

Research Article

Thomas Telios*, Florian Schulz

A Relational Psychoanalytic Analysis of Ovid's "Narcissus and Echo": Toward the Obstinate Persistence of the Relational

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2025-0061>

received March 31, 2024; accepted January 21, 2025

Abstract: This article draws on relational psychoanalysis to reinterpret Ovid's version of Narcissus and Echo as a means to reflect on the dynamics of how subjects connect to others and themselves through listening. Attuning to a long tradition of scholarship, we understand Ovid's tale as a rich template for contemplating the difficulties of becoming social. We underline how both protagonists take on essential roles in each other's transformations. While acknowledging how each actor's unique biography creates an intrapsychic vector, we highlight the effect of their encounters in their mutual becoming. We illustrate how the relational space between them plays an essential role in their development as they overcome their unique difficulties in connecting to each other. Our relational-psychoanalytic analysis offers a surprising interpretation, namely, that Narcissus and Echo can ultimately overcome their isolation and connect through their transformation. This illustrates the potential of relational psychoanalysis as an interpretative tool that allows us to understand social dynamics as a product of a relational space in which intra-psychic representations encounter and transform each other, thus contributing to ongoing discussions on the concept of relational subjectivity.

Keywords: narcissism, relational psychoanalysis, relational unconscious, social philosophy, social ontology, philosophy of subjectivity, collectivity

"In the beginning is relation."

Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 18

"It never made sense to me to regard self-consciousness as an original phenomenon. Do we not first become aware of ourselves in the gaze of another person? In your gaze, as that of the second person who speaks to me as a first person, I become aware of myself not only as a conscious subject but also as a unique *individual*. The subjectifying gaze of others possesses an individualizing power."

Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, 15.

1 Introduction

In this article, we revisit Ovid's text on Narcissus and Echo in Book Three of *Metamorphoses* and reinterpret it from a relational psychoanalytic viewpoint. In doing so, we illustrate how this "canonic"¹ text can be reread as

¹ Renger, "Narrating Narcissus, Reflecting Cognition," 10.

* **Corresponding author: Thomas Telios**, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS), University of St.Gallen, St.Gallen, Switzerland, e-mail: thomas.telios@unisg.ch

Florian Schulz: Research Institute for Organizational Psychology (OPSY), University of St.Gallen, St.Gallen, Switzerland

a narrative of how lives are socially shaped, struggles to overcome isolation, and the role of listening and dialogue in these processes. To that end, we develop three interconnected lines of argument. First, we build on the long tradition of attempts that have dared a “determined redemption of narcissism from its pejorative characterization as fundamentally anti-social ... for the purpose of theorizing a reflexive and embodied subjectivity.”² These attempts have been undertaken not only in the fields of psychoanalysis³ and the history of psychiatry and psychology,⁴ but also in sociology,⁵ literary criticism and queer theory,⁶ philosophical traditions like the Critical Theory of Frankfurt School,⁷ and Deconstruction.⁸ Second, by providing a relational-psychoanalytically informed reading of Ovid’s text, we underscore its ongoing relevance as a source for psychoanalytical inquiry. As we will demonstrate, a relational perspective offers a fresh interpretation of the text and provides interesting insights regarding the constitutive functionality of connecting through dialogue. Third, we intervene in recent philosophical attempts to establish a relational model of philosophy and politics. Such a “relational ontology” or “relational model,” as Adriana Cavarero summarizes this approach, “concentrate[s] on the category of *relation* to rethink a subjectivity marked by exposure, vulnerability, and dependence.”⁹

The impact of the figure of Narcissus, a source of psychoanalytic theorizing and an inspiration for interpreting the subject and its (dis-)connection to the Other(s), is indisputable.¹⁰ As Adele Tutter makes clear, there is no other myth apart from that of Oedipus that “has captured the interest of psychoanalysts quite like the myth of Narcissus.”¹¹ The significance of Ovid’s text in consolidating Narcissism as both a description of a clinical symptom or personality trait as well as an influential concept in the intrapsychic development of individuals is also well-documented. In *Ein Beitrag zum Narcissismus*, Otto Rank was the first to name Ovid as the primary reference for the myth within psychiatric-psychoanalytical studies. However, as Niclas Johansson argues,¹² Ovid’s version is also most likely the one that Havelock Ellis had in mind a decade earlier when speaking of “a Narcissus-like tendency”¹³ in “Auto-erotism: a psychological study.” In addition, it was through Ovid’s rendition that Narcissus came to exemplify “a myth about the origins, highly idealized by us all”¹⁴ and to occupy an “entirely singular place ... in the history of Western subjectivity.”¹⁵

Despite the consensus on their importance, both Ovid’s text and the concept of narcissism are subjects of an ongoing and vivid debate.¹⁶ Sydney Pulver observes that “there are probably only two facts upon which

2 Sheils and Walsh, *Narcissism, Melancholia and the Subject of Community*, 3.

3 Kristeva, *Tales of Love*.

4 Fine, *Narcissism, the Self, and Society*; Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism*.

5 Walsh, *Narcissism and its Discontents*; Sheils and Walsh, *Narcissism, Melancholia and the Subject of Community*.

6 Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*.

7 Adorno, “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,” Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*.

8 Derrida, *For Strasbourg*; Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*; Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*; Derrida, “There is No One Narcissism.”

9 Cavarero, *Inclinations*, 11. See also Arturo Escobar’s conceptualization of relationality as referring “to the fact that all entities that make up the world are so deeply interrelated that they have no intrinsic, separate existence by themselves,” Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, xiii.

10 For a detailed and critical overview of the vast literature, refer to Orlowsky and Orlowsky, *Narziß und Narzißmus im Spiegel von Literatur, Bildender Kunst und Psychoanalyse. Vom Mythos zur leeren Selbstinszenierung*; Renger, “Narrating Narcissus, Reflecting Cognition,” Renger, *Narcissus. Ein Mythos von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace*; Renger, *Mythos Narziß. Texte von Ovid bis Jacques Lacan*.

11 Tutter, “Under the Mirror of the Sleeping Water,” 1235.

12 Johansson, *The Narcissus Theme from «Fin de Siècle» to Psychoanalysis Crisis of the Modern Self*.

13 Ellis, “Auto-Erotism,” 280.

14 Etchegoyen, “Identification and its Vicissitudes,” 5.

15 Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 134.

16 Refer primarily to Wieseler, *Narkissos: Eine kunstmythologische Abhandlung*; but also Vinge, *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century*; Bergmann, “The Legend of Narcissus,” Schlagmann, “Zur Rehabilitation von Narziß Mythos und Begriff,” and Johansson, *The Narcissus Theme from «Fin de Siècle» to Psychoanalysis Crisis of the Modern Self* for a more detailed account of the different variations (Ovid, Pausanias, Plotinus, etc.) of the myth and its appearances within the western European collective imaginary. For further lexicological clarifications, an overview of the debate regarding whether it was Konon (as handed down by Photios in vol. 186 of his *Μυριόβιβλος*) or Ovid who fathered the first written version of the legend, and

everyone agrees: first, that the concept of narcissism is one of the most important contributions of psychoanalysis; second, that it is one of the most confusing."¹⁷ In part, this confusion pertains to the fact that different psychoanalytic schools like Freudian drive theory,¹⁸ self-psychology,¹⁹ and object relations theory²⁰ have elevated narcissism to a core concept because of its capacity to define how a self can become coherent and stable. The confusion is further fueled by the different readings of Ovid's text that the different psychoanalytic schools have developed.

Adding more fuel to the fire, we proceed by analyzing Ovid's text on Narcissus and Echo from a relational-psychoanalytic perspective. One central aspect that this perspective brings to the forefront is the claim that the becoming of selves must always be read in the context of encounters with others. The evident question is then: Who is Narcissus's Other? The equally evident answer is: Echo, a figure whose absence in many interpretations, is noteworthy. As we suggest, without Echo's involvement and participation, Narcissus would have never come to occupy his position within the psychoanalytic conceptual arsenal and the Western European cultural-collective imaginary. By highlighting how Ovid intertwines the fates of Echo and Narcissus, we follow the steps of a small but significant body of literature which underlines the role of Echo in the overall development of the plot.²¹

In what follows, we return to Ovid's text and argue that it narrates a dipole, a relational drama. Narcissus and Echo are not the only figures in their monologues. Nor is Narcissus the protagonist in a play with Echo featuring solely as a stunt or sidekick. On the contrary, Narcissus and Echo are *symprotagonists*, co-leading characters of a mutual enactment that, as we suggest, has four distinct acts. In these acts, other figures also play significant roles in developing the main characters and the events leading to the narrative's culmination. As we wish to make clear, Narcissus and Echo did not have their independent storylines before their fatal encounter on Mount Helicon.²² Rather, we suggest that they would not have exerted such a constitutive influence on one another's further development without their distinctive biographies. We further claim that precisely therein lies the alternative psychoanalytical valence of the text, namely, in the dipole's functionality as a paradigm for the subject's becoming on the basis of relations within which it finds itself entangled.

By highlighting Echo's development, we do not intend to establish Echo as "the Other" of male-dominated psychoanalysis.²³ Further, we do not intend to reenter the debate concerning gender-specific applications of narcissistic tendencies²⁴ or retrace narcissism's history as a perversion,²⁵ behavioral personality disorder,²⁶

remarks concerning the differing endings of the myth, refer to Brown's comments in his edition of Konon's *Διηγήσεις*; Brown, *The Narratives of Konon*, 173–8. For a radically different and archeologically founded reading of Narcissus's origin not as a citizen of Thespies in Boetia but as a citizen of Eretria in Euboea, see Knoepfler, *La patrie de Narcisse. Un héros mythique enraciné dans le sol et dans l'histoire d'une cité grecque*.

¹⁷ Pulver, "Narcissism," 91.

¹⁸ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*; Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*; Freud, "On Narcissism;" Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*.

¹⁹ Kohut, "Forms and Transformations Of Narcissism."

²⁰ Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms;" Kernberg, "Contrasting Viewpoints Regarding the Nature and Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personalities;" Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism*.

²¹ Brenkman's literary approach in "Narcissus in Text," Hollander's poetic vindication in *The Figure of Echo*, Hannan's post-Freudian psychoanalytical reading in "A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Ovid's Myth of Narcissus and Echo," Spivak's feminist-postcolonial critique in "Echo," Tutter's art-theoretical approximation in "Under the Mirror of the Sleeping Water," and DeArmitt's ethical-deconstructionist treatise of the figure of Echo in *The Right to Narcissism*. It is worth mentioning that there are traditions, like Neoplatonism, in which Echo is altogether absent from the interpretation of Narcissus's journey; Walde, "Narcissus im Mittelalter;" Johansson, "Beyond Narcissism."

²² Unlike Narcissus, who owes his rise to fame to this one myth, Echo appears in a further set of mythical variations where she is liaised with Pan, the god of the wild mountainous landscapes, protector of shepherds and flocks, patron of rustic music, associated with fertility and spring, the epitome of sexual prowess and whose death, according to Plutarch, signified the end of the classical antiquity and the transition to Christian medieval times; Plutarch, *Œuvres Morales*.

²³ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*.

²⁴ Ellis, "Auto-Erotism;" Näcke, "Kritisches zum Kapitel der Normalen und Pathologischen Sexualität;" Freud, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*.

²⁵ Binet, "Le fétichisme dans l'amour;" Charcot and Magnan, "Inversion du sens génital."

²⁶ Campbell and Miller, *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder*.

developmental stage (*primary narcissism*),²⁷ coping mechanism (*secondary narcissism*),²⁸ and/or essentialist “anthropomorphic”²⁹ disposition.³⁰ On the contrary, we intend to derive from Ovid’s text the relevance of the “in-between” in subjectivation processes, which can be understood as a product, collection, and condensation of interconnected intrapsychic dynamics.³¹ In the scenes that unfold between Narcissus and Echo, the “stage”³² or “plateau”³³ is set for the two subjects’ relational becoming, where peripheral biographical elements and experiences that both subjects have accumulated throughout their development encounter, clash, and get translated, integrated, and fused with one another. Each subject is not just the result of the relation with another subject. Subjects are also the result of their relationalization with the past of another subject or other subjects. From this perspective, the subject’s formation is better understood as a “constellation,”³⁴ “assemblage” (*agencement*),³⁵ or “amassment” (*struction*)³⁶ – the entangled amalgam of different stories that need to be retold from different angles, and the point at which different outcomes are to be hypothesized and expected after different variables have been factored in. In this light, the subject’s becoming is not simply interspsychic but also intrapsychic; not just intersubjective but also collective; and not just monocausal and monosemantic but also necessarily, in the Freudian sense,³⁷ overdetermined.

Following this introduction (Section 1), the article is structured as follows. Section 2 briefly presents the main characteristics of the relational psychoanalytical paradigm. Grounded in this approach, we use a relational perspective to reconstruct Ovid’s text on Narcissus and Echo as a tale of two equals (Section 3). Finally, (Section 4), we scrutinize the outputs of this relational reading of Ovid’s text on Narcissus and Echo for the

27 Freud, *Three Essays*; Rank, “Ein Beitrag zum Narcissismus;” Freud, “On Narcissism;” Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*.

28 Freud, “On Narcissism;” Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*; Green, *On Private Madness*.

29 Kohut, “Forms and Transformations of Narcissism,” 254.

30 In this article, we will not be providing a detailed account of the all too well-known transition of the notion of narcissism from psychiatry to psychoanalysis or the various and different understandings that the concept of narcissism has experienced throughout its rich intellectual history. For more on that, refer to Cooper, “Narcissism;” Morrison, *Essential Papers on Narcissism*; Sandler et al., *Contemporary Freud. Turning Points and Critical Issues*; Padovan, “The Medical-Psychiatric Origins of the Psychoanalytical Concept of Narcissism.”

31 In *Narcissism: A New Theory*, Symington introduces the notion of the “composite self,” which would seem to move in our direction. Nevertheless, what Symington does when addressing a self who is “being made up of parts” (20) is to further the Jungian understanding of the different types (thinking, feeling, intuition, and sensation) of the self to account for the inconsistencies of a subject who behaves differently even under similar situations. Conversely, when we refer to the collective essence of the intersectional subject, we have an intersectional type of subjectivity in mind, consisting of and bearing within it the different identities that correspond to different modes of subjectivity production; Telios, *Das Subjekt als Gemeinwesen*.

32 Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 285. In “Freud and the Scene of Writing” from *Writing and Difference*, Derrida comments on the processual character of the Freudian subject, i.e., the fact that the subject’s genesis cannot be causally and explanatorily derived but only associatively traced back to intertwined structures. He writes: “If there were only perception, pure permeability to breaching, there would be no breaches. We would be written, but nothing would be recorded; no writing could be produced, retained, or repeated as legibility. But pure perception does not exist: we are written only as we write by the agency within us, which always already keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external. The “subject” of writing does not exist if we mean by that some sovereign solitude of the author. The subject of writing is a *system* of relations between strata: the Mystic Pad, the psyche, society, the world. Within that scene, on that stage, the punctual simplicity of the classical subject is not to be found. In order to describe the structure, it is not enough to recall that one always writes for someone and the opposition sender-receiver, code-message and so on remain extremely coarse instruments. We would search the “public” in vain for the first reader: i.e., the first author of a work. And the ‘sociology of literature’ is blind to the war and the ruses perpetrated by the author who reads and by the first reader who dictates, for at stake here is the origin of the work itself. The *sociality* of writing as *drama* requires an entirely different discipline” (ibid.).

33 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 2. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze/Guattari define the concept of plateau that they take over from Gregory Bateson as a “multiplicity connected to other multiplicities” (2). In his introduction to their book, Brian Massumi defines the concept of plateau as “an orchestration of crashing bricks extracted from a variety of disciplinary edifices. They carry traces of their former emplacement, which give them a spin defining the arc of their vector. The vectors are meant to converge at a volatile juncture, but one that is sustained, as an open equilibrium of moving parts each with its own trajectory”; Massumi, “Foreword,” x.

34 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*; Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*; Adorno, “The Actuality of Philosophy.”

35 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

36 Nancy and Barrau, *What’s These Worlds Coming To?*

37 Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

"relational model" of subjectivity according to current tendencies within the humanities and especially philosophy. As we demonstrate, such a relational reading of Narcissus and Echo serves as a model of relational subjectivity as a type of decentered, social-ontological, collective, processual, and dynamic subjectivity production. In *Der Andere in der Psychoanalyse. Die intersubjektive Wende*, Michael Ermann mentions explicitly philosophy's contributions toward the consolidation of the relational psychoanalytical paradigm.³⁸ In this last section, we wish to briefly demonstrate how the relational psychoanalytical paradigm can germinate philosophical thought.

2 On the Necessity of Relational Reading: The Theoretical Framework

In his *Essential Papers on Narcissism*, arguably one of the most comprehensive collections of psychoanalytic literature on the matter, the editor Andrew Morrison condenses the story as follows:

A handsome young man, Narcissus was much loved by the nymphs, including Echo, who was rejected by him. The Gods vowed to punish him for his callousness by causing him to fall in love with his own image as reflected in a mountain pool. However, the mirror image fragmented each time that Narcissus reached out to embrace it, causing him to pine away in melancholy, and ultimately die. In his place, the nymphs found a flowering plant growing where once his body had been.³⁹

This summary gives insight into some of the shortcomings of the text's representation in the (psychoanalytic) literature. By suggesting that Narcissus is a man, Morrison fails to reflect on and adequately grasp Narcissus's stage of psychic development. As a matter of fact, according to Ovid, it is indeed ambiguous as to whether Narcissus "could be taken/Either for boy or man."⁴⁰ Yet, as Maryanne Hannan points out, beyond this quote the text refers to Narcissus exclusively as a boy or a boy lover (*puer*).⁴¹ Second, this is important since it allows for an ethical evaluation of narcissistic behavior as essentially "callous," which would be illegitimate otherwise, i.e., if Narcissus's behavior were a (self-defensive) reaction of a personality in a still (self-)developing stage amidst an environment that seeks to determine (if not dominate) him. Third, Narcissus's callousness justifies his being cursed by the Gods "to fall in love with his own image."⁴² However, as the text bears witness, the curse of the goddess Nemesis was not to fall in love with his own image, but to love without being loved back: "Love one day, so, himself, and not win over/The creature whom he loves!" (*"sic amet ipse licet, sic non potitur amato!"*⁴³). This curse might come true as soon as Narcissus sees himself reflected in the water and chooses himself as his love object. However, the curse's essence is rooted in the ban on being with the loved object/Other and not simply in loving his own image.

From this perspective, we suggest that the story unfolds its greatest potential when reread through a relational lens. Although the notion of relationality has gained considerable momentum in the social sciences in general⁴⁴ and especially in psychoanalysis over the last three decades,⁴⁵ the importance of relationships to psychic life and the development of symptoms was recognized early on. It was none other than Sigmund Freud who in the opening statement to *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* famously suggested that Individual and Social Psychology cannot but ultimately converge with one another:

³⁸ Ermann, *Der Andere in der Psychoanalyse*, 51–9.

³⁹ Morrison, *Essential Papers on Narcissism*, 1.

⁴⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 354–5. Throughout the whole article, we use Rolfe Humphries's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The numbers refer to the line numbers in Book Three.

⁴¹ Hannan, "A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Ovid's Myth of Narcissus and Echo," 560.

⁴² Morrison, *Essential Papers on Narcissism*, 1.

⁴³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 495–6.

⁴⁴ Kyriakidou and Özbilgin, *Relational Perspectives in Organizational Studies*; Gergen and Gergen, "Narrative and the Self as Relationship."

⁴⁵ Stern, "Interpersonal Psychoanalysis."

It is true that Individual Psychology is concerned with the individual man and explores the paths by which he seeks to find satisfaction for his instincts; but only rarely and under certain exceptional conditions is Individual Psychology in a position to disregard the relations of this individual to others. In the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent, and so from the very first Individual Psychology is at the same time Social Psychology as well in this extended but entirely justifiable sense of the words.⁴⁶

Despite these early recognitions, only around the 1990s did the theorizing of relationality gain greater importance and acceptance. This is due to the dominance of what Michael Ermann has described as the *intrapsychic* as well as the *relationship* paradigms.⁴⁷ The *intrapsychic paradigm* focuses on looking at a person's inner development and is essentially what Michael Balint has termed and critiqued as a One-Person-Psychology: the fact that external, objective truths determining the patient's inner processes can be discovered.⁴⁸ The *relationship paradigm* acknowledges that a person's psychic development is ultimately a function of (internalized) relationship experiences; a core assumption also of object-rationalists like Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, or Ronald Fairbairn. In contrast to both, the *relational paradigm*, which we will explore in the following, recognizes individual trajectories and accounts for the mutual becoming that takes place in a "third space," namely, the relational process.⁴⁹ As Harry S. Sullivan puts it early on, a "personality can never be isolated from the complex of interpersonal relations in which the person lives."⁵⁰ While the *relationship* paradigm underlines the importance of relationships, the *relational* paradigm stresses the shaping power of relational dynamics and sees in relations the primary form and vector of the individual's development. Individuals do not just meet each other in relationships, but individuality is continuously constituted and maintained within an intersubjective field. In other words, individuality is continuously socially constructed and constituted and maintained within an intersubjective field. As Stephen A. Mitchell writes, "mind is composed of relational configurations. ... Experience is understood as structured through interactions."⁵¹ It is thanks to the relational psychoanalytical approach that relationality has been brought back into the center of current debates.⁵²

While much of the (relational) psychoanalytic literature is directed toward understanding and interpreting the relational matrix of therapist and patient and thus the transformative nature of the lived experience within the therapeutic setting, we argue that the core relational assumptions apply to all (intensive and) lived relational experiences and thus can be used as an interpretative template toward further dynamics.⁵³ The following four conceptual shifts belong to the conceptual core of relational psychology and provide the cornerstone of our study of the story of Narcissus and Echo:

i. From sexual drives to relational affect: The first aspect concerns a shift from sexual drives to relational effects. Based on a critique of classical drive theory, relationalists like Harry Sullivan, William Fairbairn, and Sandor Ferenczi argue that "our dependence on human relationships is primary rather than derivative of drives."⁵⁴ What precedes and forms, both causally and temporally, the subject's motivation is not the drives but human relationships and how they get internalized to form the subject's motivations. This is not to say that sexual drives, one of the most innovative elements of early psychodynamic theorizing, ought to be overhauled. Rather, the binarity between drives *or* affects needs to be considered obsolete and replaced by an understanding of libidinal–sexual *and* relational drives as two interlinked systems.⁵⁵

⁴⁶ Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1f.

⁴⁷ Ermann, *Der Andere in der Psychoanalyse*, 12.

⁴⁸ Balint, "Changing Therapeutic Aims and Techniques in Psycho-Analysis," 123.

⁴⁹ Greenberg/Mitchell call this "third space" the "relational matrix," and Atwood/Stolorow name it the "intersubjective context"; see Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*; Stolorow and Atwood, "Toward a Science of Human Experience."

⁵⁰ Sullivan, *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*, 10.

⁵¹ Mitchell, *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis*, 3–4.

⁵² For an overview, refer to Hirsch, *The Interpersonal Tradition*.

⁵³ Only recently has relational psychoanalysis started being used as a reference toward the interpretation of literary texts (see Ruddick, "Beyond the Fragmented Subject") or cultural artefacts like movies (see Hamburger, *Film Psychoanalysis*).

⁵⁴ Taub, "A Confusion of Tongues between Psychoanalysis and Philosophy," 512.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 517.

ii. *From repression to dissociation of the unconscious*: The second aspect marks the transition from repression to dissociation.⁵⁶ Instead of jumping to a moral evaluation, relational psychology uses the concept of dissociation to draw attention to the operationalization of the subject's disarticulation and disentanglement from its (social) environment. According to Donnel B. Stern "dissociation allows to avoid the formulation of experience that we cannot even acknowledge belongs to us."⁵⁷ In doing so, it suggests that a state of psychic equilibrium is created by means of an "unconscious refusal to articulate or realize these aspects of our subjectivity."⁵⁸ Dissociation thus detaches the person from the lived experience that the person relationally shapes with others, rendering encounters void of attachment. Further, dissociation needs to be differentiated between depersonalization and derealization. In depersonalization, a person detaches all affect from the body, thus splitting the self into mind and body. In derealization, a person feels disconnected from the world as if experiencing it through a thick layer of fog. In both cases, dissociation serves a regulatory function. To tackle the unconscious anxieties that the individual develops by merely being with Others in the world, the individual either disconnects himself emotionally from the world or splits itself to encapsulate (and thereby protect) the self.

iii. *From symbolic representation to relational enactment*: Further, relational psychology shifts the focus from symbolic phantasies as a form of communication between parts of the self toward the analysis of relationship enactments as a circular dynamic of transference and countertransference.⁵⁹ Enactment is understood as a self-replicating pattern of experiences and behaviors that aims to actualize "the nuclear configurations of self and other that constitute a person's character. Such patterns of conduct may include provoking others to act in predetermined ways, so that a thematic isomorphism is created between the ordering of the subjective and the interpersonal fields."⁶⁰ What is essential to such an understanding of enactment is that it is constituted by and simultaneously constitutes specific modes of (communicative) interactions. Seen this way, the relational paradigm emphasizes the importance of culturally rooted scripts and addresses the importance of socially acquired meanings for the creation of unconscious desires and needs.

iv. *From the Freudian to the intrapsychic and relational unconscious*: Finally, relationalists have a rather ambivalent relationship to Freud's notion of the unconscious. In their view, the concept of the unconscious should be transformed into a relational unconscious.⁶¹ The latter conceptualizes a third, in-between, and enclosing space within which two subjects are engaged and execute their unconscious entanglement. There are two crucial aspects of the theory of relational unconsciousness that are important for our analysis. First, the theory values the unknown and unknowable (underlying) relationship dynamics that shape subjects' encounter with one another. Second, it draws attention to the fact that while the subject can know with certainty what it thinks of the/its Other, the Other's stance toward the subject can never become totally disclosable. A merit of this approach is that relationship patterns are not seen as static but as dynamic representations of historically developed intrapsychic processes that result from the subjects' immediate interactions as they unfold through time.

From our viewpoint, relational psychoanalysis can be reappropriated to do justice to the multiple layers of which storylines and biographies are composed. The relational unconscious has most commonly been used for an in-depth interpretation of psychoanalyst-patient relationships. As Peter Wolson argues, "transference and countertransference provoke an unconscious enactment, which consists of a co-created infantile drama emanating from the internal worlds of analyst and analysand."⁶² Given the fruitful insights such case analyses have yielded, we suggest that the relational unconscious concept can also be used to analyze further social-relational processes. As we intend to show by reading Ovid's text on Narcissus and Echo, the relational paradigm can highlight the backstories of the involved persons (*dramatis personae*), their individual

⁵⁶ For a panoramic theoretical overview and a clinical application of the concept of dissociation within the relational paradigm, see Bradfield, "The Dissociation of Lived Experience."

⁵⁷ Stern, "Dissociation and Unformulated Experience," 660.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Stern, *Partners in Thought Working with Unformulated Experience, Dissociation, and Enactment*.

⁶⁰ Stolorow and Atwood, *Structures of Subjectivity*, 71.

⁶¹ For a more current overview of the concept, refer to Wachtel, "The Relationality of Everyday Life."

⁶² Wolson, "Working with the Relational Unconscious," 212.

development up to the moment they encounter each other, as well as how they mutually influence each other to determine each other's further development. As Ruthellen Josselson et al. rightfully suggest, "relationships, because they have (always shifting) meaning at unconscious and affective, as well as cognitive, levels, become exceedingly challenging to render in language, let alone with the precision of terminology require[d] in science."⁶³ Yet, as we would like to counterargue, therein lies the advantage of the relational reading: In managing the complexity of relationships by obviating the monosemantics lurking in every specific interpretative perspective, while being aware of the limitations of every retelling.

We now move on to explicate Ovid's text on Narcissus and Echo from a relational perspective, showing how such a relational reading can underpin a "relational model of subjectivity."

3 Rereading Ovid: Narcissus and Echo as Tale of Two Interrelated Equals

Ovid's ingeniousness lies in laying out a perfect template for the prototypical narrative of co-dependent development. He presents his subjects, provides some background information that explains how they ended up at the place where they met, and then starts describing their encounter in detail. After both characters have undergone their respective transformations as a result of their individual stories and encounters, a reunion occurs, bringing the narrative to an end and allowing for a series of questions. Following this pattern, we propose four acts to retell the story. The first act is a sort of prologue, a *Vorabend*, where we provide each character's backstory. The second act retells the encounter of the two *sympotagonists*. It contains two scenes: a first in which both Echo and Narcissus orbit each other and become interwoven in the phantasies of their respective other, and a second in which they collide with each other and thereby also with their own and each other's reality. The third act consists of Echo's and Narcissus's individual transformations, followed by the fourth act, where Echo and Narcissus finally meet and merge in ether.

3.1 Act 1: Prologue

Echo was a lively and talkative Oread, i.e., a mountain nymph associated in the prevailing collective imaginary of Ovid's time with the powers of Artemis, the goddess of hunting, meaning that Echo was also attributed with certain feminine and sexual qualities. Echo incurred the wrath of Hera by stalling her, the queen of the gods and the goddess of women, marriage, family, and childbirth, through lengthy conversations, giving Echo's sister nymphs enough time to avoid getting caught *in flagranti* with Zeus, Hera's husband and king of the gods. Hera found out that Echo was deceiving her, and to punish her, Hera stripped Echo of the ability to take the dialogical initiative, thus condemning her to speak by repeating the last words addressed to her.

Two aspects of Echo's background story are notable from a relational perspective. First, it was Echo who was punished despite not participating in the sexual act itself and despite her courageous and protective attitude toward her sisters. Second, the form of her punishment is particularly severe. The ability to initiate and steer self-expression through communication is central to the human condition. Being stripped of this ability causes a regression into an early stage of childhood development where semantic communication is not yet possible. Young children repeat words and phrases not as a form of self-expression but as a method of language acquirement, a phenomenon unsurprisingly called "echolalia." Both these aspects suggest a somewhat childlike, preoedipal character, wherein Echo possesses a nymph's (woman's) body but the relational capacities of a child. Her liveliness and willingness to put herself in danger for her sisters – without ever joining in the sexual act – as well as the nature of the curse are indicative of the oral hunger mirrored in and

⁶³ Josselson et al., *The Meaning of Others*, 5.

through Echo's relationship with Narcissus. From the outset of the drama, Echo's hunger sets the tone for her mode of relationalization with Narcissus and hints at (one of) the sources of the relationship's disruption.

After being informed regarding the curse on Echo, a second one follows. Narcissus, son of the Naiad water nymph Liriope, was the offspring of Liriope's rape by the river god Cephissus. The motif of sexual reification and violation repeats itself throughout Narcissus's upbringing. From an early age, the extraordinarily beautiful Narcissus was attracted to the gaze and desires of others. While he fended off these desires with a stance of "pride,"⁶⁴ he could not protect himself from others' judgment and their (secondary narcissistic) anger. His defiance caused one of his rejected lovers to invoke Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, who saw it fit to curse Narcissus to "Love one day, so, himself, and not win over/The creature whom he loves!"⁶⁵ It is Tiresias, the blind oracle, who gives us a cryptic glimpse of Narcissus's fate. Upon being asked by Liriope whether her son will grow old/mature ("*tempora matura*"⁶⁶), Tiresias answers that this can be the case only if he "never knows himself" ("*si se non noverit*"⁶⁷).

This prelude is of great importance and both the self-fulfilling prophecy of the oracle, and the curse can be interpreted, from a relational psychoanalytic perspective, as a result of dissociation. As Elizabeth F. Howell points out, "while the Greeks thought the cause of Narcissus's problem was punishment from the gods, we can see it today as the result of dissociative processes."⁶⁸ The latter is to be found in the fact that "Narcissus's life became a closed intrapersonal system."⁶⁹ The dissociative model that Howell suggests according to which the self splits itself to become a self-sufficient "closed system" as a means to avoid dependency on toxic others is insightful for this scene. By withdrawing himself, Narcissus's intention can be interpreted either as an attempt to protect himself from the toxic and pervasive experiences he had to endure or as mechanisms to overcome and tackle self-sufficiently.

3.2 Act 2: Unheard and Untouched

3.2.1 Scene 1: Orbiting

In the first stage of their encounter, both protagonists observe each other from a safe distance, projecting their own needs onto each other arrogantly. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Echo. Upon seeing Narcissus, Echo "burned [*incaluit*] ... as when sulphur/Smeared on the rim of torches, catches fire/When other fire comes near it."⁷⁰ In Narcissus, she sees the chance to fulfill all she wishes for and needs; yet she is deprived of him. Her inability to take the initiative fuels this idealization and keeps her restrained even after being asked to reveal herself.

On the other hand, Narcissus, separated from his hunting party and lost, appears strangely vexing toward Echo. His words signal an interest and openness to meet the unknown other; they appear playful and daunting. From what follows, we must infer that Narcissus is also entrapped in a naive fantasy in which the Other is without desire and thus without threat to his integrity. Narcissus hears Echo; he calls out to her, but she remains hidden. They interact with each other in an impeded fashion, given the limitations of Echo's speech. However, out of this crippled communication – Echo just repeats Narcissus's last syllables or words – uncomfortable curiosity grows in Narcissus, who has also never developed the ability for proper, mature, and complete communication out of fear of being harassed. Echo seems to use this to her advantage. She

⁶⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 357.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 495–6.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 347.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 348.

⁶⁸ Howell, "Narcissism, a Relational Aspect of Dissociation," 52.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 371–4.

encourages Narcissus's longing by adopting a mysterious aura, remaining hidden, and preparing her exodus to present herself to Narcissus only through her voice.

Hearing as a communicative modality is essential to this stage of the story's development. Given that Echo cannot initiate a discussion, what she hears is the only cue she has left. And against all odds, she seems to use it masterfully to hook Narcissus. On the other hand, Narcissus's perception of Echo rests solely on hearing Echo's particular way of reproducing what she hears. Yet, for him, it is not peculiar but exhilarating and unique (compared to what he has been used to). Ignorant of Echo's situation, he hears Echo's repetitions as a form of authentic expression and does not register them as deficient. Derrida is correct when commenting that Echo does not merely "resonate,"⁷¹ as Nancy previously argues, but that she "manages to produce a totally unforeseeable event for Narcissus."⁷²

Undoubtedly sexual drives, as classical Freudian theory underlines, are at play the moment where Narcissus and Echo encounter each other. Yet such interpretation cannot account exhaustively as the reason that triggers Narcissus and Echo to desire each other. Rather, it is a series of events that brought them together and determined the further unraveling of the(ir) story. Their encounter has been meticulously prepared through their unique biographies and past experiences (for instance, Echo's impossibility to articulate herself in a complete way or Narcissus's traumatic experiences of harassment due to his beauty). Therefore, instead of a reductionist understanding that is based only on libido, the relational paradigm provides us with a more holistic understanding of the subjects' becoming that allows us to consider more than one reason that has been amassed and internalized by the subjects and that can explain causally the subjects' relationalization and encountering. This is not to say that Narcissus's and Echo's respective pasts determine how they encountered and reacted to each other inescapably. However, it is to say that the course of their story could have been different if it were not for their individual backgrounds.

3.2.2 Scene 2: Colliding

In the next scene of their encounter, the phantasies discharge. The play with the unseen and the unheard is destroyed once and for all as soon as both characters are confronted with each other's appearance. The collision is sparked by Narcissus's invitation "let us get together."⁷³ Although undoubtedly sexually connotated, this phrase could also be read as an invitation to a spiritual communion. Reacting to this invitation, Echo storms toward Narcissus with outstretched arms, illustrating her willingness to *be* with Narcissus. Two questions regarding Echo's behavior are central here: How can we explain this sudden shift from reluctant reservedness to an absolute self-giving embrace? To what extent is Echo driven (only) by sexual desire? At first glance, we might surmise that her reaction is triggered by a misunderstanding caused by an unfortunate play of words. Yet, such an interpretation would grasp only the most basic level of interaction, sidestepping the unconscious dynamics at play here. After all, if it were purely sexually driven, Echo's sudden change would be incoherent both regarding her previous behavior – orbiting obscurely and enigmatically around Narcissus – and the fact that she was the one who refrained from her sisters' liaison with Zeus. Therefore, it is more plausible to assume that Echo's repressed (oral) desires take the better of her and that she, in all her need to be with someone, lets all sense of reason and respect for boundaries dissolve and becomes exuberant in the act of psychic desperation and hope.

Narcissus's reaction is no less drastic and unmediated. Not only does he resist Echo, but he also cries out with unprecedented cruelty:

By chance Narcissus
Lost track of his companions, started calling
"Is anybody here?" and "Here!" said Echo.

⁷¹ Derrida, *For Strasbourg*, 63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 386.

He looked around in wonderment, called louder
 "Come to me!" "Come to me!" came back the answer.
 He looked behind him, and saw no one coming;
 "Why do you run from me?" and heard his question
 Repeated in the woods. "Let us get together!"
 There was nothing Echo would ever say more gladly,
 "Let us get together!" And, to help her words,
 Out of the woods she came, with arms all ready
 To fling around his neck. "Keep your hands off," he cried, "and do not touch me! I would die before I give you a chance at me."
 "I give you a chance at me," and that was all
 She ever said thereafter.⁷⁴

The moment a real Other, an Other for which he has shown some genuine interest, steps into Narcissus's life), existential anxieties are triggered, forbidding him even to give the Other (whom he so insistently invited) a chance to get to know him. Furthermore, and leaving no room for a possible misinterpretation, he shames Echo with such an absolute and harsh statement so as to gain as much distance from her as possible. This tragic moment of repudiation and subsequent withdrawal marks the end of their quick encounter and begins the transition to the painful metamorphosis of the two individuals.

Both Narcissus and Echo remain the protagonists of their own storylines, which are woven into their respective pasts. At the end of this agonizing encounter, nothing seems to have changed; thus, they find refuge in despair. But this is not to say that no transformation was initiated through their encounter. Had they come together and had their orbiting led to a fusion rather than a collision, they still would have crucially, indispensably, and necessarily changed the course of each other's storyline. Yet the transformation they caused was something else entirely.

However, this is exactly the point where we see the manifestation of the relational concept of the enactment. As Stern argues,

circumstances—interactions with others—sometimes conspire in such a way that the dissociated way of being threatens to erupt into awareness. Interaction, for example, might seem to be moving in a way that we unconsciously perceive as a threat to wrest us into a position in which a certain kind of humiliation cannot be avoided. That must not happen. The only course of action left to the dissociator who needs to protect himself from such imminent danger is the externalization of the way of being that one must not take on oneself—the *interpersonalization of the dissociation*. Enactment is the last-ditch unconscious defensive effort to avoid being the person one must not be, accomplished by trying to force onto the other what defines the intolerable identity.⁷⁵

What is essential to such an understanding of enactment is that it is constituted by and simultaneously constitutes specific modes of (communicative) interactions. Seen this way, the relational paradigm emphasizes the importance of culturally rooted scripts and addresses the importance of socially acquired meanings for the creation of unconscious desires and needs.

3.3 Act 3: Separation, Despair and Dissolving

In the third act, Echo and Narcissus are left to themselves and are about to undergo their famous metamorphoses. In the case of Echo, the sequence of her transformation might not be as lengthy as that of Narcissus, yet it is no less vivid or illustrative:

Ashamed, in the leafy forests, in lonely caverns.
 But still her love clings to her and increases

⁷⁴ Ibid., 382–91.

⁷⁵ Stern, *Partners in Thought Working with Unformulated Experience*, 14.

And grows on suffering; she cannot sleep,
 She frets and pines, becomes all gaunt and haggard,
 Her body dries and shrivels till voice only
 And bones remain, and then she is voice only
 For the bones are turned to stone. She hides in woods
 And no one sees her now along the mountains,
 But all may hear her, for her voice is living.⁷⁶

Only after Echo's literal vanishing into thin air do we find Narcissus again where we first met him: alone and tired after a hunt, beside an untouched, mirrorlike spring, similar to the one where he met Echo. However, instead of Echo moving behind the leaves, a spring catches Narcissus's attention; a spring that in some accounts of the myth bears his name⁷⁷ but in other accounts bears the name of his mother, the raped Liriope.⁷⁸

As stated, Echo's development is explicitly linked to the rejection that she suffers from Narcissus, presumably for simply daring to think that she could be with him, and to which she reacts with humiliation. She utters: "I give you a chance at me but I am not worthy as my beauty she is nothing compared to yours."⁷⁹ This resigned attitude is further underlined by her anachoresis, which compels her to hide from the world and dwell in secluded forests and lonely caves. Nevertheless, as the story tells us, this strategy does not satisfy her oral desires and needs. Her longing to love and be loved only grows stronger, causing her to despair. Much in line with this oral motif, she then becomes anorectic, starves herself to death, and is reduced to only a voice, thus forfeiting her body and the desires it houses.

While Narcissus shares Echo's essential elements of development, his demise is more complicated as he attempts to satisfy his hunger for love through a relationship with a part of himself. As a close reading of Ovid's text reveals, it is not himself with whom Narcissus falls in love, as is often falsely assumed. When looking into the pool and seeing this image, whose dreamy beauty Ovid describes in great detail, Narcissus is initially unaware that the image is his reflection and that he and the reflection are one. A further form of dissociation, a kind of depersonalization that the psychoanalyst Paul Ferdinand Schilder has analyzed and described as a state of estrangement of the personality, seems to be at work here. This estrangement is commonly associated with experiences of trauma, which in the case of Narcissus has to do with the breaching of his integrity by the overstepping Echo. As Schilder puts it, in depersonalization one's own "actions seem automatic to him; he observes his own actions like a spectator. The outer world seems strange to him and has lost its character of reality."⁸⁰ This is for Schilder the case with this type of patient, who like Narcissus, "has been admired very much by the parents for his intellectual and physical gifts"⁸¹ and where "a great amount of admiration and erotic interest had been spent upon the child."⁸² The latter is, in turn, commonly associated with experiences of trauma and in the case of Narcissus, a re-traumatization triggered by the breach of his integrity by the overstepping Echo.

However, Narcissus's dissociation from the social world and his reorientation toward himself does not suffice – much to the dislike of the relationalists – to save him. The reason is that the image that Narcissus chose to quench his thirst is unsustainable since, in Ovid's words, it is a "reflection lacking substance"⁸³, an "unbodied hope"⁸⁴ or "shadow"⁸⁵ that Narcissus mistakenly recognizes as a substance. "I love him, and I cannot seem to find him!"⁸⁶ Narcissus cries into the surrounding woods, imploring them to become witnesses to his

⁷⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 395–406.

⁷⁷ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.31.7.

⁷⁸ Wieseler, *Narkissos: Eine kunstmythologische Abhandlung*, 5 where he quotes Vibius Sequester, *De Fluminibus, Fontibus etc.*, 22.

⁷⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 391.

⁸⁰ Schilder, "The Treatment of Depersonalization," 258.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 435.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 421.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 422.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 453.

fate. Yet what is the nature of his love? While sexual attraction lingers over the text, it is obvious that it is not only looks that bind Narcissus to this Other. Rather, what stimulates Narcissus's interests in the beautiful figure in the water is a curious and unprecedented display of synchronicity with his emotions and effects. When he cries, the Other cries; when he reaches out, so does the Other. The moment when Narcissus realizes that (t)his reflection and he are the same is also the moment when he realizes that he will not be able to embrace himself. Moreover, the impossibility of being with him(self), this unreciprocated projection of all his needs and desires onto an Other who proves to be himself and from whom he is separated by – "hymen" in Greek – of water, becomes the source of Narcissus's despair. The moment in which he attests that "he is myself"⁸⁷ is the moment that the prophecy is fulfilled and Narcissus recognizes/knows himself *as, in, and through* himself, leading him immediately to wish to escape his own body. What fuels his deadly sorrow is the realization that no matter how much he tries, he will never be able to be with the Other physically. Just like Echo, his body begins to fade away, suggesting another splitting of the self from the body and its basic needs.

At this very point, Narcissus decides or allows – even if unwillingly and unknowingly – Nemesis's curse to befall him. When bending over the pool's water and seeing the yet unknown image, Narcissus is fascinated by this strange and irreducible Other. Little by little, though, Narcissus falls in love with familiar characteristics, not because they are his but because he can relate to them. What initially attracted him was a bodyless hope and a shadow that he deemed as substance and that made him "wonder,"⁸⁸ as Ovid says, probably for the first time in his life. As soon as this first shock and awe settle down, Narcissus starts becoming aware of the fact that it is the "eyes, [like] twin stars,"⁸⁹ the "locks as comely/As those of Bacchus or the god Apollo,"⁹⁰ the "smooth cheeks,"⁹¹ the "ivory neck,"⁹² and the "flush of color rising/In the fair whiteness"⁹³ that bind him to this being in the water. It is no longer a radical Other that astonishes and startles him but a mere someone else – concrete, approachable, and identifiable. By falling in love with the countenance (*Antlitz*) of this radical, wonderful Other via the realization that he has fallen for someone else, an Other (*das Andere*), Narcissus comes to recognize that this someone else is at the same time someone opposite to him, a Not-I (*Nicht-Ich*). Narcissus tries to kiss the else, dips his hands in the water to embrace the else, observes his gaze fixed upon him, sees the lips of the Not-I surfacing from the water and opening to join his own, notes that the hands of this else stretch to touch his own every time he beseeches the spirits of the surrounding trees to redeem him from his suffering, and watches as this different person opens his mouth and talks back to him following every boast that he, the figure in the water, should be thankful to him, Narcissus, for offering himself so willingly after having rebutted everyone else. But still, this Other confronts, defies, and eludes all his futile attempts to literally grasp, touch, determine, and identify him in order to make him his own. It is only then, after having been attracted by this Other and having realized that this Other will never be determined and possessed by him, that Narcissus becomes aware of the fact that he has fallen in love with his own image, that he has made another out of himself, and that he has thus fallen in love with an Other that he himself has created out of himself:

The truth at last. He is myself! I feel it,
I know my image now. I burn with love
Of my own self; I start the fire I suffer.
What shall I do? Shall I give or take the asking?
What shall I ask for? What I want is with me,
My riches make me poor. If I could only
Escape from my own body! if I could only
— How curious a prayer from any lover—

⁸⁷ Ibid., 463.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 422.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 425.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 426.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 427.

Be parted from my love! And now my sorrow
 Is taking all my strength away;
 I know I have not long to live, I shall die early,
 And death is not so terrible, since it takes
 My trouble from me; I am sorry only
 The boy I love must die: we die together.⁹⁴

Can Narcissus touch, see, smell, kiss, and hug himself? Yes. Can Narcissus touch, see, smell, kiss, and hug the version of himself residing in the water? No. Is it himself with whom Narcissus falls in love? No, or else he would be able to touch, see, smell, kiss, and hug him. Is it the countenance (*Antlitz*) of the radical Other, any Other (*das Andere*), or a Self able to elude its exterior self-determination, the Not-I (*Nicht-Ich*), with whom Narcissus falls in love? No, no, and again no. What Narcissus loves is this astounding Other in the form of himself – someone who attracts and fixes his gaze, who seems to be as close and similar and identical to him as only his own self can be, and who, since he cannot be appropriated by Narcissus, can only be someone else.

This is where the key feature of relational psychoanalysis manifests itself, namely the belief in the formative potential of a relational matrix in which the self is understood as a self-in-context of lived relationships. As Stolorow notes, the relationality that emerges through the intersubjective relationalization of two individuals “denotes neither a mode of experiencing nor a sharing of experience, but the contextual precondition for having any experience at all. In our vision, intersubjective fields and experiential worlds are equi-primordial, mutually constituting one another in circular fashion.”⁹⁵ The space in which Echo and Narcissus find each other may end up being different from the one intended. However, this space is still the joint result of what both Echo and Narcissus have co-created. As such, they still carry within themselves their exposure and relationalization to each other.

3.4 Act 4: Epilogue: Grief and Reunion in Ether

We now come to the brief but significant fourth episode in which Echo revisits the grieving Narcissus. In the moment Narcissus despairs, Echo reemerges. She is angry but manages to attune herself to his feelings, still echoing his words but without the confusion of the previous episode. Echo has been transformed and has become an echo of her previous self. Yet, this has granted her a sovereignty and confidence that she did not have before. She no longer minds producing *an* echo (the acoustic phenomenon describing sound that follows a previous sound and reflects back at the listener with a delay) if not necessarily wanting to be *the* Echo (the embodied person cursed never to be able to commence a conversation but only repeat what has been addressed to her). “Alas!”⁹⁶ cries out Narcissus, addressing his pity to this beloved other that he has made of himself; “Alas!”⁹⁷ cries out the echo of the Echo to her beloved Other who has become a shadow of his former self. “Farewell, dear boy,/Beloved in vain!”⁹⁸ are Narcissus’s last words to his beloved in the water. “Farewell, dear boy,/Beloved in vain!”⁹⁹ are also the last words that Echo addresses to Narcissus, her beloved. Narcissus dies, the nymphs prepare a pyre, but “when they sought his body, they found nothing,/Only a flower with a yellow center/Surrounded with white petals.”¹⁰⁰ In this scene, Ovid links the void that Narcissus’s missing body leaves behind with the flower that stands where the body should be. As suggested above, Echo, too, has changed. And so, in this final scene, both meet once again to conclude the transformative journey that their individual trajectories and their mutual encounters set them upon.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 463–77.

⁹⁵ Stolorow, “Intersubjective-Systems Theory,” 384–5 FN1.

⁹⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 495.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 496.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 497–8.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 498–9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 508–10.

4 Outlook: Toward a Psychoanalytically Informed Model of Relational Subjectivity

We began by declaring that we would treat Ovid's text as a template for a subjectivity that finds itself in a state of continuous becoming. We hypothesized that this was to be derived from the effects of the encounters between subjects. What, then, are the conceptual and philosophical components of the relational model of subjectivity that we can extrapolate from our relational rereading of Ovid's text? What role does listening play in this process? As mentioned at the end of the introduction, if reread from a relational perspective, Ovid's text helps us qualify and corroborate the "relational type of subjectivity" as a form of decentered, social-ontological, collective, and processual/dynamic subjectivity production.

Every encounter creates a relationship, the consequences of which inevitably unravel to bind subjects to one another even after their separation. This relational entanglement of the subject results in *decentering* the subject. The subject is decentered because its becoming does not rely solely on itself but on its relationalization with others. However, these Others that decenter the subject embody and engender different social structures, roles, and protocols. Through every encounter with the subject, these Others do not infuse themselves only. They also embody social structures, roles, and protocols that they vectorize in the subject's becoming. The story of Narcissus and Echo might have been different if they had not been caught among the power dynamics, enmities, feuds, and rivalries of gods like Zeus and Hera; if Echo had not needed to fulfill a concrete social role and act loyally to the other nymphs, her peer-group; or, finally, if Narcissus had developed a different way of reacting to or coping with the advancements of his suitors. Therefore, the subject's relationalization results not only in the subject's decentering but also in the subject's *social-ontologization* and ascription in different social embeddings. This decentering relationalization couples the subject to different institutional or societal structures that henceforth determine its biography as soon as it enters a relation with another.

In addition, the subject's social-ontological and decentering relationalization renders subjectivation into a process of *collectivization*: The subject is not the product of a linear, self-centered development but the result of processes of socialization and inter-personal encounters that the subject embodies and synthesizes within itself. In the case of Narcissus and Echo, although it might seem at first sight that what we are dealing with here is merely interpersonal relation, we are actually dealing with the encounter of two collective events. Narcissus and Echo are not two bodies that each contain one, singular identity, but two persons carrying a collective identity that they bring into the encounter. First, due to the plurality of the different social structures that calibrate it, the subject is a collective entity embodying all those different modes of subjectivation. Narcissus is not only the son of Liriope but also the offspring of rape, a citizen of Thespies, someone who is considered young and attractive according to the prevailing criteria, the object of Echo's desire, etc. Similar considerations apply to Echo. She might be a nymph by birth, but she is also a friend of the other nymphs, someone perhaps as young as Narcissus who chooses to act in solidarity with her peers to protect them, a stigmatized social outcast and pariah after Hera cursed her, a nomad or refugee forced to wander since she could no longer communicate and subsequently be understood as the prevailing norms demand; finally, a love interest to whom Narcissus, in contrast to his treatment of the majority of his rejected lovers, decided to attach himself and actively pursue. Second, the subject needs to be addressed in a collective way in order (for us) to do justice to the subject's different possibilities of becoming. Narcissus is not the exclusive effect of only one of the above modes of subjectivation. Rather, he is simultaneously the outcome of each one of those modes of subjectivation and all of them together. Narcissus is the son of Liriope *and* offspring of rape *and* a citizen of Thespies *and* a very handsome young man etc. Equally, Echo is a nymph *and* a friend of the other nymphs *and* someone who is solidary with her peers, *and* a stigmatized social outcast and pariah after Hera cursed her, etc. Third, the subject is collective since it is not only the result of the relation with its/the Other but also the result of the subject's entire individual biography paired with the entire individual biography that the Other brings into the relation. Narcissus's comportment toward Echo might have been different if Echo had not been traumatized by Hera's curse and had not been withdrawn and cautious in her rapprochement with him, which made her attractive to Narcissus. Analogously, we do not know what drove Narcissus to be seen by Echo on this – only ex-post fatal – day in the forest. Perhaps he had been worried about the continuous efforts of his prospective

lovers to “touch him”¹⁰¹ and sought some respite, or he could have followed just another social protocol like hunting.¹⁰²

Further, the continuous reconfigurations that the subject experiences through every encounter with Others and their tense and conflictual pasts render it impossible for the subject to remain or become integral, uniform, and congealed. The subject’s trajectory is not an optimization of its abilities, a teleological process toward the subject’s completion, or an expression of its capacities and qualities. Rather, the subject’s becoming is an erratic process shifting with every encounter, fluctuating, and oscillating between the possibilities that every encounter brings along with it and deviating from previously prescribed paths as soon as a new encounter emerges. The subject’s collectivizing and decentering relationalization forces the subject to be reconfigured, manifesting thereby the *processual* and *dynamic* character of its processual becoming.

Finally, the myth of Narcissus and Echo demonstrates the constitutive character of listening within the process of the subject’s becoming. In *Listening*, Jean-Luc Nancy differentiates between two forms of listening: the one, *écouter*, refers to the physical activity of perceiving sounds and organizing them into words. The other form, *entendre*, refers to the attention needed to be given to Others when hearing them speak. This second form of listening has a productive functionality and accounts for a process of subjectivity production that unravels within the space of resonance created by listening. As Nancy puts it:

When one is listening, one is on the lookout for a subject, something (itself) that identifies *itself* by resonating from self to self, in itself and for itself, hence outside of itself, at once the same as and other than itself, one in the echo of the other, and this echo is like the very sound of its sense. But the sound of sense is how it refers to *itself* or how it *sends back to itself* [*s’envoie*] or *addresses itself*, and thus how it makes sense.¹⁰³

Narcissus’s and Echo’s primary mode of interaction occurs through listening and not through visual contact. Listening is the vector of their communication. The various stages of their relationalization – from recognition, identification, attraction, and the creation of expectations and anticipations to disappointment, despair, isolation, and transformation – are sonically instead of visually mediated. To be sure, visibility becomes quintessential in Narcissus’s story arc, and it is the perfidies of visibility that bring about Narcissus’s demise. However, Narcissus’s and Echo’s relationalization with each other and the promises or potentialities for the respective development accompanying their relationalization are based on the resonance of their voices. As such, listening acquires spatial characteristics. It provides the space where voices resonate; where subjects can experience the liminality of the selves they purport to be, share, and communicate (*partager*).¹⁰⁴ It is also a space that can lead to partition and dis/association. As Nancy writes:

To listen is to enter that spatiality by which, *at the same time*, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me: it opens me inside me as well as outside, and it is through such a double, quadruple, or sextuple opening that a “self” can take place. To be listening is to be *at the same time* outside and inside, to be open *from* without and *from* within, hence from one to the other and from one in the other.¹⁰⁵

Ovid’s text is a marvelous *mise en scène* of these tropes and modalities of subjectivation. Of course, we will never know whether Echo’s and Narcissus’s drama was inevitable, just as we will never know whether they

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 359.

¹⁰² In this light, what we call collective could equally appropriately be called “intersectional” in the feminist-sociological use of the term. See Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex;” Knapp, “Fragile Foundations, Strong Traditions, Situated Questioning;” Yuval-Davis, “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics;” Yuval-Davis, “Dialogical Epistemology – An Intersectional Resistance to the ‘Oppression Olympics;”” Wilson, *Situating Intersectionality*; Collins, “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas;” Hancock, *Intersectionality*.

¹⁰³ Nancy, *Listening*, 9. For a superb and recent general introduction into Nancy’s conceptualization of listening, its subjectivating effects, as well as the new type of community that it helps create, Lindberg, “Composition for Voices.” In an equally admirable, slightly older essay, Carrie Giunta tackles Nancy’s understanding of listening for cinematographic purposes while referencing Echo as a concrete example of the ambivalences of listening to which Nancy seeks to do justice through his concept of listening; Giunta, “Question of Listening.”

¹⁰⁴ Nancy, “Sharing Voices.”

¹⁰⁵ Nancy, *Listening*, 14.

would have behaved differently toward each other if they had brought different past experiences into the encounter. At the same time, we will never really know the level of significance of their past experiences and the extent to which they really influenced the course of events. Finally, we will never know what would have happened if the people that played a role in the development of Narcissus's and Echo's story (Hera, Zeus, the rapist Cephissus, etc.) had chosen to act differently.

However, what we can attest is that the subject is the result of relationships among participants within a certain historical/biographical dynamic and – most importantly – that it is impossible to create a direct causal link to one past event or to one past relationship that is exclusively determinant of the subject's structuration. This observation corresponds to a post-foundational understanding of the subject that is the contingent result of more than one mode of subjectivation.¹⁰⁶ The fact that this Other also is the intersection of more than one mode of subjectivation discloses the relation as having never been simply intersubjective but always already hyper-dyadic, which is to say – once again – collective. The relational reading to which we have subjected Ovid's text, namely, we have retold the events presented in the text from multiple perspectives and experimented with many possible outcomes, reveals the immanent constellational character of every relation. It is to Freud's credit that he recognized in the tale of Narcissus and Echo something that was not only diagnostic but also palliative against both psychical and social pathologies. As he mentions in "On Narcissism," if the ego is to develop "there must be something added – a new psychical action – in order to bring about narcissism."¹⁰⁷ It is just that this new psychical action does not originate in the subject but is implanted in it through the subject's entering into a relationship with its/the Other. Paraphrasing Jean Laplanche, who paraphrased Freud,¹⁰⁸ it would not be wrong to argue that the new Copernican revolution lies – as Ovid's Narcissus and Echo demonstrate – in realizing that "where Id was, there shall be relation."

Acknowledgments: We extend our sincere gratitude to our supportive anonymous reviewers. Their thoughtful feedback and insightful comments have played a vital role in shaping this text and refining its arguments. We are truly grateful for the time and effort they invested, which significantly helped us produce a sharper and more comprehensive work. We also wish to sincerely acknowledge the support of the Research Institute for Organizational Psychology (OPSY) at the University St. Gallen for covering the open access publication fees of this article. Their generous financial assistance has facilitated the dissemination of our research to a broader audience, promoting open and unrestricted access to scientific knowledge.

Author contributions: Both authors contributed equally to every stage of this manuscript, including idea conceptualization, text analysis and writing. Each author reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest: Authors state no conflict of interest.

References

- Adorno, Theodor W. "The Actuality of Philosophy." *Telos* 31:1 (1977), 120–33.
- Adorno, Theodor W. "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda." In *The Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, 118–37. New York: Urizen Books, 1978.
- Atwood, George E. and Robert D. Stolorow. *Structures of Subjectivity: Explorations in Psychoanalytic Phenomenology and Contextualism*. London/New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Balint, Michael. "Changing Therapeutic Aims and Techniques in Psycho-Analysis." *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 31 (1950), 117–24.

¹⁰⁶ Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*.

¹⁰⁷ Freud, "On Narcissism," 77.

¹⁰⁸ Paraphrasing Freud's dictum "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden," Jean Laplanche argues that "Wo Es war, wird (soll? muss?) immer noch Anderes sein." Laplanche, *Essays On Otherness*, 84.

- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. London: Verso, 2003.
- Bergmann, Martin S. "The Legend of Narcissus." *Otto Rank: A Centennial Tribute. [Special Issue]. American Imago* 41:4 (1984), 389–411.
- Bersani, Leo. *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Binet, Alfred. "Le fétichisme dans l'amour." *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 24 (1887), 142–67 & 252–75.
- Bradfield, Bruce. "The Dissociation of Lived Experience: A Relational Psychoanalytic Analysis of the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma." *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology* 6:4 (2011), 531–50.
- Brenkman, John. "Narcissus in Text." *The Georgia Review* 30:2 (1976), 293–327.
- Brown, Malcolm K. *The Narratives of Konon*. München: Saur, 2002.
- Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Edinburgh: Clarke, 1937.
- Campbell, Keith W. and Joshua D. Miller (eds.) *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings, and Treatments*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011.
- Cavarero, Adriana. *Inclinations. A Critique of Rectitude*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.
- Charcot, Jean-Martin and Valentin Magnan. "Inversion du sens génital." *Archives de Neurologie* III (1882), 53–60; IV (1882), 296–322.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas." *Annual Review of Sociology* 41:1 (2015), 1–20.
- Cooper, Arnold M. "Narcissism." In *American Handbook of Psychiatry*, edited by Silvano Arieti, 297–316. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1981.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1:1 (1989), 139–67.
- DeArmitt, Pleshette. *The Right to Narcissism: A Case for an Im-Possible Self-Love*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Derrida, Jacques. *For Strasbourg. Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.
- Derrida, Jacques. *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Work of Mourning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Derrida, Jacques. "There is No One Narcissism (Autobiophotographies)." In *Points. Interviews, 1974–1994*, edited by Elisabeth Weber, 196–215. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge, 1978.
- Ellis, Havelock. "Auto-Erotism: A Psychological Study." *The Alienist and Neurologist* 19 (1898), 260–99.
- Ermann, Michael. *Der Andere in der Psychoanalyse. Die intersubjektive Wende*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2014.
- Escobar, Arturo. *Pluriversal Politics. The Real and the Possible*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Etchegoyen, Horacio R. "Identification and its Vicissitudes." *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 66:1 (1985), 3–18.
- Fine, Reuben. *Narcissism, the Self, and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London: Hogarth Press, 1949.
- Freud, Sigmund. *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*. London/New York: Norton, 1940.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London/Vienna: The International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922.
- Freud, Sigmund. "On Narcissism. An Introduction." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 14*, 73–102. London: Hogarth Press, 1914.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. London/New York: Norton, 1910.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 1905.
- Gergen, Kenneth J. and Mary M. Gergen. "Narrative and the Self as Relationship." *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 21:3 (1988), 17–56.
- Giunta, Carrie. "Question of Listening: Nancean Resonance, Return and Relation in Charlie Chaplin." In *Nancy and Visual Culture*, edited by Carrie Giunta and Adrienne Janus, 55–72. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
- Green, André. *On Private Madness*. London: Karnac, 1997.
- Greenberg, Jay R. and Stephen A. Mitchell. *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Naturalism and Religion. Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Polity, 2002.
- Hamburger, Andreas. *Film Psychoanalysis. Relational Approaches to Film Interpretation*. London: Routledge, 2024.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Hannan, Maryanne. "A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Ovid's Myth of Narcissus and Echo." *Psychoanalytical Review* 79 (1992), 555–75.
- Hirsch, Irving. *The Interpersonal Tradition: The Origins of Psychoanalytic Subjectivity*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Hollander, John. *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Howell, Elizabeth F. "Narcissism, a Relational Aspect of Dissociation." *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 4:3 (2003), 51–71.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Josselson, Ruthellen, Amia Lieblich, and Dan P. McAdams (eds.) *The Meaning of Others: Narrative Studies of Relationships*. Washington: American Psychological Association Press, 2007.
- Johansson, Niclas. "Beyond Narcissism: They Multi-Layered Narcissus Reference in Hermann Hesse's *Narziss und Goldmund*." *German Life and Letters* 73 (2020), 270–96.
- Johansson, Niclas. *The Narcissus Theme from «Fin de Siècle» to Psychoanalysis Crisis of the Modern Self*. Bern: Lang, 2017.
- Kernberg, Otto F. *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism*. New York: Aronson, 1975.

- Kernberg, Otto F. "Contrasting Viewpoints Regarding the Nature and Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personalities. A Preliminary Communication." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 22:2 (1974), 255–67.
- Klein, Melanie. "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms." *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 27 (1946), 99–110.
- Knapp, Gudrun-Axeli. "Fragile Foundations, Strong Traditions, Situated Questioning: Critical Theory in German-Speaking Feminism." In *Adorno, Culture and Feminism*, edited by Maggie O'Neill, 119–40. London: Sage, 1999.
- Knoepfler, Denis. *La patrie de Narcisse. Un héros mythique enraciné dans le sol et dans l'histoire d'une cité grecque*. Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 2010.
- Kohut, Heinz. "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14:2 (1966), 243–72.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Tales of Love*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Kyriakidou, Olympia and Mustafa Özbilgin. *Relational Perspectives in Organizational Studies*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006.
- Laplanche, Jean. *Essays On Otherness*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Lindberg, Susanna. "Composition for Voices: Jean-Luc Nancy's Musical Subject." *Symposium. Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy* 28:1 (2024), 8–29.
- Lunbeck, Elizabeth. *The Americanization of Narcissism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Marchart, Oliver. *Post-Foundational Political Thought. Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.
- Massumi, Brian. "Foreword." In *A Thousand Plateaus*, edited by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, ix–xv. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Mitchell, Stephen A. *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Morrison, Andrew P. (ed.) *Essential Papers on Narcissism*. New York/London: New York University Press, 1986.
- Näcke, Paul. "Kritisches zum Kapitel der Normalen und Pathologischen Sexualität." *Archiv für Psychiatrie und Nervenkrankheiten* 32 (1989), 356–86.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc and Aurélien Barrau. *What's These Worlds Coming To?*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. "Sharing Voices." In *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, edited by Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, 211–60. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990.
- Orlowsky, Ursula and Rebekka Orlowsky. *Narziß und Narzißmus im Spiegel von Literatur, Bildender Kunst und Psychoanalyse. Vom Mythos zur leeren Selbstinszenierung*. München: Fink, 1992.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018.
- Padovan, Caio. "The Medical-Psychiatric Origins of the Psychoanalytical Concept of Narcissism." *Ágora* 20:3 (2017), 645–55.
- Pausanias. *Description of Greece*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918.
- Plutarch. *Œuvres Morales*. Vol. 6. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974.
- Pulver, Sydney E. "Narcissism. The Term and the Concept." In *Essential Papers on Narcissism*, edited by Andrew P. Morrison, 91–111. New York: New York University Press, 1986.
- Rank, Otto. "Ein Beitrag zum Narcissismus." *Jahrbuch für Psychoanalytische und Psychopathologische Forschungen* 3 (1911), 401–26.
- Renger, Almut-Barbara. "Narrating Narcissus, Reflecting Cognition: Illusion, Disillusion, 'Self-Cognition' and 'Love as Passion' in Ovid and Beyond." *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* 3:2 (2017), 9–32.
- Renger, Almut-Barbara (ed.) *Narcissus. Ein Mythos von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace*. Stuttgart & Weimar: Metzler, 2002.
- Renger, Almut-Barbara (ed.) *Mythos Narziß. Texte von Ovid bis Jacques Lacan*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1999.
- Ruddick, Lisa. "Beyond the Fragmented Subject." In *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Vera J. Camden, 256–74. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2021.
- Sandler, Joseph, Ethel S. Person, and Peter Fonagy (eds.) *Contemporary Freud. Turning Points and Critical Issues: Freud's 'On Narcissism: An Introduction'*. London: Karnac, 1991.
- Schilder, Paul F. "The Treatment of Depersonalization." *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 15:4 (1939), 258–66.
- Schlagmann, Klaus. "Zur Rehabilitation von Narziß Mythos und Begriff." *Integrative Therapie* 34:4 (2008), 443–68.
- Sheils, Barry and Julie Walsh. *Narcissism, Melancholia and the Subject of Community*. New York: Palgrave, 2017.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Echo." *New Literary History* 24:1 (1993), 17–43.
- Stern, Donnel B. "Dissociation and Unformulated Experience: A Psychoanalytic Model of Mind." In *Dissociation and the Dissociative Disorders: Past, Present, Future*, edited by Martin J. Dorahy, Steven N. Gold and John A. O'Neil, 654–63. London: Routledge, 2023.
- Stern, Donnel B. "Interpersonal Psychoanalysis: History and Current Status." *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 53:1 (2017), 69–94.
- Stern, Donnel B. *Partners in Thought Working with Unformulated Experience, Dissociation, and Enactment*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Stolorow, Robert D. "Intersubjective-Systems Theory: A Phenomenological-Contextualist Psychoanalytic Perspective." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues. The International Journal of Relational Perspectives* 23:4 (2013), 383–9.
- Stolorow, Robert D. and George E. Atwood. "Toward a Science of Human Experience." In *The Intersubjective Perspective*, edited by Robert D. Stolorow and George E. Atwood, 15–30. New York: Jason Aronson, 1994.
- Sullivan, Harry S. *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*. London/New York: Norton, 1953.
- Symington, Neville. *Narcissism: A New Theory*. London: Karnac, 1993.
- Taub, Gadi. "A Confusion of Tongues between Psychoanalysis and Philosophy: Is the Controversy Over Drive versus Relational theory a Philosophical One?" *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 90:3 (2009), 507–27.

- Telios, Thomas. *Das Subjekt als Gemeinwesen. Zur Konstitution kollektiver Handlungsfähigkeit*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2021.
- Tutter, Adele. "Under the Mirror of the Sleeping Water: Poussin's Narcissus." *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 95:6 (2014), 1235–64.
- Vinge, Louise. *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century*. Lund: Gleerups, 1967.
- Wachtel, Paul L. "The Relationality of Everyday Life: The Unfinished Journey of Relational Psychoanalysis." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues. The International Journal of Relational Perspectives* 27:5 (2017), 503–21.
- Walde, Christine. "Narcissus im Mittelalter: nach Ovid – vor Freud." In *Narcissus. Ein Mythos von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace*, edited by Almut-Barbara Renger, 41–62. Stuttgart & Weimar: Metzler, 2002.
- Walsh, Julie. *Narcissism and its Discontents*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Wieseler, Friedrich. *Narkissos: Eine kunstmythologische Abhandlung*. Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1856.
- Wilson, Angelia R. (ed.) *Situating Intersectionality: Politics, Policy, and Power*. New York: Palgrave, 2013.
- Wolson, Peter. "Working with the Relational Unconscious: An Integration of Intrapsychic and Relational Analysis." *The Psychoanalytic Review* 99:2 (2012), 209–25.
- Yuval-Davis Nira. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:3 (2006), 193–209.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Dialogical Epistemology – An Intersectional Resistance to the 'Oppression Olympics.'" *Gender and Society* 26:1 (2012), 46–54.