs' (l. 1798), and tries to heighten his anguish by repeating the word 'despair':

HORATIO Discourteous ayre,  
My blood is frozen with dispaire.  
PAGE Dispaire.<sup>29</sup> (ll. 1804-06)

While Horatio uses the word as a substantive, the page seems to turn it into an imperative verb, which peremptorily urges his interlocutor to renounce all hope of being forgiven. Horatio then asks: 'what ransome shall I pay thee for thy life?' (l. 1800) and the page threatens him by suggesting that the only form of payment accepted is 'thy life' (l. 1801). When Horatio appears to be scared enough, though, the page grants him pardon:

HORATIO Pardon forgiue me, shall I goe?  
PAGE I goe.  
HORATIO But shall your hate pursue me, I or no?  
PAGE No. (ll. 1807-10)

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<sup>29</sup>All references to this play are from John Day, *Law Tricks*, ed. by John Crow, Walter W. Greg, Frank P. Wilson (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

Relieved by the reassurances of the alleged ghost, Horatio leaves the tomb, but he immediately re-enters, asking the disembodied voice to confirm that he has been forgiven: ‘May my hearts true repentance satisfie, / My wilful murder, your replie’. The page, still hidden from sight, answers affirmatively ‘I’ (ll. 1840-42).

There appears to be some similarity between this echo-scene and that in Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*. In both cases a noblewoman is killed (or nearly so) by men dissatisfied with their sexual choices: if the Duchess’ fault was that of refusing to remain unmarried, the Countess is blamed by Horatio for her steadfastness in chastity and her indifference to his sexual advances (ll. 1244-52). These two silenced women regain the ability to communicate by means of an echoic voice – either their own or a borrowed one. It is true that in Day’s *Law Tricks* the Countess is not a ghost and she does not speak herself, but it is nonetheless significant that the page chooses echoing as a form of expression when he decides to impersonate the ghost of a murdered woman. Echoes are an obvious choice for someone who wants to create an eerie atmosphere: they are sounds apparently emitted by no physical source, and, as such, they seem supernatural. By speaking as an echo, though, the page not only scares Horatio, but also lends his voice to the Countess, incapacitated to speak for herself. Echoic speech is thus the mode adopted to ventriloquise a woman, and it is especially suitable for that purpose. As is recognised by Stavreva, the mythological figure of Echo had become the ‘Renaissance trope denoting the alienation of the speaking subject from vocal agency’:<sup>30</sup> echoic language in Day’s play becomes thus a sign that the Countess’ vocal agency is temporarily taken away from her and appropriated by another speaking subject, the page.

While ventriloquism was normally a way to silence a woman,<sup>31</sup> the page’s speaking on behalf of the Countess is well-intentioned and has positive outcomes. Not only does he prevent her from being silenced forever by refusing to

<sup>30</sup>Kirilka Stavreva, *Words Like Daggers: Violent Female Speech in Early Modern England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), p. 20.

<sup>31</sup>Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 142.

administer poison to her, but he also speaks to her advantage when he pretends to be her ghost. On that occasion, he presents the Countess as someone who has suffered unjustly, and heightens her assassin's remorse for his deed. His final forgiveness of Horatio anticipates the Countess' own decision to pardon both Horatio and Lurdo, which leads to her reinstatement as Lurdo's virtuous wife. As he himself states, although he 'plaid the knaue' with Horatio and Lurdo, he 'did like an honest man with her' (ll. 2291-92), enabling everyone to have their happy ending.

In the last scene of the play, Polymetes pretends to conjure the supposed 'shadow' of the Countess (ll. 2235), who appears on stage and accuses Horatio of having killed her. When the Duke is about to punish Horatio and Lurdo with death, the Countess reveals that she is alive:

COUNTESS Justice great Duke, giue me my husbands life,  
Both his and his, if your demaund be why,  
See she suruiues for whose death they should die. (ll. 2282-84)

As a result of this epiphany, Lurdo and Horatio's death sentence is revoked and the Countess' reputation is cleared. Her husband had accused her of being unchaste and wanted to divorce her on the sole ground that 'two sufficient men / swore her a harlot' (ll. 46-47). In the last scene, though, he immediately interprets her apparition as a sign of her innocence: 'Alive!', exclaims the Duke, 'Vnblemish't!' retorts Lurdo (ll. 2285). Once her good name is restored, Lurdo promises to 'receive her, loue, and lodge her in [his] heart' forever (ll. 2299).

Even if the page is consistently on the Countess' side, his ventriloquism of her could be perceived as ambiguous: in speaking for her and even taking important decisions on her behalf, such as whether or not to forgive Horatio, the page seems to diminish her agency. And yet, the fact that it is he who blames Horatio for his crime and defends the Countess' innocence actually reinforces her characterisation as a chaste and honourable woman. In early modern England, women were expected to bear their grief submissively like a patient Grissil: complaining about the 'huge wrongs' suffered, as the page does in the echo-scene, would likely constitute a transgression of that norm. Moreover, women who

chided were indeed labelled as scolds, and scolds were often accused of sexual incontinence. The triad of chastity, silence, and obedience was an ‘interlinked set of virtues’ which were prescribed to women: silence was thus indissolubly associated with chastity, which meant that if a woman was loquacious, she was also considered to be sexually available.<sup>32</sup> Although Luckyj has shown that silence could be equally read as a sign of sexual desire,<sup>33</sup> in Day’s comedy the representation of female speech and silence appears to be unambiguous.

Female shrewdness is one of the themes explored in the play, and it is embodied by the figure of Emilia. Emilia is described as witty (ll. 391, 399, 1967, 2147), intimidatingly eloquent (ll. 396-401), endowed with a ‘smooth tongue’ (l. 1955), and even potentially promiscuous (ll. 887-91). The Countess incarnates an opposite and more virtuous model of femininity. It is through silence that she asserts her will; silence is her response to Horatio’s insistent sexual advances: ‘my ears are deafned and *my vtterance mute*’, she tells him in Act III (l. 1184, emphasis mine). The play thus explicitly associates silence with chastity and eloquence with sexual promiscuity: in this context, the Countess’ best chance to defend herself against accusations of being a whore was exactly that of letting someone else speak in her stead. The fact that in the echo-scene boldness and verbal wit are displayed by the page rather than by the Countess preserves her image as a modest woman, and casts her unambiguously as a victim of calumny. Her silence is a proof of her chastity and she regains her social status as a virtuous wife exactly because someone else acted and spoke for her.

Wit is not appropriate for a woman, but it clearly is for the page. When his stratagem is revealed in the last scene, the page is praised by Horatio for having ‘turn’d to mirth a Sceane so tragicall’ (ll. 2306-07). The verbal dexterity he shows in pretending to be an echo would probably have been appreciated by the audience: that expedient offers comic relief, thus mitigating the gloomy atmosphere of the Countess’ tomb. As will be shown in the next chapter, echoes

<sup>32</sup>Kim Walker, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York: Twaine Publishers, 1996), pp. 8-9; Jardine, p. 121-24; Lynda Boose, ‘Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman’s Unruly Member’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42.2 (1991), 179-213 (p. 195).

<sup>33</sup>Luckyj, pp. 63-67.

were often employed by early modern playwrights for their comic potential: a character whose words were re-echoed was often mocked by that distorting reverberation. That is also the case in Day's *Law Tricks*, where the page not only beguiles Horatio, but also decides to have fun at the expense of the Countess. When the Countess awakes, he hides and pretends once again to be an echo in order to 'haue a little sport' with her (ll. 1856-57). He answers to her questions by repeating her words but, instead of playing the part of a supernatural entity, he reveals that the voice she is hearing is that of a youth:

COUNTESS What voice is that? is this place earth?

PAGE Earth.

[...]

COUNTESS What voice is that? a woman or some youth?

PAGE Youth. (ll. 1858-65)

In this case he takes full responsibility for that verbal game, which he evidently finds amusing. Even if he mocks the Countess, his trick is ultimately innocent, as he reveals his identity as soon as he sees that the Countess is scared. Echoic language is thus used by the page to vetriloquise a woman for her own advantage, but also to entertain the audience. As a result, Day's echo-scenes are different in atmosphere from the one in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*. The audience is perfectly aware that there is nothing scary or supernatural in the echo heard in the Countess' tomb. In Day's comedy, the echo-dialogue is an amusing device, but, despite its lighter tone, it once again demonstrates that echoing was often linked with issues of female vocal agency.

## Echo and misogynistic discourse

A woman's exertion of her agency often generated anxieties in the early modern period, as it was perceived to be a threat to social hierarchy and patriarchal authority. Women were hierarchically subordinate to men and they were fittingly expected to be passive and submissive. Assertiveness was an exclusively male

quality, and it was considered to be unacceptable in women. A woman who transgressed those norms of behaviour usurped male prerogatives, thus challenging men's position of superiority. Speech was generally held responsible for endowing women with that kind of dangerous agency, and as such, it was identified as a subversive force that had to be kept in check. Excessively loquacious or verbally aggressive women were disruptive to both domestic and social peace: they were often described as shrewish, quarrelsome with their neighbours, and violent with their husbands. A scold was a woman who defied male authority, and she also claimed for herself a freedom of speech which was generally denied to her sex. Her unruly tongue had thus the uncanny power to undermine patriarchal hierarchy and traditional gender norms.<sup>34</sup> As has been pointed out above, though, a woman's silence was also invested with a subversive potential. Just as women who spoke too much, women who remained perpetually silent made it difficult to lead a serene domestic life and, more in general, they eluded male control, thus also threatening to disrupt patriarchal authority.<sup>35</sup>

The mythological figure of Echo is the very embodiment of the trope of the voice, a voice which was generally recognised as female.<sup>36</sup> As such, literary depictions of the nymph and of the speech pattern associated with her often reflect the ambiguities which characterised early modern attitudes towards female speech. As has been shown, echoes could be alluded to as a perfect paradigm of the kind of measured and derivative speech that was appropriate for women: in Breton's romance, for instance, echoing is a speech pattern employed by a woman keen not to overstep the boundaries of female modesty. Similarly, in the two conduct books mentioned above, women are advised to imitate echo because echoes reply to those who speak with a very small number of words. That suggestion also seems to imply that women should speak only when

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<sup>34</sup>For a more detailed treatment of how women's speech constituted a threat to social order and gender norms see Jardine, pp. 103-20; Stavreva, p. 16; Boose, pp. 189, 203; Woodbridge, pp. 197, 207-19.

<sup>35</sup>For a more detailed explanation of the subversive potential of female silence see Luckyj, pp. 58-71.

<sup>36</sup>In some early modern works the nymph's gender was ambiguous: in *Maid's Metamorphosis*, for instance, the nymph is referred to as 'she' but she is also called 'Eccho boy' (p. 143). In Gascoigne's *Glasse of Government*, Echo is the name of a male character. Yet, in most of the cases, femaleness was the nymph's defining trait.

they are spoken to, just as echoes only answer to previously uttered words: in this case, echoes represent controllable female speech, which is elicited at the will of a man.

More often, though, Echo and echoes were associated with excessive and hence troublesome loquacity. Early modern depictions of the nymph could thus be unflattering, especially when they were informed by misogynistic stereotypes about female speech. Dekker's echo-scene in *Old Fortunatus* (1599) is emblematic of this tendency. After having been mocked by Echo, Fortunatus exclaims:

and the spite is that none of these grass-eates can speak my language but this foole that mockes me, and sweares to haue the last word (in spite of my teeth.) I, and shee shall haue it because shee is a woman, which kind of cattell are indeede all Eccho, nothing but tongue, and are like the great bell of Saint Michaels in Cyprus, that keepes most rumbling when men would most sleepe.<sup>37</sup> (I.i.41-47)

Echo is here unambiguously identified as female and even taken as the epitome of womankind in general. The nymph is accused of exasperating verbal aggressiveness: like all women, she is contentious, irritating, and incapable of holding her tongue. Such a reading of the nymph had a precedent in Berchorius' medieval commentary on Ovid, where Echo was glossed as an example of 'quarrelsome and contentious women or quarrelsome servants who always want to have the last word and answer to everything said by husbands and masters' (p. 196).

Dekker was also probably familiar with Chaucer's tale of Griselda, which he may have used as a source for his *Patient Grissil* (1600, printed 1603). Chaucer interestingly casts Echo as an anti-type of the patient woman *par excellence*, Griselda. The nymph is briefly referred to in the envoy at the end of the Clerk's Tale and she is associated with unsubmissive women. After the clerk's account of the tale of Patient Griselda, the ironic envoy advises women not to follow Griselda's example:

O noble wives, ful of heigh prudence

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<sup>37</sup>All references to this play are from Thomas Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) I, pp. 105-205.

Lat noon humylitee youre tonge naille  
[...]  
Folweth Ekko, that holdeth no silence,  
But evere answereth at the countretaille.  
Beth nat bidaffed for youre innocence  
But sharply tak on yow the governaille.  
[...]  
Ne dreed hem nat; doth hem no reverence,  
For though thyn housbonde armed be in maille,  
The arwes of thy crabbed eloquence  
Shal perce his brest and eek his aventaille.  
In jalousie I rede eek thou hym bynde,  
And thou shalt make hym couche as doth a quaille.<sup>38</sup> (IV.1183-1204)

He suggests that women should not passively endure their husband's will, as Griselda did. They should rather follow Echo's example, who never refrains from speaking. Two antithetical models of femaleness are here presented: the silent and submissive woman is opposed to the rebellious and aggressive one. Women belonging to the latter category make use of their 'crabbed eloquence' in order prevail over their husbands. Female speech can thus be so powerful as to enable the subordinate sex to 'tak on [...] the governaille'. In other words, a woman's eloquence can be employed to subvert the traditional hierarchical order and gain supremacy over men. Even if women are formally encouraged to imitate Echo, the paradigm embodied by the silent Griselda appears as more reassuring. Female speech is indeed imagined as an arrow capable of piercing through a man's armour: it is physically harmful other than socially disruptive. It also has a charming quality, as it can be used to 'bynde' men by eliciting their jealousy. Echo is referred to as a model for verbally aggressive women and she is hence associated with their dangerous speech.

The loquacity which traditionally characterises the figure of Echo was not

<sup>38</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry Dean Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 3-328.

only interpreted as a sign of quarrelsomeness, but also of sexual incontinence. Not only did Golding show disapproval of the nymph's garrulity by calling her 'babbling nymph', but he also explicitly condemned her for her boldness in wooing Narcissus, accusing her of being a bawd who deserved her punishment (III.443; Epistle of 1567, 108). In Greene's *Morando* (1584), Aretino significantly mentions Echo's self-consuming obsession for Narcissus to prove that women fall in love too easily and are too weak to withstand the power of desire: the nymph is also associated with other female figures, such as Salmacis, Circe, and Byblis, who came to embody obsessive, illicit, or insatiable sexual appetite.<sup>39</sup> A woman exerting her sexual agency violated gender norms and was often seen as a potentially dangerous: in order to satisfy her sexual appetite, that kind of woman could employ her eloquence to seduce men and keep them in her thrall. As will be demonstrated, echoes were often associated with alluring female speech.

The nymph Echo was thus depicted as verbally aggressive, sexually greedy, and she also embodied other disturbing characteristics which were stereotypically attributed to women. A binary opposition was often established between qualities perceived to be typically male and others believed to be female: masculinity was conceived as limited, single, and steadfast, while femininity as unlimited, multiple, and changeable.<sup>40</sup> All those female attributes perfectly describe the mythological nymph: her voice is indeed multiple, unpredictable and impossible to confine. Moreover, as will be shown in greater detail in the next chapter, her speech pattern destabilises meaning and alters the sense of words previously uttered. Her language constantly transforms itself in appropriating what others have said, and it also alters what it captures. Because she lacks a body, her speech is the only locus where her subjectivity survives and, hence, its polymorphic quality becomes one of the defining characteristics of the nymph herself. The way in which this female figure speaks thus reinforces the link between her

<sup>39</sup> Robert Greene, *Morando, the Tritameron of Loue*, in *The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart, 12 vols (London and Aylesbury: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1881-83), III, pp. 45-109 (p. 105).

<sup>40</sup> Jardine, p. 115.

femaleness and her unsettling mutability. Her female voice undermines male values of determinacy and stability.

Stereotypes against women and their speech thus often emerge in early modern allusions to Echo, where the nymph appears as an unruly and potentially dangerous female figure. As Gina Bloom has brilliantly pointed out, Echo's disembodiment even increased patriarchal anxieties about female speech. The nymph possesses an unconventional kind of agency, which is difficult to control or discipline. Her metamorphosis disrupts the relationship between body, vocality, and subjectivity, thus making it more difficult to hold her accountable for her words. Her echoic voice, unlocatable and disembodied, thus eludes male censure and frustrates any attempt to restrain it.<sup>41</sup> Behind many early modern representations of echoic voices lies hence both a male fantasy of control over the female voice, and the preoccupation that it might be impossible to exert it.

### **The taming of a shrew: Middleton and Webster's *Anything for a Quiet Life***

The ambiguities which surrounded echoic expression when it was associated with female speech are evident in Middleton and Webster's *Anything for a Quiet Life* (c. 1621, published 1662). Echoes are here associated with female vocal agency but in a remarkably unconventional way. They are denied their conventional status as eerie manifestations of an uncontrollable female voice, and echoing is instead employed as a strategy to tame a shrew. The play is next in composition after *The Devil's Law Case* (1620) and both explore the issue of unruly women. Lucas partly attributes this choice of subject to the 'wave of exasperation against domineering women' originated by the 'Lake-Roos trial', a trial in which Lady

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<sup>41</sup>Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 161, 163, 166-67, 183-85. According to Stavreva, the fact that echoes are voices that cannot be controlled is the reason why echoic speech is typically assumed by scolds, witches, and prophets, emblems of an eccentric and uncanny femininity (p. 20).

Lake accused her husband of incest with his step-grandmother.<sup>42</sup> The growing popularity of anti-feminist pamphlets and works of entertainment in the 1620s is testified by a letter written by Chamberlain to Carleton, quoted in Lucas's introduction to *The Devil's Law Case*: 'our Pulpits ring continually of the insolence and impudence of Women; and to help forward, the Players have likewise taken them to task, and so to the Ballads and Ballad-Singers'.<sup>43</sup> *Hic Mulier*, a pamphlet against masculine women published in 1620, is probably one of the most representative examples of these anti-feminist works which proliferated in this period. *Anything for a Quiet Life* also teems with misogynistic stereotypes, and one of the play's most evident aspects is its satire against domineering women. Thomson usefully reminds that *Anything for a Quiet Life* was also the title of a ballad printed in 1621, which concludes by advising men to avoid marriage and presents women as living embodiments of deception itself. Middleton and Webster's play certainly shares the ballad's anti-feminist sentiment.<sup>44</sup>

The play's misogynistic tone is evident especially in its depiction of Lady Camlet, who possesses all the characteristics which were traditionally frowned upon in women. As soon as the play opens, she is described by Camlet as a spendthrift ('her going brave has the only virtue / To improve my credit in the subsidy book', I.i.59-60) and a lascivious woman: the reference to Camlet's plantation of silkworm, which she has moved 'home to a fair chamber, where divers courtiers use to come and see them' (I.i.65-67), carries the implication that she lures men to her (I.i.61-62n). She is also repeatedly blamed for being shrewish and excessively loquacious. In Act I, Camlet complains at length about her railing (I.i.134-58) and compares her to the bells of Bow Church in Cheap-side (I.i.138). The comparison of a woman's voice with a church bell, and the observation that she 'railed upon me when I should sleep' (I.i.157) interestingly

<sup>42</sup>John Webster, *The Devil's Law Case*, ed. by Frank Laurence Lucas, in *The Complete Works of John Webster*, 4 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972), II, pp. 213-372 (p. 215).

<sup>43</sup>*The Devil's Law Case*, p. 216.

<sup>44</sup>Thomas Middleton and John Webster, *Anything for a Quiet Life*, ed. by Leslie Thomson, in *Thomas Middleton: the Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), pp. 1593-1631 (p. 1595). All subsequent references to this play are from this edition.

remind of Fortunatus' tirade against women in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*. Lady Camlet's speech is indeed the main object of male scorn. Her voice is described as being so strident that it 'will be heard from Helbre to Divelin' (V.ii.108-09), and her 'tongue' is also repeatedly denigrated as being 'bitter', 'sharp', or difficult to restrain (III.ii.198, IV.ii.71-75; V.ii.127-28). As was often the case in anti-feminist texts, a woman's unrestrained linguistic agency is equated with despotism, which results in the reprehensible flouting of social conventions which prescribe the primacy of the husband over his wife. George fittingly declares to be certain that Lady Camlet 'denies her husband the supremacy' (V.i.94-95). Aggressive female speech has the power of subverting gender hierarchies, thus potentially causing social disruption. It also threatens the tranquillity of private family life: Lady Camlet is so violent and excessively prone to bouts of anger that she makes it difficult for Camlet to lead the quiet life he longs for.

These misogynistic stereotypes emerge in the play's brief echo-scene in Act V, Scene II. Camlet's apprentice, George, devises a stratagem to discipline his master's quarrelsome wife, convincing her to speak in a lower voice and to be more submissive to her husband. When he sees her approaching in order to speak with Lord Beaufort, George hides behind an arras. From that hiding place, he repeats her words pretending that there is an echo which catches her voice. This trick enables him to shame her for speaking too loud and to induce her to make decisions that are advantageous to him.

The woman laments with Lord Beaufort that her husband has gone away and Beaufort replies that it is only because of her behaviour that he has left her. When he blames her for having dismissed Camlet's apprentice, George steps in and echoes her words of repentance, turning them into an imperative:

BEAUFORT You turn away his servants, such on whom his estate depends, he says, who know his books, his debts, his customers. The form and order of all his affairs you make orderless; chiefly, his George you have banish'd from him.

RACHEL My lord, I will call George again.

GEORGE (*within*) Call George again! (V.ii.130-36)

The echo, being intentionally produced by George, selectively repeats Rachel's words only, and it is thus interpreted by Beaufort as a sign of her excessive

loudness:

BEAUFORT Why, hark you, how high-voiced you are that raise an echo from my cellarage which we with modest loudness cannot.

RACHEL My lord, do you think I speak too loud?

GEORGE (*within*) Too loud.

BEAUFORT Why hark, your own tongue answers you, and reverberates your words into your teeth.

RACHEL I will speak lower all the days of my life: I never found the fault in myself till now. (V.ii.137-45)

Even if it is generated by a man, the echo is thus associated with Lady Camlet's female voice. Like the page in *Law Tricks*, George chooses echoic speech when he wants to imitate a woman's speech, one which is in this case aggressive and inconveniently loud. Echoing is interpreted as a signal that a woman's voice has overstepped the boundaries imposed by social norms.

By pretending to be an echo, George manages to tell Lady Camlet what to do without confronting her directly, so as to prevent her anger and make sure that she will listen. Unlike in Day's *Law Tricks*, his appropriation of a typically feminine expressive mode is not motivated by a will to act on behalf of a woman. Rachel does win her husband back by following George's advice, but in echoing her words the apprentice is actually acting in his own interest. The device improvised by George is successful. Lady Camlet swears that she will henceforth be silent and she will allow her husband to rehire George:

RACHEL I will call George again.

GEORGE (*within*) Call George again.

BEAUFORT See, you are raised again, the echo tells you.

RACHEL I did forget myself indeed, my lord; this is my last fault; I will go make a *silent inquiry* after George; I will *whisper* half a score porters in the ear that shall run softly up and down the city to seek him. (V.ii.151-57. emphasis mine)

Male fantasies of control of a woman's voice are here fulfilled, as Rachel Camlet's unruly tongue is eventually disciplined. Echoing is here the strategy adopted to limit a woman's speech and ensure that it remains within reassuring boundaries,

but, at the same time, it is explicitly identified as the very symbol of female speech which exceeds those boundaries.

The matter is even further complicated by the fact that Rachel, who appears to have been tamed, starts to echo George's words: in this case, echoic speech signals that she has finally become a submissive woman. Later on in the scene that has been analysed so far, we see George 'bringing her to conditions' (V.ii.302) and Rachel docilely repeating his precepts:

GEORGE You shall never talk your voice above the key sol, sol, sol.

RACHEL Sol, sol, sol. Ay, George.

GEORGE Say, 'Welcome home, honest George', in that pitch.

RACHEL Welcome home, honest George. [...]

GEORGE Nor I will not have you call my master plain husband, that's too coarse; but as your gentlewomen in the country use, and your parsons' wives in the town. 'Tis comely and shall be customed in the city: call him Master Camlet at every word.

RACHEL At every word, honest George. (V.ii.304-18)

In this dialogue, echoic speech is the symptom of diminished linguistic agency and enforced passivity. Rachel's voice has become comfortably derivative, as she repeats George's sentences unaltered and does not speak unless spoken to. Echoes are emptied of all their disruptive potential and so is the female voice, traditionally associated with it. George has managed to deprive a woman of her independent vocal articulation and to convince her to do as her husband pleases. In taming Lady Camlet, George has also restored the disrupted social hierarchy: by the end of the play an apprentice has regained a master to serve, and a wife is finally submitted to her husband.

In *Anything for a Quiet Life*, echoic speech is closely linked with issues of female vocal agency and its characterisation appears to be ambiguous: echoing is both the means to tame a shrew and the final proof that the shrew has been tamed. In this case, echoes are demystified and not characterised as threatening manifestations of a disembodied and uncontrollable female voice. On the contrary, echoic speech is interestingly appropriated by a male character to limit a woman's agency. Fittingly, the female voice with which echoes are associated is

represented as potentially disorderly but also restrainable.

## Seductive female voices in Browne's *Ulysses and Circe* and Wilson's *Cobler's Prophecy*

Like the female voice, echoic sound was uncanny and potentially disruptive, but it was seductive at the same time.<sup>45</sup> Female speech had the power to allure unwise men unable to resist its attractiveness: as the rightful descendants of Eve, women were considered to be troublesome and tempting. Seduction lies at the core of Brown's masque *Ulysses and Circe* (1615), which is highly atypical in its genre. As has been often noticed, it is the only masque not connected in any way with the court: it was not commissioned to celebrate a courtly occasion, nor did it have royal or aristocratic spectators among its audience. Its only purpose was to provide recreation during the Christmas festivities and its only dedicatees were the Inner Temple gentlemen: in Browne's own words 'it was done to please ourselves in private' (l. 8).<sup>46</sup> The masque had thus no didactic end, and it was free from the duty of flattering the monarch. The pastoral world in which it is set is thus not conceived as an idyllic model to be imitated by the court, but it merely provides a charming background which contributes to its festive tone.<sup>47</sup> Echoes fully belong to this magic woodland world and share its function.

The masque opens in a land where 'all love, delight, and sweetness dwells' (l. 152). Sensuous pleasures, alluring music, joy, and eternal spring characterise Circe's island. Echoes reverberate in this enchanted realm and contribute to its idyllic atmosphere by joining their voices with the sounds heard in the woods:

What sing the sweet birds in each grove?

Nought but love.

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<sup>45</sup>Dunn and Jones, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup>All references are from William Browne, *The Masque of the Inner Temple (Ulysses and Circe)*, ed. by R. F. Hill, in *A Book of Masques in Honour of Allardyce Nicoll*, ed. by Terence John Bew Spenser and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 179-206.

<sup>47</sup>For the lack of allegory and didactic purpose see *The Masque of the Inner Temple*, p. 183; Gilliam Wright, 'Giving Them But Their Own: Circe, Ulysses, and William Browne of Tavistock', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 12 (1999), 190-217 (pp. 196-97, 207).

What sound our echoes day and night?

All delight.

What doth each wind breathe as it fleets?

Endless sweets. (ll. 143-48)

Among the delights of the island is the enticing tune of the Sirens, who are unconventionally depicted as Circe's attendants. Their song is an invitation to Ulysses and his men to divert their ship's course to Circe's island, where sheer pleasure can be enjoyed (ll. 23-32). The erotic connotation of their enticement emerges explicitly in the last two lines in particular:

But come on shore,

Where no joy dies till love hath gotten more. (ll. 31-32)

Such lines 'are repeated as from a grove nere, by a full chorus' (l. 33) and they become a sort of refrain, appearing once again when the Sirens win the dispute against Triton (ll. 92-93). Echoes are here not explicitly alluded to, but a refrain repeated from the woods would probably have sounded very similar to an echo. The 'lascivious' Sirens (l. 20) thus count on echoic repetition to propagate their 'wanton melody' (l. 82) through the land. Echoes are thus immediately associated with sensuous delectation.

Not only are echoes linked with the Sirens, but they also cooperate with Circe, eager to lure Ulysses into staying with her. Circe wishes to please her guest and, in order to do so, she decides to entertain him with two masques. Echoes help in this task by circulating her order that her nymphs hasten there from several places of the island to dance in the second masque:

and let in a song

Echoes be aiding, that they may prolong

My now command to each place where they be,

To bring them hither all more speedily. (ll. 341-44)

Echoes repeat Circe's summons promptly and faithfully, thus giving origin to an echo-song which precedes the masque:

Circe bids you come awaye.

*Echo.* Come awaye, come awaye.

From the rivers, from the sea.

*Echo*. From the sea, from the sea.

From the greene woods every one.

*Echo*. Every one, every one.

Of her maides be missinge none.

*Echo*: Missing none, missing none.

No longer stay, except it be to bringe

A med'cine for love's stinge.

That would excuse you, and be held more deare,

Than wit or magicke, for both they are here.

*Echo*. They are here, they are here. (ll. 349-61)

Echoes are hence ready to comply with Circe's requests and to cooperate with her attendants, the Sirens. Both the Sirens and Circe were epitomes of the dangerous allurements represented by women and especially by the female voice. The Sirens famously led men to ruin by mesmerising them with their melodious song. Circe's witchcraft could also be associated with speech, as the woman had the ability to ensnare men by uttering magic spells and enchantments. In a 1625 sermon, for instance, the Homeric episodes of Circe and the Sirens are conflated, and Ulysses and his crew are praised for having 'stopt their eares, so to escape the charmes of Circes':<sup>48</sup> hearing is here the sense affected by Circe's powers.

Browne's Circe is even considerably more eloquent than her Homeric progenitor. Unlike in Homer, Circe manages to charm Ulysses, and she does so by using not only 'magicke', but also 'witte'. As Wright points out, Circe does not use enchantments against Ulysses in order to convince him to stay, 'but her eloquence and assurances of love are intended to have the same effect'.<sup>49</sup> Her ability to use language is also displayed when she awakes Ulysses by using her 'powerful verses' (l. 164). Ulysses fails to resist Circe's charms because he does not have the moly: it is she who possesses it and uses it on him (l. 179). Interestingly, the

<sup>48</sup>Richard Sheldon, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse Laying Open the Beast, and His Marks* (London: William Jones, 1625), sig. H2r.

<sup>49</sup>Wright, p. 206.

moly was allegorically identified with ‘Eloquii candor facundia’ [‘The brilliance of eloquence and readiness of speech’] in Alciato’s influential emblem book.<sup>50</sup> If Browne knew that emblem, he might have given the moly to Circe instead of Ulysses to reinforce her characterisation as a verbally skilled woman. Traditionally cunning and eloquent, Ulysses appears here as surprisingly passive.<sup>51</sup> the hero lacks both the moly and his rhetorical skill, both of which have been transferred to Circe. The masque thus shows a role reversal not only in terms of the traditional mythological narrative, but also also of gender roles. The hero is turned into a submissive man by a woman who is far from silent and docile: she is the proficient rhetorician, he the passive listener. Lured by her charms, Ulysses neglects his manly, active life, and indulges in sensuous pleasures.

Echoes reverberate and amplify the voice of such dangerous female creatures as Circe and the Sirens, thus representing a no less threatening manifestation of female speech. The charming echo-song produced by Circe is one of her tricks to mesmerise Ulysses and manipulate him into staying with her. Echoes are hence tools in Circe’s hands, pleasant sounds which enhance the incantatory property of her speech. Stavreva suggests that the language of witches was characterised by *enargeia*, that is a vividness which affects the listener’s senses and stirs their emotions. *Enargeia* was achieved through visual images but also aural elements, such as repetition.<sup>52</sup> In Brown’s masques, echoes are indeed melodious acoustic repetitions, and, as such, they help to endow Circe’s song with *enargeia*, making it even more seductive. Circe’s language is dangerous exactly because it is a witch’s language, one whose very acoustic quality can affect those who listen.

At a first glance, the use of echoes to invite nymphs to dance recalls Jonson’s echo-song in *The Masque of Blackness*, and yet the similarity is merely apparent. While in Jonson’s masque the summons uttered by the echoes promote a fruitful union leading to the triumph of harmony, here they rather invoke the nymphs

<sup>50</sup> Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum Libellus* (Venice: Aldus, 1546), sig. B5v <<https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciai/ emblem.php?id=A46a022>> [accessed December 2019].

<sup>51</sup> Ulysses’ unhistorical passivity has been noticed also by Wright (p. 53).

<sup>52</sup> Stavreva, pp. 17-18.

so that they can display their graceful dance before a male audience which passively and steriley contemplates them. Unlike in Jonson, the echoes are not associated with chastity and decorum, but they are rather instrumental in convincing Ulysses to indulge in the sensual delights offered by Circe's island. Moreover, echoes do not reverberate words of praise for the monarch, and their sound is not the earthly manifestation of the divine harmony of the spheres. They are instead associated with enjoyment and sensuous gratification, as was more appropriate for the carefree and pastoral atmosphere of Browne's holiday piece.

Despite its dramatisation of the alluring power of pleasure, no moral judgment is implied in the masque. Critics have been unanimous in recognising that this work lacks allegory, a feature which distinguishes it from other masques. Browne was certainly aware of the popular Renaissance interpretations of the Homeric episodes of Circe and the Sirens as moral warnings against lust and worldly delights, but he chose not to draw on the didactic potential of the material which he was elaborating.<sup>53</sup> His aim seems to be that of entertaining his audience, not that of educating them. The songs, dances, and 'powerful verses' (l. 164) devised by Circe and her attendants obviously delight not only Ulysses and his crew, but also the gentlemen of the Inner Temple. Echoes contribute to create such a recreational atmosphere: the song in which they are inserted provides sheer acoustic pleasure and builds up excitement for the nymphs' performance. Female voices, among which are echoes, are thus a pleasant distraction in which the men can temporarily indulge while they enjoy the holiday suspension of their nobler activities. Such voices appear powerful and potentially dangerous, but they are also undeniably attractive. As Dunn and Jones have argued, a woman's voice was the object of both fear and desire.<sup>54</sup> Brown's way of dealing with the threatening seductiveness of the female voice seems to be that of licensing its enjoyment only for a limited period of time.

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<sup>53</sup> *The Masque of the Inner Temple*, p. 183; Wright, p. 207.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn and Jones, p. 3.

Echo is even more unruly and at the same time sexually enticing in Robert Wilson's *Cobler's Prophecy* (c. 1589-93, published 1594). Wilson's unflattering depiction of Echo reflects the play's conservative and misogynistic tones.<sup>55</sup> The nymph's voice reverberates Sateros' and Raph's words when they find themselves 'sollitarie in this wood' (l. 503) in the presence of the Muses. Raph interprets Echo's *verbatim* repetition of the soldier's phrases as an attempt to ridicule him: 'Harke souldier, some body mocks thee' (l. 505). The nymph then catches his words and he becomes the next victim of her derision: 'mocks me much' (l. 507), he recognises. Readings of Echo as a slanderer were widespread in the period, and had their most authoritative source in Berchorius' *Ovidius Moralizatus*, where the nymph is associated with 'mockers who derisively repeat the words of others and, if they do not hear anything pleasing to them, speak and repeat' (p. 196). As has been pointed out above, Berchorius also identifies Echo as the epitome of the contentious woman, a reading which is also useful to shed light on Wilson's echo-scene. The nymph appears strong-willed, and her assertiveness is read by Raph as a sign of sexual availability.

When Echo repeats Raph's name, which had been pronounced by Sateros, he asks: 'Raph, thats my name indeede, / But how shall I call thee?' (ll. 511-12). Echo's resolute reply can be read as a strong claim of agency: 'I call thee' (l. 513). The nymph cannot choose the words she says, but her replies often show that she is able to select the portion of sentence which she repeats. In this case, she includes the personal pronoun 'I' and begins her phrase with it, thus apparently drawing attention to her own individuality. As Bloom puts it, 'through her articulation of "I," Echo declares her personhood using the

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<sup>55</sup>The play's conservatism emerges not only in its bias against women but also in the final silencing of the Cobbler: Raph's sceptical remark that 'poor folke must hold their peace' (l. 1661) seems to confirm the existence of a stable social hierarchy which remains unaltered in the play (All references to the play are from Robert Wilson, *The Cobler's Prophecy*, ed. by Alfred Cecil Wood and Walter W. Greg (London: Oxford University Press, 1914)). As Kermode notes 'Raph the Cobbler ensures the maintenance of the hierarchical class system' and is again silenced as soon as he achieves that result (Lloyd Edward Kermode, 'The Playwright's Prophecy: Robert Wilson's *The Three Ladies of London* and the "alienation" of the English', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 11 (1999), 60-87 (p. 71)).

grammatical signifier of subjectivity'.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, Echo refuses the position of object ('thee') and takes on the role of subject ('I'), putting Raph in a passive object position: she will be the one who acts and he will be the submissive recipient of the action. Once again, her speech evokes a threatening reversal of traditional gender roles, according to which women had to be the passive target of male attention. Moreover, the verb 'call' has two possible meanings in this context: it can indicate both the act of giving someone a specific name and the act of crying out to someone in order to summon them. Whichever the meaning intended by Echo, her use of the verb emphasises her powerful agency. By frustrating Raph's request to know her name, she places herself in a position of superior knowledge and thus potentially superior power over him: it is no coincidence that we immediately see Raph follow her in the woods eager to find out her identity while she continues deny herself to him. If the verb 'call' is interpreted as 'summon', its implication is that Echo is the one who decides when to call: Raph has no possibility to do the same, not only because he does not know her name, but also because she has established that she will be the agent of that action.

Raph reads Echo's words as a sexual invitation. He hopes that his interlocutor is a 'pretty wench' and declares that he will join her, probably hoping to possess her sexually as well:

RAPH Art: faith and thou be as pretty a wench as any of these three, my mad wife shall never know that I play a mad part.

ECCHO Part.

RAPH Part: Ile come.

ECCHO Come.

RAPH Faith and I will, haue at thee. (ll. 517-22)

The sexual undertone of these exchanges is immediately evident when Raph expresses the desire to 'play a mad part' with Echo without his wife knowing. The cobbler is paradoxically attracted to Echo even if he does not see the female

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<sup>56</sup>Bloom, p. 165.

body which produces the voice he hears: he merely guesses that it belongs to a pretty woman and is impatient to meet her. Echo's voice is enough to seduce him and instigate him to commit adultery.

The bias against the nymph is reinforced when Raph re-enters after trying to chase the source of that echoing voice. He laments that he kept calling her until his throat was hoarse but he received no answer:

Did no body see the mocking sprite, I am sure I haue followed her vp and  
downe all this day crying and calling while my throat is hoarse againe. Ile coniure  
her too but tis in vaine, for knowledge hath knockt that in the braine, but be it  
diuel or be it spright, Ile call againe to haue a sight. (ll. 608-13)

Raph imagines that the voice belongs to a 'mocking sprite' or even to a 'devil': Echo is thus identified as a spiteful supernatural being or a devilish presence. The cobbler's association of Echo with a devil is also suggested by his use of the verb 'conjure' which generally designates the invocation of a ghost, a spirit or a devil. From his point of view, the echoic voice has enticed him to follow her just as a tempting devil would do, and has scornfully left him unsatisfied and yearning to 'have a sight' of her. Raph wants exactly what he cannot have, that is a sight of a disembodied voice. The attribution of sinister supernatural qualities to the echo facilitates the transition to the next scene, where Raph encounters even eerier disembodied voices, those of the spirits begging Charon to carry them to Hell.

What Raph does not know is that the echo has been revealed to be a mere artificial sound. When he exits to follow the voice, Sateros is left alone with the Muses, who disclose their identity to him. They explain that by repeating the word 'muses' earlier in the scene (l. 502), Echo had rightly 'told thee what we are' (l. 524). Echo, though, is defined by the three goddesses as 'this artificiall echo' (l. 524), an appellative which clearly denies her status as an autonomous subject. Echo's strong claim of personal identity and authoritative agency 'I call thee', uttered just a few lines earlier, is here undermined. This sudden depersonalisation of the nymph can be read as an attempt to neutralise the threat posed by an unlocatable and uncontrollable female voice. Bloom explains that in the

commentary to his translation of the *Metamorphoses*, Sandys draws on scientific discourse and reduces the voice of the mythological nymph to a sound that is predictable and controllable, thus emptying echoes of their sinister quality.<sup>57</sup> Wilson might have been aiming to achieve the same goal. Echo's disembodied female voice is unsettling, especially as it frustrates male attempts to restrain it, but the acoustic phenomenon of echoing can be explained scientifically, it can be reproduced, and it is eventually bound to dissipate. Raph has not been seduced by a diabolic temptress, but duped by a hollow sound which does indeed fade. The playwright is here amusing his audience and at the same time protecting them against the dangerous exertion of unrestrained female agency.

Even if Echo is downgraded to echo, its sound is still associated with corrupting female allurements in Mars' misogynistic rant. During the episode representing the sexual dalliance between Mars and Venus, a martial ideal of masculinity is opposed to emasculating sexual pleasures: Venus has turned the god of war into a 'trim' (l. 877) and effeminate lover and she keeps him in her thrall.<sup>58</sup> The antagonism between those two competing set of values emerges more explicitly when Mars finds out about Venus' infidelity. The god declares war against women's 'wantonness', 'follie, lightnes, trecherie and fraud' (ll. 1053-55), and describes the conflict in terms of an opposition between the virile noises and smokes of war and the deceptive tears and alluring looks of women:

The trumpets clang and roaring noise of Drums,  
Shall drowne *the echoes of your weeping cries*,  
And powders smoke dim your enticing eyes.  
These wanton ornaments for maskers fit,  
Will Mars leau off, and sute himselfe in steele. (ll. 1064-68, emphasis mine)

Echoes significantly reverberate women's 'weeping cries', thus being associated with the female weapons against which Mars vows to fight. Focussing on the

<sup>57</sup>Bloom, pp. 174-81.

<sup>58</sup>For a detailed analysis of the conflict between male martial rhetoric and effeminate indulgence in sexual pleasures in the scenes of love between Mars and Venus see Alex Macconochie, "Lady, Shall I Lie in Your Lap?": Gender, Status, and Touch on the English Stage', *Renaissance Drama*, 45.1 (2017), 25-50.

repeated ‘head-in-lap’ gesture, Macconochie argues that ‘the *Coblers Prophecy* participates in a discourse that represents female touch as [...] enabling women to actively undermine masculine dominance’.<sup>59</sup> Female touch is indeed the object of a misogynistic devaluation, but so is the female voice: Venus beguiles Mars by employing not only the head-in-lap gesture, but also her eloquence, artfulness, and her songs. For instance, she vocally defends love against war (ll. 886-900), pretends to be offended by Mars’ eagerness to fight against Raph, and lulls him to sleep with a song (ll. 990-98). Mars significantly admits: ‘thy voice will rauish me’ (l. 990). Her voice is one of the tools that a woman can skillfully use to seduce a man, thus undermining his position of authority.<sup>60</sup> The fact that echoes are mentioned in Mars’ tirade against women corroborates the idea that the play’s misogynistic anxieties about the socially disruptive female voice are projected onto the figure of Echo. The dangerous sound of echoes continues to haunt the play but once echoes are identified as artificial sounds, their source can be successfully detected and they can be more easily silenced. Echoes are here sounds produced by women’s beguiling cries, which will be drowned out by the more manly noises of war.

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In the early modern period, echoic speech was perceived as a typically female expressive mode. Because of their characteristics, such as derivativeness, persistence, and readiness to answer back, echoes could be assimilated to different aspects of female speech, from docile taciturnity to dangerous verbal aggressiveness. Two main tendencies can be recognised in representations of echoes as female voices. On the one hand, the nymph and the acoustic phenomenon associated with her were drawn upon by authors who wanted to give a favourable portrayal of enduring female agency. In this case, Echo was taken as the epitome

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<sup>59</sup> Macconochie, p. 32.

<sup>60</sup> It is perhaps interesting to note that Wilson gives a far more reassuring description of the Messenger’s male voice. The Messenger announces the victory of Boeotia to the Duke who comments: ‘For that sweete voice offerd to vs by man, / Cast sweetest incense into holy fires’ (ll. 1590-91). Not only does his voice herald ‘happy newes’ (l. 1592), but it is also reassuringly ‘offered by man’.

of a female voice which manages to signify in spite of attempts to silence it: she was the emblem of female agency suppressed but re-appropriated. On the other hand, echoic speech was characterised as potentially disruptive or dangerously seductive. The uncanny potential of echoic voices had to be minimised by casting them as mocking imitations of a female voice, rationally explainable physical phenomena, or holiday pastimes soon to be dismissed.

Echo and echoes evoked fears about female speech, but language more in general also generated anxieties in this period. Mazzio and Vienne-Guerrin have argued that the widespread representations of the ‘unruly tongue’ did not have to do merely with gender issues, but they reflected broader concerns with language and the power of words.<sup>61</sup> The same can be said of early modern depictions of the mythological figure of Echo and of her derivative speech. Echoic speech incarnates not only everything that could be scary about women’s voices, but also about language itself. It is on this aspect that the next chapter focuses.

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<sup>61</sup>Carla Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue in Early Modern England’, *Modern Language Studies*, 28.3/4 (1998), 93-124 (p. 115, n.32); Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin, *The Unruly Tongue in Early Modern England: Three Treatises* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), pp. 15-16.

# ‘In mockinge sorte and counterfayting wies’: Echo and early modern views on language

In Turberville’s translation of Ausonius’ XXXII epigram, Echo addresses the reader and presents herself:

Daughter to talking Tongue, and Aire am I,  
My Mother is nothing when things are waid:  
I am a voyce without the bodies aide.  
When all the tale is tolde and the sentence saide,

Then I recite the latter worde afresh  
In mockinge sorte and counterfayting wies:  
Within your eares my chiefest harbour lies,  
There doe I woonne, not seene with mortal eyes.<sup>1</sup> (ll. 1-8)

The nymph defines herself as pure voice, born of a talking tongue. Her realm is that of sound, she dwells in the ears of those who listen. The line ‘I am a voyce without the bodies aide’ marks a significant departure from Ausonius, whose poem reads: ‘voce sine mente gero’ [‘I have a voice without a mind’] (Epigram XXXII, 4). Unlike Ausonius, Turberville does not imply that the nymph lacks rational control over language, and he also substitutes the verb ‘gero’ with ‘I

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<sup>1</sup>George Turberville, ‘To the one that painted Eccho’, in *Epitaphes, Epigrams, Songs and Sonets* (London: Henry Denham, 1567), sigs. D2v-D3r.

am': Echo does not simply *bear* a voice, she *is* a voice. As Donawerth explains, the concept of *vox* was generally employed to define language itself in Medieval texts on grammar, which were still learnt at school during the Elizabethan age.<sup>2</sup> Language was primarily conceived as speech, its oral dimension was preeminent.<sup>3</sup> While in the grammatical treatises of the Middle Ages *vox* was subordinated to *oratio*, that is the arrangement of single words into complete and meaningful sentences, the Renaissance valued the potential of every word to signify. Speech was not regarded as a hierarchical structure, but rather as the locus where human reason and sound emission meet, the instrument whereby thoughts are expressed.<sup>4</sup> That idea of language seems to be reflected in Turberville's representation of Echo, a voice which lacks a body but does not necessarily lack a mind.

Echo is meaningful *vox*, she is made of language itself. Language is what enables her to survive, and to preserve and assert her identity: she can only exist as a manifestation of it. Early modern attitudes towards language are thus unsurprisingly projected onto dramatic representations of this mythological figure. The ways in which Echo produces meaning by appropriating and re-signifying words uttered by someone else offer interesting examples of verbal creativity and clever wordplay, which fittingly led dramatists to explore ideas about the nature of language and that of its key unit, the linguistic sign. The dramatic echo-dialogues analysed in this chapter reflect very accurately the complex and nuanced views of language of the early modern period: faith in its power to affect men's minds, enthusiasm towards its ludic potential, and also awareness of its flaws all emerge in those echo-scenes.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Jane Donawerth, *Shakespeare and the Sixteenth-century Study of Language* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), pp. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Hope, 'Shakespeare and Language: an Introduction', in *Shakespeare and Language*, ed. by Catherine M.S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-17 (pp. 4-5).

<sup>4</sup>Donawerth, pp. 19-21.

<sup>5</sup>For the idea that early modern views of language were much more complex than ours, and sometimes even contradictory, see Hope, 'Shakespeare and Language: an Introduction', p. 10; Donawerth, pp. 6, 61.

## ‘Words cheap’

In *Old Fortunatus*, Dekker describes Echo not only as a shrewish female voice, but also as a mocker. Fortunatus is wandering in a wood looking for nuts to eat, when he hears an echo which catches his words. He hopes that the voice he hears is that of a ‘goodfellow’, and asks what the name of that wood is and which is the best way out of it (I.i.5-6). Echo unhelpfully repeats his words unaltered, answering to the first question: ‘this wood’, and to the second: ‘best way out’ (I.i.7, 9). Her answers are comically tautological. Her words are true but they do not improve Fortunatus’ knowledge of the place he finds himself in: ‘thats true, my best way out, is my best way out, but how that out will come in, by this Maggot I know not’ (I.i.10-11), comments the old man. In this case, Echo does not have the revelatory role often attributed to her: she merely states the obvious and, in doing so, she frustrates Fortunatus’ expectations, thus exposing him to ridicule. Throughout the dialogue, Echo repeats his words apparently without alteration:

FORTUNATUS Ile lie owne, in steade of fasting ile feede vpon Nuts, and in  
stead of sighing will laugh and bee leane, Sirra *Eccho*.

ECCHO Sirra *Eccho*.

FORTUNATUS Heres a nut.

ECCHO Heres a nut.

FORTUNATUS Cracke it.

ECCHO Cracke it.

FORTUNATUS Hang thy selfe.

ECCHO Hang thy selfe.

FORTUNATUS Th'art a knave, a knave.

ECCHO A knave, a knave.

FORTUNATUS Ha, ha, ha, ha.

ECCHO Ha, ha, ha, ha. (I.i.20-33)

Her parroting of Fortunatus’ phrases produces a comic effect. As Bonadeo explains, verbal repetition has a strong potential to elicit laughter, and for that

reason echo-scenes are often employed as comic devices.<sup>6</sup>

The comedy, though, lies not only in repetition per se, but also in the fact that Echo flings the insults addressed to her back at her interlocutor. This is one of the simplest and most common comic strategies employed in echo-dialogues from Aristophanes to the early modern period. In Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, Mnesilochus is insulted by an echo which rebounds his exasperated exclamations: 'go to blazes!' (l. 1079), 'you're drivelling!' (l. 1080), 'curse you!!' (l. 1081).<sup>7</sup> The echo-scene in *Old Fortunatus* follows a very similar pattern. Fortunatus' imperative 'hang thy selfe' is repeated by Echo, who necessarily alters its referent: while the pronoun 'thy selfe' was originally referred to Echo, it comes to denote Fortunatus when the phrase is reverberated. Similarly, when Fortunatus accuses Echo of being a knave and Echo repeats his words, the accuser becomes the object of blame.<sup>8</sup> Despite repeating her interlocutor's words *verbatim*, Echo does make significant changes. Even when she does not modify the lexical units or the semantic content of the sentences she appropriates, she has the ability to alter the referent intended by her interlocutor.

Echo's repetitions of 'heres a nut' and 'cracke it' constitutes a more substantial interference with the meaning of the phrases uttered by the original speaker. While Fortunatus is here commenting on a factual reality, that is his finding of a nut, Echo may likely be drawing on the idiomatic meaning of the phrase 'crack me this nut', which was proverbial in early modern England, and it was often used in derision.<sup>9</sup> Florio, for instance, lists it as a synonym of 'swallow this gudgeon', an exclamation of satisfaction at fooling a gullible person.<sup>10</sup> The word 'nut' was also employed in bawdy jokes and idiomatic expressions to indicate either a woman's vulva, a man's testicles, or to allude to copulation or forni-

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<sup>6</sup>Bonadeo, p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae*, ed. and transl. by Alan H. Sommerstein (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2001).

<sup>8</sup>Ioculo suffers the same fate when he engages in a verbal dispute with Echo in *Maid's Metamorphosis*. In the echo-scene quoted in the second chapter, Ioculo accuses Echo of lying but she repeats his words ('thou doest lye'), thus transferring the blame to him (Act IV, p. 143).

<sup>9</sup>Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of English Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), pp. 509-10 (N359).

<sup>10</sup>John Florio, *A World of Wordes* (London: Arnold Hatfield, 1598), sig. D3r ('beccati su questa').

cation.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the scene, Fortunatus feels that he is being mocked by Echo, as he calls her ‘this foole that mockes me’ (I.i.42), and exclaims: ‘why so, two fooles laugh at one another, I at my tittle tattle gammer eccho, and shee at me’ (I.i.34-35). His being offended by Echo’s apparently identical repetitions may be due not only to her flinging his insulting phrases back at him, but also to the fact that he recognises the derisive potential of the words ‘nut’ and ‘crack it’. In other words, Fortunatus seems to realise that Echo is capable of turning the denotative meaning of his words into the figurative meaning that they could carry.

Echo often catches a single word uttered by her interlocutor and repeats it with an evident twist in meaning. In *Cobler's Prophecy*, for instance, the Soldier realises that the sight of the three goddess he has seen in the wood has driven him ‘into certaine muses’, that is a state of deep thought or dream-like trance (l. 501). Echo repeats his last two words, but, by saying ‘muses’ (l. 502), she is actually revealing the name of the three goddesses, the Muses. Similarly, when Raph exclaims ‘my mad wife shall never know that I play a mad part’, Echo repeats the word ‘part’ but uses it as a verb meaning ‘to leave someone’s company’ (l. 517-18). Dymock’s *The Faithful Shepherd* offers another example of Echo’s ability to twist the meaning of a word. After having been told that he will soon fall in love, he asks sarcastically: ‘Nay soft, when shall crook’t Loue (tell me good foole) / Enter my brest? I warrent ’tis too straight’. Echo answers ‘straight’ (sig. M3r). While Silvio uses the word ‘straight’ to indicate that his breast is too narrow to host love, Echo turns it into an adverb meaning ‘straightaway’. This kind of wordplay can be identified as a specific rhetorical figure, *asteismus*.

In some cases, the meaning introduced by Echo does not unequivocally replace the one intended by the original speaker. As has been pointed out, the answer given by Echo when Raph asks her name in *Cobler's Prophecy*, ‘I call

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<sup>11</sup>Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Athlone Press, 1994), II, pp. 965-67.

'thee' (l. 513), capitalises on the polysemy of the verb 'to call', meaning both 'to summon' and 'to name'. The new meaning introduced by Echo, 'to summon', is made to coexist with the one intended by Raph, 'to name'. Echo thus retrieves another possible meaning of the word she repeats, which had been excluded by the original speaker, thus exposing the ambiguity latent in that word. Both meanings can be activated by the context. In that case, *asteismus* overlaps with *syllepsis* as it was understood in the Renaissance: *syllepsis* was conceived as a particular kind of wordplay whereby a single word holds together multiple meanings.<sup>12</sup>

In many echo-dialogues, Echo does not merely repeat her interlocutors' words *verbatim* but she even creates new phrases by preserving similarity of sound with the last syllables uttered by them. Her answers are thus linked with the original utterance through *paronomasia*. That rhetorical device is very often employed in echo-dialogues, as it allows for creative wordplay and often produces comic effects. When she is not compelled to repeat the exact same words, Echo can enjoy greater freedom to express herself: *paronomasia* enables her to give wittier answers and even to subvert completely the meaning of the sentences she repeats. In the anonymous academic play *Narcissus, A Twelfth Night Merriment*, the nymph makes full use of those expressive possibilities. The play is a comic rewriting of the myth of Echo and Narcissus. Its plot relies on the Ovidian narrative, as is explicitly suggested in the prologue, which presents the play as 'Ovid's owne Narcissus' (l. 135).<sup>13</sup> The author adds two original scenes to the famous mythological fable, both of which show Echo engaged in a heated verbal exchange with two friends, Dorastus and Clinias. The two of them are hunting in a wood, when they hear Echo from offstage who distorts their words in order to insult them. For instance, Dorastus' summon 'where art thou Clinias?' is re-echoed as 'in yee ass' (ll. 520-21). His threat 'I shall make you whine and blubber' is scornfully shortened into the insulting word 'lubber' (ll. 534-35). The

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<sup>12</sup>Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice*, p. 84; Read, pp. 82-3.

<sup>13</sup>All references to this play are from *Narcissus. A Twelfth Night Merriment*, ed. by Margaret L. Lee (London: David Nutt, 1893).

same pattern is repeated throughout the dialogue: Dorastus tries to intimidate the invisible interlocutor who is offending him, but Echo defies him by cutting his sentences and turning them into insults by way of *paronomasia*. Clinias is the other victim of Echo's mocking. Once again, the nymph manages to utter slandering epithets such as 'loute' (l. 568), 'asse again' (l. 584) and 'jolthead' (l. 588) by deforming her interlocutor's exclamations, respectively 'you are mightely out' (l. 567), 'mock me to my face again?' (l. 583), and 'I am spurgald and jolted' (l. 587).

Linguistic creativity is the defining trait of Echo throughout the play. Her extensive use of *paronomasia* in the two echo-dialogues is anticipated in her self-presentation, which precedes those scenes. The nymph delivers a short monologue in which she introduces herself and summarises her story, thus showing an uncharacteristic ability to articulate speech autonomously. Her speech is interspersed with alliterations, rhyming couplets, and recurring phonetic patterns, which all contribute to endow it with an echoic quality. The lines 'my angry grammer / made my tottering tongue to stammer' (ll. 466-67), for instance, combines the alliteration of the letter 't' with the rhyming *paronomasia* 'grammer'- 'stammer'. Such aural effects multiply towards the end of the monologue, thus preparing the way for Echo's loss of verbal articulation and consequent adoption of her traditional echoic speech:

Echo I live, Eccho surnamed the dolefull,  
That, in remembrance now could weepe a bowlfull;  
Or rather if you will Eccho the sorrowfull,  
That, in remembrance now could weepe a barrowfull. (ll. 470-73)

Her name is uttered three times in four lines, and the whole phrase 'that, in remembrance now could weepe' is repeated so as to form a sort a refrain. The onomatopoeic sound 'ow' haunts the passage, thus giving the aural impression of a moan, which is perfectly appropriate to the pathetic image that Echo gives of herself. Dolefull and bowlfull are phonetically very similar, and so are also sorrowfull and barrowful: Echo's speech thus concludes with two different *paronomasiae*. The fact that the nymph draws on that rhetorical figure so frequently even while she still enjoys verbal autonomy contributes to establish it as a char-

acteristic feature of her language, a sort of verbal habit which defines her.

When she meets Narcissus, Echo plays once again with words so as to confess her erotic attraction for him. Alone in the wood, the boy hears Echo's voice and calls 'is any body nye?' (l. 604). The nymph answers in an apparently unambiguous way: 'I' (l. 605), but, as has been pointed out above, even that trivial word carries ambiguity, as it can be intended either as the personal pronoun I or as the adverb yes. Echo then flatters Narcissus by transforming his plea for help 'I prethy help mee foorth, els I am the rude woods forteiture' into the complimentary remark 'faire feature' (ll. 610-12). Like the echoing voice in *Old Fortunatus*, the nymph refuses to help Narcissus to find a way out of the wood, and when he asks more explicitly for her 'counsell how to gett out of this laborinthe', she merely tells him to 'labour in't' (ll. 615-17). She thus not only alters his phrases by way of *paronomasia*, but also frustrates his perlocutionary goals.

Communication is never easy with Echo, who then charges Narcissus' phrases with an erotic sense not intended by him, exactly as her Ovidian predecessor had done. For instance, she manipulates the syntax of his negative sentence 'let mee dye first ere thou meddle with me' so as to turn it into the positive imperative 'meddle with me' (ll. 631-32). The very word 'meddle' is also used with different meanings by the two interlocutors: while Narcissus is merely refusing physical contact with her, the nymph is more likely inviting him to copulate.<sup>14</sup> That semantic twisting of Narcissus' word can perhaps be recognised as one of the verbal devices most frequently employed by Echo, that is *asteismus*. A few lines earlier, Echo similarly brought out the potential sexual connotation of Narcissus' words: when Narcissus asked her to show herself and join him ('I prethy come'), the nymph answered 'I come' (ll. 629-30), a phrase which obviously confirms her intention to meet him, but which may also carry implicit erotic undertones.<sup>15</sup> The sexual desire shown by Echo throughout the dialogue suggests that the two

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<sup>14</sup>That the verb 'to meddle' could mean 'to copulate' is proved by Williams, p. 870.

<sup>15</sup>Williams, p. 277.

meanings of the word ‘come’ are likely both intended.

In a wide range of early modern echo-dialogues Echo thus plays the role of a punster. As has been often pointed out by scholars, the word ‘pun’ did not exist in early modern England, but the notion of pun was covered by four rhetorical figures: *syllepsis*, *antanaclasis*, *asteismus*, and *paronomasia*.<sup>16</sup> The nymph often avails herself of these figures in order to express her meanings: her punning use of language and her creativity in throwing back previously uttered words with new meanings suggest that she is a skilled player with words.

Interestingly, it was implicitly recognised that some of the aforementioned rhetorical devices had an echoic quality to them. Puttenham, for instance, translates *antanaclasis* as ‘the rebounde’ (sig. Aa1r). He justifies his choice by drawing a comparison between the rhetorical figure and the motion of a tennis ball: as the ball, ‘being smitten with the racket, reboundes backe againe’, so are words repeated but ‘vsed in diuers sences, one giuing the *Rebounde* vpon th’other’ (sig. Aa1r). Even if Puttenham does not use the word rebound as an explicit allusion to echoing, the verb could indeed be used to describe the reverberation of a sound, as is testified by Jonson’s hymn to Pan in *Pan’s Anniversary*: ‘And while his powers and praises thus we sing, / The valleys let *rebound* and all the rivers ring’ (ll. 148-49, emphasis mine). *Antanaclasis* could thus be easily associated with echoing: when two words are repeated, they are rebounded, that is re-echoed. After providing a definition of *antanaclasis* Puttenham confuses it with *paronomasia*: one of the examples he brings involves the words ‘married’ and ‘marred’, which are not exact homonyms. He immediately corrects himself by recognising that ““married” and “marred” be differēt in one letter”, and then shows another example (sig. Aa1r). This slip suggests that the boundaries between these rhetorical figures were very thin, especially at a time when there were no prescriptive rules as to how words should be pronounced or

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<sup>16</sup>Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice*, p. 83; Read, p. 81; Mahood, pp. 18-9; Margarete De Grazia, ‘Homonyms Before and After Lexical Standardization’, *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 127 (1990) , 143-56 (pp. 153-4).

written.<sup>17</sup> Thus, if *antanaclasis* and *paronomasia* were confused and indexed as ‘the rebound’, they were both perceived to produce an acoustic effect similar to echoing. Redfern points out that ‘all devices in which there is an echo-effect – a chiming or a clang – seem very close to wordplay’:<sup>18</sup> the same awareness seems to have existed also in the early modern period. Echo is thus unsurprisingly often linked with wordplay.

*Paronomasia* and *asteismus* were regarded as comic devices. In his famous treatise on eloquence, Peacham describes *paronomasia* as a ‘light and illuding forme’ and explains that it ‘is commonly used to illude by the Addition, chāge and taking away’:<sup>19</sup> ‘to illude’ meant ‘to mock’, the word derives from the Latin *ludere*, to play. *Asteismus* was also identified as a witty verbal game: Puttenham translates it as ‘the merry scoffe; otherwise, the civil jest’ and assimilates it to ‘a kind of mock’ (sig. Y1v). Peacham briefly alludes to it as one of the ‘formes of speech’ which serve to ‘move mirth’ (sig. W4v). Thus, the verbal strategies through which Echo manages to re-signify words previously uttered are fittingly often used to deride her interlocutors: the nymph does indeed speak in ‘mockinge sorte’ by ‘counterfayting’ the phrases she catches. By having Echo slander other characters, early modern playwrights capitalise on the comic potential of echo-dialogues and of the rhetorical figures associated with them.<sup>20</sup>

Echo mocks her interlocutors not only by parroting their words or by verbally insulting them, as is the case in *Old Fortunatus* and in *Narcissus*: her very subversion of the meanings intended by them exposes them to ridicule. Characters are revealed to lack power over language, to be unable to control the meaning

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<sup>17</sup>For a more detailed discussion on the overlap that existed between rhetorical figures see Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice*, p. 87; Read, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup>Redfern, p. 99. Culler also detects a close relationship between puns and echoes, and argues that ‘discourse itself compulsively echoes when a pun is in reach’ (Jonathan Culler, ‘The Call of the Phoneme: Introduction’, in *On Puns*, ed. by Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 1-16 (p. 11)).

<sup>19</sup>The *Garden of Eloquence* (1593), sig. J4v. Further references to Peacham’s work are from this edition and are given in brackets in the text.

<sup>20</sup>Interestingly, Fried suggests that breaking words down into shorter ones is a device typical of comic rhymes and puns (Debra Fried, ‘Rhyme Puns’, in *On Puns*, pp. 83-99 (p. 86)). This is exactly what Echo often does when she reverberates words previously uttered, and that probably contributes to the comic effect produced by her answers.

of their own utterances. Echo's speech pattern undermines the intention with which a speech act is performed by an original speaker, it thwarts attempts to convey a single meaning or to achieve a perlocutionary goal. The nymph's interlocutors are thus left verbally powerless, and often comically so.

Echo's repetitions also unveil the ambiguity and flawed nature of language itself. By showing that a phrase can be utterly perverted as soon as it is uttered, echoic speech lays bare the fact that language is not always a reliable means to convey the desired meanings. First of all, the nymph relies on homonymy, polysemy, and homophony in order to express herself, and these are all phenomena which indicate that there are not as many words as there are things and ideas.<sup>21</sup> This lack of a reassuring one-to-one relationship between words and things exposes language as an imperfect and potentially limiting medium.

Echo's punning use of words also draws attention to another characteristic of language which complicates the construction of meaning, namely the contingent and non-univocal relationship between a word and its sense. By re-signifying words previously uttered, the nymph emphasises the possibility of attributing a different signified to a given signifier, that is of equivocating meaning. It may be tempting to argue that in doing so Echo 'undermines the basis on which our assumptions about the communicative efficacy of language rest: in Saussure's terms, that for each signifier there is an inseparable signified'.<sup>22</sup> That is how Attridge explains the effect of puns, and his statement is certainly true if we assess puns according to our modern conception of language. Yet, the idea that there should be one signified for each signifier did not exist in the early modern period. Hope and De Grazia explain that in that period orthography was not yet standardised and hence there was no stable criterion to distinguish words written or pronounced similarly: thus, many words which we now perceive as being similar but separated were then identified as one polysemous word.<sup>23</sup> It

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<sup>21</sup>Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice*, pp. 26-27, Donawerth, pp. 109-10.

<sup>22</sup>Derek Attridge, 'Unpacking the Portmanteau, or Who's Afraid of *Finnegans Wake*?', in *On Puns*, pp. 140-55 (p. 140).

<sup>23</sup>Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice*, pp. 90-92.; De Grazia, pp.

was common for a single sign to have several disparate meanings, which were distinguished in context. In such a fluid linguistic system, puns were not perceived as transgressive or anomalous elements. While we may find puns disturbing because they join different words by a purely coincidental similarity of form, early modern writers and audiences were not necessarily so biased towards them because they identified the words involved as the same sign.<sup>24</sup>

The trouble with puns, and hence with echoic repetition, was thus not so much that they arbitrarily associate words, but rather that they expose how easily polysemous words can be misunderstood or purposely twisted. Meaning *is* put at risk by Echo's repetitions, and that is because she neutralises her interlocutor's effort to disambiguate the meaning of a word. Thus, what Bates argues about puns can be said of Echo's speech as well: like puns, echoic repetitions 'reveal the discrimination of meaning to be a haphazard, approximate, and error-prone affair'.<sup>25</sup> While the original speaker assumes he has successfully selected the meaning of a word, the distorting echo which catches his voice reminds him that his effort is potentially insufficient, that other meanings can be intended or implied. In many cases, echoic distortion also shows that context does not always help to distinguish among the different sense of a word, as both the meaning intended by the original speaker and that imposed by Echo on the pre-existent signifier are activated simultaneously. Thus, it is exactly because one single signifier is associated with multiple signifieds that ambiguity can easily creep into language and disturb communication. As a result, Echo's repetitions make those who hear them aware of their lack of control over language.<sup>26</sup>

Even in a linguistic system in which the correspondence of several meanings to a single signifier was no disturbing exception to the rule, meanings could proliferate and get out of control. By employing punning rhetorical figures, Echo draws attention to the fact that language involves difference even in identity and,

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150-56.

<sup>24</sup>Hope, *Shakespeare and Language. Reason, Eloquence and Artifice*, pp. 96-97; De Grazia, pp. 150, 156.

<sup>25</sup>Catherine Bates, 'The Point of Puns', *Modern Philology*, 96.4 (1999), 421-38 (p. 424).

<sup>26</sup>Redfern significantly reaches the very same conclusion about puns (p. 123).

as such, it is intrinsically ambiguous. Redfern points out that puns are closely associated with the notion of the double: they show that words or phrases ‘have their alter-ego or Doppelgänger [...] their twin identical or not’.<sup>27</sup> Puns work indeed like echoic repetitions, as both act as distorting mirrors which reproduce a word identically but show how different it can be at the same time. Echo is herself an embodiment of the archetype of the double: in the Ovidian myth, her repetition of Narcissus’ words works as an acoustic double which parallels the visual mirror image seen by the youth in the stream. Being the protagonist of a myth entirely built on mirrorings and reduplications, the nymph fittingly appears in early modern echo-dialogues which unveil the doubleness of language.

As has emerged so far, not only does Echo interfere with the syntactic and grammatical structure of a previously uttered sentence by repeating only its final portion, but she also alters the referent of the phrases she catches and resignifies the words pronounced by her interlocutor. She thus causes linguistic disruption and wreaks semantic havoc. The nymph relies on the ambiguity intrinsic to language in order to express her meanings, thus showing that words are indeed ‘but a cheverel glove to a good wit’, as Shakespeare’s Feste would say (III.i.12).<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, in the second part of the academic play *The Return from Parnassus, or the Scourge of Simony* (c. 1601), it is Echo herself who appears to express a judgment on the nature of words. In Act II, scene II, Academico converses with Echo and confesses his hope to obtain a living from Sir Raderick, who could offer him a position as a parson in a parish he controls. Echo tries to open Academico’s eyes to the fact that Sir Raderick will sell the pastorate rather than confer it upon a qualified candidate:

ACADEMICO What then wil he do with his chancel?

ECCHO Sell

[...]

ACADEMICO Yea? giuen to a Rogue? Shall an asse this vicaridge compasse?

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<sup>27</sup>Redfern, p. 103.

<sup>28</sup>William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will*, ed. by Keir Elam (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2008). All subsequent references are from this edition.

ECCHO Asse.<sup>29</sup> (II.ii.607-14)

Echo warns him that he can only get that position by ‘paying’ (II.ii.590) and repeatedly incites him to do so. Academico, though, is so naive as to refuse to acknowledge that simony was a widespread practice and reacts to her words with indignation:

ACADEMICO Faine would I haue a living, if I could tel how to come by it

ECCHO Buy it.

ACADEMICO Buy it fond Echo? Why thou dost greatly mistake it.

ECCHO Stake it.

ACADEMICO Stake it? What should I stake at this game of simony?

ECCHO Mony.

ACADEMICO What, is the world a game, are liuings gotten by playing?

ECCHO Paying.

ACADEMICO Paying? but say what’s the nearest way to come by a liuing?

ECCHO Giuing. (II.ii.583-92)

The nymph distorts Academico’s phrases by relying once again on homophones (by - buy) and especially on *paronomasia* (playing - paying, living - giving), which is once again her favourite verbal strategy.

The nymph shows worldly-wisdom also when she tries to make Academico realise that common people are often biased against academics:

ACADEMICO Ille make my lone request, that he wold be good to a scholler.

ECCHO Choller.

ACADEMICO Yea, will hee be colerike, to heare of an art or a science?

ECCHO Hence. (II.ii.603-06)

The social marginalisation to which scholars were often doomed is one on the main themes of the Parnassus trilogy, a satire which denounces the difficulty for university graduates to earn a living.<sup>30</sup> The first part of *The Return from*

<sup>29</sup>All references are from *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)*, ed. by James Blair Leishman (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1949).

<sup>30</sup>For an exhaustive treatment of how that motif is represented in the plays see Paula Rosenfeld Glatzer, *The Complaint of the Poet: the Parnassus Plays* (Doctoral thesis, The City University of New York, 1974). Glatzer also comments on the role played by the echo-scene (p. 317).

*Parnassus* shows the protagonists seeking suitable employment but being consistently rejected, and the second part continues to ‘present vnto each pittyng eye / The schollers progress in their miserye’ (Prologue, 74-75). Adams points out that the Cambridge graduates represented in the play are used to being part of a system where intellectual endeavour is held into high esteem: ‘the ability to use and manipulate words – in English, Latin, and Greek – becomes the currency of this system, conferring upon its holders prestige and credibility’.<sup>31</sup> As the plays show very clearly, though, such skills are underestimated and ultimately useless outside of the university. In the second part of *The Return from Parnassus*, the echo-dialogue demonstrates that Academico’s faith in words and in his ability to use them is misplaced. Echo openly confutes all of his idealistic convictions, and she even does so by appropriating and manipulating his own words. Echo thus steals the weapons of her verbal adversary and uses them against their former owner. Academico leaves the verbal battlefield and, being still resolved to speak to Raderick, he comments sarcastically ‘wel, if he give me good words, it’s more then I have from an Eccho’, to which Echo answers ‘goe’ (II.ii.619-20): she thus literally and metaphorically has the last word. For all his learning, Academico is outwitted by Echo, a disembodied voice which only exists as language itself. He is thus betrayed by that medium which he should master, language.

Academico’s naive optimism towards language is even more explicitly cast into doubt by Echo. Before leaving the stage, the scholar ignores Echo’s warnings that he will have to bribe Sir Raderick in order to obtain a living, and decides: ‘yet for al this, with a penilesse purse wil I trudg to his worship’ (II.ii.617). Echo answers by distorting his phrase into ‘Words cheap’ (II.ii.618), thus clearly reiterating her point that Academico’s words are too cheap a payment for Sir Raderick, who will only accept coins as a currency. Her answer, though, may also be taken to signify that words, in general, have little value. Echo states that words are things of no importance, and at the same time she concretely

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<sup>31</sup>Christopher A. Adams, *The History, Printing, and Editing of ‘The Return from Pernassus’* (Bachelor’s dissertation, The College of William and Mary, 2008), p. 66.

proves it by perverting the meaning of those uttered by Academico. Language is not a tool upon which Raderick can rely to achieve his goals, as it can be easily manipulated and hence even fail to convey meaning. In other words, Echo not only distorts Raderick's sentences, but she also seems to be commenting on what enables her to do so, that is the unreliability of the linguistic sign.

Despite Echo's comment and her ability to destabilise meaning, the play's attitude towards language is not utterly biased. It is true that words can be distorted and meaning misunderstood, but the possibility of attributing different signifieds to a given signifier is exactly what enables Echo to speak: homophones and equivocal or phonetically similar words are potentially ambiguous but at the same time they allow for great creativity. Through her punning use of language Echo creates new meanings, gives useful advice to Academico, and produces a comic scene which amuses the audience. The echo-dialogue offers an enjoyable example of verbal wit, its rhyming words and plethora of rhetorical devices enable the anonymous academic author to show his poetic skills. Perhaps even the students who acted in the play had the chance to give free rein to their linguistic creativity: Maguire hypothesises that the echo-dialogue might have involved improvisation on the part of the actors.<sup>32</sup> While in the printed quartos of 1606 the scene extends for thirty-eight lines, in the manuscript version of the play the scene is only 8 lines long, and it stops with Echo's insinuation that 'the nearest way to come by a liuing' is 'giving' (II.ii.591-92). The compiler writes an *Exit*, which he then crosses out, and replaces with a series of *etceteras* written in the blank space between this scene and the next. Maguire investigates early modern uses of *etceteras* and explains that the symbol was often employed to invite the actor to improvise. That might have been the case in the manuscript version of the echo-scene in *The Return from Parnassus*, where *etceteras* could have been either 'an instruction to actors to continue in the same echoing vein, improvising' or that 'the actors improvise of their own accord, their continuation of the

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<sup>32</sup>Laurie Maguire, 'Typographical Embodiment: The Case of Etcetera', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. by Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 527-48 (p. 541).

scene then being indicated in the manuscript text with the four etceteras'.<sup>33</sup> If improvisation was indeed meant to take place, this dialogue with Echo provided the student actors with an invaluable occasion to exhibit their wit and play with words and rhymes.

Although Echo's repetitions show that language is a flawed means of communication, they also reveal truths that Academico fails to understand. This may appear contradictory to us, but it was not so in the early modern period. Donawerth explains very clearly that attitudes towards language were not polarised between faith and scepticism: while Elizabethans feared that words do not clearly express ideas because of their ambiguity, they also knew that it was possible to gain wisdom from the multiple meanings of words that could suddenly emerge.<sup>34</sup> Distrust of the clarity of language and faith in its richness and expressive power were thus two sides of the same coin. Wordplay, for instance, was deemed to grant a sudden and unexpected access to knowledge by joining apparently unrelated meanings. Puns 'suggest meanings while at the same time illustrating the instability of meanings', as Culler puts it.<sup>35</sup> This is exactly what echoic speech does in *The Return from Parnassus*: Echo implicitly and explicitly alerts her listener to the fact that words cannot be trusted, but she also discloses the truth by relying on the pliability of words.<sup>36</sup> The revealing function of echoic repetition is even more explicit in Herbert's religious poems. As has been pointed out in the second chapter, puns are for Herbert linguistic phenomena that enable to intuit fundamental religious truths. In that devotional context, echoic distortion does not disrupt meaning or trouble communication, but it rather elevates human beings.

Many early modern echo-dialogues can be read as a sign of the 'intense linguistic consciousness' which, according to Elam, characterises much of the liter-

<sup>33</sup>Maguire, 'Typographical Embodiment', p. 541.

<sup>34</sup>Donawerth, pp. 10, 61.

<sup>35</sup>Culler, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup>In this case, Echo is not so much oracular, but rather worldly-wise. Oracular echoes, though, also rely on the ambiguity of the linguistic sign to reveal the truth. Puns are indeed key elements both of comedy and of oracular expression, as is also recognised by Redfern, p. 102.

ary and cultural production of this period.<sup>37</sup> Focussing on Shakespearean drama, Elam states that ‘an impressively dense and intense concern with meaning and its production, with the status of the linguistic sign, and with the relationship of language to the world marks the entire comic canon’, but he also explains that those concerns do not emerge in Shakespeare’s works alone.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, they also seem to be projected onto many dramatic representations of Echo, and unsurprisingly so, given that the disembodied nymph only relies on language to survive and can hence be identified with it.

Echo’s punning speech embodies very well the contradictions which characterise early modern views on language. Like puns, echoic speech did not constitute an indication that language was irredeemably useless. The Elizabethans were aware that language had its limits, but it also had a great creative potential through which those limits could be overcome.<sup>39</sup> Puns, for instance, drew attention to the fact that the ambiguity of language could dangerously undermine communication, but they also produced a comic effect, which is the reason why echoic wordplay is employed in the comedies analysed in this chapter. Puns and echoes were popular because they offered the sheer pleasure of linguistic creativity. Thus, while Wilson associates polysemous words with ‘error’, ‘fraud’, and wile, and insists that they should be avoided,<sup>40</sup> Peacham lists equivocation among ‘the pleasures and delights of speech’ and argues that ‘as it is most wittie, so it is most pleasant’ (sig. G1v). Moreover, not only are puns pleasant but they often also have a truth value: if one meaning is undermined by the punning repetition of a word, a new one is uncovered at the same time. Homonyms, homophones, and polysemous words show that language is an imperfect medium

<sup>37</sup>Keir Elam, *Shakespeare’s Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 2. See also Keir Elam, “Understand Me by My Signs”: on Shakespeare’s Semiotics’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, 1.1 (1985), 84-97 (p. 85).

<sup>38</sup>Elam, *Shakespeare’s Universe of Discourse*, pp. 21, 1-2. See also Elam, ‘Understand Me by My Signs’, p. 87.

<sup>39</sup>Donawerth, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup>Thomas Wilson, *The Rule of Reason* (London: Richard Grafton, 1551), sigs. L4v-L5v. For an interesting and detailed explanation of the political implications underlying Wilson’s bias against homonyms see Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 100.

but also that it is rich enough to bring enjoyment and enlightenment. These contradiction are all held together by Echo, who relies exactly on such similarities between words and sounds.

## Words that wound

The power of language lies not only in its richness but also in its capacity to produce tangible effects. Redfern suggests that ‘the trickster-figure, who features in so many cultures, reminds by his very Protean changeability that language is all-powerful’.<sup>41</sup> Echo is herself a trickster, one who plays with words to achieve her ends. She is also a Protean figure, as she constantly changes, adopts different voices, and mimics her interlocutors. Her language is indeed powerful, so much so that it enables her to survive despite her loss of a body and of autonomous verbal articulation: it is through language that she lives and especially acts. Elizabethans believed in the power of words, they knew that men could do good or evil deeds solely through their words. Many treatises and even passing comments on speech in this period seem to be informed by a pragmatic perspective.<sup>42</sup> Belief in the power of words could stem from a magical conception of language according to which words have a motivated relationship with the things they denote. Because of that relationship, names were believed to have a direct influence over things: they could thus conjure them or even exert powers that were associated with them.<sup>43</sup> More often, though, men who considered words to be powerful had faith in the art of rhetorical persuasion: in their opinion, words did have tangible effects, but that was due not to their magical properties but rather to their ability to affect men’s minds.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever the source of the belief in the power of language, it was widely

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<sup>41</sup>Redfern, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup>Vienne-Guerrin, p. xl.

<sup>43</sup>Elam, *Shakespeare’s Universe of Discourse*, pp. 141-43; Mahood, pp. 170-71.

<sup>44</sup>Donawerth, p. 38.

recognised that words could be dangerous, even to the point of inflicting physical pain. Benedick's remark on Beatrice's verbal aggressiveness in *Much Ado About Nothing* (c. 1598-99), 'she speaks poniards, and every word stabs' (II.i.227), is one among many other explicit expressions of faith in the power of words to hurt.<sup>45</sup> Even more than Beatrice, Echo has to rely on the power of words if she wants to harm someone mentally or physically. Lacking a body, she only has language as a weapon, and it is a weapon which she can skillfully use. Interestingly, Redfern explains that two etymologies have been guessed for the word 'pun', both of which associate puns with weapons: the word has been hypothesised to stem from *puntiglio*, meaning a pointed sword, or from the verb 'to pun', that is to beat with force. The pun is thus somehow equated with a sword or to a bludgeon.<sup>46</sup> Such etymologies seem to hint at a certain awareness that wordplay is a potentially powerful tool. It is true that the word 'pun' did not exist in the early modern period and hence there could be no real or invented etymological association between wordplay and weapons. Yet, men were nonetheless conscious of how dangerous wordplay could be: the figures of speech which correspond to our notion of puns, *paronomasia*, *asteismus*, *antanaclasis*, and *syllepsis*, were all instruments of rhetoric and, as such, they could be drawn upon to move and persuade. Rhetoric was deemed to have the uncanny potential to hold sway over men's minds, and that persuasive power was enhanced by effective stylistic devices, among which was wordplay.<sup>47</sup> As Elam points out, rhetorical devices were conceived by Renaissance rhetoricians as 'persuasive *doings* with words': figures of speech were even implicitly associated with the gestural resources employed by actors on the stage, as they were both considered to be the stylistic elements of the verbal and non-verbal languages of rhetoric and acting.<sup>48</sup> Wordplay thus

<sup>45</sup> William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, revised edition, ed. by Claire McEachern (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Redfern, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Donawerth points out that ambiguous words are very important in persuasion (p. 118). For more information on how rhetoric was regarded and assessed in the Renaissance see Rebhorn's influential study: Wayne A. Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men's Minds. Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1955). Rebhorn focuses on early modern views of rhetoric as a means to manipulate and even subjugate people at pp. 3-4, 15, 23-79.

<sup>48</sup> Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse*, pp. 16, 236.

enables Echo to make up for her lack of a body, and to perform persuasive actions on the stage, which are as influential as non-verbal ones.

The dangerous performative power of words is emphasised in the aforementioned echo-scenes in the academic play *Narcissus*. When Echo mocks Clinias, she explicitly draws attention to the sinister potential of her rebounding speech. Clinias challenges his invisible detractor to fight and claims: ‘Jove helpes then if we fight, but wee trust to our swoordes’ (l. 561), to which Echo replies ‘woordes’ (l. 562). She is here dismissing Clinias’ challenge as a mere empty threat, but her answer can also be read as a suggestion that it is with words that she wounds. The *paronomasia* swords - words evokes a connection between sword-play and wordplay, implying that the two are not too dissimilar in terms of harmfulness. In the next two lines, Echo makes the hint more explicit. Clinias exclaims: ‘Woordes; why, doe you thinke tis you woordes shall vs affright?’ (ll. 563-65), Echo answers affirmatively ‘right’ (l. 566), thus leaving no doubt that she is warning him that her speech can hurt him.

Her words do indeed bring about tragic outcomes. Both Dorastus and Clinias think that the insulting voice they hear is that of their friend, so that, when they meet again on stage, they accuse each other of having offended them, until they get so enraged that they initiate a fight and kill each other:

CLINIAS Wast you, Dorastus, mockt mee all this season?

DORASTUS Pray, Clinias, hold your tounge, y’haue little reason

To make a foole of mee & mocke mee too.

CLINIAS Nay, sir, twas you that mockt mee, so you doe;

[...]

My scindifer, that longe hath beene vndrawde,

Shall come out of his sheath most fiery hott,

And slice thee small, even as hearbes to pott.

[...]

*[They fight & fall] (ll. 633-52)*

Echo’s words have thus sowed discord between the two friends and led them to die as a result. When she mocks Dorastus and Clinias, Echo has not met Narcissus yet, and hence she presumably still has her body: in the Ovidian

narrative, she only fades away when the youth rejects her and dies. If the play follows its source, the nymph is likely not a disembodied voice at this stage of the plot, but she merely hides herself from Dorastus and Clinias. Even in this case, though, she is unseen by her interlocutors and speaks from offstage, as was generally the case in early modern echo-dialogues. To them and to the audience, the nymph is only a voice, but one which makes an impact on reality by challenging, threatening, and even causing the death of two characters.<sup>49</sup>

The epithet which Narcissus attributes to Echo towards the end of the play, 'hag' (l. 671), can perhaps be read as another hint at the power of her words: the term was used as a synonym of witch.<sup>50</sup> By referring to Echo as 'hag' Narcissus is obviously expressing his disdain for her, but a more substantial link between Echo and witches may also be implied. Like Echo, witches use language to manipulate reality, they perform supernatural deeds by employing verbal charms and spells. Their words were even believed to be able to kill. The adjective 'hag' may thus be a covert anticipation of the fact that Echo's words can produce tangible and potentially tragic effects, as will be demonstrated in the following scene by the deaths of Clinias and Dorastus.

Despite the fact that her words bring death into a comedy, no moral censure against the nymph is implied in the play. Echo appears as a slanderer and a sexually greedy woman, but that is not the main focus of her characterisation. The play has no didactic aim, its purpose is that of entertaining and amusing the audience: it follows that its figures are comic rather than moral.<sup>51</sup> Even the scene where Dorastus and Clinias die is humorous, aimed at eliciting laughter rather than suggesting a serious indictment of Echo. The two friends chase each other, probably on and off the stage, and then have a heated verbal argument in which they utter bombastic threats and bizarre alliterating insults: 'my scindifer, [...] shall come out of his sheath most fiery hott' (ll. 644-45), 'O with thy bloud

<sup>49</sup>Echo also challenges Dorastus to fight by turning his proposition 'Doe not provoke me, I shall come' into the imperative 'come' (ll. 544-45).

<sup>50</sup>'Hag' (2), in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, 20 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), VI, p. 1011.

<sup>51</sup>Vinge, p. 236.

Ille make so redd my whineard,/ As ripest liquor is of grapes in vineyarde' (ll. 649-50), 'Frieng panne of all fritters and frauds' (ll. 643), 'Thou huge humminge humblebee, thou hornett' (l. 647). They also continue to speak in their inflated style after having been wounded, repeatedly announcing that they are about to die but refusing to do so for the next eighteen lines, until they finally comment in unison 'Vild word adieu, wee die, o o o o!' (l. 670) and die. Echo's mocking of the two friends is thus not only hilarious *per se*, but it also provides the opportunity to stage another comic scene.

The nymph is never blamed for her trickery but she is rather appreciated for the comic potential of her speech pattern. In *Narcissus*, Echo's punning repetitions do frustrate Narcissus' attempts to communicate and set two friends against each other, but they also amuse the audience and probably even win their favour. It is no coincidence that the two non-Ovidian scenes added by the anonymous playwright to his comic plot are echo-dialogues, which were not only very popular but also potentially very funny. Not only is the nymph the protagonist of those two scenes, but she also has a primary role in the play, as she is the one who addresses the audience directly and comments on the dramatic action. For instance, she apostrophises the spectators when she introduces herself ('Knowe, if you aske, that Eccho is my name' (l. 455)) and when she wittily craves their applause at the end of the play (l. 740-47). The fact that she is entrusted the final request for applause may be read as a sign that the playwright believed that his audience would have liked the nymph and hence they would have been ready to comply with her request. Thus, what appears to be Echo's paradigmatic trait in this play is her linguistic creativity. That quality enables her to do many different things with words: indeed, she demonstrates her ability to mock or praise her interlocutor, to beguile or harm others, and to express her own wishes.

Echo's words influence the course of events also in Heywood's *Iron Age*, part one (c. 1610-12).<sup>52</sup> In the last Act of the play, Heywood dramatises the episode

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<sup>52</sup>The play was printed in 1632 but it was likely composed much earlier, probably between the first years of the seventeenth century and the 1610s. For a discussion on its date of composition see John

of the contention of Ulysses and Ajax for Achilles' arms, narrated in book XIII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The plot follows the Ovidian narrative closely except for a very brief echo-scene added by the playwright. He has an echo answer to Ajax, who has become mad at having lost the contention with Ulysses. The hero soliloquises about the ungratefulness of the leaders of the Greek army, and then challenges imaginary enemies to fight. It is at this point that Echo catches his words:

AIAX I feare you not  
Dare you not yet? not one to fight with mee:  
Who then? What's hee must cope with Aiax?  
ECHO Aiax?  
AIAX Well said old boy, was't Nestor my brave Lad?  
I'le doot, I'le doot, come my fine cutting blade,  
Make mee immortall [...]  
Aiax by none could but by Aiax fall.  
*[He kills himself].*<sup>53</sup>

Ajax interprets Echo's answer to his question as a suggestion to commit suicide, which appears to be a welcome thought for the mad hero. He mistakes the sound of the echo for the voice of Nestor, renowned for being the wisest hero in the Greek camp. The role played by the echo in this brief exchange appears thus to be a parody of the traditional representation of the nymph as a good counsellor, one who could have rescued Narcissus from spiritual death: Ajax associates that voice to that of someone who notoriously gives good advice, but the echo is in fact leading him to die. Heywood also seems to give an ironic twist to the popular allegorisation of Echo as good fame. By killing himself, Ajax hopes to wipe the stain of defeat from his honour and to be made immortal. The echo does somehow play a part in his acquisition of fame, but it does not do so by

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S.P. Tatlock, 'The Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature, Especially in Shakespeare and Heywood', *PMLA*, 30.4 (1915), 673-770 (p. 719); Ernest Schanzer, 'Heywood's Ages and Shakespeare', *The Review of English Studies*, 11.41 (1960), 18-28 (pp. 27-28).

<sup>53</sup>Thomas Heywood, *The Iron Age*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, III, pp. 257-345 (p. 344).

reverberating his name through time or space, but rather by contributing to cause his death.

In Heywood's play the echo reverberates a single word, but one which has considerable power. This scene implicitly demonstrates that the nymph Echo does not need a body to act and even to kill because her reverberating speech pattern can effectively do that. As was the case in *Narcissus*, her speech is her most dangerous weapon, in spite of its being derivative and subordinate. Not only does the echo persuade Ajax to turn his hand against himself, but it also moves the plot forward, as it contributes to bring Ajax's railing to an end and provides the trigger for his suicide. Theatre is a performing art which combines gesture and speech, yet Echo in *Narcissus* and the echo in *Iron Age* both manage to play an important role in the plot even without using or possessing a physical body. On stage it thus particularly evident that Echo does things with words.

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Early modern authors seem to have been aware that Echo's repetitions reveal much about language. They draw attention to the ambiguity of the linguistic sign, and show how easily words can be equivocated or twisted. As soon as a sentence is uttered, the speaker loses control over it: he cannot determine or foresee how it will be interpreted or whether or not his perlocutionary goals will be achieved. By appropriating and distorting words uttered by her interlocutor, Echo gives a very effective demonstration of that impossibility to control meaning. The nymph dispossesses speakers of their words and alters them until they become unfamiliar to them.

The ambiguity inherent in language does complicate communication but it may also prove fruitful. As has been shown, ambiguity brought about by homophones, homonyms, and echoes can easily disrupt meaning, but it also creates it. Thus, if echoes expose the unreliability of language, they also display its richness and its creative potential. Echoic repetition shows that the juxtaposition of words spelled or pronounced alike may yield unexpected truths or it may simply amuse the audience through the clever wordplay which it originates.

Echoic repetition is clearly not the sole linguistic phenomenon that has the capacity to make speakers and listeners aware of the ambiguity inherent in language. Puns, witty retorts, and other forms of non-echoic dialogue also rely on phonetically or semantically equivocal words. Yet, Echo's speech pattern can itself be equated with puns, and the fact that it involves interaction with another speaker makes it particularly apt to display the difficulties that can arise in communication. Moreover, Echo, 'a voyce without the bodies aid', can be perceived as a sort of embodiment of language itself: as such, it is not surprising that many dramatic representations of the nymph reflect early modern concerns on the value of the linguistic sign. In two university plays, *Narcissus* and *The Return from Parnassus*, the nymph even comments explicitly on words: the academic *milieu* in which the plays were represented may have encouraged the playwrights to allude to the ongoing debates on the linguistic sign, which would have been familiar to the learned audience of their shows. It is true that such cultural discussions were by no means confined to the universities, but a scholarly audience would have immediately picked up the reference and perhaps been prompted to reflect on the semiotic implications of echo's distorting speech pattern.

Just as Echo's lack of autonomous verbal articulation reveals that linguistic signs can be manipulated, so does her disembodiment prove that actions can be performed with language. Despite lacking a body, the nymph has often an unexpected influence on the world of the play. By relying solely on her speech, she can do a wide variety of things with words: she can mock or flatter, woo or wound, persuade or mislead, and she can even kill. Her power is especially due to the fact that her words can be rhetorically effective and hence move the minds of those who listen, as is the case in Heywood's *Iron Age*. The persuasive power of echoic repetition is displayed also in *Othello*, where it has even more sinister outcomes. Othello's mind is more subtly and more intensely affected by echoic repetition than is Ajax's already troubled one. As will be shown in the next chapter, echoing fittingly becomes a rhetoric device in *Othello*, one which is employed for evil purposes.

# Echoes of the myth of Echo in Shakespeare

Shakespeare never explicitly alludes to the mythological nymph Echo, nor does he introduce a traditional echo-dialogue in any of his works. He appears to be well aware that those dialogues with Echo were popular in the drama and poetry of his period, but chooses not to draw on that literary trope: on the contrary, he even seems to expose it as an old-fashioned cliché. He does echo Ovid's account of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, though, and also mentions acoustic echoes in several of his plays and in his narrative poems.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, when textual and narrative elements of Ovid's story are borrowed, mythological Echo, acoustic reverberation, and literary echoes are all combined: this combination is especially evident in *Venus and Adonis*, where it appears to be deliberately employed for specific purposes. Indeed, literary echoes and mythological Echo are nowhere more closely intertwined than in his first published poem.

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<sup>1</sup>The allusions to echo in *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* are analysed later in this chapter. In *A Lover's Complaint* (1609), echoic reverberation is mentioned in the first lines of the poem. The very narration of the poem's 'plaintful story' is mediated by an echo: 'From off a hill whose concave womb reworded / A plaintful story from a sistering vale/ My spirits t'attend this double voice accorded / And down I laid to list the sad-tuned tale' (William Shakespeare, *A Lover's Complaint*, in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (London: Thomson Learning, 1997), pp. 429-52, ll. 1-4).

# Mythological and literary echoes in *Venus and Adonis*

*Venus and Adonis* is possibly the most ‘Ovidian’ work in Shakespeare’s corpus. Critics have widely recognised that the story of Venus and Adonis is conflated with elements from other myths narrated in the *Metamorphoses*, most notably those of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus and Echo and Narcissus.<sup>2</sup> It also features allusions to the myths of Orpheus, Pygmalion, and perhaps Actaeon.<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare borrows not only from the *Metamorphoses*, but he seems to be looking at the Ovidian canon more broadly: the poem opens with a quotation from the *Amores*, and its narrative voice seems to be modelled on the Ovidian figure of the *praeceptor amoris* of the *Ars Amatoria*.<sup>4</sup>

The relevance of the myth of Echo and Narcissus to the poem has been noted by scholars, who have investigated the themes of narcissism, identity construction, and the representation of desire in Shakespeare’s epyllion.<sup>5</sup> On a

<sup>2</sup>Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), I, pp. 161-63; Thomas W. Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare’s Poems and Sonnets* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950), pp. 1-48 (pp. 3, 10-11, 18); Douglas Bush, ‘Venus and Adonis and Mythology’, in ‘Venus and Adonis’: Critical Essays, ed. by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997), pp. 91-102 (p. 92); William Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Their Contemporaries* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), p. 56; Laetitia Sansonetti, *Out-Oviding Ovid in Shakespeare’s ‘Venus and Adonis’*, in *The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature*, ed. by Sophie Chiari (Farnham: Ashgate 2015), pp. 175-87 (pp. 177-78).

<sup>3</sup>Bullough, p. 163; Keach, p. 70. Velasco briefly suggests that there might be an echo of the myth of Actaeon in Shakespeare’s poem, but she does not analyse in sufficient detail (Beatriz Soubriet Velasco, ‘Ovid and Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*: a Study of Sexual-role Reversal’, *Sederi*, 7 (1996), 297-300 (p. 299). Adonis is insistently represented as a hunter, but, as soon as he becomes the object of Venus’ obsessive love, the hunter becomes a prey, as he is chased by the goddess, who is compared to a predatory animal (‘Even as an empty eagle, sharp by fast, / Tires with her beak on feathers, flesh and bone, [...] Even so she kissed his brow, his cheeck, his chin’, ll. 55-60; ‘She feedeth on the steam, as on a prey’, l. 62). Thus, Adonis somehow shares Acteon’s fate, the hunted hunter *par excellence*.

<sup>4</sup>M.L. Stapleton, ‘Venus as “Praeceptor”: The *Ars Amatoria* in *Venus and Adonis*’, in ‘Venus and Adonis’: Critical Essays, ed. by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997), pp. 309-22; Bate, p. 50. The *Heroines* have also been mentioned as one of Shakespeare’s possible poetic sources (William Shakespeare, *The Poems*, ed. by John Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 16). See also Sansonetti, who includes the *Elegies* among the Ovidian works which inspired Shakespeare (pp. 181-82).

<sup>5</sup>See for instance Coppélia Kahn, ‘Self and Eros in *Venus and Adonis*’, *The Centennial Review*, 20.4 (1976), 351-71; Eric F. Langley, “And Died to Kiss his Shadow”: The Narcissistic Gaze in Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 44.1 (2008), 12-26; Eric F. Langley,

most obvious level, the figure of Narcissus, who stubbornly refused to yield to Echo's advances, offered a paradigmatic example of male unresponsiveness to love upon which Shakespeare certainly drew in characterising Adonis as indifferent to Venus. In Ovid's poem, Adonis does famously not reject the goddess of love, and he does not appear to be as young as Shakespeare's unrelenting boy. Shakespeare may have found hints of Adonis' coldness towards Venus in Robert Greene's *Greenes Neuer too Late* (1590):<sup>6</sup> in Greene's romance, Infida tries to win Francesco with her song, in which she compares herself to Venus and states that she will 'die for woe' if her beloved proves to be as 'unkind' as Adonis was.<sup>7</sup> If he had read Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Shakespeare may also have chosen to expand on Marlowe's description of Hero's sleeve, whose embroidering shows Venus striving 'to please the careless and disdainfull eies, / Of proud Adonis' (ll. 13-14).<sup>8</sup> The stories of Hermaphroditus and Narcissus, though, were also popular and readily available examples of youths who refused to yield to a sexually assertive woman. The numerous allusions to the myth of Echo and Narcissus, in particular, testify to its relevance to Shakespeare's narrative and suggest that it was one of Shakespeare's major sources: Shakespeare's characterisation of Adonis is indeed greatly influenced by the figure of the self-enamoured boy.

Adonis is even explicitly compared to Narcissus by Venus, who identifies self-absorption as the reason why he does not reciprocate her love in spite of her wooing:

Is thine own heart to thine own face affected?

Can thy right hand seize love upon thy left?

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*Narcissism and Suicide in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1-52; Celestin J. Walby, *Answering Looks of Sympathy and Love: Subjectivity and the Narcissus Myth in Renaissance English Literature* (Doctoral thesis, University of Missouri, 2004), pp.111-29; Anthony D. Cousins, *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Narrative Poems* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 12-47; Sansonetti, pp. 178-79.

<sup>6</sup>*Shakespeare's Poems*, ed. by Woudhuysen and Duncan-Jones, p. 18. Bush, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Greene, *Greenes Neuer too Late*, in *The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene*, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart, 12 vols (London and Aylesbury: Hazell, Watson, and Viney, 1881-83), VIII, pp. 1-109 (pp. 76-77).

<sup>8</sup>Christopher Marlowe, *Hero and Leander*, in *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by Fredson Bowers, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), II, pp. 423-515. It is uncertain whether Marlowe's poem antedates or predates *Venus and Adonis*.

Then woo thyself, be of thyself rejected,  
Steal thine own freedom and complain on theft.  
Narcissus so himself himself forsook,  
And died to kiss his shadow in the brook. (ll. 157-62)

The consecutive repetition (*geminatio*) of the word ‘himself’ is a brilliant rhetorical construction which mimics Narcissus’ reflection in the pool both graphically on the page and acoustically.<sup>9</sup> Adonis’ contemplation of his own image in the brook is again alluded to by Venus when she mourns for his death: the goddess longingly recalls that ‘when he beheld his shadow in the brook / The fishes spread on it their golden gills’ (ll. 1099-1100), thus including self-contemplation among Adonis’ habitual activities which the world will miss. The goddess also accuses Adonis of being ‘proud’ (l. 762), and pride is the main fault for which Narcissus is blamed in Golding’s Epistle of 1567, where the author states that the boy is ‘of scornfulness and pride a mirror clear’ (l. 105). Shakespeare, who was familiar with Golding’s translation of the *Metamorphoses*, was likely aware of his moralising interpretation of the myth, and his use of the adjective ‘proud’ may have helped to reinforce the association between Narcissus and Adonis drawn more explicitly elsewhere in the poem. Venus’ accusation of pride is also immediately followed by another instance of *geminatio*: ‘So in thyself thyself art made away’ (l. 763), which once again conveys the idea of reflection and duplication, especially in such an explicit mythological context. Another element that Shakespeare’s Adonis has in common with Narcissus is his age. Adonis is here younger than his Ovidian progenitor, as he repeatedly describes himself as being too unripe for love: just like Narcissus, he thus appears to ‘stand between the state of man and lad’ (*Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. Golding, III.438).

If Adonis is repeatedly associated with Narcissus, Venus has fittingly much in common with Ovid’s Echo. Both of them are female wooers whose sexual invitations are quite explicit. They are eager to embrace the objects of their

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<sup>9</sup>For a fine analysis of this rhetorical figure and its implications in *Venus and Adonis* and other early modern love poems see Langley, *Narcissism and Suicide*, pp. 1-25.

desire, but are stubbornly rejected by them and experience overwhelming grief as a result. Lastly, they are depicted as mourning the loss of their beloved ones, who both died prematurely. Significantly, Venus' lament when Adonis rejects her and leaves her alone in the wood is answered by echoes which 'make verbal repetition of her moans' (l. 831). Given all these common traits between Shakespeare's characters and Ovid's mythological figures, it might be tempting to argue (and it has been argued) that Venus is the exact counterpart of Echo, and the disdainful Adonis is a second Narcissus.<sup>10</sup>

And yet, Venus also seems to be repeatedly described in terms which remind of the self-absorbed Narcissus. Langley, for instance, has convincingly pointed out that Venus' rhetoric of mutuality and reciprocation actually reveals her narcissistic attitude; even if she champions extramissive sight, she actually indulges in fantasies of narcissistic gaze.<sup>11</sup> Cousins similarly notes that the goddess 'seems narcissistic in [her] self-interestedness and indifference to Adonis' desire'.<sup>12</sup> Textual echoes of Ovid's myth also confirm this association between Venus and the self-enamoured youth. The narrator's description of Venus' feelings when she obtains a kiss from Adonis clearly hints at Narcissus' famous exclamation 'inopem me copia fecit' ['the very abundance of my riches beggars me'] (III.466): Venus' lips have known the 'precious taste' of Adonis' 'sweet coral mouth', 'whereon they surfeit, yet complain on drouth' (ll. 542-44).

The narrator also repeatedly links Venus with images of mirrorings and visual reflections, which immediately evoke the story of Narcissus. When she sees the dead body of Adonis, Venus looks into his lifeless eyes, which are described as 'two glasses, where herself herself beheld / A thousand times, and now no more reflect' (ll. 1120-30): the implication seems to be that Venus used to

<sup>10</sup> See for instance Kahn, p. 259. Mauré, who focuses only on the two explicit mentions of echo rather than on the numerous allusions to Ovid's myth more in general, also claims that Venus is 'pareille à Echo' [just like Echo] (*Héritages*, p. 301).

<sup>11</sup> Langley, 'And died to kiss his shadow', pp. 18, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Cousins, p. 31. See also Heather Dubrow, "Upon Misprision Growing": *Venus and Adonis*', in '*Venus and Adonis*': *Critical Essays*, ed. by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997), pp. 223-46. Dubrow argues that Venus has some psychological traits in common with Ovid's Narcissus (p. 234), and recognises that 'the lovers share deeper affinities than they care to admit' (p. 240), among which that of being both self-centered.

admire her own reflection in Adonis' eyes rather than delight in the beauty of his beloved, which she had so longingly praised. *Geminatio* is once again employed to emphasise the effect of duplication. A plethora of other rhetorical figures of repetition appears later in the poem, which is once again linked with the idea of Venus gazing at reflections of herself. For instance, when the goddess cries for fear that Adonis is dead, her eyes and tears are described as mirroring each other:

O, how her eyes and tears did lend and borrow!  
Her eyes seen in the tears, tears in her eye;  
Both crystals, where they viewed each other's sorrow,  
Sorrow that friendly sighs sought still to dry. (ll. 961-64)

The stanza features *anadiplosis*, (sorrow / Sorrow; tears / tears), *epanalepsis* ('Her eyes [...] her eye'), and the repetition of 'her eyes' and 'tears' in two consecutive lines: all of these rhetorical devices reproduce syntactically the mutual mirroring of eyes and tears described by the narrator. Sansonetti also reads Venus' imperative 'look in mine eyeballs, there thy beauty lies' (l. 119) as a sign of her narcissism: by encouraging Adonis to behold his reflection in her eyes, just as she stares at herself in his, Venus reveals her eagerness to 'transform herself and Adonis into a dual version of Narcissus by indulging into mutual gazing'.<sup>13</sup> Not only does Venus have much in common with Ovid's Narcissus, but she is also significantly unlike Echo in that she can initiate her own woeful ditty and is also overwhelmingly vocal in wooing her beloved.<sup>14</sup>

Adonis is similarly no exact counterpart of Ovid's Narcissus despite the fact that he has many traits in common with him. Cousins observes that there is one major difference between these two figures: while Shakespeare's Adonis wishes to achieve self-knowledge independently and before he experiences love, Narcissus gets to know himself only as a result of his falling in love (with himself, in his case).<sup>15</sup> Adonis even shows some resemblance to Ovid's Echo in that his freedom

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<sup>13</sup>Sansonetti, p. 178.

<sup>14</sup>Walby, for instance, draws attention to the adverb 'extemporally', which, in his opinion, emphasises Venus' autonomous verbal articulation (p. 126).

<sup>15</sup>Cousins, pp. 32-33.

of speech is drastically limited by a goddess: ‘if thou wilt chide, thy lips shall never open’ (l. 48), Venus threatens him while stopping his mouth and trying to kiss him (ll. 46-47). Moreover, if Venus uses rhetorical figures of repetition which mimic visual reflection, Adonis also repeats words but he does so in a way that reminds of Echo’s rhetorical strategies of re-signification. After being interrupted by Adonis, for instance, Venus wonders ‘where did I leave?’, to which the youth bluntly replies: ‘no matter where [...] leave me and then the story aptly ends’ (ll. 715-16). His repetition of the word ‘leave’ changes its meaning: while Venus is simply asking where she interrupted her speech, Adonis uses the word with the meaning of ‘to go away from someone’. Adonis’ answer thus draws on *antanaclasis*. Earlier in the poem, the youth had also uttered the word ‘love’ three times in the same line, once again with slight shifts in meaning: the phrase ‘my love to love is love but to disgrace it’ (l. 412) means indeed that the sole *feeling* he has towards *love* is a *desire* to disgrace it. Like Echo, Adonis displays his skill at employing several meanings that a word can have simultaneously.

There is thus no exact identification between Venus and Adonis and the mythological prototypes of Echo and Narcissus respectively. By drawing on that Ovidian myth, Shakespeare seem to be rather interested in capitalising on the possibilities granted by the reflections, repetitions, and mirrorings which lie at its core. As will be pointed out in the next section, the same purpose also underlies his use of the myth in *Twelfth Night*, where the playwright lays even more emphasis on the theme of the double. In depicting the goddess of love, Love herself, as self-centered but also desperately in love with another being, self-assured but also wholly dependent on Adonis, sexually predatory but also tenderly loving, Shakespeare seems to suggest that love is a metamorphic force, capable of transforming men and making them act at times like Echo and at others like Narcissus.

Ovid’s poem explores the polymorphousness of sexual desire and shows that love has no boundaries and can take literally any form. Early modern authors drew heavily on this aspect of their predecessor’s poetry, especially in the Ovidian epyllia of the late Elizabethan age. This is also true of *Venus and Adonis*,

which has been identified by Bate as ‘a poem about transgressive sexuality’.<sup>16</sup> Love, embodied by the goddess Venus herself, does indeed take on countless shapes: the goddess seeks erotic fulfilment, but is also capable of motherly love (ll. 1183-86); she clearly thinks of herself as a Venus Victrix, conqueror of Mars (ll. 97-112), but blatantly fails to win Adonis; her vain attempts to win Adonis are at times comic and at others pathetic; she can be predatory in her wooing, but she is also cast as a helpless victim of Adonis’ words, which are compared to a threatening grinning wolf and to ‘the deadly bullet of a gun’ (ll. 459-61). Moreover, the fact that she plays the traditionally masculine role of aggressive sexual hunter also suggests that sexual desire blurs the boundaries between manly and womanly roles or even humanly and beastly behaviour. The allusions to the myth of Echo and Narcissus complete this picture, as they contribute to create that great variety of scenarios which are presented in the poem.

Shakespeare’s use of the myth shows indeed that the roles of responsive and selfless lover, and of narcissistic and isolated object of love are not fixed. Venus’ insistence on reciprocation and mutual exchange is exposed as being misleading, as her rhetorical strategies and lexical choices betray her unconfessed and perhaps not fully conscious narcissism. As a consequence, the traditional distinction between felicitous reciprocal love and sterile self-love also appears to be blurred, thus reinforcing the idea that love cannot be pinned down to rigid categories.<sup>17</sup> The poem also warns us that an unrequiting beloved is not necessarily a narcissist: not only does Adonis have some traits in common with Echo as well as with Narcissus, but he is also depicted as self-interested by Venus, whose view is certainly partial and whose judgment is inevitably clouded by her erotic desire. Multiple views on love and reciprocation are thus offered to the reader who can pick up the mythological allusions scattered in the poem. Shakespeare’s epyllion shows that love is protean, that the rhetoric of love is ambiguous, that Echo can be narcissistic and Narcissus is not indisputably self-absorbed: love is

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<sup>16</sup>Bate, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup>Langley argues that that is often the case in Elizabethan erotic narratives, where love of others is often worryingly similar to self-love (“And died to Kiss his Shadow”, pp. 19-20).

represented in all its contradictions, and the myth of Echo and Narcissus is a pivotal element in such a complex portrayal.

When we look specifically at the poem's most famous allusion to echo, it is immediately evident that the nymph and the acoustic reverberation associated with her are by no means cast in a positive light. When she is abandoned by Adonis, the lovelorn Venus begins to sing a 'woeful ditty' which is rebounded by echoes:

And now she beats her heart, whereat it groans,  
That all the neighbour caves, as seeming troubled,  
Make verbal repetition of her moans;  
Passion on passion deeply is redoubled:  
'Ay me!' she cries, and twenty times 'Woe, woe!'  
And twenty echoes twenty times cry so.

She marking them begins a wailing note  
And sings extemporally a woeful ditty;  
How love makes young men thrall and old men dote;  
How love is wise in folly, foolish-witty:  
Her heavy anthem still concludes in woe,  
And still the choir of echoes answer so. (ll. 829-40)

Shakespeare skilfully uses the rhetorical devices generally employed to convey the acoustic effect of an echo: *diacope* ('passion on passion'), *epizeuxis* ('woe, woe'), and *mesodiplosis* ('and twenty times [...] and twenty echoes twenty times') combine in the first stanza; *polyptoton* ('folly, foolish', 'woeful [...] woe'), and *anaphora* ('how love [...] how love') in the second. Moreover, both stanzas feature numerous alliterations of the sound 'o', which reinforce the aural impression of a reverberated lament. These two stanzas seem to characterise echoes as sympathetic listeners of Venus' laments, compassionate sounds which respond to her moans. Yet, in the following stanza, the narrator comments:

Her song was tedious and outwore the night,  
For lovers' hours are long, though seeming short:  
[...]

Their copious stories oftentimes begun  
End without audience and are never done.

For who hath she to spend the night withal  
But idle sounds resembling parasites,  
Like shrill-tongued tapsters answering every call,  
Soothing the humour of fantastic wits?  
She says ‘‘Tis so:’ they answer all ‘‘Tis so’,  
And would say after her, if she said ‘No’. (ll. 841-52)

Echoes are in fact portrayed as vain sounds which provide no effective solace to Venus. Shakespeare thus nods to the role traditionally played by Echo in Elizabethan love and pastoral poetry, where the nymph is repeatedly invoked as a consoling presence for sorrowful lovers, but he then subverts and parodies that literary commonplace. Echoes are in this case idle parasites which merely flatter Venus by repeating everything she says. Indeed, that description of echoes strikingly recalls a passage in T.H.’s moralising commentary on the myth of Echo and Narcissus, in which the anonymous author draws on Berchorius’ *Ovidius Moralizatus* and associates Echo with ‘flattringe folke’: <sup>18</sup>

Nowe yf a tiraunte saye it shall be so  
None other thinge but so they haue to speake  
Although it tourne a thousande vnto wooe  
[...]  
The same, they saye, they aunswer after warde. (sig. C1r)

Just like flatterers, echoes merely rebound Venus’ words to her ears, thus feeding her self-centeredness and absorption with her own concerns. <sup>19</sup> Woudhuysen and

<sup>18</sup>The similarity between these two passages has been noticed also by Walby, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup>Interestingly, echoic reverberation provides no consolation but rather seems to sharpen the sorrow of those who hear it also in *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). When Collatine and Lucretius bemoan Lucrece’s death, almost competing as to who has more right to claim ownership of Lucrece and hence to suffer more intensely for her death, the ‘dispersed air’ echoes their cries: “O,” quoth Lucretius, “I did give that life / Which she too early and too late hath spilled.” / “Woe, woe,” quoth Collatine, “she was my wife; / I owed her, and ’tis mine that she hath killed.” / “My daughter” and “my wife” with clamours filled / The dispersed air, who, holding Lucrece’ life, / Answered their cries, “My daughter” and “My wife” (1800-06). As Burrow points out, Lucrece does actually no longer belong

Duncan-Jones also hypothesise that a possible association between tapsters and pimps may be implied in the narrator's remark that Venus had nobody 'spend the night withal'.<sup>20</sup> If that is the case, Shakespeare's parasitic echoes, compared to 'idle tapsters', are implicitly accused of immoral sexual behaviour, a charge which recalls Golding's description of Echo's conduct as 'the lewd behaviour of a bawd' (*Epistle*, l. 108). That echoes may be equated with pimps does seem plausible especially because it is Venus, who was reproached by Adonis for her lewdness and 'wanton talk' (ll. 793-810), who turns to them for consolation.

This parodic description of echoes adds to the comic treatment of Venus which often emerges in the poem. Critics agree in recognising that Shakespeare's characterisation of the goddess of Love is complex in that it combines comic or even grotesque elements with more pathetic and tender traits.<sup>21</sup> Venus' affiliation with those idle echoing sounds seems to be one of the elements responsible for making her appear a laughable figure. She shows wrong judgment or at least naivety in choosing echoes as interlocutors for her lamentation, as they are merely vain and flattering voices. This undermines the poignancy of her mournful song, which fails to elicit the readers' pity.

And yet, there may be another reason behind such a biased representation of echoes. Echo-songs appear also in the epyllia by Thomas Lodge, *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589), and John Clapham, *Narcissus* (1591), which likely exerted considerable influence on Shakespeare's poem. It has been recognised that Ovidian poetry was a genre with encouraged competition among writers: it was a literary form generally adopted by young poets eager to show their poetic skills and to appeal to a wide audience of readers. It often entailed echoing, re-elaborating, or expanding details found in poems written by other poets.<sup>22</sup>

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to them, since it is the air that now 'holds' her life (William Shakespeare, *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Colin Burrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 336 (l. 1806n)). Thus, the re-echoing air appropriates their selfish cries and, by doing so, it cruelly reminds them that Lucrece has become *its* daughter and *its* wife.

<sup>20</sup> *Venus and Adonis*, ed. by Woudhuysen and Duncan-Jones, p. 204 (l. 849n).

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Nancy Lindheim, 'The Shakespearean *Venus and Adonis*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37.2 (1986), 190-203 (p. 193); Cousins, pp. 16-18, 35-36; Keach, pp. 60-61, 66, 75.

<sup>22</sup> *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Burrow, pp. 16-18. See also Sansonetti, pp. 182-83.

Shakespeare was animated by the same purposes and competitive spirit, as is testified by the epigraph to his poem, ‘Vilia miretur vulgus: mihi flavius Apollo / Pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua’ [‘Let common people gawp at common things: may golden-haired Apollo serve me with his goblets filled from the Castalian waters’], a quotation from Ovid’s *Amores* (I.15.35-36) which presents the poem as an achievement that stands out from the mass of common, vile literary works in that it is inspired by Apollo himself.<sup>23</sup> Bearing this context in mind, Shakespeare’s allusion to echoes reverberating Venus’ woeful song may appear to be another hint of his desire to outdo his predecessors. By declaring that a choir of echoes answers to Venus, Shakespeare sets up the expectation that an echo-song is about to begin but he then immediately disappoints it. Burrow and Martindale argue that this is a deliberate attempt on Shakespeare’s part to distance himself from Clapham’s poem, but, in such a competitive literary milieu, it seems plausible that he also had Lodge’s work in mind, as both *Narcissus* and *Scillaes Metamorphosis* are Ovidian poems which feature fully developed echo-dialogues.<sup>24</sup>

In Lodge’s poem, Echo promptly answers to Scylla who is longing for Glaucus’ love.<sup>25</sup> Her manifestation is anticipated by the *paronomasia* ‘alas poor Lasse’ (p. 26), in which the second term is not only a near homophone of the first but also a shortened version of it, a device which mimics Echo’s speech pattern. As is the case in Shakespeare’s poem, though, Echo does not console her interlocutor but rather ‘mockes’ ‘her piteous’ plaining’: the nymph merely rebounds Scylla’s desperate cries unaltered, thereby confirming her assertions that ‘Glaucus is faire’ but ‘he hateth Scilla’, and that there is ‘no hope’ for her (p. 26). She only alters Scylla’s words on one occasion, when she untactfully transforms her exclamation ‘O love!’ into ‘no love’, thus restating what Scylla was already

<sup>23</sup>The quotation and its translation are from *Shakespeare’s Poems*, p. 127.

<sup>24</sup>Charles Martindale and Colin Burrow, ‘*Narcissus*: A Pre-Text for Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis?* (text, translation, and commentary)’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 22. 2 (1992), 147-76 (pp. 153-54). See also *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Burrow, p. 12.

<sup>25</sup>All references are from Thomas Lodge, *Scillaes Metamorphosis*, in *The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge*, ed. by Edmund W. Gosse, 4 vols (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), I, pp. 1-30.

painfully aware of. Echo's voice is given the epithet of 'piteous', but the same adjective had already been attributed to the tone of Scylla's own 'plaining' in the previous stanza: this suggests that the adjective does not so much qualify Echo as empathetic towards Scylla but rather indicates that she is merely reproducing the sad tone of her speech. This characterisation of Echo seems to be anticipated in the first stanzas of the poem, when Glaucus evokes the episode of Adonis' death and recalls that echoes were 'ringing from the rockes his fall' (p. 10). The obvious implication behind that brief allusion is that echoes reverberate any sound, no matter how pitiful or cruel, and hence it should not be surprising that Echo later reverberates Scylla's desperate lament that she has 'no hope'.

Shakespeare's echoes reverberate Venus' song rather than Adonis' fall but they are as futile and ineffective as those who respond to Scylla. Despite this apparent similarity in the depiction of echoes, though, Shakespeare is by no means merely imitating Lodge. Unlike his predecessor, he abruptly interrupts the echo-song before it starts and describes it as 'tedious'. If echoes are so useless, he seems to imply, it is useless even to report their sterile repetitions. As Burrow recognises, Shakespeare seems thus to be casting echo-devices as trite literary clichés which he refuses to reproduce.<sup>26</sup> Such a boring song would indeed 'end without audience', it would alienate the readers. Instead, he employs wordplay and rhetorical figures of repetition to produce the effect of echoic reverberation without having to develop a fully fledged echo-dialogue. In doing so, he achieves *copia*, and displays his poetic talent: in other words, he challenges Lodge on his own ground and outstrips him by using echoic repetition in a more creative and sophisticated way.

If Shakespeare plays up Lodge's parody of the figure of Echo and ridicules his echo-song, he distances himself even more markedly from Clapham, and unsurprisingly so. Clapham's *Narcissus* was published in 1591 and it was the first Ovidian poem dedicated to the Earl of Southampton. *Venus and Adonis* was the second: Shakespeare dedicated it to the same patron two years later.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Burrow, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Martindale and Burrow, pp. 150; *Shakespeare's Poems*, ed. by Duncan-Jones and Woudhuysen, p.

He thus probably perceived his predecessor as a sort of literary rival, one whom he should outdo to impress the Earl. At stake in that poetic competition was Southampton's favour and financial support, which would have been particularly useful for Shakespeare at a time when the theatres were closed because of the plague, leaving him without his major source of income.

Shakespeare had likely read Clapham's poem and seems to have borrowed some of its elements. Those literary echoes have all been detected by Martindale and Burrow, who argue that Clapham's poem was a 'shaping pretext for *Venus and Adonis*'.<sup>28</sup> Among them are, for instance, the ungovernable horse driven by lust, the fact that Adonis is unresponsive to Venus, and Venus' insistent persuasions to love. Shakespeare's imitation, though, is often ironic and informed by his determination to distinguish his poem from that of his precursor. The most obvious differences is that in *Venus and Adonis* there is no trace of Clapham's moralising messages and allegorical figures: his characters are by no means stereotyped but rather vital and multifaceted. His brusque dismissal of Venus' echo-song marks another significant departure not only from Lodge's poem, but also from that of Clapham. This has been recognised also by Burrow and Martindale, who draw attention to Shakespeare's substitution of his rival's pedantic interlude in Latin with a much shorter and comic description of echoes reverberating Venus' 'ditty'.<sup>29</sup> It would be redundant to summarise their argument in greater detail here, but it may be worth focussing briefly on two previously unnoticed differences between Shakespeare's and Clapham's treatment of Echo/ echoes, which not only corroborate the scholars' convincing hypothesis, but also contribute to shed light on Shakespeare's original re-elaboration of the traditional echo-device.

The most obvious one is that, unlike Clapham, Shakespeare does not allude to the mythological nymph but rather to the acoustic phenomenon of reverberation. He thus de-mythologises the figure of Echo and denies her the status of

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<sup>26</sup>; *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Burrow, pp. 11-12.

<sup>28</sup>Martindale and Burrow, p. 153.

<sup>29</sup>Martindale and Burrow, pp. 148-49, 153; *The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. by Burrow, p. 12.

speaking character. This reinforces the aura of futility cast over Venus' dialogue with echoes: trying to converse with an acoustic effect is indeed a vain, if not foolish, endeavour. Clapham had instead put moralising words of warning into Echo's mouth. His Echo tries to open Narcissus' eyes to the moral 'error' he is committing (l. 187), and tries to convince him to go away from the river Philautia ('eamus' [ let us go], l. 185), a place of perdition where he will certainly find his death ('perire', l. 205) and his ruin ('ruina', l. 188).<sup>30</sup> She even evokes the threatening name 'Erynnis' (l. 197), goddesses of vengeance and retribution, thus implying that he will be punished for his self-love. By representing echoes as mere acoustic phenomena, Shakespeare appears to be implicitly ridiculing this whole dialogue, in which the moralising lesson is entrusted to what he perceives as being lifeless sounds. Lastly, his possible association of echoes with pimps radically subverts and hence parodies Clapham's characterisation of Echo as a pedantic moralist. His echoes could hardly give any moral advice on love, especially to their interlocutor, the goddess of Love herself.

Thus, Shakespeare employs the myth of Echo and Narcissus in a substantially and deliberately different way from the two poets who had previously referred to it in their narrative poems. The myth offers him an opportunity to engage in dialogue with his precursors and emphasise his own distinctive poetic voice. The figure of Echo, whose expression depends on previously uttered words, has long been considered to be the emblem of literary imitation and, hence, it seems particularly appropriate that the nymph is one of the main elements involved in the poetic competition between Shakespeare and Lodge, and especially between Shakespeare and Clapham. Echo's traditional speech pattern shows that speakers have no control over their own words once they are uttered: the nymph appropriates and distorts them, twists their meaning, and even turns them into their opposite. Similarly, a literary work can be echoed, fragmented, twisted, or parodied.<sup>31</sup> Shakespeare does exactly that: by borrowing from his predecessors'

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<sup>30</sup>All references to Clapham's poem are from Martindale and Burrow, 'Narcissus: A Pre-Text for Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*?'

<sup>31</sup>For interesting readings of the association between Echo and literary imitation see Adam Hansen

works, he shows that they can not only be imitated, but also mocked and surpassed. His echo of their echo-songs casts them as tedious, as sterile imitations of an outworn literary convention that deserves no audience. While their echoes – those uttered by the nymph in their poems, but implicitly also their literary echoes of Ovid – are boring, his imitation both of Ovid and of the very works of rivals is fertile, original and more enjoyable. In *Venus and Adonis*, acoustic echoes and literary echoes are thus indissolubly linked.

## Echoes, mirrorings, and doubles in *Twelfth Night*

In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare insistently alludes to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as is immediately evident at the beginning of the play: Viola and Sebastian are washed up on the shore of Illyria, which is the land which Cadmus and his wife reach in book IV of the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, in Shakespeare's Illyria, a place where 'nothing that is so, is so' (IV.i.8), identities are mistaken, narcissism dominates and misunderstandings thrive, thus further corroborating the Ovidian nature of the play. The myth of Echo and Narcissus, in particular, plays a pivotal role in the play: the characters are often associated with Echo, Narcissus, or even both of them, and the myth is referred to either overtly or through verbal parallels to Golding's translation. Interestingly, in Shakespeare's source *Gl'Ingannati* (1537) there is no allusion to this myth: Shakespeare independently adds it, thus conflating classical and Italian sources.<sup>33</sup>

The importance of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in *Twelfth Night* has been recognised and emphasised both on stage and on the page. On the contemporary stage, special emphasis has been placed on the figure of Narcissus in

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and Kevin J. Wetmore, 'Introduction', in *Shakespearean Echoes*, ed. by Adam Hansen and Kevin J. Wetmore (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1-20. The seminal work on Echo as an emblem of literary imitation is obviously Hollander's *The Figure of Echo*.

<sup>32</sup>Bate, pp. 144-45.

<sup>33</sup>Accademici Intronati di Siena, *Gl'Ingannati*, in *Commedie del Cinquecento*, ed. by Ireneo Sanesi, 2 vols (Bari: G. Laterza & Figli, 1912), I, pp. 311-97.

Peter Gill's 1974 RSC production, which featured an imposing portrait of the Ovidian boy hanging over the stage, aimed at drawing the audience's attention to the narcissism endemic in Illyria.<sup>34</sup> That explicit cue likely facilitated an audience less familiar with Ovid's myths than that of the early modern period to appreciate the Ovidian subtext of the play. On the page, the presence of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in *Twelfth Night* has also been extensively analysed by scholars, most famously by Taylor, Palmer, Bate, and Iselin.<sup>35</sup> All of them tend to argue that Orsino and Olivia are modelled on Ovid's Narcissus, and associate Viola with Echo. Charlotte Coffin, though, who has also studied the role of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in the play, has questioned such exact identifications between the Shakespearean and the Ovidian characters, and has shown that Shakespeare's use of the myth is more complex.<sup>36</sup> Despite the reams that have already been written on this subject, it is probably worth looking once again at Shakespeare's allusions to the myth of Echo and Narcissus in *Twelfth Night* so as to have a complete overview of how the playwright interpreted and re-used the Ovidian myth in his *oeuvre*. Some of the observations and findings of the above-mentioned scholars will be reported here, but previously undetected parallels between Shakespeare's play and Ovid's tale will also be pointed out. Building on that vast of body of criticism, this section will try to assess the role of Ovid's myth in the play, which will then be related to Shakespeare's allusions to it elsewhere in his dramatic corpus.

Orsino is the first narcissistic character presented in the play. The very first scene of the play, where the count's melancholy is displayed, immediately draws

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<sup>34</sup> *Twelfth Night*, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Brian Taylor, 'Narcissus, Olivia, and a Greek Tradition', *Notes and Queries*, 44 (1997), 58-61; Anthony Brian Taylor, 'Shakespeare Rewriting Ovid: Olivia's Interview with Viola and the Narcissus Myth', *Shakespeare Survey*, 50 (1997), 81-89; D.J. Palmer, 'Twelfth Night and the Myth of Echo and Narcissus', *Shakespeare Survey*, 32 (1979), 73-78; Bate, pp. 144-51; Pierre Iselin, 'Écho, ou la Répétition dans *Twelfth Night*', in 'Twelfth Night': *Le Langage en Fête*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Chardin (Paris: Messène, 1996), pp. 77-87.

<sup>36</sup> Charlotte Coffin, 'An Echo Chamber for Narcissus: Mythological Rewritings in *Twelfth Night*', *Cahiers Élizabéthaines*, 66 (2004), 23-28. Mauré has also followed Coffin's lead and has argued that les personnages sont tour à tour Écho ou Narcisse; les identités fluctuent sans cesse' [The characters are in turn Echo or Narcissus, their identities fluctuate repeatedly] (*Héritages*, p. 336, translation mine). She presents that argument also in Cécile Mauré, 'Le Mythe Comme Détour dans *Twelfth Night*', *LISA*, 6.3 (2003), 139-55.

attention to Ovid's myth: the lines 'give me excess of it, that surfeiting / The appetite may sicken and so die' (I.i.2-3) echo Narcissus' lament 'inopem me copia fecit' (III. 466). In this scene, Orsino seems to be in love with the 'spirit of love' (I.i.9) itself, and this is particularly evident when he tells Curio that he loves Olivia: 'Why so *I* do, the noblest that *I* have. / O, when *mine* eyes did see Olivia first [...] / That instant was *I* turned into a hart, / And *my* desires [...] / E'er since pursue *me*' (I.i.17-22, emphasis mine). In this passage the personal pronouns 'I' and 'me' and the adjectives 'mine' and 'my' appear six times in five lines, thus testifying that Orsino's love is self-centered. Like Narcissus, 'where he likes another thing, he likes himself in deede' (*Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. Golding, III.534). Elam also recognises that by stating that his desires pursued him, Orsino is indeed giving the impression that his object of desire is in fact himself.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, as Palmer points out, Orsino does not meet Olivia until the final scene, which suggests that he, like Narcissus, is in love with an illusion.<sup>38</sup>

Olivia also appears to have something in common with Narcissus. In Act I, Scene V, she compares herself to a painting and she ironically blazons her beauties: here Taylor detects echoes of Golding's translation, such as the mention of the colours red and white and the use of the word 'graces'.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Viola blames Olivia for being 'too proud' (I.v.242), which, as has been pointed out above, is also the trait attributed by Golding to Narcissus. Interestingly, in *Gl'Ingannati* it is Lelia in her male disguise, the character on which Viola is modelled, who is accused of being 'troppo superbo' [too proud] (II.ii, p. 339). The same accusation is indeed made to Viola later in the play (III.i.125, 149), but it is also transferred onto Olivia, thus emphasising her association with Golding's Narcissus. That scene ends with Olivia's admission that she is falling in love with Cesario (I.v.285-90): like Narcissus she dotes on a boy who does not exist.

Malvolio can be identified as another Narcissus figure. The association is made explicit by Olivia, who blames him: 'O you are sick of self-love Malvolio'

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<sup>37</sup> *Twelfth Night*, I.i.20-22n.

<sup>38</sup> Palmer, p. 74.

<sup>39</sup> Taylor, 'Shakespeare Rewriting Ovid', p. 83.

(I.v.86), and it is also suggested later in the play, when Maria reports that he ‘has been yonder i’the sun practising behaviour to his own shadow this half hour’ (II.v.14-15), a self-fixation which inevitably recalls that of Narcissus admiring his reflection in the pool.

The similarity which scholars often find between Echo and Viola is generally based on her dialogue with Olivia in Act I, scene V. Viola tries to persuade Olivia to reciprocate Orsino’s love and begins by delivering a speech which had been ‘penned’ (168) by Orsino and which she has taken ‘great pains to study’ (189). In other words, Viola is reporting her master’s words. As Palmer points out, she even does more than that: she ‘proves versatile in adopting different voices [...] the impertinent youth [...], the flattering courtier [...], the candid moralist [...] and, at the climactic point of the interview, the ardent lover’.<sup>40</sup> It is true that, when Olivia interrupts her and asks her what she would do, she answers in her own voice, but even so, this speech is interspersed with allusions to the myth of Echo. Viola answers telling Olivia that she would:

Halloo your name to the reverberate hills  
And make the babbling gossip of the air  
Cry out ‘Olivia’. O, you should not rest  
Between the elements of air and earth,  
But you should pity me! (I.v.264-68)

‘The babbling gossip of the air’ is undeniably Echo, defined by Golding as a ‘babbling nymph’ (*Metamorphoses*, III.443). The word ‘halloo’ might be another echo of Golding’s translation, in which the same verb is employed to describe the way in which Echo answers to Narcissus (III.478). The image of reverberation also suggests that the Ovidian nymph is here being alluded to. Lastly, in the phrase ‘Cry out “Olivia!” O, you should not’ (I.v.266), the alliteration of the letter ‘O’ helps to give the aural impression of an echo.

Other similarities between Viola and Echo can be identified elsewhere in the play. Like the Ovidian nymph, who pines until her body fades away, Viola perceives herself as a sort of disembodied being when she is in her male disguise.

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<sup>40</sup>Palmer, p. 75.

She soliloquizes at length about the difficulties of her disguise and calls herself a ‘monster’ (II.ii.34), thus giving the impression that she feels she has lost her human body and, with it, also her identity. Later, she almost confesses her love to Orsino by telling him the story of an imaginary sister who pined for love until she consumed herself and died (II.iv.110-21). That narrative clearly reminds of Echo’s fate, who also mourned the loss her unresponsive beloved until her body faded away.<sup>41</sup> By inventing the story of her sister, Viola is obviously speaking of herself and covertly expressing her feelings, which she cannot reveal: her imaginary sister is a fictive projection of herself, and hence the figure of Echo, whose sad tale is so similar to that of Viola’s sister, becomes a sort of mythological double of Viola as well. Interestingly, the reference to ‘Patience on a monument’ (II.iv.114) seems to be an allusion to another mythological character, that of Niobe. Niobe and Echo are both mentioned in Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels*, where they are cast as pitiful victims of a god’s rage. Shakespeare may also be combining the two figures through implicit allusion in order to elevate them to archetypal examples of consuming grief.

The comic characters have generally been neglected by scholars who investigated the Ovidian hypotext of *Twelfth Night*, but, on some occasions, their behaviour and their characterisation call to mind some elements of the myth of Echo and Narcissus. Sir Andrew, for instance, can perhaps be seen as a parodied version of the figure of Echo. He often appears to be unable to act or express himself if not by imitating the behaviour and words of others, especially of Sir Toby. When Sir Toby and Sir Andrew ask Feste to sing a song for them in act II, scene III, Sir Andrew recalls the meaningless speech uttered by the fool the previous day and echoes fragments of it: ‘thou spakest of Pigromonitus, of the Vapians passing the equinoctial of Queubus’ (21-23). Kerrigan brings these lines forth as an example of the ‘replication of proliferating nonsense’ which often takes place in the play and which ‘recalls Plutarch’s comparison of gossip to

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<sup>41</sup>This parallel has been pointed out also by Palmer, who observes: ‘Viola’s tale of melancholy concealment and pining love certainly corresponds in feeling to Ovid’s description of Echo’ (p. 75).

the porch or gallery at Olympia which “from one voice by sundry reflections and reverberations . . . rendered seven echoes”<sup>42</sup>. When blabbers hear a speech, adds Kerrigan quoting Plutarch, they repeat it so that ‘it resoundeth again on every side’, and it seems that the speech they heard did not reach their brain but only their tongues.<sup>43</sup> Andrew’s mindless babbling does indeed seem to work like an echo, thus corroborating the idea that he might be recognised as a sort of comic and deflated version of the nymph.

Sir Toby then tips Feste, and Sir Andrew immediately replicates his behaviour, thus acting as a visual echo of his friend. An acoustic echo follows after the visual one: Sir Andrew reacts to Sir Toby’s comment on Feste’s song, ‘a contagious breath’ (II.iii.53), by echoing his word ‘contagious’ (‘very sweet and contagious i’faith’, II.iii.54). This verbal exchange puns on the double meaning of ‘contagious breath’, which may mean ‘a catching voice’ or suggest halitosis,<sup>44</sup> and it thus relies on a rhetorical device analysed in the previous chapter, *syllepsis*, which is often associated with echo-effects. While Sir Toby’s phase is comic because its ambiguity cannot be escaped, Sir Andrew’s answer amuses the audience because the meaning not intended by him (‘stinking breath’) can very easily be intuited, thus making his sentence contradictory and nonsensical (‘sweet and contagious’). Not only does Sir Andrew echo Sir Toby, but an implicit and distorting echo is also embedded in his own words, waiting to be picked up, and it threatens to disrupt their meaning. Later in the play, Sir Andrew agrees once again with every sentence sir Toby utters by constantly responding: ‘So could I too’, ‘Not I neither’, ‘or mine either?’ (II.v.176-86).

As has been pointed out above, Coffin has argued that despite the aforementioned similarities between Shakespeare’s dramatic characters and Ovid’s mythological figures, there is no rigid one-to-one correspondence between them. Shakespeare seems instead to re-use the myth of Echo and Narcissus in a very similar way as in his *Venus and Adonis*, where the goddess of love and the un-

<sup>42</sup>John Kerrigan, ‘Secrecy and Gossip in *Twelfth Night*’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 50 (1997), 65-80 (p. 70).

<sup>43</sup>Kerrigan, p. 70.

<sup>44</sup>*Twelfth Night*, II.iii.53n.

yielding youth are no exact counterparts of Echo and Narcissus. Indeed, the ‘mythological identities’ of Orsino, Olivia, Viola, and Malvolio are fluid and unstable:

The myth of Echo and Narcissus is indeed a subtext to the play, as is shown by the manifold echoes to Golding’s translation, but there is no straightforward association. In relation to one another, Orsino, Olivia and Viola are by turns Echo, Narcissus, and even Narcissus’ reflection.<sup>45</sup>

It might be useful here to summarise briefly some of these parallels detected by Coffin while also adding new considerations on that matter before trying to assess the role of the myth of Echo and Narcissus in the play. Viola’s univocal identification with Echo is undermined when Malvolio describes her as ‘in standing water between boy and man’ (I.v.155), a sentence which recalls Golding’s description of Narcissus, who ‘seemed to stand between the state of man and lad’ (III.438). Orsino also hints at a possible association between Viola/ Cesario and Narcissus by praising Cesario’s female qualities:

For they shall yet belie thy happy years  
That say thou art a man. Diana’s lip  
Is not more smooth and rubious. Thy small pipe  
Is as the maiden’s organ, shrill and sound,  
And all is semblative a woman’s part. (I.iv.30-34)

He thus draws attention to the ambiguous status of his beauty which makes him attractive for both men and women, exactly as Narcissus was.<sup>46</sup> And indeed, both Olivia and Orsino fall in love with that peculiar androgynous creature: Viola never dismisses her male clothes, not even when her identity is revealed and she becomes engaged to Orsino. Moreover, if Viola does not narcissistically love herself, she still feels affection for the image she sees in the mirror, as it reminds her of her beloved brother whom she thinks she has lost forever: ‘I my brother know / yet living in my glass’ (III.iv.376-77), she muses.

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<sup>45</sup>Coffin, p. 25.

<sup>46</sup>Coffin, p. 25.

Just as Viola can be associated with both Echo and Narcissus, the other characters in the play equally appear to have traits in common with both of those mythological figures. After Cesario's heated verbal exchange with Olivia, for instance, the woman who had until then been impervious to love becomes infatuated with him, and a dramatic and mythological role reversal takes place: Olivia becomes the scorned lover and Viola/ Cesario the unrequiting object of desire. Cesario thus assumes the role of Narcissus and is fittingly blamed by Olivia for being excessively proud (III.i.125, 149), an accusation which had earlier been moved to Olivia and which reminds of Golding's moralising interpretation of Narcissus. Moreover, Coffin brilliantly observes that, in her new role of pining lover, Olivia interestingly starts to echo sentences that Cesario had uttered:

Olivia. ‘What is your parentage?’  
‘Above my fortunes, yet my state is well:  
I am a gentleman.’ I’ll be sworn thou art. (I.v.281-83)<sup>47</sup>

Even the association of Malvolio with Narcissus, which had been explicitly suggested by Olivia and Maria, is complicated by the fact that he repeatedly echoes sentences of the letter written by Maria to fool him. In Act II, scene V, he reads it out for the first time, and then repeats some of its words as he tries to interpret them in a way that would confirm that the letter refers to him: ‘M.O.A.I doth sway my life’ (109), ‘I may command where I adore’ (113), ‘M.O.A.I’ (119, 136). Later, when he appears before Olivia in his yellow stockings and cross-gartered hose, he once again echoes fragments of the letter (III.iv.37, 39, 41, 43, 45-46, 48, 50, 52).<sup>48</sup> Malvolio thinks that Olivia is the author of the letter and he is thus convinced that he is echoing the words of his beloved, just as Echo repeated those of Narcissus. Another possible allusion to echoing, which has been overlooked by scholars, appears when Malvolio is about to be put in the dark room. Maria, Fabian, and Sir Toby pretend to think that he behaves strangely because

<sup>47</sup>Coffin, p. 24. Here Coffin also suggests that even the self-absorbed Orsino can be associated with Echo as well.

<sup>48</sup>This has also been noted by Coffin, p. 26, and Iselin, p. 86.

he is possessed by the devil: ‘Lo, how hollow the fiend speaks within him!’, exclaims Maria (III.iv.88). Her words evoke the image of the devil’s ‘hollow’, reverberating, voice resounding within Malvolio, who is thus depicted as a sort of echo-chamber for the imaginary evil being possessing him.<sup>49</sup>

The myth of Echo and Narcissus is thus constantly re-echoed as characters repeat each other’s words, mirror each other’s behaviour, act as forlorn lovers or as narcissistic self-admirers. Thus, the myth that most famously and successfully thematises doubleness is continually redoubled in the play, it is ‘repeat[ed] indefinitely’, as Coffin puts it.<sup>50</sup> The theme of doubleness also lies at the core of Shakespeare’s play, as is immediately obvious when Viola reveals that she has an identical twin. Not only is Viola Sebastian’s twin, but she also becomes his exact copy when she disguises herself as a man. She confesses that she has adopted his ‘fashion, colour, ornament’ and that she imitates him (III.iv.378-79). Sebastian thus has a twin sister, Viola, and also an identical double, Cesario. In analysing the dynamics of desire represented in the play, Girard also argues that the roles played by Viola and Olivia, and Olivia and Orsino when they interact with others who love them or whom they love are so similar that the characters can be conceived as doubles of each other with regards to those relational mechanisms. Viola and Olivia both act as unkind and unrequiting lovers: just as Olivia who spurns Orsino with pride and arrogance, Viola/ Cesario speaks harsh words to Olivia and does not (and cannot) reciprocate Olivia’s romantic interest. For that reason, Girard even calls Viola ‘the Olivia of Olivia’.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, the names Viola and Olivia are near-anagrams, which may reinforce the impression that there is a strong affinity between these two characters. Girard also suggests that Orsino and Olivia represent another pair of doubles in that they are both indifferent to the attentions of others and only feel romantic attraction towards those who reject them and treat them with contempt.<sup>52</sup> Lastly, self-absorption

<sup>49</sup>Elam glosses Maria’s expression as: ‘with a hollow and echoing voice’ (*Twelfth Night*, III.iv.88n).

<sup>50</sup>Coffin, p. 26.

<sup>51</sup>René Girard, *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2000), p. 110.

<sup>52</sup>Girard, 113-20. For the theme of the double in *Twelfth Night* see also Michèle Willems, ‘Le Double dans *Twelfth Night*’, in ‘*Twelfth Night*’: *Le Langage en Fête*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Chardin (Paris:

links Orsino and Malvolio and perhaps even Olivia.<sup>53</sup> Even the two comic characters appear to be one the mirror image of the others, especially when Sir Toby imitates Sir Andrew and repeats his words. The fact that the characteristic traits of Narcissus and Echo cannot be stably associated with one character but are rather transferred from one character to the other further complicates the matter and creates even more connections between them. The Ovidian myth is thus not merely alluded to in the play, but it is closely connected with the very dramatic structure of the play.

All the visual and acoustic reflections that proliferate in the play give rise to equivocations and misunderstandings, upon which the comic plot is based. On the most immediate level, identities are confused: Viola/ Cesario looks so much like Sebastian that the two of them are often mistaken for each other until, in the final scene, they appear together on stage, thus generating a visual duplication that leaves everyone disoriented and confused. ‘Most wonderful!’ (V.i.221), exclaims Olivia; ‘How have you made division of yourself?’ (V.i.218), asks Antonio, equally amazed. Orsino’s reaction emphasises even more clearly the illusive nature of identical visual reflections: ‘one face, one voice, one habit and two persons: / A natural perspective that is and is not’ (V.i.212-13). He interprets the scene he is witnessing as a sort of hallucination, an optical illusion that makes him doubt the reliability of his senses.

Visual reflections are not the sole ones which deceive the senses: acoustic echoes are similarly disorienting and often lead us to wonder whether we can trust what we hear. Montaigne fittingly mentions echo as the perfect proof that our perceptive faculties be easily tricked:

As for the error and uncertainty of the operation of the senses, each man can furnish himself with as many examples as he pleases, so ordinary are the mistakes and deceptions that they offer us. At the echo in a valley, the sound of a trumpet seems to come from in front of us, when it comes from a league behind.<sup>54</sup>

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Messène, 1996), pp. 89-100.

<sup>53</sup>That Olivia might be narcissistic has been suggested by Taylor ('Shakespeare Rewriting Ovid', p. 82) and Girard (p. 107).

<sup>54</sup>Michel de Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, in *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans.

This idea of deceitful redoubling is also repeatedly found in Shakespeare's corpus. In *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1590-03) and *Venus and Adonis*, the echo reverberates the barking of the hounds chasing a prey, thus giving the acoustic impression that another hunt is going on the same time: 'the babbling echo mocks the hounds, / Replying shrilly to the well-tuned horns, / As if a double hunt were heard at once (II.ii.17-19), 'the hot scent-snuffing hounds [...] spend their mouths; Echo replies, / As if another chase were in the skies' (ll. 692-96).<sup>55</sup> In *Henry IV, Part II* (c. 1597), the doubling effect of echo is compared to rumour, which misleads men by distorting the truth: 'Rumour doth double, like the voice and echo / The number of the feared' (III.i.97-98).<sup>56</sup> The echoes that are heard throughout *Twelfth Night* are similarly confusing. Small wonder that, during Viola's first missive to Olivia, it is not always easy to tell when she echoes Orsino's speech or speaks in her own words. Her very first words, 'most radiant, exquisite and unmatchable beauty' (I.v.165) appears so deferential and emphatic that it is likely part of the role assigned to her by Orsino. Olivia then repeatedly interrupts her, so that by the time Viola compliments her beauty in typically Petrarchan fashion (I.v.231-34) we wonder whether she is still rehearsing Orsino's speech or making up her own. This is also true of her extremely inflated assurance that Orsino loves Olivia 'with adoration's fertile tears, / With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire' (I.v.247-48), which appears to be pompous enough to have been devised by Orsino, although that is not explicitly stated. Just as it is often difficult to identify the source of acoustic echoes or even to recognise them as reverberations of an original sound, the audience cannot be sure where Viola's words come from when she speaks on Orsino's behalf and acts as his echo.

Echoes generate confusion also in the episode in which Malvolio tries to

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by Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 318-457. This passage is also usefully quoted in Hansen and Wetmore, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup>All references to *Titus Andronicus* are from William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 1995).

<sup>56</sup>William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part II*, ed. by James C. Bulman (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016).

impress Olivia with his yellow stocking and cross-garters. In that scene, echoes multiply as characters repeat each other's words without actually understanding each other or being able to identify the source of those words. When Malvolio repeats the letter, he thinks he is echoing Olivia's words, but he is in fact echoing Maria who, in turn, had imitated Olivia's handwriting and presumably also her writing style. Olivia even re-echoes those words herself on two occasions, as she repeats "thy yellow stockings?" and "cross-gartered?": as Iselin points out, Olivia is here imitating her own imitation.<sup>57</sup> She understandably fails to recognise Malvolio's words as an echo of her own, just as Malvolio does not realise that he is in fact merely echoing an 'echo' of Olivia's writing style.

Thus, duplication (and not just that introduced by the appearance of two identical twins on stage) is responsible for most of the misunderstandings that take place in the play: the paradigmatic element of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, which is insistently repeated and multiplied by Shakespeare, is exactly what creates confusion, beguiles the senses, disorients. Indeed, throughout Shakespeare's *oeuvre*, confusion and deception are often effects produced by acoustic and verbal echoes.

In a comedy, errors and misunderstandings are obviously destined to be solved. Thus, the myth of Echo and Narcissus, drawn upon by Shakespeare as a source for his comedy, is here substantially altered, as it is given a happy ending: unlike Narcissus, Olivia and Orsino overcome their isolation and begin to love. According to Bate and Taylor, it is Viola, whom they associate with the nymph Echo, who solves the plot and manages to restore the play's narcissistic society.<sup>58</sup> They suggest that Viola acts as a sort of *deus ex machina*, as she provides an 'alternative to self-love' and 'harmonizes Illyria by teaching its inhabitants to echo and thus to love'.<sup>59</sup> Their argument, though, is not convincing not only because Viola is by no means straightforwardly modelled on Echo, as

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<sup>57</sup> Iselin, p. 86.

<sup>58</sup> Bate, pp. 148-49; Taylor, 'Shakespeare Rewriting Ovid', p. 88.

<sup>59</sup> Bate, p. 149. Taylor similarly claims that Viola's corruption of language 'tends to have a healing effect' and that Viola 'holds a mirror up to Orsino' and Olivia, thus showing them their dangerously inert lifestyle ('Shakespeare Rewriting Ovid', pp. 86, 88).

has been noted above, but also because the appearance of Sebastian is necessary to bring about the happy ending: Viola could not have solved the plot alone.

Indeed, judging by the rare explicit allusions to Echo in the play, the nymph does not appear to be conceived as an entirely benign or sympathetic figure. As has already been stated in the previous chapters, Echo had been represented as a good adviser and potential saviour of Narcissus in many moralising and allegorical interpretations of Ovid's myth, but Shakespeare does not seem to draw on any of them. He rather echoes Golding, whose assessment of the nymph is famously far less favourable: in both Shakespeare and Golding, Echo is a 'babbling' nymph, her iterative speech is tedious. Shakespeare is also aware of the traditional role of Echo as an emblem of sorrow, which is frequently drawn upon in complaint literature. Viola's 'willow cabin' speech seems to hint at that widespread characterisation of Echo: at a first glance, the 'gossip of the air' appears to be described as a helpful presence for a sad rejected lover, as it would reverberate the name of his beloved incessantly called out by him. And yet, Viola's words also introduce an element of parody in that depiction of the echo. As Mauré points out, the echo would certainly exasperate Olivia by insistently repeating her name, and it would also leave her no possibility to escape it: '*O you should not rest / Between the elements of air and earth, / But you should pity me*' (I.v.266-68, emphasis mine).<sup>60</sup> The echo may thus offer some consolation to the grieving lover, but it is at the same time a 'babbling gossip' which soon tires with its restless repetitions.

Thus, even if Viola were indisputably depicted as a second Echo, that would not automatically cast her in a positive light nor would it imply that she is so selfless as to be able to save Illyria. According to Coffin, the happy ending of the comedy is achieved 'through an emphasis on repetition and doubles, rather than through the external intervention which Echo sometimes provides'.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, it is achieved when all the pairs of doubles find themselves on stage at the

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<sup>60</sup>Mauré, *Héritages*, p. 331.

<sup>61</sup>Coffin, p. 26.

same time, when Sebastian, the exact mirror image of Cesario, appears before his *alter ego*. This peculiar repetition enables each character to direct their affection towards someone who is not themselves, their double, or someone too similar to themselves. Olivia abandons her infatuation with Viola, with whom she has in common her gender, the letters of her name, and her role as an unrequiting lover, and turns her love towards someone who is more dissimilar from her. Orsino similarly overcomes his self-love and his obsession for a woman who is as stubborn as he is, as he finally realises that Viola is in love with him. When Sebastian appears on stage, Viola also regains her identity and does no longer have to be merely a mirror image of her twin brother: another pair of doubles, this time perfectly identical, is thus split as soon as Cesario ceases to exist. Two autonomous individuals materialise, who look like each other, but are in fact no exact copies of each other. The twins differ in gender and the image which Viola sees in the mirror when she looks at herself in her male disguise ('I my brother know / yet living in my glass' III.iv.376-77) is finally revealed to be a deception, an optical illusion. It is at that point that the characters turn away from their own reflection and start to see others. The mirror which held Narcissus a prisoner is neutralised and characters are released from its spell.

Shakespeare thus constantly reproduces the dynamics and the key motifs of the myth of Echo and Narcissus, but rewrites its tragic epilogue, adapting it to the genre of comedy. As the myth teaches us, repetition is productive and meaningful only when no exact double is produced. As long as Narcissus or the narcissistic characters in Shakespeare's play are obsessed with their mirror image, there can be no good outcomes. Similarly, if Echo did not re-signify the words she repeats, her speech would not convey meaning. Literary imitation is significantly one of the most obvious forms of creative repetition and Shakespeare's re-use of the myth of Echo and Narcissus may be informed by that awareness. Although imitation is here not as important a concern as it was in *Venus and Adonis*, it might still be useful to bear in mind the association between Echo and literary echoes to gain further understanding of Shakespeare's allusions to Ovid's myth. Shakespeare uses the myth with extreme originality,

as he repeats and re-echoes it so as to emphasise and further complicate the intricate pattern of pairs of double which populate his play. He also discards or parodies the traditional readings of the nymph which are instead often drawn upon by his contemporaries: his acoustic echoes are of no substantial help to the distressed lover, nor are they meaningful for the hard-hearted beloved, and the figure of Echo is nowhere presented as a redeeming figure. Shakespeare does echo Golding's representation of the nymph as a babbler, but does not draw on his moralising judgement of her as a bawd. He thus appropriates some of the elements of the myth and creates a new text: what interests him the most about Ovid's myth seems to be exactly the fact that the myth enables him to explore and emphasise the themes of doubles, repetition, and imitation (and perhaps even literary imitation), which are central in the play.

## Disruptive echoes in *Othello*<sup>62</sup>

Shakespeare appears to perceive the visual and acoustic reflections which thrive in the myth of Echo and Narcissus as a source of confusion: they cause men to doubt their sensorial and perhaps even mental faculties, to wonder at something that, according to what they see and hear, 'is and is not'. Early modern playwrights who alluded to Echo are generally aware of the fact that echoes can surprise and befuddle their listeners because of their very nature as disembodied, truncated, repetitions of a previously uttered sentence. At the most obvious level, they generate confusion as to who is speaking: those who hear a voice without seeing its source are often unsure whether it is their own voice, that of another human being, or merely a sound reverberated by the natural landscape. Echo's speech pattern casts doubt not only on who is speaking but also on what is being spoken of: as has been pointed out in the previous chap-

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<sup>62</sup>A modified and amplified version of this section has been included in a volume of conference proceedings entitled '*Con Altra Voce*: Echi Variazioni e Dissonanze nell'Espressione Letteraria', which has been submitted for peer review to the Edizioni della Scuola Normale Superiore.

ter, Echo often alters the referent of a previously uttered sentence in order to express her own meanings. The most disorienting effect of echoic repetition, though, is perhaps the linguistic disruption they cause, which has been illustrated at length in the previous chapter. In other words, not only do echoes leave those who hear them to wonder who is speaking and what is being spoken of, but also if the words they have uttered have conveyed or even can convey the meaning intended by them. Thus, on the early modern stage echoes often blur the boundaries between speaker and person spoken of and betray the precariousness of the relationship between signifier and signified, which, taken to its extreme consequences, may even lead to a complete loss of meaning.

Shakespeare was certainly aware of Echo's powerful ability to re-signify words previously uttered, of which he could find a testimony not only in Ovid but also in numerous other poetic and dramatic echo-dialogues of his time. Bearing this in mind, it seems interesting to analyse an apparently trivial reference to echoing in *Othello*, which has often been overlooked by scholars but may in fact shed new light on Iago's manipulation of Othello.

In Act III, scene III, the so-called 'temptation scene', Iago tricks Othello into believing that Desdemona is unfaithful. One of the strategies he employs in doing so is echoic repetition, which has led one scholar to define the dialogue between him and Othello as a 'flattened-out but demonic version of an echo-song'.<sup>63</sup>

OTHELLO Indeed? Ay, indeed. Discern'st thou aught in that?

IAGO Is he not honest?

OTHELLO IAGO Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO Honest? Ay, honest.

OTHELLO IAGO My lord, for aught I know

OTHELLO What dost thou think?

OTHELLO IAGO Think, my lord?

OTHELLO OTHELLO Think, my lord! By heaven, *thou echo'st me*

As if there were some monster in thy thought

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<sup>63</sup>Kenneth Gross, *Shakespeare's Noise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 110.

Too hideous to be shown.

Thou dost mean something.<sup>64</sup> (III.iii.101-11, emphasis mine)

Iago does not voice his thoughts but merely repeats Othello's words: echoic repetition is used as a rhetorical strategy of reticence aimed at instilling suspicion into Othello's mind.<sup>65</sup>

Iago has a similar objective in mind when, just a few lines later, he echoes Brabantio's words. In the first act of the play, Brabantio had warned Othello against Desdemona's disloyalty: 'look to her Moor, if thou hast eyes to see / She has deceived her father, and may thee' (I.iii.293-94). Iago almost seems to quote Brabantio when he suggests to Othello: 'look to your wife' (III.iii.200), and then insinuates: 'she did deceive her father, marrying you' (III.iii.209). This is the second warning against his wife that Othello hears and it inevitably reinforces his suspicion. Iago next echoes Brabantio's admonitions when he claims that Desdemona's choice

Not to affect many proposed matches  
Of her own clime, complexion and degree,  
Whereto we see, in all things, nature tends (III.iii.233-35)

betrays a 'will most rank' (III.iii.234). Brabantio had similarly complained that his daughter fell in love with the Moor 'in spite of nature / Of years, of country, credit, everything' (I.iii.97-98), thus going 'against all rules of nature' (I.iii.102). Echoic repetition is thus an expressive mode which enables Iago to undermine the relationship between husband and wife, compared by him to a tuneful music. He wants to 'set down / The pegs that make this music' (II.i.198-99) (that is to fiddle with the tuning keys of their relationship), and chooses to use echoes to bring about disharmony and disruption.

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<sup>64</sup>All references to this play are from William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by Ernst Anselm Honigmann (Walton-on-Thames: Methuen, 1997).

<sup>65</sup>On Iago's adoption of rhetorical strategies of amplification and verbal dilation throughout the play see Patricia Parker's extremely perceptive article 'Shakespeare and Rhetoric: "Dilation" and "Delation"' in *Othello*', in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. by Geoffrey H. Hartman and Patricia Parker (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 54-74. Parker, though, does not focus on Iago's echoing of Othello's words.

That Othello has been corrupted by Iago becomes evident in the language he begins to use, especially in Shakespeare's text. The Moor is so deeply affected by Iago that he starts to speak like him, repeats his words, and appropriates his imagery. Gonzales has argued that the 'spread of evil' from Iago to the other characters works as a sort of contamination, signalled by the fact that his victims gradually adopt his blasphemous language, the demonic or animal imagery he employs, as well as the disease and corruption-related lexis with which it is brimming.<sup>66</sup> Othello does appropriate Iago's imagery, but he also repeats his very words at several stages of the play: starting with the temptation scene, it is the Moor who becomes an echo of his ensign.

A revealing example is offered by a dialogue between Iago and Othello in Act IV, scene I, where Othello echoes Iago's words in exactly the same manner as Iago had previously repeated his.

IAGO Will you think so?

OTHELLO Think so, Iago?

[...]

IAGO Or to be naked with her friend in bed

An hour or more, not meaning any harm?

OTHELLO Naked in bed, Iago, and not mean harm? (IV.i.1-5)

The Moor also shows this tendency to uncritically echo the ensign's phrases when he repeats his truism, whose contorted syntax seems aimed at confusing the hearer rather than actually conveying useful meaning.

IAGO Men should be what they seem,

Or those that be not, would they might seem none.

OTHELLO Certain, men should be what they seem. (III.iii.129-31)

Iago and Othello echo and are echoed by each other throughout the play, so much so that the voice of the original speaker and that of the echo become almost

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<sup>66</sup>Alexander G. Gonzales, 'The Infection and Spread of Evil: Some Major Patterns of Imagery and Language in *Othello*', *South Atlantic Review*, 50.4 (1985), 35-49.

indistinguishable.<sup>67</sup> Iago's repetitions of Othello's words may merely appear as plain and imitative echoes, but they in fact betray autonomous agency, as they are part of a conscious manipulative strategy. Moreover, when Othello starts to echo Iago's words and characteristic lexical choices, he does not seem to realise that he is appropriating someone else's thoughts and even his exact words. Indeed, the audience may almost be under the impression that when Othello speaks it is Iago they are hearing. As with many echo-dialogues on the early modern stage, echoic repetition makes us wonder exactly who is speaking, whether the echoing voice is truly that of the original speaker, and whether the meaning and referent of a sentence are actually established by the speaker or by the echo.<sup>68</sup>

The same pattern of echoing and being re-echoed is interestingly reproduced also in Boito's libretto for Verdi's *Otello* (1887). In the scene that corresponds to Shakespeare's 'temptation' dialogue, Otello once again realises with irritation that Iago is echoing his words. Yet, while in Shakespeare's *Othello* echoic repetition is represented as an act performed by Iago, in Boito's libretto for Verdi's *Otello*, Iago is actually identified with the echo: '*tu sei l'eco dei detti miei, nel chiostro dell'anima ricetti qualche terribil mostro*' (II.iii, emphasis mine) [You are the very echo of my words, in the cloister of your soul you are sheltering some terrible monster], exclaims Otello.<sup>69</sup> The metaphor of the cloister, which

<sup>67</sup>This effect of disorientation has been noted also by Nuttall, who states that 'one can hardly tell which speaker says which words' (Anthony D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 280), and Laurie Maguire, *Othello: Language and Writing* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), p. 162.

<sup>68</sup>It is here perhaps suggestive to note that, if Fineman's hypothesis holds true, the very name 'Othello' is an echoic name. According to Fineman, the name derives from the Greek word *thelō*, which is found in the New Testament (Joel Fineman, 'The Sound of O in *Othello*: The Real of the Tragedy of Desire', *October*, 45 (1988), 76-96, (p. 79)). More precisely, it appears in Romans 7.15, where Paul significantly explains that being sinful means failing to understand what we do and doing what we hate to do. The word *thelō* is preceded by the letter 'O', which not only resounds throughout the play, but it is also interpreted by Fineman as a sign of the 'hollowness' of Othello's self (p. 86-7). While Othello appears to be self-sufficient at the beginning of the play, he instead gradually evolves into a mere 'empty shell of a hero', a shadow of his former self (p. 84). Metaphorically speaking, the hollow subject Othello can thus be imagined as a sort of echoic space where sound is easily reverberated because of its emptiness, and it for that reason that Iago's words keep echoing and rebounding in his mind.

<sup>69</sup>Giuseppe Verdi, *Otello*, in *Tutti i Libretti di Verdi*, ed. by L. Baldacci, G. Negri, (Milano: Garzanti, 1975), pp. 499-530 (p. 510). I have preferred to give my own translation of this passage instead of

has no equivalent in Shakespeare's *Othello*, may reinforce the association of Iago with echoing: a cloister is a covered space, generally a place of seclusion within a monastery and, as such, it is generally highly resonant. Iago's soul is thus imagined as a sort of echo-chamber and his words are consequently an eerie echo of what is captured by it. Boito seems to have understood the importance of echoing in Iago's manipulation of Othello, and he chose to emphasise it.

By identifying Iago as his echo, Otello would appear to consider the words uttered by the ensign as a mere acoustic reverberation of his own voice. Those who hear an artificial echo are generally aware that they are hearing their own words rebounded back to them even if their voice may seem different or distorted. Otello appears similarly convinced that he is merely hearing his own words repeated ('sei l'eco dei detti miei'). This turns out to be a fatal mistake for him, as Iago's echoic repetitions are by no means an innocuous acoustic effect. In both Boito's libretto and Shakespeare's play, Othello fails to take into account the ensign's agency and treats as his own the words and thoughts actually coming from Iago. Iago manages to instil suspicion into Othello because the Moor internalises his words and allows Iago's evil thoughts to morph into his own evil thoughts.

Later on in the opera, the roles are reversed and Otello starts to echo Iago, exactly as was the case in Shakespeare's play. Boito once again shows great awareness of how the Shakespearean text works as he condenses Othello's gradual adoption of Iago's imagery and phrases in the scene where Othello faints:

OTHELLO (*sempre più affannoso*)  
Fuggirmi io sol non so! ... Sangue! Ah! l'abbietto  
Pensiero!... "Ciò m'accora!"  
(*convulsivamente, delirando*)  
Vederli insieme avvinti... il fazzoletto! (III.ix, p. 525).

[OTHELLO (*delirious*) I cannot flee from myself!

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the slightly less literal version by Burton, whose useful translation has been used elsewhere in this section.

Blood! Ah! That vile thought!  
‘This breaks my heart!’ To see them embraced together.  
The handkerchief!].<sup>70</sup>

‘Ciò m’accora’, ‘vederli insieme avvinti’, and ‘il fazzoletto’ are all frantic repetitions of what Iago had told him in order to stoke his imagination.<sup>71</sup> Iago rejoices at Otello’s fainting, which he takes as the sign that his ‘poison’ has worked (III.ix, p. 525), and makes an intriguing allusion to echo. As he observes Otello’s unconscious body and hears the crowd cheering him outside his palace, he comments: ‘l’eco della vittoria / porge sua laude estrema’ [The echo of victory praises him for the last time] (III.ix, p. 525).<sup>72</sup> Because of Iago, Otello’s good fortune is about to end, and the echoes of his victories will cease to ring: the only echoes that can now be heard are those of Iago’s phrases uttered by Otello, and they testify to his undoing.

The disorientation as to who is voicing whose thoughts produced by verbal re-echoing in Shakespeare’s *Othello* is combined with another characteristic typical of echo-dialogues. Just as the nymph Echo expresses her own meanings by capitalising on the instability of the linguistic sign, which enables her to modify the signified ascribed by the original speaker to a certain signifier, Iago also relies on the fragile bond between signifier and signified. His echoing of the words ‘honest’ and ‘think’ is nothing but an empty repetition: Iago is not trying to convey meaning and he is not alluding to any real fact. His repetitions are conceived in such a way that the listener is made to force his interpretation onto the words he hears and is thus easily mislead. Kenneth Gross is right in arguing that

Iago conjures suspicion by precisely not adding hidden meanings or double entendres [...] he renders words such as “honest” and “think” at once empty and full, vacant purses burdened by the illusion that there is meaning inside them,

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<sup>70</sup>Giuseppe Verdi, *Verdi’s Otello*, trans. by Fisher D. Burton (Miami: Opera Journeys, 2001), p. 101.

<sup>71</sup>The previous occurrences of those words can be found at: II.iii (p. 510), II.v (p. 513), and II.V (p. 514).

<sup>72</sup>I have here preferred to give my own translation. Burton translates ‘lode estrema’ as ‘extreme praise’ (*Verdi’s Otello*, p. 101), but the Italian word ‘estrema’ also means ‘final’, ‘last’. As Iago imagines himself crushing Otello’s head under his foot in the very next line, it seemed to me more appropriate to interpret ‘estrema’ as ‘the last one’.

implicating Othello himself in the game of repetitions.<sup>73</sup>

Iago disrupts the relationship between signifier and signified by utterly severing one from the other. Throughout the play, repetition often betrays ‘a furious blankness of meaning’, as Gross puts it.<sup>74</sup> The word ‘honest’, for instance, acquires different meanings (or even lack of meaning) depending on who pronounces it and who it is referred to. It is rightly used to describe Desdemona and Cassio, but it is also referred to Iago: indeed, it is Iago who is most often given the epithet ‘honest’. Used as it is so often to designate the schemer par excellence, the word cannot but appear to be ambiguous if not utterly devoid of meaning.

The word ‘husband’ has similarly become corrupted: Emilia’s obsessive repetition of it in Act V, scene II, conveys her disorientation and confusion at being no longer able to grasp its meaning.

OTHELLO Cassio did top her; ask thy husband else.

[...] Thy husband knew it all.

EMILIA My husband?

OTHELLO                   Thy husband.

EMILIA                      That she was false?

To wedlock?

OTHELLO Ay, with Cassio [...]

EMILIA My husband?

OTHELLO Ay, 'twas he that told me first;

An honest man he is, and hates the slime

That sticks on filthy deeds.

EMILIA                      My husband!

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<sup>73</sup>Gross, *Shakespeare's Noise*, p. 110.

<sup>74</sup>Gross, *Shakespeare's Noise*, p. 120. Maguire also recognises that Iago deprives words of their semantic content. She identifies him as a punster and explains that he skilfully manipulates language because he is dangerously aware of its polysemous quality (Maguire, *Othello*, pp. 130, 139, 146-47). Greene argues that Iago represents the nominalist current of thought that was gaining momentum in the seventeenth century: in her reading, the ensign believes that words are simply signs which ‘do not necessitate the existence of the things they name’, and that attitude towards language determines his success in manipulating Othello (Gayle Greene, “But Words are Words”: Shakespeare's Sense of Language in *Othello*’, *Études Anglaises*, 34.3 (1981), 270-81 (pp. 710-11)).

OTHELLO	What needs
This iterance, woman? I say thy husband.	
EMILIA O mistress, villany hath made mocks with love!	
My husband say that she was false?	
OTHELLO	He, woman;
I say thy husband: dost understand the word?	
My friend thy husband, honest, honest Iago. (V.ii.134-50)	

Critics have generally given optimistic readings of Emilia's 'iterance', interpreting it as a 'powerful indictment' and as sign that it is possible to gain access to true knowledge.<sup>75</sup> And yet, this final acquisition of knowledge seems to be somehow marred by the fact that she does not understand the meaning of the word 'husband', which leads Othello to ask with irritation: 'dost understand the word?'. Interestingly, Othello's answer to his own question contains the *epizeuxis* of an equally perverted word, that is 'honest'. The use of this rhetorical device conveys the idea that Othello is almost desperately trying to cling to the meaning of a word which he thought he had rightly used and understood, but which he has in fact repeatedly misinterpreted. This dialogue brings together two interlocutors who repeat words as if they were trying to fix their evanescent meaning, while their insistent repetitions merely confirm that such words have deteriorated into empty signifiers.

Iago has indeed managed to 'set down the pegs' that make the well-tuned music with which Othello and Desdemona's relationship is metaphorically associated. In doing so he also seems have untuned the harmony of the whole world of the play, which begins to be threatened by a loss of meaning. That harmony does not belong to such a corrupted world is also signalled by the ambiguous status of music itself in the play. Othello has been defined as 'Shakespeare's most musical tragedy' and the recurrent presence of music has elicited a great

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<sup>75</sup>Grennan argues that Emilia's speech successfully incriminates her husband, thus acting as 'the agent of moral restoration in the public world' (Eamon Grennan, 'The Women's Voices in *Othello*: Speech, Song, Silence', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987), 275-92, pp. 290-91). Gross similarly claims that Emilia's repetition of the word 'husband' does not dispel meaning but it 'marks a sudden access of knowledge and salient wonder' (*Shakespeare's Noise*, p. 122).

deal of scholarly attention.<sup>76</sup> As has been often pointed out, the play repeatedly represents music as unpleasant, ineffective, and even disruptive. Desdemona, for instance, is referred to as an ‘admirable musician’ capable of ‘sing[ing] the savageness out of a bear’ (IV.i.185-86), but despite this she fails to appease Othello and restore their marital concord. Her music, which resembles that of Orpheus in its charming and soothing effect, remains unheard. Not only does music prove unable to re-establish harmony, but it actually becomes an instrument of deception. Iago employs it as a means to achieve his plan to ruin Cassio’s reputation: he stages alluring drinking songs and thus persuades Cassio to drink, confident that his intemperance will earn him Othello’s disapprobation.<sup>77</sup>

Another revealing example of the flawed nature of the play’s music is offered by the scene in which the Clown mocks the musicians sent by Cassio (III.i.1-20). The Clown complains that the wind instruments emit a nasal sound and disparagingly refers to their music as ‘noise’ (III.i.13). This music understandably fails to impress Othello, thus frustrating Cassio’s wish to regain the Moor’s favour. Scholars have significantly interpreted this scene as a sign that heavenly harmony cannot be heard in a world so dark as that represented in the play. Ross explains that *musica instrumentalis* was supposed to be an imitation of the harmony that existed in the universe, but the dissonant noise produced by the musicians is clearly unfit for that purpose: it is rather ‘made to represent the music men live by and make [...] when corrupted from that ordering analogous to that of the heavens’.<sup>78</sup> Minear similarly interprets Cassio’s request to produce ‘music that may not be heard’ as an allusion to the divine music of the spheres: in her reading, the musicians’ admission that they have ‘none such’ suggests that celestial harmony is utterly absent on earth, where the sole authentic form

<sup>76</sup>Erin Minear, ‘Music and the Crisis of Meaning in *Othello*’, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 49 (2009), 355-70, p. 355. For other studies on music in *Othello* see Rosalind King, “‘Then Murder’s Out of Tune”: The Music and Structure of *Othello*’, *Shakespeare Survey*, 39 (1987), 149-58; Lawrence J. Ross, ‘Shakespeare’s “Dull Clown” and Symbolic Music’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 17 (1966), 107-28; Frederick William Sternfeld, *Music in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 23-38, 142-50, 231-33.

<sup>77</sup>King, pp. 152-53.

<sup>78</sup>Ross, pp. 108, 124.

of music is silence.<sup>79</sup>

Even if it is hard to prove that the brief reference to inaudible music constitutes a conscious allusion on Shakespeare's part to the music of the spheres, the scene does undermine the idea that earthly music is an echo of heavenly harmony: the sounds produced by the musicians are so jarring and disagreeable that they can in no way be seen as a fitting surrogate of the sublime harmony of the ordered cosmos. As Minear explains, the notion that the music produced by human beings was closely connected to that of heavens was popular in the early modern period, but it was sometimes also cast into doubt: according to some authors, the 'terrestrial echoes of such Platonic music do not necessarily guide the hearer toward true harmony':<sup>80</sup> This is the case in Shakespeare's *Othello*, where not only music, but echoes themselves play a role antithetical to that often attributed to them. As has been previously explained, the Neoplatonic allegorisation of the figure of Echo associated her with the melodious music of the heavenly spheres. In *Othello*, though, echo do not offer a glimpse of divine harmony but rather bar access to it. Far from embodying the perfectly harmonised workings of the heavenly spheres, echoes and music actually bring about discord and disruption. Echo and Orpheus have lost their power to inspire and elevate human beings. Acoustic echoes were often employed as melodious musical devices in early modern royal entertainments and court masques, where they contributed to create the melodious and sophisticated songs required by that theatrical genre. In *Othello*, echoes fulfil an antithetical role: in the hands of Iago, they become a tool that enables him to put Othello and Desdemona out of tune, to turn melodious music into a cacophony.

Shakespeare interestingly seems to identify echoes as sounds that spoil the melody of a well-tuned combination of sounds also elsewhere in his dramatic corpus. In the previously quoted passage of *Titus Andronicus*, for instance, Tamora encourages Aaron to sit with her in the wood and listen as 'the babbling

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<sup>79</sup>Minear, pp. 363-64. Sternfeld also reads the reference to the music which cannot be heard as a veiled allusion to the concept of the music of the spheres (Sternfeld, p. 232).

<sup>80</sup>Minear, p. 356.

echo mocks the hounds, / replying shrilly to the well-tuned horns' (II.ii.17-18). As Mauré explains, the barking of hounds was often treated as if it were a choir of different voices: early modern treatises on hunting gave indications on how to choose hounds based on their sound of their bark. The best pack of hounds was that whose barks could merge to produce a melodious sound, similar to music.<sup>81</sup> The echo which 'mocks' the hounds thus reverberates a parodied version of their harmonised barking, and it also mars the music produced by the well-tuned horns with its shrill reverberation. In the Induction of *The Taming of the Shrew* (c.1590-92), echo is similarly characterised by the adjective 'shrill'. The context is once again that of a hunt (albeit imagined rather than actually occurring) in which the yelping of hounds is rebounded by echoes: 'Thy hounds shall make the welkin answer them / And fetch shrill echoes from the hollow earth' (Induction, II.43-44). The implication appears to be the same as in *Titus Andronicus*: the echoes are jarring, unpleasant sounds which ruin the tuneful concert of dogs howling in unison. One last mention of echo which seems to confirm this picture is found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1594-96). Theseus invites Hippolyta to walk 'up to the mountain's top, / And mark the musical confusion / Of hounds and echo in conjunction' (IV.i.108-10).<sup>82</sup> Mauré argues that the phrase 'musical confusion' alludes to the notion of *discordia concors*, thus implying that the mingling of dissonant echo and melodious barking finally produces a harmonious albeit composite sound.<sup>83</sup> What she has not sufficiently emphasised, though, is that the difference in quality of those two sounds emerges unequivocally in the text. Echoes and yelpings are indeed not equally useful or necessary to generate harmony. Musical concord can indeed be produced by the hounds alone. Their barking had been associated with music just four lines earlier: 'My love shall hear the music of my hounds' (IV.i.105), promises Theseus. Later, he boasts about his hounds, describing them almost as if they were musical instruments carefully combined to sound melodiously together:

My hounds are [...]

<sup>81</sup> Mauré, *Héritages*, pp. 293-94, 309.

<sup>82</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Sukanta Chaudhuri (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017).

<sup>83</sup> Mauré, *Héritages*, pp. 309-10.

slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more tuneable  
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn. (IV.i.118-24)

The idea of *discordia*, of ‘confusion’, is introduced only when echoes are mentioned by Theseus. In other words, Theseus’ sentence seems to link the adjective ‘musical’ specifically with the hounds, and the noun ‘confusion’ with their echo. It is built on a parallel structure that powerfully sets echoes and hounds one against the other rather than assimilating them as elements which contribute to produce harmony in equal measure. Echoes are thus once again discordant and disruptive sounds.

Such musical dissonance brought about by echoes seems to be somehow associated with discord between lovers not only in *Othello*, but also in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The ‘mad marriage’ (III.ii.181) of Katharina and Petruchio is sealed by an unseemly kiss which re-echoes in the church:

he took the bride about the neck  
And kissed her lips with such a clamorous smack  
That at the parting all the church did echo. (III.ii.176-78)

If it is read bearing in mind other depictions of echoes in Shakespeare’s plays, even this apparently casual and insignificant allusion to echo yields meaning and contributes to set the mood of this scene. The marriage between Katharina and Petruchio is famously not idyllic at first, their relationship is anything but harmonious at this stage of the play. The echo of that aggressive and inappropriate kiss is one among the many humiliations inflicted by the groom upon Katharina on her wedding day, and, as such, it emphasises the fact that there is no mutual affection, no ‘consonance’, between the newlyweds. Echoes even have the threatening potential to destroy the relationship between a couple of lovers in *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1596). In Act II, scene II, Juliet wishes to call Romeo back but recognises:

Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud,  
Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies  
And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine,

With repetition of my ‘Romeo’:<sup>84</sup> (160-63)

As in *Twelfth Night*, Echo appears at first to be mentioned as consoling presence for longing lovers, one who would join her cries with theirs. And yet, if Echo did repeat Romeo’s name aloud, she would betray his presence to the Capulets thus revealing his secret relationship with Juliet.<sup>85</sup> Echoes are thus represented as sounds which can either be associated with the lack of harmony between a couple or even meddle with a well-tuned romantic relationship.

As is especially evident in *Othello*, Shakespeare’s use of echoes thus marks a subversion both of Macrobius’ association of the figure of Echo with heavenly harmony and of the Neoplatonic reading of her as a reflection of God’s voice. In such a dark tragedy, echoes bear no relationship to the celestial realm, and their function is clearly not that of soothing a troubled mind, as Reynolds would have it. In his *Mythomystes* he tells of the nymph:

a voyce shee had, so sweete to th’eare,  
With a discourse so smooth, and full of pleasure,  
As it a heauen was her wordes to heare,  
Wordes which the heauyest grieuance and displeasure  
Could mitigate, and easyer make to beare. (sig. N1r)

Repetition actually stirs Othello’s imagination to the point of leading him to commit murder. Echoes thus become a perverted version of the Bat Kol: instead of reflecting the voice of God, they are uttered by that ‘demi-devil’ Iago (V.ii.298), and instead of elevating those who hear them, they drag them down towards hell. Hell imagery does thrive in the play’s last scenes, and Othello recognises that it is there that he is bound:

This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,

<sup>84</sup>William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by René Weis (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2012).

<sup>85</sup>This has been noted also by Mauré, *Héritages*, p. 323. Echo appears to be endowed with the same dangerous potential to undermine secrecy also in *Twelfth Night*. Observing the similarity between Olivia and Viola’s names, Kerrigan claims that ‘it can hardly be accidental that, if the “babbling gossip of the air” did cry out “O-liv-ia”, the rebounding echoes would reverberate into something very like “Vi-o-la” – a word which is, for innocent audiences, a secret within the secret’ (Kerrigan, p. 74). If this holds true, echo would reveal Viola’s name and hence her feminine identity, which Viola needs to keep secret.

And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl,  
Even like thy chastity. O cursed, cursed slave!  
Whip me, ye devils,  
From the possession of this heavenly sight!  
Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,  
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! (V.ii.272-78)

Thus, the characterisation of echoes in *Othello* seems to be influenced much more by the agency over language displayed by the nymph Echo in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and in Renaissance echo-dialogues than by the allegorical readings of that mythological figure, especially those offered by Macrobius and by Neoplatonist mythographers. The conception of echoes as disruptive sounds may easily have stemmed from the nymph's use of language, which spoils and subverts the grammar, syntax, and semantic content of a sentence. Echoes bring linguistic disruption also in *Othello*: when they are heard, words become empty, misleading, or unintelligible. This, in turn, causes disruption in the world of the play.

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Throughout his *oeuvre*, Shakespeare appears to consider the myth of Echo and Narcissus as a tale that epitomises the theme of the double. In *Venus and Adonis* and especially in *Twelfth Night*, duplication is further redoubled: the myth's paradigmatic elements are reproduced, and the characteristic traits and behaviours of Echo and Narcissus are repeatedly transferred from one Shakespearean character to the other. This literary and dramatic technique contributes to create multifaceted characters and to generate a multiplicity of perspectives. On stage, such repeated mythological mirrorings aggravate the confusion produced by the pairs of doubles (real or metaphorical) which can be identified among the characters.

Shakespeare also seems to be aware that echoic duplication can be either a vain and sterile repetition, just as the flattering identical reverberation of Venus' moans, or a productive transformation of previous material, as is the case, for

instance, with creative literary echoes. Yet, the majority of his allusions to echoes suggest that he identified those sounds as sources of confusion and discord. With *Othello* ends a critical investigation of echoes which followed a path that started in heaven and ends in hell: indeed, while this study began by analysing echoes as celestial reverberations of God's voice or of the heavenly harmony of the spheres, it ends by suggesting that they were also represented as dangerous verbal repetitions uttered by a devilish man, which bring about disharmony and lead to hell those who are mesmerised by them.

# Conclusion

## ‘Aeris et linguae filia’

The theatrical representations of Echo that have been examined so far all tend to focus on the final stage of the nymph’s metamorphosis. On stage, Echo is generally ‘a voyce without the bodies aide’, as Turbeville puts it.<sup>86</sup> That disembodied voice sings pleasant refrains in songs, delivers covert messages to the monarch, or reveals the truth and even predicts future events. It can be represented as a female voice *par excellence*, a voice from heaven, or a misleading and even fiendish voice. Even when she is re-embodied, as is the case in Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels*, her characterisation is clearly indebted to allegorical readings of the Ovidian nymph which bring her aetherial and intangible quality to the fore by associating her with truth itself and even the spirit of God.

Disembodiment is indeed an element of vital importance in most of the depictions of Echo analysed in this study: her lack of a body facilitates her identification with musical harmony and especially with a kind of music so insubstantial that it cannot be heard by human beings, namely the harmony of the heavenly spheres. Moreover, as has been pointed out by Hope, human speech was considered to be a combination of the ‘ethereality of air with the corporeal physicality of the tongue, lips and lungs’, and, as such, its essence was believed to be both divine and earthly at the same time.<sup>87</sup> After her final metamorphosis, Echo survives as speech that comes from no corporeal source, and she is thus a

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<sup>86</sup>Turberville, ‘To the one that painted Eccho’, l. 7.

<sup>87</sup>Hope, *Shakespeare and Language*, p. 32.

particularly fitting figure to be associated with higher superior powers and even with the Bat Kol: her speech, deprived of its physical dimension, only retains its ethereality and its divine aura, and it is thus often depicted as the voice of God or as a voice coming from heaven and bringing his Word on earth. The recurring early modern representations of holy or prophetic echoes thus confirm the argument brought forward by Shullenberger in his analysis of Milton's *Comus* and demonstrate its applicability beyond Milton's work: 'bodily sacrifice is the precondition of vocal sanctification [...] a voice's inviolability depends upon its immateriality or insubstantiality'; an immaterial, intangible voice can be sacred and prophetic.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, though, Echo's lack of a physical body can also be a dangerous trait which needs to be rationally justified, as is especially the case when the nymph is or represents a female voice which threatens to elude male control. Echoes are thus de-mythologised and explained as scientific phenomena or licensed as elements that contribute to a spatially and chronologically circumscribed entertainment.

Echo is not only a disembodied voice, but also one that is compelled to repeat what has been said by others. Verbal repetition can produce harmonious acoustic patterns, and hence echoes are fittingly often employed as refrains in songs or as poetic devices. Echoes are indeed similar in sound to rhymes and also to many rhetorical figures that entail repetition or wordplay, so much so that they were often explicitly associated with them in early modern treatises on rhetoric. In poetic or theatrical echo-devices, though, echoes do produce rhymes and figures of repetition, but they generally do more than that: when a word is re-echoed, it is generally shortened, modified, or re-signified. Echoes are thus more similar to puns than to simple rhymes.

That ability to alter the signified of a given signifier, to unsettle the meaning of what has been uttered by another speaker can elicit reflections on the reliability of the linguistic signs and the way in which language works and conveys

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<sup>88</sup>William Shullenberger, *Lady in the Labyrinth. Milton's Comus as Initiation* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), p. 137.

meaning. Just as puns, echoes draw attention to the fact that language is an imperfect system, as more than one meaning can be associated with a single sign. Homophones and homonyms, upon which echo-replies generally rely, can hinder communication and generate misunderstandings that can certainly be comic but also lead to tragic outcomes. The disruptive potential of echoic repetition is especially emphasised in Shakespeare's *Othello*, where Iago's echoing of Othello's words shows that the relation between signifier and signified is so unstable that signs can not only be re-signified but even emptied of meaning: that subtle evacuation of meaning produces dire consequences for all the characters in the play. At the same time, though, echoes draw connections between apparently unrelated words, thus often provoking sudden and unexpected revelations. Despite all its flaws, language can not only convey meanings but even offer a glimpse of the secret links between things, which are all part of the perfect, divinely instituted order of the world. As has been shown in chapter two, the fortuitous similarities between words can thus even have devotional relevance as they testify to the ordering action of God. The answers given by Echo and echoes in early modern echo-dialogues and echo-poems thus emblematised (and in some cases even explicitly draw attention to) the contradictions inherent in language, of which the early moderns were perfectly aware.

The disembodied voice of Echo, with its ability to convey meaning by altering that of previously uttered sentences, can thus be seen as a sort of embodiment of language itself. Not only do echoic answers lay bare the characteristics of language and its mechanisms of signification, but the nymph also relies solely on her words to be able to act on stage and even influence the plot. That nymph, who does not have a body but exists solely as a speaking voice, could thus not be better described than by borrowing Ausonius' words: on the early modern stage, Echo is indeed 'aeris et linguae [...] filia', that is a voice born of air and language (Epigram XXXII, 3). Thus, while in classical antiquity Echo was only mentioned as a natural acoustic phenomenon until she was personified by Ovid as a nymph who incurred Juno's wrath and fell in love with Narcissus, in early modern English literature, and especially on the early modern English stage,

Echo often appears as a manifestation of language itself. Her echoic answers are thus fittingly associated with the language of rhetoric, poetry, royal praise, and linked with women's speech and even with the words of God.

## A literary trope

Despite the common traits that have emerged in most of the representations of the nymph in early modern England, Echo and echoes often seem to play specific and slightly different roles in the literary and theatrical genres that have been examined. In courtly entertainments and Jacobean masques, for instance, echoes are frequently inserted in songs and accompanied by music, but, even as musical effects, they often have a political function. In sermon and religious poems, echoes are instead identified as signs of God's presence in the world or as sounds capable of bridging the gap between earth and Heaven, human beings and the Lord. Echoes appear also in academic plays, which often drew on Italian drama and novellas as sources of plot and character.<sup>89</sup> That Italianate influence is evident not only in *Pastor Fidus*, a Latin adaptation of Guarini's play, but also in Brooke's *Melanthe*, whose echo-scene appears to be influenced by the one in Guarini's piece. Italian stories were fashionable, but, as has been recognised by Bolton, university drama also required the presence of farcical, satiric, and spectacular elements in order to be successful and appreciated:<sup>90</sup> the echo-scenes that appear in the academic plays that have been analysed would have catered very well for that need for spectacle. In this context, the figure of Echo is often a comic figure which entertains the audience, even though the kind of amusement she provides is often based on witty wordplay that could provoke more serious reflections on language. Echoic repetition is even explicitly associated with certain kinds of wordplay in rhetorical treatises and, in Grange's romance *Golden Aphroditis*, echoes are artificially produced verbal repetitions which are

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<sup>89</sup>Smith, *College Plays Performed in the University of Cambridge*, pp. 6-7; Norland, p. 473; *Melanthe*, p. 38.

<sup>90</sup>*Melanthe*, pp. 88-89.

then transcribed so as to form an ingenious literary composition. Lastly, on the public and private stage, echo-dialogues seemed to have been incredibly popular and they had the most disparate functions: the answers given by an echo or by the nymph Echo provided entertainment and spectacle, created suspense by anticipating future events in an often enigmatic language, and elicited laughter by distorting and equivocating the words of their interlocutor. Categorising the roles played by Echo and echoes according to the genre of the work in which they appear, though, does entail some generalisation, and it is undoubtedly more useful to look at how each author characterises the figure of Echo and elaborates the trope of the echo-dialogue, as has been done throughout this study.

Some authors did indeed represent or allude to the figure of Echo with remarkable originality. Ben Jonson, for instance, even stages a sort of ‘counter-metamorphosis’ whereby Echo regains her physical body and autonomous verbal articulation. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare also draws on the myth of Echo and Narcissus in a subtler and less conventional way than many of his contemporaries, and he even seems to devise a radically re-elaborated and sinister version of an echo-dialogue in Act III, Scene III of *Othello*. *Cynthia’s Revels*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*, three plays which appropriate either the myth of Echo or the echo-device so creatively, were unsurprisingly all written at the beginning of the seventeenth century: by that time, the echo-device had appeared so often in poetry and drama that it was gradually becoming a literary cliché. Ten years later, even more echo-dialogues had appeared on the early modern stage, so much so that Robert Tailor seems to comment quite explicitly on their widespread popularity.

Tailor’s Jacobean play *The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl* (1613) features an interesting late example of an echo-scene. The setting is once again pastoral and the scene presents many of the conventional traits that had become inextricably associated with the echo-device. In the romantic sub-plot, Maria and Carracus find out that Albert has tricked Maria into sleeping with him: Maria, overwhelmed by shame, fakes her own death and runs away into the wood. Carracus, driven mad by grief, also goes into the wood, and he deliberately calls Echo in the hope of receiving answers to his questions:

This is a wood, sure; and, as I have read,  
In woods are echoes which will answer men  
To every question which they do propound. Echo!<sup>91</sup> (IV.ii.20-22)

As was the case in countless other dramatic and poetic echo-devices, a forlorn and grief-stricken lover invokes Echo to find company or consolation. Interestingly, Carracus also states the reason why he invokes Echo: ‘I have read, / In woods are echoes which will answer men’. Those words seem to imply that echo-devices were such a widespread literary commonplace that Carracus has read about them in books and wishes to have his own dialogue with an echo. Tailor thus draws attention to the conventional nature of the scene he is about to stage and exposes its artificiality.

An echo does answer to Carracus’ call, and the man starts to treat that voice as if it were a wise adviser and asks it whether women may ever be chaste and friends loyal. The echo then starts to give truthful oracular answers, thus once again playing a role that was often attributed to the nymph in previous early modern works: by reverberating Carracus’ words, the echo reveals to him that his beloved Maria is still alive and confirms that she is innocent.

CARRACUS Once more, good Echo  
Was my Maria false by her own desire,  
Or was’t against her will?  
ECHO Against her will.  
CARRACUS Troth it may be so; but canst thou tell,  
Whether she be dead or not?  
ECHO Not.  
CARRACUS Not dead?  
ECHO Not dead. (IV.ii.35-40)

As was the case in *Maid’s Metamorphosis*, for instance, the echo-dialogue anticipates that the two lovers will meet again and prepares the way for that reunion.

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<sup>91</sup>All references to this play are from Robert Tailor, *The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl*, in *Three Renaissance Usury Plays*, ed. by Lloyd Edward Kermode (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 275-349.

Carracus believes those words and he repeatedly compliments the echo for its ability to tell the truth: ‘how true this echo speaks’ (IV.ii.26), ‘thou speakst most true, for I have found it so’ (IV.ii.32), ‘therefore, good speak-truth, farewell’ (IV.ii.42-43). Such emphatic insistence on the sincerity of that echoing voice may be read as a wink at the widespread early modern characterisation of Echo as a voice that reveals the truth and even foresees the future.

The echo-scene in Tailor’s play thus provides an occasion for parodying a literary cliché. Indeed, popular literary conventions are mocked throughout the play. Kermode convincingly suggests that the whole romantic plot is a satire against current stage fashions, and McKenzie argues that the play reads like a ‘general burlesque’: ‘the theatrical banter in Act I and the stage effects in Act V, the resort to stock routines of substitutions and disguise, and the extremities of sententiousness, pastoral romance, and farce suggested such an intention’.<sup>92</sup> The echo-scene is thus unsurprisingly among the stereotyped elements of contemporary performances that are parodied in the play. That scene echoes many of the traits and roles attributed to Echo in previous dramatic and poetic dialogues: an acoustic echo is personified and treated as a friendly consellor, it then becomes a prophet, and a voice who only speaks the truth. Moreover, the echo-scene is included in the romantic plot strand, which scholars identified as one of the main of targets of ridicule in the play.

As is fitting for a trite cliché, Carracus’ conversation with the echo is finally dismissed as ‘idle prate’ (IV.ii.61): in a moment of lucidity, Carracus acknowledges the illusory nature of his dialogue with a mere acoustic reverberation. The echo-scene is thus exposed as a theatrical illusion, a spectacular but artificial device, and one which had been too frequently been drawn upon.

After the mid-seventeenth century, the echo-device ceased completely to be popular or fashionable. As Hardie and Colby explain, it is even parodied in Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* (1663) and discredited as ‘false wit’ by Joseph Addi-

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<sup>92</sup> *The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl*, ed. by Kermode, p. 51; Robert Tailor, *The Hog Hath Lost His Pearl*, ed. by Donald Franklin McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. ix.

son.<sup>93</sup> Milton also refuses to stage a traditional echo-song in his masque presented at Ludlow Castle in 1634. The Lady in *Comus* sings a melodious song addressed to Echo, asking for help to find her brothers who have become separated from her in the woods, but she famously receives no answer. By avoiding to include echoic answers to the Lady's songs, Milton subverts a convention of the Jacobean masque which was already regarded as an exhausted literary trope by the time he wrote his own aristocratic entertainment. Echo's silence thus testifies to the loss of popularity of the echo-device, but it also serves to emphasise the Lady's isolation and vulnerability.

The Lady's brothers wander away from her while gathering berries and fruits, and she is left alone and without protection in a dangerous wood where Comus, the malicious son of Circe, lurks. While she is searching for them, the Lady decides to make the loudest possible noise in hope that they will be close enough to hear her, and starts to sing her song to Echo:

Sweet Echo, sweetest Nymph, that liv'st unseen  
Within thy airy shell  
By slow Meander's margent green,  
And in the violet-imbroider'd vale  
Where the love-lorn Nightingale  
Nightly to thee her sad Song mourneth well:  
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle Pair  
That likest thy Narcissus are?  
O if thou have  
Hid them in some flowry Cave,  
Tell me but where,  
Sweet Queen of Parly, Daughter of the Sphear!  
So maist thou be translated to the skies,  
And give resounding grace to all Heav'ns harmonies!<sup>94</sup> (ll. 230-43)

<sup>93</sup> Philip Hardie, 'Miltonic Echoes: Fallen and Unfallen Resonances in *Paradise Lost*', *Polysèmes*, 20 (2018), par. 2 <<https://journals.openedition.org/polysemes/4381>> [accessed January 2020]; Colby, p. 47.

<sup>94</sup> All references are from John Milton, *A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle, 1634*, ed. by Barbara K. Lewalski and Estelle Haan, in *The Complete Works of John Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University

The Lady's allusion to Narcissus, with whom she compares her own brothers, clearly suggests that she intends to evoke Ovid's Echo. Yet, the last two lines of her song, in which she wishes that Echo be 'translated to the skies' point to Macrobius' allegorical reading of the myth of Pan and Echo: it is Pan's Echo that is glossed as the harmony of the heavenly spheres in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*. The two versions of the mythological nymph are thus conflated, and other depictions and allegorical readings of Echo are also alluded to. For instance, the line 'Sweet Queen of Parly, Daughter of the Sphear' echoes Ausonius' definition of the nymph: just as in Ausonius' epigram, Echo is closely associated with speech ('parley') and air (as Lewalski and Hann explain, 'Echo's habitation in the region of the air beneath the moon makes her "Daughter of the Sphear"').<sup>95</sup> Hollander also suggests that by referring to her as 'Sweet Queen of Parly', the Lady is praising Echo in her role of 'eloquent, rhetorical, and governing music'.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, the fact that the Lady considers Echo to be a guiding spirit who helps men find their way possibly hints not only at widespread representations of Echo on the early modern stage, but also at Christian readings of the nymph as the providential intervention of god's grace which illuminates and instructs men when they are metaphorically lost.

The image of Echo that emerges from this song is entirely positive: the Lady obviously thinks of her as a celestial presence, a revealing a voice, and a potential ally that will help her be safe. Yet, the explicit invocation of Ovid's Echo opens up the possibility for ambiguity: while Pan's Echo is either the legitimate lover of the god, with whom she has a fulfilling and harmonious relationship, or the brave virgin who refused to yield her maidenhood to him, Ovid's Echo is a nymph who instantly becomes fixated with a boy, flings herself in his arms, and is even quite vocal about her sexual desire for him, which earns her the reputation of being lascivious.<sup>97</sup> Thus, if one Echo is chaste in her own right,

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Press, 2012), III, pp. 59-104.

<sup>95</sup> *A Mask Presented at Ludlow-Castle*, ll. 241n, 231n.

<sup>96</sup> John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky. Ideas of Music in English Poetry 1500-1799* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 321-22.

<sup>97</sup> See for instance Golding's moralising interpretation of the nymph as a lewd bawd, which has been

the other has her moral flaws and is only redeemed when she is appropriated by Christian literature and Neoplatonic allegoresis. Bearing this in mind helps us to infer another important reason why Echo remains silent.

The Lady's innocent plea for help might have been marred if Echo had answered to it: Ovid's unchaste and self-deluding nymph is hardly an appropriate assistant for the virtuous Lady. Chastity is the Lady's most emphatically celebrated virtue, and her unblemished reputation might have been damaged if she had been in any way associated with the vocally and sexually incontinent nymph. Moreover, if her song had been reverberated in the woods, the Lady would have merely heard an acoustic reverberation of her own voice, as was the case in most early modern echo-scenes, and placed trust in her own words brought back to her ears: in other words, she would have appeared as the over-ingenuous victim of a mirage. What the Lady hopes to hear is not so much the voice of Ovid's mythological nymph nor a natural reverberation of her own words, but rather a celestial Echo, a transfigured and 'purified' Echo who can be (and has been traditionally) 'translated to the skies' and whose voice contributes to produce heaven's harmonious music.

That heavenly echo, though, cannot be heard on earth. Milton makes that very clear in his *Paradise Lost* (1667), where he appears to draw a sharp distinction between pre-lapsarian and post-lapsarian echoes. As Hollander and Hardie point out, Eden can be a highly resonant place: in the Mourning Hymn to God, Adam and Eve invite the natural elements created by the Lord to join their song and make His praise resound.<sup>98</sup> The sun, the moon and the planets, the mists and exhalations, the rivers, and the birds are asked to 'sound his praise' (V.172), 'resound / his praise' (V.178-79), 'advance his praise' (V.191), 'tune his praise' (V.196), and 'bear on your wings and in your notes his praise' (V.199).<sup>99</sup> Eden thus echoes not only with the song's reiterated refrain made of a verb followed by 'his praise', which has been noted by Hollander, but also with the various

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repeatedly quoted in this study.

<sup>98</sup>Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 38-39; Hardie, par. 4.

<sup>99</sup>All references to Milton's poem are from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Barbara K. Lewalski (Malden, MA; Oxford; Carlton, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

sounds produced by the elements praising God.<sup>100</sup> In the last two lines of the Hymn, Adam invokes every living creature to

Witness if I be silent, Morn or Even,  
To Hill, or Valley, Fountain, or fresh shade  
Made vocal by my Song, and taught his praise. (V. 202-04)

As Hardie explains, Adam contributes to that festive celebration of God by teaching the natural landscape to respond to his song and praise him, just as the shepherds of Virgil's *Eclogues* teach the landscape to *echo* their voice.<sup>101</sup> Before the Fall, Adam and Eve are thus surrounded by an idyllic and echoing landscape and they can even exert control over those jubilant reverberations.

After their expulsion from Eden, Adam and Eve hear an entirely different kind of echo. Finding himself in a world much less hospitable than Paradise, Adam complains

O Woods, O Fountains, Hillocks, Dales and Bowrs,  
*With other echo* late I taught your Shades  
To answer, and resound farr other Song. (X.860-62, emphasis mine)

On earth, 'divine justice mends not her slowest pace for prayers or cries' (X. 858-59) and the landscape does no longer comply with men's requests. An even eerier echo is heard in Hell right after the birth of Death. At the sight of her offspring, Sin

fled, and cry'd out *Death*;  
Hell trembl'd at the hideous Name, and sigh'd  
From all her Caves, and back resounded *Death*. (II.787-89)

Echo becomes here a disquieting harbinger of death, a sound of lamentation and terror. As Hardie points out, when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit later in the poem, death is introduced in the world and the reaction of the earth and of God's creatures echoes that of Hell at the birth of Death.<sup>102</sup> Nature 'sighing

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<sup>100</sup>Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>101</sup>Hardie, par. 9-10.

<sup>102</sup>Hardie, par. 35.

through all her Works gave signs of woe' (IX.782-3), and 'Earth trembl'd from her entrails, as again, / In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan' (IX.1000-01): in other words, the world resounded with all the sighs emitted by God's creatures, and the noise of the trembling earth equally spread. *Paradise Lost* thus describes a festive, productive, and controllable echo and a sinister one which heralds death and signals the fallen condition of man.<sup>103</sup>

Since the heavenly echoes that resounded in Eden are lost to man, the Lady's wish to hear them cannot be fulfilled. If an echo did answer to her song in that dangerous wood inhabited by an evil tempter and sinful men turned to beasts, it would necessarily be that 'other' echo about which Adam complains after the Fall. The echoes heard on earth are either bad omens or 'imposters' who might deceive those who listen, as was the case in several early modern echo-scenes of which Milton was likely aware. In Peele's *Old Wives Tale*, for instance, the echo leads the two brothers who had petitioned it for help straight into danger.<sup>104</sup> Unlike her biblical progenitors before their expulsion from Eden, the Lady cannot elicit echoes from the landscape, she cannot teach the elements to reverberate her words, and, above all, she should not trust the earthly echoes that could potentially answer to her song. It is for that reason that her plea remains unanswered: natural reverberations would be of no help, and the heavenly echoes which she invokes are inaudible to a mortal. Milton seems to wish to keep the two different kinds of echo separate, or, as Gross brilliantly puts it, 'Milton's revisionary echo rises above the merely repetitive, successive structures of secular time [...] its wished-for resonances may be projected but not apprehended within the poem itself'.<sup>105</sup>

The silent or inaudible Echo of the masque can be thus unequivocally identified as the sanctified figure of Christian and Neoplatonic allegories, the Echo

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<sup>103</sup>For a detailed analysis of the opposition between these two kinds of echo see Hardie, par. 5-7, 15, 35; Loewenstein, pp. 142, 145.

<sup>104</sup>Loewenstein suggests that Peele's play was a source for *Comus* (p. 134). While there is no evidence that that was the case, Peele's play was by no means the only play where Echo deceives and misleads her interlocutors.

<sup>105</sup>Kenneth Gross, "Each Heav'ly Close": Mythologies and Metrics in Spenser and the Early Poetry of Milton', *PMLA*, 98. 1 (1983), 21-36 (p. 28).

whose melodious voice is a symbol of heavenly harmony. There is another virtuous female figure in the masque who has been ‘translated to the skies’. Sabrina, who comes to the Lady’s rescue, is an innocent virgin who threw herself into the Severn in order to escape the wrath of her stepmother and was made goddess of the river by order of Nereus, who took pity on her. Just as Echo and Sabrina, the Lady will also be raised to heaven if she continues to be virtuous. As the Attendant Spirit advises before he returns to his heavenly abode:

Mortals, that would follow me,  
Love virtue, she alone is free;  
She can teach ye how to clime  
Higher than the Spheary chime. (ll. 1018-21)

The Lady is thus associated with female figures who faced violence but who were elevated or glorified afterwards, women who found their ‘inviolable voice’, as Shullenberger puts it.<sup>106</sup>

Cleared of any stigma that may be attached to her, Echo is indeed a fitting alter-ego for the Lady.<sup>107</sup> By holding fast to her chastity, the Lady defeats Comus in their rhetorical contest, leaving him shocked at hearing her strenuous defense of virtue: ‘She fables not. I feel that I do fear / Her words set of by some superior power’ (ll. 801-2). Just as Echo’s voice cannot be heard by mortals on earth, the heavenly truths voiced by the Lady cannot be fully grasped by Comus: ‘Thou hast nor Eare, nor Soul to apprehend’ (l. 785), ‘thou art not fit to hear thy self convinc’t’ (l. 793), retorts the Lady.<sup>108</sup> Her victory over

<sup>106</sup>Shullenberger, pp. 136-39. To this list of redeemed female figures who are linked with the Lady, Shullenberger adds Philomel. According to Shullenberger, the myth of Philomel is alluded to by the Lady when she sings the lines ‘the love-lorn Nightingale / Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well’ and by the Attendant Spirit, who compares the Lady to a ‘poor hapless Nightingale’ (ll. 234-35, 566-67). Philomel’s tragic story is recuperated in that the lady turned into a nightingale was considered to be a symbol of Poetry in early modern England (pp. 134-36).

<sup>107</sup>For the identification between the Lady and Echo see also Louise Simons, “And Heaven Gates Ore My Head”: Death as Threshold in Milton’s Masque”, *Milton Studies*, 23 (1987), 53-96 (pp. 59, 65) and Shullenberger, p. 130. Shullenberger also suggests that Echo is a projection of the Lady’s own imaginative capacities (p. 38).

<sup>108</sup>Even though she starts from slightly different premises, Larson also suggests that the Lady’s song is a powerful rhetorical medium that elevates and spurs to virtuous actions those who are pure enough to listen (Katherine R. Larson, “Blest Pair of Sirens ... Voice and Verse”: Milton’s Rhetoric of Song”, *Milton Studies*, 54. 1 (2013), 81-106 (pp. 104-05)).

Comus, her exemplary virtue, and her association with the celestial Echo whom she invokes leave no doubt that the Lady will also be ‘translated to skies’, where she will finally be able to hear that melodious echo which had been previously denied to her.<sup>109</sup>

Even if the popularity of the formal devices originated by Echo’s speech pattern had drastically dwindled by the time Milton wrote *Comus*, the nymph continues to be a figure of primary importance in that masque despite the fact that she remains silent. This apparently paradoxical fact suggests that further studies on the literary metamorphoses of the mythological figure of Echo even after the heyday of her popularity on the English stage are likely to yield interesting results.

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<sup>109</sup>In her article, Simons also argues that the masque prefigures and symbolises the Lady’s ‘ascent into the heavenly realm of mythologized sainthood’ (p. 54).

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