Narcissus (339–510)

Tiresias was not a member of Cadmus’ family, and his sorrows at first have no connection with those of the Theban monarchy. Similarly, Narcissus, though a Boeotian, has no direct relationship with Thebes or Cadmus. Our narrator seems to have forgotten his announced subject and strayed off on idle material. However, in this substantial and carefully organized story, Ovid continues to explore his principal themes. Narcissus illustrates significant aspects of human sexuality and the danger of not understanding it; he frustrates desires, which his beauty roues, and spurs love of others, male or female, which might have flourished, and he is left with futile self-love that inevitably proves suicidal. His discovery of himself, because of his prior snubbing of others, cannot lead to personal development, only to doom. Accordingly, in the narrative, the circumstances of self-knowledge become shaped like the events that brought Actaeon and Cadmus to misery. Narcissus experiences, apparently for the first time, the vision of himself—and it is fatal, predicted so from the start by Tiresias. Moreover, he sees this fatal sight in a pool of an inviolate forest area. Like Actaeon, he must die, victim not of a violated deity, but of himself.

We possess no other extended narrative about Narcissus, and, although some people argue that much of Ovid’s achievement should be credited to a lost Hellenistic source, there is no evidence whatsoever for such material. Moreover, Ovid has woven into the myth of Narcissus, too, in love with his reflection, the tale of Echo, the nymph whose every verbal response depends on echoing (e.g., reflecting) the words of others. Ovid treats these two as opposites. Narcissus totally preoccupied with himself and Echo pathetically preoccupied with others, and he forces them into a doomed relationship. Echo falls in love with the boy and yet must vainly try to pursue her love in terms of her loveless words. She speaks passionately to words that he speaks with no interest in her, and she misinterprets his passionless sentences, from which she is permitted to echo only final words or syllables, as invitations to love. When she follows up her misinterpretation and, and spurns her, the rejection desolates her, and her body wastes away, leaving her nothing but a wordless, hopeless echo as we know the phenomenon. As Ovid presents the story of Echo, we tend to sympathize with her and view her as a victim of heartless, selfish Narcissus. However, she is also a victim of her own defective nature. Unable to be a complete person, forced to wait for others to speak first before she can utter a word—and then only according to the last words spoken by the other—Echo can never experience the humanity of love, the ideal toward which Ovid’s amatory theme in Book 3 points. But selflessness makes a stronger appeal then selfishness, and Ovid shows Echo, even after suffering rejection, capable of sympathizing with and pitying the fate of selfish Narcissus.

Once he has narrated the scoring and metamorphosis of Echo and set up expectation of the merited punishment of Narcissus, Ovid moves into the second phase of his story. Narcissus, tireless hunter, comes to an inviolate spot with a clear pool: he is like both Actaeon and Diana in situation, and so Ovid makes him play a double role as the mysterious power whose being may not be safely seen (or known) and the sacrilegious intruder and spectator. Narcissus views his reflection in the pool and falls fatally in love with it and himself. Ovid develops the delusion of Narcissus, his false perception of the reflection as another person, his crazy efforts to conduct a conversation with the image in the water. In contrast to Echo, he generates all the words and gestures in this imaginary relationship. Although at first he interprets the exact repetition of his movements of body and mouth as proof that this “other person” responds to him, eventually he realizes that the reflection is nothing but an echo of himself, devoid of body.
we would expect Liriope to get pregnant, so Ovid can hurry forward to the birth of the child. pulcherrima: seems a gratuitous and ironic detail at the time of birth, but the nymph’s beauty explains the loveliness of her baby: he is beautiful, too. nymphs 345: some early scribes changed the Greek nominative to Latin a, but the meter, an emphatic sequence of four spondees, requires long e. As the story begins, the narrator acts as though love can inhere simply in physical beauty. It could see a quite different note. The naming of Narcissus probably much concludes Liriope’s role.

346–
de quo consulatur: Ovid goes back to Tiresias and links him briefly to Narcissus. We may assume that the mother Liriope consulted the seer, but the narrator does not actually say so. esset... visurus: separation of the two verbal units enables Ovid to shape 347 like a Golden Line and lend it solemnity. It is no accident that he uses a verb of seeing here. Narcissus will see a fatal vision long before he reaches a natural old age. Jutidicus notas 348: Ovid reuses a solemn epic phrase from Aen. 8 340, where a prophetess unambiguously predicted the greatness of Aeneas’ descendants. Tiresias’ prophecy, on the other hand, baffles people, and it strikes us at first as a trivial inversion of the Delphic injunction to know oneself. In Greek moral thinking, as Plato’s Socrates emphasizes, self-knowledge is the prerequisite of an ethical life, the most important goal for human beings. Self-knowledge enables us both to act in reasonable conformity with our true natures and to make intelligent changes in ourselves. Tiresias declares that self-knowledge will shorten Narcissus’ life. How is that possible? The clue lies in the implicit meaning of “knowledge” in Tiresias’ prophecy. Narcissus will not “know” anything more profound than that the figure he sees in the water is the reflection of himself. That discovery does kill him, granted, but it is not the self-knowledge that Delphi and moral philosophers mean. If he had arrived at Socratic self-knowledge or worked his way to it after this frustration, Narcissus could have led a useful, significant existence, even one that brought him love.

349–
The narrator sounds as though he is indeed interested in developing a tale that proves the reliability of Tiresias. extus: ambiguous here. The first meaning would simply be the outcome of events, but that leads to the second meaning: the unavailable connection with Narcissus is his strange madness and death (cf. 350). To explain those intriguing matters, the story then can explore Narcissus’ life in considerable detail.

351–
te ad quinque: that is, annos. Since quindecim almost never fitted into the hexameter, and Ovid did not want to try equally awkward sedecim, he creates an addition problem for us: (3 × 5) + 1 = 16. Narcissus had reached his early teens, when some young men are equally attractive to males and females.

Book 3 (Notes 353-65)—Narcissus and Echo 375

For this wooing topos in Ovid, cf. note on 1.478. Catullus in his Epistalamium, 62.42 ff., seems to have created the anaphora formula that Ovid uses here. He had men argue from the analogy of a pretty flower, which is desirable only so long as it is in bloom, that young girls should yield to love. Ovid turns most cases of wooing into rejection. There is always a sensible answer to the impatient selfishness of “Gather ye roses while ye may.” Narcissus, however, is not sensible: he proves more selfish than those who desire his beauty. The careful balance between 353 and 355 is significantly interrupted by the parenthetical comment in 354, which explains the boy’s nonresponsiveness as due to arrogance. The adjectives of 354 create an antithesis: hardiness in Narcissus’ personality negates the allure of his soft, young beauty. The dichotomy, which Ovid will work out in the split between body and reflection, has been noted as of now, superbis 354: even worse but equally doomed with futilis formae (cf. Seneke at 270).

355–
The narrator has gone from glaperful in 351–52 through perfect in 353–55, completing his sketch of the relevant background, and now he moves into the present. He introduces Echo, who falls in love with Narcissus under the typical amatory opportunity of a hunt. agitans... servus: we have just watched Acteon driving deer, then himself being hunted down and killed as a deer. vocales 357: before he names Echo, the poet introduces her dominant characteristic, her voice, and then explores its parameters. nec... didicit: since it is hardly a matter of “learning” to do these things but rather of having the capacity, we might have expected puetum or potest (cf. 361, 205). The prefixes re-, occurring at the same metrical position in 357 and 358, both point to the basically responsive personality of Echo. resonantibus: Ovid has coined this word here as the definite epithet to go with the name. non vox erat: after the earlier vocales, this may seem puzzling. What is meant is that Echo was not simply a voice, not yet. The narrator points up the difference between the Echo of his initial story and Echo of our experience (and of later stages of the story, after 399 ff.). earum... arca: 360: wide hyperbaton. garuid: Echo suffers a basic frustration. She has a passionate compulsion to communicate her feelings, but is hampered by being dependent on others’ words. verbis... resonantibus: 361: the longest response given in this story consists of four words (cf. 500), extending slightly more than a half-line.

362–
Echo has lost the capacity to initiate speech and conversation because Juno has punished her for what, to the goddess, was misuse of that ability. The nymph distracts the jealous deity with her chatter, deliberately babbling on so as to give her friends time to escape Juno’s anger. deprenderes: earlier, in 3.6, the narrator used this verb to ask who could catch Jupiter in the act. Juno always blames the girls for
Jupiter's amours, so here she aims to catch them. sub amore . . . nascens 363; until the reflexive adjective is added, after a pause, we might think that Juno merely means "out in the open under the sky" with the colloquial sub amore. In fact, the phrase means that the nymph literally lies "under Jupiter," in sexual intercourse; praevarior 364; the deliberate plan of Echo sets up the dam-clause with subjunctive in 365.

Ovid doubles his clauses as Juno menaces liqueat . . . potestas 366 and vox . . . nascens 367. The adjectives purus and baccatum refer to the drastic limitations on Echo's power of speech. In the tamen-clause of 368-69, the slightest possibilities are once again reviewed, in new terms: in fine loquendi 368; i.e., the final words spoken by others. in gemitum . . . reportat 369; these terms for repeating, echoing frame the line significantly.

Ovid explicates his metaphor with a humble simile about firebrands. The elaborate opening by a double negative (non aliter quam instead of simulque) looks to false expectation of epic dignity in the compariso. As with Echo, brands are brought ever nearer to the flame until (unlike her) they actually ignite. asensit circumvulta tardi: "measured around the tops of torches." (They resemble huge matches.) vincula 374: Bömer argues that this is a formulaic epithet that Ovid has clumsily borrowed from Vergil and the epic tradition. It seems better to take the adjective in connection with the image; the "likely" feature of sulphur is its great combustibility.

The poet briefly characterizes the frustration of this lover who cannot speak out her love spontaneously. blandiss . . . dedit: ablative of manner (her words) or dative (to the addressee). swift words form Narcissus would liberate her love. molles . . . procer 376: more lover's talk, "soft requests" for affection. natura repugnata: a battle here raging between the will and the physical constraints of Echo's speech. nec sint, incipit 377: sino takes the subjunctive with or without ut. quad semel: parenthetical clause, more consistently in prose rendered id quod, somet, ed quo quae tua verba reminiscat 378; literally, "sounds to which she might echo back her own words." Subjunctive in relative clause of purpose.

It is partly true that Echo responds with "her own words," in that, though she only repeats what another has said (and only the final part of the speech), she impresses on them a special meaning.

Separated from his companions, Narcissus might be vulnerable to attack, as Actaeon proved to be. Ovid starts off this episode with pluperfect in the first two lines, then moves into the present as he focuses on Narcissus' puzzlement over the echo. His question in 380-81 from a desire to locate his friends. In the choric vocables of the line, Ovid appropriately juxtaposes the hunter's query and the shortened form of Echo's repetition, which constitutes a reply. We can easily imagine how she converts the neutral question into her own feeling response. We are not to consider a multiple echo reverberating from many points in the landscape, but a single clear "response," from nearby, to judge from what Ovid said about the close pursuit by Echo. Narcissus, then, imagines that the echo is the free communication of an independent person (as he will later misinterpret the reflection in the pool to be the free response of a separate individual) voca illa vocant 382; instead of mechanically reproducing the exact words of each echo, the poet devises various clever methods of alluding to them. Here, he does not repeat veris, but conveys the special intention of Echo: whereas Narcissus looks for someone indefinite to tell him where his path lies, she specifically calls Narcissus for love.

nullo veniente: ablative absolute. quid . . . me fugit?: because nobody appears after his previous command, Narcissus impatiently assumes that the speaker avoids him and asks why. With the very same words, again indirectly conveyed to us in 384, Echo speaks out her longing passion. When later confronted with her reflection, to which he mistakenly assigns personality, Narcissus will speak much the same words, but with a hopeless longing similar to Echo's here (cf. 455-56 and 477-78).

alterae . . . imagine voces: a circumlocution for the echo-effect, but

Ovid so phrases it as to suggest by the visual term image a connection between an echo and a reflection. That helps to link the two phrases of Narcissus' story, corona 386: Ovid exploits the difference between "getting together," merely to make a casual acquaintance, and uniting in sexual intercourse (cf. above 324). The first person plural lucerat Echo to act optimistically on her response. verbis juxta ipsa est 388: in "favoring her own words," Echo happily acts upon them. silva: ablative of place from which. In the later story of Porsenna, when the loyally moves through the underbrush in the woods to embrace Cephalus, he mistakes the sound for that of a wild animal and kills her. So Ovid recounts it in Ars Am. 3.731 ff. Interret operatus arduus colla 389; these words have an unmistakably erotic meaning and indicate the attention of Echo. However, in the only previous use of
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inaevus brevissus: Ovid used the same words in identical metrical position at 528 to describe the vain flight of another hunter, Actaeon. The word order of 391 may be simplified as follows: emoirur anteque sit. Translated emoirur as future indicative; it is a strong assertion of intended action. sit 1ibi copia nostri: Frendel called special attention to the importance of this clause in Ovid’s story. Whereas Narcissus is so intent on denying himself to others that he proclaims his determination to die rather than giving Echo access to himself, she freely offers herself without reservation to him. By dropping the two opening words of Narcissus’ outcry, which subordinate the clause (essentially negating it) to his death-wish, Echo converts the anticipatory subjunctive to a passive, a genuine invitation to love which he, in arrogant coldness, cannot accept.

spreta: Ovid sketches out the main features of humiliation that result from spurned love. Ashamed, Echo hides herself from all contact with people (392-93). However, her frustrated love torments her even more painfully.

corpus . . . curse of this alterative pair, the agonized feelings take priority and cause the body to undergo the metamorphosis that eventually eliminates it. The nymph Echo decomposes into nothing but a voice, the familiar bodiless echo (still endowed with love for vain Narcissus). tenue: sleeplessness wears her down. adductique cedem mutex 397: she becomes gaunt and wrinkled. 398: her vital juices evaporate. When nothing remains but voice and bones, these separate from each other, bones turning into stone (a reversal of the change of 1.398 ff.) and voice alone surviving to represent Echo’s troubled personality. 399: at this point she becomes the echo the narrator and audience know (cf. 359-60).

inde latum silvis: virtual repetition of the first hemistich of 393. Echo hides and is no longer seen, because she no longer possesses a visible body. By contrast, she is universally heard: her entire identity inheres in her voice. omnis 402: a passive of agent with passive verb, common in Latin poetry.

Narcissus and His Reflection (402–510)

In his transition, Ovid notes that Narcissus had frustrated not only the sympathetic word for Narcissus’ behavior. coeret . . . viriles: the tricolon

coda on the group that will continue the narration. A young man calls down divine punishment on the proud spurner. corretus has no independent existence from corretus nor a separate meaning; the orthography depends entirely on the metrical need for a long syllable that the epithet provides. Thus, we should think back to 386-87 and translate “sexual relations with men,” not “masses of men.”

alpea: Ovid has a rejected male curse Narcissus for two reasons: (1) he wants to keep Echo sympathetic and come back to her at the close, showing her still loving and able to generate a warm response from the youth’s selfish words; (2) he perceives that when Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection, he loves a male; which would better justify a male’s curse than a female’s. Guillaume de Lorris, in his Roman de la Rose, greatly simplifies his Ovidian imitation and has Echo, a fine French lady, curse Narcissus with her dying breath, with the result that he falls in love with his reflection—de Lorris then omits Ovid’s elaborate analysis of that love—and quickly dies. manus . . . ad aethem lollens: standard prayer gesture. sic . . . tice 405: careful echo of the apostrophe in 402-3, to set up poetic justice. amor . . . teneo: significant disposition to heighten antithesis, precibus . . . insatis 406: dative with compound verb. The narrator injects his bias against Narcissus with the adjective Rhomnesie, Themsis or Nemesis, the Greek goddess of divine punishment, had a famous shrine at Rhumnes near Athens.

Ovid abruptly moves into an epichrestic description of an idyllic, unvideated, “virginal” forest pool (407-12). It has the typical start (fons era) and the demonstrative close (hoc) at 413. Except for the adjective argenterus, he characterizes the pool and its location entirely in negatives: no mud, leaf, animal, human being, or even sunny has “touched” it. inimic: the pool’s first adjective is coined for this passage. It never recurs in Latin. Although it adds a touch of poetic appeal to the remarkably clear water of this spring, it initiates the negatives that end by making the pool an appropriate symbol of Narcissus’ personal negativity. The description of Diana’s pool at 155 ff. differs noticeably, alivae pescus 409: since she-goats have been listed in 408, this noun includes billy goats and sheep, as well as other barren animals.

The attractive grassy approach to the spring occurred in Diana’s pool also (cf. 162). sole . . . nullus 412: the description ends on the negative note, instead of positively talking of cool shade. passus: future participle in present sense, used to fit the meter easily.

et studio venandi luxwe et auctor: Ovid proceeds us once again into the formulative setting of the tired hunter, probably at high noon. A strange kind of “violence” will occur here. procubuit 414: he fell forward to get a drink. faciemque: although a general word for appearance, this
alliterative word prepares for the form that will appear as a reflection in the pool (cf. 416).

sitis altera: the metaphorical use of thirst in love poetry was well established. Lucullus used thirty Tantalus as a paradigm of sexual frustration, as Horace used him to define the foolish miser (Sat. 1.1.68). As Börner notes, Ovid varies the metrical stress on the two different types of thirst here. conceptus imagine formas 416: while leaning forward to drink, Narcissus sees and becomes caught up with desire for his reflection. Ovid repeats these words in 4.676 to describe the violent onset of Persessa’s love for Andromeda. If he failed to make clear in 416 what Narcissus saw, he ended any doubts in the verbosity of 417. spem . . . amat 417: reminiscent of the hopeless passion of Echo at 389. She tried to put hope into her echo; he imagines hope in his reflection. This time, frustration will arise not from the pride of the beloved but from physical absence.

adnumeris ipse stibi: Narcissus epitomizes the self-fraudulation that Ovid has repeatedly studied in the poem. The verb here renders the stinging effect of love at first sight, but, in order to capture the reflexive feature of this passion, the poet invents the compound form (withative). Ovid also suggests by his choice of language that this love, which fulfills the vacuo, (cf. 406) constitutes, as elsewhere, a metamorphosis of the lover. Narcissus becomes trapped and motionless by the pool, a stance reflected. Romans used statues for this very purpose, as garden-planners do today. Some of the richer houses of Pompeii and the pool in front of the Serapeum at Hadrian’s Villa provide good examples of Roman taste. The simile implies the lifelong beauty that Ovid sees in this whole story.

humani positus: Ovid clarifies the stance of his figure for future artistic representations (such as the famous one of Caravaggio: Narcissus crouches where he has been drinking, thus lean over the water and creates the reflection. gennimun . . . sibiis: a good example of a metaparon interrupted by the opposition that explicates it. dignus . . . cernet 421: Narcissus possesses fair long hair, as the youthful gods Bacchus and Apollo did in artistic representations. Now that Bacchus has been born, Ovid insets a favorable reference to him at the first opportunity. He has no other than Bacchus as his amanuensis is the god of the body that are “white as ivory.” decusque oris: “his handsome face.” mixtum candere ruborem: the narrator talks of the general complexion of the boy and his reflection, an ideal blending of red and white, what we today sometimes call “a healthy pink.” The same three words will recur in slightly different syntax at 491, 493. to register the loss of that complexion. cundere: ablative of place where, omitting in, cum tuaque miratur 424: after the chosen details of 420-23, the narrator can afford to generalize. quid: ablative of specification. mirabilis ipse: the repetition, the apparent distinction between object and subject, makes the mirabil form and the paradoxical experience of Narcissus graphic. There will be much repetition of this type.

In the four hemistichs of these lines, Ovid uses three different structures to present the reflection paradox: verb and reflexive pronoun, active and passive forms of the same verb, active and intransitive forms of synonymous verbs. Even when he repeats his use of active and passive, he varies the grammar: using a relative clause first, then a subordinate dum-clause. The alliteration of 426 begins to imply that the narrator plays with the situation he has devised, with no sympathy with Narcissus.

fallaci . . . fort: he thought he was kissing a human face but, deceived by the reflection, he merely touched the water. For 428-29, the complex word order implies the awkward, frustrated effort. The order could be made more prosaic and perspicuous as follows: questus in medias aquas brevius meruit caput anima collum visum. In addition to attempting a kiss, the lover is trying to embrace the neck. Although Narcissus would have ruined the reflection by plunging his arms into the water, the narrator does not utilize that detail here; later, at 475 ff., it will serve his purposes well.

quid videt, necis: so far, he has not fulfilled the fatal prophecy of self-knowledge (cf. 348). quod vider: relative clause placed, as often, before its antecedent, this time to force the balance with the first clause and entertain the audience by the varied syntax. quid decipit inexit error 431: the doubling and ambivalence demands Narcissus’ investigation.

311 Now the narrator, as though impatient and eager to clear up the confusion, apostrophizes Narcissus. Not that Narcissus is able to hear him across the fictional and temporal barrier. But the speech emphasizes the reality of the reflection, the vanity of the image, for our benefit, to distance us further from this lover. simulacrum queis capitis: reusing the verb of 428, Ovid changes the earlier object (which was the physical neck) to inessential image. It will take the boy until 463 to understand this. quod petit 433: clarification of the paradox of 426. quod amas, avertete, perdes: Ovid compresses the grammatical syntax, in order to force these verbs into juxtaposition and suggest the speed with which, by a slight movement, the boy could destroy his beloved (rather emphatically dismissed as lifeless by the neuter quod). The first and third verbs make good sense together, the second
verb is a paraphrastic imperative, where we would expect perhaps a condition (si averteris) or gerund (avertendo), neither of which would have fitted so neatly into the metrical line.

repereceusse . . . imaginis umbra: "the shadow or phantom of a reflected image." nil habeb ista nui 435: a new perspective on the confusion caused by the reflection. Whereas before Ovid played with the reflective opportunities of the reflection, e.g., that Narcissus kept seeing and seeking himself, deduced that it was another, now the alienated narrator argues that, as an entity generated from and identical with the boy (isto), it has no substance of its own, no reflective feature.

venitque munetique: note the distinction in terms, which, in 436, will be extended to a distinction of moods. If Narcissus left, his reflection would quietly disappear—if only he could bring himself to leave.

The apostrophe having accomplished nothing, the narrator continues in the third person. He starts off with anaphora and alliteration, to establish the fanatical quality of this devotion: it distracts the lover from food and robs him of sleep. He will waste away, if he goes on like this. *sparsus in herbe* 438: whether this is a new stance (vs. 420) is not clear, but it is more precise. *mendacem . . . formum* 439: Ovid insists, with the philosophic tradition, that mere form lies. That is especially true here, where form is nothing but reflection of form.

*perec oculos perit:* the alliteration helps to call attention to the strange way of dying, not simply because of the eyes, but actually out through the eyes, *paulamque levatus.* since he had been sprawling face downward on the ground, staring at the pool, Narcissus has to raise himself in order to carry out the histrionic gesture toward the trees, to enlist nonhuman nature on his side. Since he himself has been inhuman and suffers the penalty for that, he gets little sympathy from us. And of course the trees do not respond.

*amicus* although "cruel love" is a familiar theme to Ovid and his audience, it normally applied to love that was actively, not passively, cruel. The unkind or heartless lover gets branded as "cruel." Cf. 1.617, 2.612, and (in the later words of Narcissus) 3.477. Probably, then, we are to sense the irony of the usage here and, rejecting his sensuality but remembering Echo, to classify Narcissus with other cruel lovers. *latebram opportunam* 443: the woods provide a convenient place for love. In the poem, however, the kind of love that has taken place in that locale has been primarily rape. Thus, the trees to which Narcissus appeals have indeed seen a great deal of "cruel love," much crueller than this.

*tot aequus saccula:* literally, "so many centuries have been passed (of your existence)." Ovid turns into a passive structure an active phrase, *aeger aequus,* that Propertius coined in 2.2.16 on analogy with the conventional *aeger aequus.* Narcissus simply means: "since you are so many centuries old." *subiurab.* 445: perfect subjunctive in relative clause of characteristic. Again, the selfish boy expects to generate pity by his rhetorical question and hear: "Nobody, you are uniquely pitiable. We have just watched his victim Echo waste away, so he cannot get from the inanimates woods or us the answer he wants. Chiasmatic ordering of the paired words on either side of the caesura in 446. *placere* 446: that is, *mihi.* Narcissus likes what he sees, but he cannot make contact. *quo:* as in 430, the poet subtly alludes to what he does not recognize, that the reflection is nonhuman. Here, the personal pronoun *qui* would easily have fitted. *tuto . . . amare* 447: a terminal sententia, like that in 1.60, occupying the second hemistich. The narrator has called attention to the *error* in much the same terms as 431, but without wasting any pathos.

quaque: = et quo, introducing relative clause of purpose. Narcissus' self-pity now focuses on a common topic of love elegy, namely, lovers' separation. Normally, there is a geographical separation of great distance between frustrated lovers, when, for example, the girl goes off with a rival or the man to fight wars. At the minimum, a house door or a wall parts the lovers. None of those conventional obstacles exists here. *exiguus prohiberam aqua* 450: "we are kept [from each other] by a tiny film of water." *caput ipse teneri:* "he obviously wants me to embrace him." Narcissus continues to personally the reflection, to treat it as a separate being.

The statement of 450 is now justified. *quotiens . . . totiens:* he draws false conclusions from the mirror effect. Although he means he tries to kiss that other boy, Ovid makes him say what in fact he does: he kisses the water! *resipere or:* as Narcissus leans down to kiss the water, he sees the reflection straining to meet his lips, mouth up and head tilted back at the same angle that his is. *putos* 453: the speaker has forgotten his imaginary audience of trees (cf. 442 ff.) and now seems to address each one of us or anyone who will pity him. Subjunctive in incomplete unreal clause. *amanthus* plural, because Narcissus infers from the reflection that "it" feels the same as he does. So they are mutual lovers, both frustrated.

Now he turns to the water and addresses the reflection itself. *In hac* 454: this imperative resembles *venit* at 382, which Echo tried to turn into a lover's appeal. Narcissus is here, however, the beloved to "come out" of the water. *aniter:* as Bömer notes, this adjective does not appear in the erotic vocabulary of Ovid or other love poets. It does not, then, have the conventional association of modern "one and only." The vocative implies that Narcissus regards this form as the only *paer* he would familiarly address. And Ovid chooses it for its obvious irony: this deceived lover treats as unique what is only a double of himself.
Narcissus sees "promises" where of course there are none from another, only his own vain desires and interested looks. The corresponding verbs of 458 describe what we know is the mirror effect, reflection, which the lover interprets as spontaneous response. ador: a fatal illusion, not an observed fact. As long as Narcissus can attribute an independent personality and series of free actions to this shape, it remains a possible love object.

Significantly, the moment he reminds us of Echo and verbal response, the course becomes fulfilled. *iste ego sum: "I am what I have been calling 'you.'" Here the divided being(s) resolve themselves into the single Narcissus, as he realizes the truth of the reflection and the cruel fact about himself, which also fulfills Tiresias' original prediction. *nec me...nulli image: a sharp distinction from what he said at 454. *mei 464: nice use of the objective genitive, distinguished from the meaning of *meor.

**quid faciam?** Ovid has the desperate lover lay out his problem in the familiar rhetorical form of a dilemma. Cf. Actaeon at 204 ff. *roger anne regem? Translate with the active verb first: "woo or be wooed?" If *dilecte rogabo? No sooner has he shaped his difficulty as a dilemma than Narcissus must discard it as invalid. There are not two separate people or two independent actions from which he can choose. *quod capio, necum est 466: the third word should be rendered very literally; "what I yearn for, I have right here with me."

These words, spoken under other circumstances, would be a happy declaration that one’s fondest desires have been achieved. Picking up on that ambiguity, Ovid has Narcissus articulate his condition in language that recalls his earlier rejection of Echo: *ante emoriar quam sit tibi copia nostri* (392). Having sworn he would die rather than give himself to her, Narcissus finds himself in total possession of himself—and so miserable that he will die. *inopem me copia fecit: Ovid correctly exploits the related etymologies of adjective and noun. The noun derives from an abandoned archaic adjective, co-ops, meaning "abundant." Wealth has paradoxically made him poor, because in acquiring the reflection, he has lost a viable lover. This is a poor version of the self-knowledge that Delphi and Socrates advocated, but it is all that limited Narcissus can muster.

As the first human lover that Ovid has presented, Narcissus finds himself in a paradigmatic state of hopelessness, doomed to defeat by the conditions of his being. It is typical of such lovers to express the vain wish—"If only . . ."—with the hopes that these conditions be altered. In 467, then, he wishes to separate himself from his body, that is, to create two individuals out of the present one and so make mutual love possible for himself. That wish will be granted in quite a different fashion: he will die and be permanently disconnected from his physical being, which in turn will be lost as a human body. *votum...novum* 468; ever the self-conscious lover, Narcissus calls attention to his unique desire. By definition, it might be said, lovers always desire to be together, to die together in times of danger. (Cf. his complaints in 453–56.) Here he wants the opposite. Abandoning these verbal conceits before they become too much for us, Narcissus faces approaching death. *Dolor* that was mentioned at 448, and the wanting away, first noted at 437 ff., have taken their toll. *primusque extinguo in aero* 470: a rare use of first person passive of this verb; Ovid has appropriated this whole clause from his *Her.* 8.121. In referring to the boy’s premature death, it uses a metaphor that links the snuffing of the light of life and of the flame of love.

In the final lines of this soliloquy, which began at 442, Narcissus still cannot abandon his fixation on there being two separate individuals. Note the careful structure of 471, divided at the caesura into two corresponding halves. *posituro: dative depending on nisi. Death is so severe burden since he will get rid of his severe pains. On the one hand, he imagines himself as released. But on the other hand, there is hic qui diligatur; and for that person he would like to have a long life! As it is, the two of them will end up united in death *animus in anima* 472). In putting things that way, Ovid lets the boy trivialize the love language of mutual lovers and also that of close friends who,
as Horace shows us, could call each other "half of their soul." Cf. Horace of Vergil, animus domusque meae (C. 1.3.8), and Maecenas, te meae partem aniniæ (C. 2.17.5).

474-476. *male susus*: the narrator has resumed control of the story, and he immediately produces a more objective evaluation of this young fool, *male* is a common poetic alternative for *non* or the negative prefix *in-,* and is often chosen for metrical reasons. Here, Ovid especially aimed for five dactyls and narrative speed after the slow self-pity of Narcissus' speech *tarheb vitam (475)* this is the first time that Ovid has taken advantage of his opportunity to the effect on Narcissus of seeing the reflection disappear or be disturbed. He could have done it earlier, for instance, when the boy kissed the water (cf. 451) or when he was weeping over the pool (cf. 459-460).

476-479. It is evident that Narcissus' self-realization lasted only a short time, before he sank back into his delusion about the separate existence of the reflection. Here he passionately apostrophizes the vanishing form, in much the way he addressed it in 454-55. It is a cruel beloved who heartlessly forsakes his love! *tangere non est* 478, *est + infin. = licet or, as here, "it is possible." Cf. 453, where Ovid writes *posse tangi,* using the passive. Narcissus at least knows now that it is impossible to touch the reflected form; he asks only to be allowed to look at it. *mi ero... furor* 479: aware of the madness that confirms the narrator's foreshadowing at the start (cf. 350), he invites our pity with the adjective. Like an addict, he seeks to "feed" his mad addiction, aware but out of control.

480-481. *et dumque...* a casual transition from direct speech by the boy back to narrative. *dolore* the pain of hopeless love (cf. 471, 452) rather than of physical sickness. *summa... ab ore,* from the top edge. Ripping one's robe from top to bottom is a standard gesture of despair among Greeks and Romans. Prasernina will rip her dress as she is kidnapped by Plato in 5.398. The immediate result of Narcissus' gesture is that his cornely chest is bared, and the poet can launch into his Golden Line at 481 (enhanced by alliteration) over the next gesture, beating the breast. *mariones* 481: earlier, the boy had been compared to a statue of Parian marble (cf. 419).

482-485. *pectus...* together with the marble-white hands, this composes a scene mixing red and white, a favorite Ovidian combination (cf. 422-23). The simile of 483-85 introduces two types of fruit, apples and grapes, which, before reaching ripeness, appear of mixed colors or parphyl. That is the color of his bruised skin, and the reference to immaturity points to the premature death of this young man's parts before he 483-84: both ablative of specification, chastically disposed. *varius... racemis:* the grape clusters show a variety of colors.

486-487. *quae:* the chest (pectore 481) being beaten. *liquefacta rumore:* the participle is ablative with *una,* Ovid derives a unique meaning from the verb, which regularly means "turn into liquid." What he intends to convey is that, after having been disturbed and nonreflected (cf. 475-76), the pool, once again clear, becomes able to reflect the boy's image. He extends the sense of *lique-* by analogy with adjective *liquidus* and verb *liqueo,* both of which carry connotations of being clear and transparent. *non taliuter ubiurus* 487: this language regularly applies to violent indignation, but here denotes the intolerable agony of Narcissus' special *furor.*

487. A second simile helps to convey the rapid disintegration of the lover.

490-491. Wax melts near fire or a flame; morning frost melts away in the sunshine. Similarly, under the burning effect of the internal fire of hopeless passion, Narcissus wastes away. *intabescere:* cf. *tabuerit* (445). *attenuatus* 489: Ovid reminds us of the way Echo earlier was weakened (cf. 396). The fates of these two become linked again as both prove victims of futile passion.

491. In 491, the narrator picks up the colorful phrase of 423, only to deny now that it is valid. Owing Narcissus has simply turned pale. One negative after another diminishes elements of his former physical beauty. *visa placebat* 492: cf. 446. *nec corpus remanet* 493: Ovid means that the special body, so desirable in Echo's eyes, had wanted, but some body still survives, until finally at 509 the narrator reports its complete disappearance. Now, he carefully brings Echo back, taking his cue from the relative clause, in order to contrast her other-directed love with the self-fixed passion of Narcissus.

494-495. *quaer:* nominative; the relative immediately picks up from the name of Echo. *quaeras:* limits the two adjectives that follow in the line; *in dolobat* (495) is an independent verb. She has greater reason to suffer and to resent her suffering, because it was caused by the person she loved, yet she grieves for him. *miserabilis* 495: perhaps the narrator now concedes that Narcissus is pitiable, but I prefer to think he is emphasizing Echo's impressionable feelings. *eheu:* whereas the Narcissus enotes in self-pity, Echo takes and transforms his speech, injecting it with her own feelings of loving sympathy. *resonat... vocibus* 496: reverting to the echo effect, Ovid reminds us of the epitaph he coined for her at 358, this time coining the adjective *resonans.*

497. Ovid describes another gesture of grief and despair, which Narcissus used: he beat his upper arms with his hands; cf. 4.138. In echoing that sound, which is wordless, Echo should have had some trouble, inasmuch as she had no arms to beat.
solitam . . . spectantis in undam: Narcissus is still staring into the pool as he utters his last words. Soon, however, it will be a different body of water that he sees; cf. 505 below. \textit{heu frustra dilecte puer} 500: again, we judge the words differently according to who is speaking them. \textit{dictoque vale} 501: ablative absolute, the second word, of course, being indeclinable. \textit{vale inquit et Echo}: since scansion of the first \textit{vale} is short, long, Ovid has to do something special with the second \textit{vale} here; he scans it short, short. This is a rare but permissible shortening in hiatus (rather than using elision). Ovid ingeniously imitates Vergil’s \textit{Ec}. 3.79, but adds the echo situation. Thus, where Vergil had the effect of a repeated “Farewell” seemingly die out, Ovid has the echo, dying out, imply the death of Narcissus.

\textit{caput . . . submisit in herba}: since he was sprawled on the grass, staring into the water, Narcissus merely slumps to the earth in death. \textit{domini mirantia formam} 503: self-admiration and self-delusion continue right up to the moment of death (cf. 424).

\textit{se . . . spectabat}: Ovid does not explain how the incorporeal being could look at himself. We can hypothesize that Narcissus went down to the Underworld with an \textit{umbra}, which would have a visible form though no physical substance. In theory, that could produce its own reflection in the Styx. In any case, this mirroring of insubstantiality compounds the folly of the boy. He is even less sympathetic in death than in life. \textit{planere}: a basic mourning gesture is beating the breast. Ovid will repeat this verb twice in 507, at the beginning (with the more familiar form of perfect 3rd person plural) and the caesura. \textit{sorores / naides} 506–7: since Narcissus’ father was Cepheus, the water-nymphs whom he sired would be the boy’s sisters. Cutting hair for women was another act of mourning. At 507, Echo again seems to violate her verbal limitations and echo a physical blow that would logically require her to have a body to beat (cf. above 497–98).

In the trisected 508, Ovid lists three items for a funeral. The most important item, however, is lacking: there is no body. \textit{croceum florem} 509: the narcissus replaces the dead boy. As Ovid describes it, it has white petals around a deep yellow center and much resembles the daffodil (to which its species is closely related). Not a significantly lovely flower, merely pretty. Narcissus’ metamorphosis is an anticlimax.