

“Doubly Resounded”: Narcissus and Echo in Petrarch, Donne, and Wroth

ROSS LERNER

Occidental College

ond'io gridai con carta et con incostro:
Non son mio, no. S'io moro, il danno è vostro.
(PETRARCH, *Rime* 23.99–100)¹

Of the many concepts that Petrarch inherited from Augustine, whose *Confessions* he liked to carry around in his pocket, perhaps the most foundational is the theologian's claim that the experience of having desire in time scatters the self, tearing it into pieces until that point that they can be gathered together again in God: “I have been scattered in times whose order I do not understand. My thoughts—the very inmost bowels of my soul—are torn to pieces in tumultuous vicissitudes, until that day when, purged and made liquid by the fire of Your love, I will flow into You.”² Augustine's theory of self-scattering becomes something like a formal principle in the scattered rhymes typically called *Rime sparse* or *Rerum*

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1. “I cried out with paper and ink: ‘I am not my own, no; if I die, yours is the loss.’” Quotations of Petrarch's poetry in Italian are from Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. Marco Santagata (Milan: Mondadori, 2008). English translations are from *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The “Rime sparse” and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976). Hereafter, Petrarch's poems are cited parenthetically.

2. “At ego in tempora dissilui quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui” (Augustine, *Confessions*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Text*, ed. James J. O'Donnell [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992], 11.29). I use the translation of Andrea Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), 57; see chap. 2 for her illuminating analysis of self-scattering in Augustine. On Petrarch's pocket copy of *Confessions*, see Francesco Petrarca, *Epistolae familiares* 4.1, in *Le familiari*, ed. Ugo Dotti, 2 vols. (Urbino: Argaglia, 1974), 1:362–77.

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vulgaria fragmentum (ca. 1374), which with great repetition are bound together as fragmented lyrics that tell, among other things, of Petrarch's loss and attempted recollection of himself in the face of love. If the *Rime sparse* has been seen as a key site in the history of Western subjectivity and individuality for some time, with some going as far as to call it "the first sustained attempt at self-consciousness in Western writing,"³ that is partly because Petrarch is so self-conscious about the difficulties of gathering up the pieces of himself through the process of creating the collection. If he does find a way to collect his scattered self in the *Rime*, it is, as Giuseppe Mazzotta has argued, only as "the unity of fragments in fragments."⁴

What are the consequences of considering Petrarch's *Rime sparse* as a poetic technology for collecting the self as it is scattered by its desires in time? And how do we square the sense of the *Rime sparse*'s capacity for self-recollection with Petrarch's suggestion, repeated just as often, that writing tends to unmake the self—to make him lose himself further? Though both conceptions of Petrarch's project have become commonplaces in Petrarch criticism, the paradoxical relation between them can be further specified in our analysis of specific poems and their echoes in later Petrarchan poems. A fundamental question at the heart of Petrarch's complex Augustinian project in the *Rime*, and one that casts its shadow over English Petrarchisms, is, in other words, how poets might conceive of verse making as a therapeutic recollection of their desiring, distracted selves (distracted in the etymological sense of drawn apart), or how they understand the act of writing a poem as itself self-scattering.⁵

In this essay, I demonstrate how the question of poetry's capacity to scatter or recollect a self leaves a significant and understudied impression on two instances of later Petrarchan resonance, John Donne's "Valediction: Of My Name in the Window" (1599) and the first sonnet that appears in Mary Wroth's *The Countesse of Montgomery's Urania* (1621). These poets rework the problem of poetry's alternatively self-gathering and self-scattering tendencies that Petrarch, in his poetic transformation of Augustine,

3. Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 206. See also Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (University of Chicago Press, 2010). Timothy Reiss, by contrast, resists the emphasis on the individual in Petrarch in *Mirages of the Self: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (Stanford University Press, 2002).

4. Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 78.

5. On the Augustinian analysis of distraction and its influence on early modern poetry, see David Marno, *Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention* (University of Chicago Press, 2016). In another context, Nancy J. Vickers has also noted how Petrarch's poetry alternates "between the scattered and the gathered" ("Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 2 [Winter 1981]: 277).

established for early modern verse. My focus on Donne and Wroth—instead of Petrarch's more obvious translators and imitators, from Wyatt to Sidney—reveals the productive persistence of this metapoetic problem of self-unmaking that is as much Petrarch's signature in the English Renaissance as is a sigh or a laurel.

This essay is in three parts. First, I analyze the genealogy of self-constitution and self-loss that Petrarch offers in *Rime* 23, which narrates the emergence of affective disorder in his life through an allusion to Ovid's Narcissus in *Metamorphoses* (ca. 8) and a revision of Augustine's theory of desire. I argue that Petrarch's *Rime* 23 revalues a model of self that constructs a petrified barrier around itself in response to Love's attempts to breach the boundaries of his body. This model of petrific policing offers a potential future for poetic self-recollection in Petrarch's poem—and it also produces a topos for Petrarchism with which Donne and Wroth will innovatively engage, to different poetic and ethical ends. In the essay's second part, I demonstrate how Donne, transposing Petrarch's Narcissus, attempts to produce a "firmness" of self and to regulate desire through poetic inscription. In the final section, I examine how Wroth's sonnet responds to the idea of self-hardening in Petrarchism, the air that so much early modern English poetry breathes, by answering his Narcissus with the character of Echo.⁶ Wroth's Urania "doubly resounds" in the company of Echo, challenging the Petrarchan tradition's exclusion of women's voices by embracing Echo's reverberating unmaking, her sonic self-scattering, as the central technique of her poem, a site in which poetic voice resounds without a longing to build a hard bulwark against desire. The significance of this series of interconnected readings is to offer a new understanding of the problem of subject formation and deformation in Petrarch's *Rime* 23, constructed as a reaction formation in response to desire; to explicate the unappreciated echo of this idea of self-hardening in Donne's "Valediction: Of My Name in the Window," along with Donne's externalization of Petrarch's architecture of hardness as a technology of poetic inscription; and to claim that Wroth's attempt to imagine a new kind of poetic personhood—echoic and relational—is an uncanny response to the masculinist fantasy of a self-protective, rigidified self that persists in Petrarchism, thus expanding our sense of Wroth's conscious and critical departure from Petrarch and his imitators. Donne and Wroth improvised new poetic understandings of the self within the scene of Petrarchism, and their poems take Petrarch's vision of poetry as self-collecting and self-scattering in surprising new directions. If Donne holds on to a model of poetic selfhood rooted in Petrarch's appropriation of Ovid's Narcissus, which presupposes that poetry might

6. See Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and Its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

help to collect a self that exists separate from the desire that scatters it, then Wroth provides us with a theory of poetic production as irreducibly relational and resonant, productively entangled in a desire that it can never be free from or fully in control of.

I. PETRARCH'S HARD AFFECT

Have ye your heart yet hardened?
(MARK 8:17 [KJV])

Petrarch compulsively explores how poetic self-narration works as a dialectic of self-making and unmaking. In *Rime* 37, the hope to “still” (appaghi) (37.64) desire in song is undercut by the very event of “speaking” (se ragionando) (37.49), which “renew[s] the burning desire” (si rinfresca / quel’ardente desio) (37.49–50) that was born with the originary “sight” (vista) (37.10) of his beloved. *Rime* 71’s apostrophe to song is exemplary of the paradox of poetic self-loss:

Canzon, tu non m’acqueti, anzi m’infihammi
a dir di quell ch’ a me stesso m’involà;
però sia certa de non esser sola.
(71.106–8)

[Song, you do not quiet me, rather you inflame me to tell of what steals me away from myself; therefore be sure not to be alone.]

Here, song is not only the exploration of self-consciousness, whether hermetic or world bound. It “inflames” Petrarch and requires him to tell of what “steals” him away from himself—which seems to be both desire and the song. As Lynn Enterline has argued, “Petrarch sees self-dispossession as the condition of poetic utterance,” and though this self-dispossession might in some sense be staged—especially given what we know of Petrarch’s careful curating and reordering of the *Rime*—self-dispossession is no doubt one of the central problems to which the *Rime* dedicates its poetic thinking.⁷ But if it is “a condition of poetic utterance,” I would suggest

7. Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 24. On Petrarch’s careful curation of the *Rime* as a way of collecting himself in the face of desire, death, and the marketplace, see Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *The Making of the “Canzoniere” and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1951); Teodolinda Barolini, “The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative in Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*,” *Modern Language Notes* 104, no. 1 (January 1989): 1–38; and Justin Steinberg, “*Rime disperse*: Petrarch’s Damned Poetry and the Poetics of Exclusion,” in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 85–102.

that it is not one about which he feels unambivalent. It is clear that Petrarch also fears such self-dispossession deeply, and he imagines strategies to return himself to himself, one of which requires using the inflammatory poetic instrument of self-loss's narration.

To take one extremely important instance, in *Rime* 23 Petrarch meditates on song as an agent of both self-recollection and self-loss by representing himself in the guise of Narcissus, who rigidly polices the boundaries of his heart and body. The poem most obsessively concerned with writing and desire and, as the *canzone delle metamorfosi*, most obviously written in the shadow of Ovid, *Rime* 23 is also the first long autobiographical poem in the sequence, offering an etiology of Petrarch's condition:

Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade,
che nascer vide et anchor quasi in herba
la fera voglia che per mio mal crebbe,
perché cantando il duol si disacerba,
canterò com'io vissi in libertade,
mentre Amor nel mio albergo a sdegno s'ebbe.
Poi seguirò sì come a lui ne 'ncrebbe
troppo altamente, e che di ciò m'avenne,
di ch'io son facto a molta gente exempio:
benché 'l mio duro scempio
sia scripto altrove, sì che mille penne
ne son già stanche, et quasi in ogni valle
rimbombi il suon de' miei gravi sospiri,
ch'acquistan fede a la penosa vita.

(23.1–14)

[In the sweet time of my first age, which saw born and still almost unripe the fierce desire which for my hurt grew—because, singing, pain becomes less bitter—I shall sing how then I lived in liberty while Love was scorned in my abode; then I shall pursue how that chagrined him too deeply, and what happened to me for that, by which I have become an example for many people; although my harsh undoing is written elsewhere so that a thousand pens are already tired by it, and almost every valley echoes to the sound of my heavy sighs which prove how painful my life is.]

The poem follows the chronology of the opening lines, moving from the "sweet time" of Petrarch's "first age" (*dolche tempo de la prima etade*), in which Love was scorned in his "abode" (*mio albergo*) and he lived in liberty (*io vissi in libertade*), through the numerous metamorphoses Petrarch is forced to undergo once Love attacks and eventually breaks through his defenses, and into the present moment in which he sings, "because, singing, pain becomes less bitter" (*perché cantando il duol si disacerba*). Though *Rime* 23 is Petrarch's most explicit autobiographical

and transparently chronological narrative, recalling how and why the poet came to write in the first place and thus showing his poetic control over his past, the agitations of “fierce desire” (*fera voglia*) that bring him to write threaten him with what he calls the “harsh undoing” (*mio duro scempio*) of his identity, which has already rendered him merely an empty “shell” (*scorza*) (23.20). Over the course of *Rime* 23, Petrarch, like Narcissus, identifies with, or falls into, a “shadow” (*ombra*) (23.168) of self-loss.⁸ But it is also through this autobiographical song that the poet implicitly seeks to return to a state of affective stability—“liberty”—that he claims existed before Love’s assaults had penetrated him. He locates this liberty in the earlier strategies used to guard against Love, strategies that resemble Narcissus’s attempts to remain untouched by the desire of others:

I dico che dal dì che 'l primo assalto
mi diede Amor, molt'anni eran passati,
sì ch'io cangiava il giovenil aspetto;
e d'intorno al mio cor pensier' gelati
facto avean quasi adamantino smalto
ch'allentar non lassava il duro affetto.
(23.21–26)

[I say that since the day when Love gave me the first assault many years had passed, so that I was changing my youthful aspect; and around my heart frozen thoughts had made almost an adamantine hardness which my hard affect did not allow to slacken.]

“Duro affetto” (hard affect) is like an anti-affect, or at least builds a protective barrier of adamantine hardness that guards him from Love’s increasing assaults. It is the rigid intention not to be affected by Love and the “fierce desire” it brings.⁹ Hard affect protects the “abode” (*albergo*) in which Petrarch lives, rendering the area around the heart—and perhaps

8. This “ombra” resonates with Ovid’s repetitions of “umbra” in the tale of Narcissus. See Ovidius Naso Publius, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 3.413–17; hereafter I cite Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* parenthetically. Thomas M. Greene attends carefully to the Ovidianism of Petrarch’s “ombra” in *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 127–46.

9. Santagata suggests that “duro affetto” has the sense of a rigid commitment not to love (“rigido proposito di non amare”), comparing it with what Dante describes as St. Francis’s “dura intenzione” to found an Order (Santagata, *Canzoniere*, note to 23.26). Bettarini makes the same comparison to Dante’s representation of “il rigido programma della regola di san Francesco” in Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere: Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. Rosanna Bettarini, vol. 1 (Turin: Einaudi, 2005), 23.26. Though the allusion to Dante’s Francis is illuminating, I take “affetto” to be more conflictual than Francis’s determination because the “duro affetto” does not produce anything—like Francis’s Order for collective life—but is

the body itself—a hard, “almost adamantine” (quasi adamantino) structure. This self-petrification marks the second epoch of the “sweet time of my first age” (dolche tempo de la prima etade) (23.1), which is divided into a period before Love’s first assault (primo assalto) (23.21) that is never precisely described in the poem and a period during which he successfully guards against Love’s incursions, when “no tear yet bathed my breast nor broke my sleep” (lagrima anchor non mi bagnava il petto / né rompea il sonno) (23.27–28).

It is unclear whether the first part of Petrarch’s “first age,” before Love’s assault, represents a prelapsarian existence entirely free from desire that the second state—characterized by hard affect—aims to imitate or reconstitute. Certainly John Freccero’s compelling and influential argument in “The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch’s Poetics,” that Petrarch inherited Augustine’s theory of desire, in which there is no self that precedes desire, has led scholars to assume that Petrarch would never suggest that there could be a time anterior to desire.¹⁰ But those tricky second and third lines of *Rime* 23, which describe the first age as “[seeing] born and still almost unripe the fierce desire which for my hurt grew” (che nascer vide et anchor quasi in erba / la fera voglia che per mio mal crebbe), suggest that there is a self that can “see” the birth of “fierce desire” and thus, unlike in Augustine’s account, that there is in *Rime* 23 at least the retrospective fantasy of a self that preexists desire. Though this imagining of a prelapsarian past before Love and desire is complicated by that somewhat cryptic description of desire as “anchor quasi in herba” that ends the second line, which suggests that the birth of “fierce desire” is something like a birth only of potentiality (Santagata glosses “in herba” as “spunata da poco, non ancora sviluppata” [recently appeared, not yet developed]),¹¹ Petrarch seems here, though not unequivocally, to imagine the first part of the first state as a time in which he existed free from desire.

The second part—the adamantine hardness preserved by hard affect—seems to be what Petrarch seeks again in this moment of autobiographical poetic reflection, as though a time before Love is outside of language and memory altogether. Though Ross Knecht has recently argued that the state of “liberty” represented by Petrarch’s “first age” is “an idol in which the youthful Petrarch had a false faith,” I see no evidence for that in *Rime* 23 itself, which never conflates (as Knecht suggests it does) the “sweet

purely meant, in Petrarch’s case, to keep the self closed off from Love, in hopes of holding on to the prelapsarian state of individual liberty that defines the first part of his first age.

10. John Freccero, “The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch’s Poetics,” *Diacritics* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 34–40, esp. 35. On what Robert Edwards has called Augustine’s “originary account of desire,” see *Confessions* 1.7–12; and Edwards’s *The Flight from Desire: Augustine and Ovid to Chaucer* (London: Palgrave, 2006), 13–37.

11. See note to *Rime* 23.2 in Santagata’s edition of Petrarca, *Canzoniere*.

time” of Petrarch’s “first age” with the “youthful errors” (giovenile errore) (1.3) announced in the first poem of the *Rime sparse*.¹² The adamantine hardness that Petrarch praises in *Rime* 23 needs to be differentiated from other kinds of stoniness across the *Rime*. Indeed, one needs a taxonomy of stoniness to do justice to how petrific metaphors shift throughout the collection, since sometimes they describe Laura’s cold indifference to him, sometimes represent Petrarch’s paralysis in the face of Laura-as-Medusa, and here reveal a form of petrification that protects the self from Love’s incursions.¹³ But the main point I wish to emphasize is that, within the context of *Rime* 23, “adamantine hardness” is the only method that seems, at one point in Petrarch’s history, to have worked to keep Love at bay and maintain Petrarch safe in his “abode.” Though Love’s “harsh undoing” is the necessary precondition for Petrarch’s singing, and singing seems to redouble self-loss, it is also singing here that promises a lessening of the pain Love causes. The implied and perhaps impossible goal for the poet who would want to end desire’s suffering in *Rime* 23 would be to sing himself back into an adamantine hardness.

The specific emphasis in *Rime* 23 on hard affect that resists the touch of Love may register a longing for “the sweet time of my first age,” but it is also, as I have already suggested, where we see Ovid’s Narcissus reflected. Whether this allusive connection marks the desire for “duro affeto” as suspect remains an open question. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus is continually described in terms that represent him as stone-like and cold as he fiercely guards against any attempt to touch (“tetigere”) his heart, as in this early description:

sed fuit in tenera tam dura superbia forma,
nulli illum iuvenes, nullae tetigere puellae.
(3.354–55)

12. Ross Knecht, “‘Invaded by the World’: Passion, Passivity, and the Object of Desire in Petrarch’s *Rime sparse*,” *Comparative Literature* 63, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 236. Petrarch’s “youthful error” in *Rime* 1 refers to a time after Love has already had an effect on Petrarch, when he is already sighing and singing; this is why it begins, “Voi ch’ascoltate in rime sparse il suono / di quei sospiri ond’io nudriva ‘l core / in sul mio primo giovenile errore” (1.1–3). Petrarch’s “first age” in *Rime* 23 has to be anterior to this first youthful error; it marks a time before sighing and singing. Even if this first age is a retrospective fantasy, we should not conflate it with what Petrarch calls his “first youthful error.”

13. On Laura’s stony indifference to Petrarch, see, e.g., *Rime* 70 and 135. On Petrarch’s petrification by Laura, see *Rime* 39, 125, 129, 171, and 23.80, where she makes him a “quasi vivo et sbigottito sasso.” On the synthesis of the Medusa and Narcissus myths in Petrarch’s meditations on petrification (and their relationship to Dante’s *rime petrose*), see Durling’s introduction to *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems*, 29–32; and Kenelm Foster, “Beatrice or Medusa: The Penitential Element in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*,” in *Italian Studies Presented to E.R. Vincent on His Retirement from the Chair of Italian at Cambridge*, ed. C. P. Brand, Kenelm Foster, and Uberto Limentani (Cambridge: Heffer, 1962), 41–56.

[But in that slender form was pride so hard that no youth, no maiden touched his heart.]

Hard in his autonomy and denial of desire, or a little later in Ovid's tale, "like a statue carved from Parian marble" (ut e Pario formatum marmore signum) (3.419), Narcissus refuses any relation with another being that might touch his heart, his "dura superbia" functioning much like Petrarch's "duro affetto." Echo's attempt to embrace Narcissus in Ovid's telling confirms this disposition. Though intrigued and "amazed" by Echo's sonic repetition, Narcissus is repulsed when she nears to touch him, telling her, "manus complexibus aufer! / ante . . . emoriar, quam sit tibi copia nostri!" (Banish hands from embraces! Let me die before my abundance is for you) (3.390).¹⁴ Narcissus patrols the borders of his body as Petrarch, when still in liberty, guarded his heart, and the hardness of Narcissus's pride reflects that adamant hardness that Petrarch wants to build up again around his heart. Both Narcissus and Petrarch imagine this self-petrifying refusal of touch as a maintenance of self-abundance, a "copia" that in Narcissus's story will become a curse for him ("quod cupio mecum est: inopem me copia fecit" [What I desire I have: plenty has made me poor] [3.466]) but that seems less morally suspect in Petrarch. But if, as D. Vance Smith writes of Narcissus's "copia," Ovid's lesson is that "total possession leaves the self dispossessed, because the enjoyment of possession can only be the enjoyment of something other than the thing possessed,"¹⁵ Petrarch recasts such self-possession as a lost liberty (rather than the self-loss that is the consequence of Narcissus's self-possession). The policing of borders that Petrarch revalues from Ovid's Narcissus, meant to harden the heart, reveals an assumption that identity, at least as imagined in *Rime* 23, pre-exists the desire that undoes identity. When Petrarch describes his life before desire as one of "liberty" ("io vissi in libertade"), he explicitly posits a self ("io") that was free before it was penetrated by desire. Desire is depicted darkly as a kind of fall (compare "cader"[23.59]), the loss of a state of hardness that comes when Love's assaults are finally successful.¹⁶ It is this unfractured, self-possessed, untouched self that hard affect attempted to

14. Translation altered.

15. D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xviii.

16. More recently, Clare Kinney has suggested that Petrarch's inflection of Ovidian myth, especially in *Rime* 23, "makes available in a particularly concentrated form a vocabulary for exploring the radical discontinuities between a former self and a self transformed by desire. In the centuries that follow, variations on this Ovidian discourse of rupture and self-estrangement seem to be indispensable not only to lyric but also to narrative and dramatic representations of the initiation into eros" ("Mary Wroth Romances Ovid: Refiguring Metamorphosis and Complaint in *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*," in *A History of Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Patricia Phillippy [Cambridge University Press, 2018], 241).

maintain and that might return on the other side of the experience of Love.

This is a Narcissistic paradigm of poetic personhood, and it is one of Petrarch's most influential contributions to English Petrarchism. I do not mean this as a moralizing judgment: I am not saying Petrarch should be dismissed as a narcissist. I am only articulating this one influential idea, which Petrarch himself investigates in *Rime* 23—the idea that there was once for the poet a “hard affect” that stabilized the self and protected it from the unruliness of desire, and that though such adamant hardness has been lost due to Love's penetrations, a poet might find a way to return to that hard affect, potentially even through poetry. This is the fleeting promise that Petrarch implicitly longs for in *Rime* 23, often admits he cannot attain, and may in the end not want, since it would bring his sighs and scattered rhymes to an end: a self-policing that kept him entirely in control of himself, hard and cold, nestled imperturbably in his protected abode, would spell the end of poetry. The “io” that existed in freedom before desire is a horizon toward which Petrarch's writing aims, but his failure across the *Rime* to achieve the hard state that approximates this prelapsarian past also puts into question whether the self can be said to exist before desire.

II. DONNE'S NAME

The body does not preexist love, but is cast in its fires.
(JORDY ROSENBERG, *Confessions of the Fox: A Novel*)

In the rest of this essay, I focus on passages from two early modern lyrics that unfold in ambivalent relation to the “duro affeto” that remains foundational to the sighs of later Petrarchisms. My interest is in how these poems register the vexed Petrarchan resuscitation of a self-petrifying Narcissistic self that exists before desire and to which a poet devastated by desire might in some measure return. John Donne's “A Valediction: Of My Name, in the Window” poses explicitly the question of how writing, that “contagious, incurable . . . disease,” can—or cannot—work to overcome desire's tendency to dispossess these poets.¹⁷ In this poem, Donne describes his departure from his beloved and his anxieties about what will happen when they are apart. There is no etiology of Love laying siege to the body of the poet, as there is in Petrarch's *Rime* 23, and Donne mostly

17. The description of writing as an “ailment, contagious, incurable,” a “disease” that infects oneself and others, comes from *Petrarch's Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul: A Modern English Translation of “De remedies utriusque Fortune,”* trans. and ed. Conrad H. Rawski, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 143.

seems to want to control desire (his own and his beloved's) rather than be freed from it. But in the description of two lovers' parting, Donne obliquely recasts Petrarch's early strategy to protect against Love's "harsh undoing" by making himself, and his name, as hard as the frozen thoughts that guarded Petrarch's heart. Self-hardening, as was implicit in Petrarch, figures as a technology that tries to forestall the self-unmaking forces of desire and writing:

My name engraved herein
Doth contribute my firmness to this glass,
Which, ever since that charm, hath been
As hard as that which graved it was.
Thine eye will give it price enough to mock
The diamonds of either rock.

(Lines 1–6)¹⁸

If we are meant to picture the poet standing behind his name at the start of the poem, as Elaine Scarry encourages us to, with his name overlaid across his body, the future promise is that the name will take the place of the body in its absence.¹⁹ What is most striking about the opening of this particular valediction poem is that the poem itself is also a proxy for the name that is already a proxy for the poet's body; it, too, is meant to overcome distance and to stabilize desire. The "firmness" of the poet, which the name then "contributes to this glass," is akin to the firmness of the "frozen thoughts" (*pensier gelati*) (23.24) Petrarch had once used to produce the "adamantine hardness" around his heart, a petrific machinery to keep Love at bay, under the poet's control, and thus to keep the poet's self intact. The poet's integrity as a "name" seems mimetically implied by the thick consonance and smooth iambs in the opening line of the poem. The engraving of the name in glass refracts the Narcissistic assumption (glimpsed in Petrarch) that the "I" has an existence that precedes its desire and that writing—along with self-hardening—might stabilize the relationship between the self and its desire. Yet this "name" is offered as an uncarnation of the poet's presence to the beloved. By "uncarnation" I mean, in a process that inverts the Christian event of incarnating the Word in the flesh of Jesus, the presence of flesh is preserved in the word, the name.²⁰ As Gary Stringer has convincingly shown, Donne structures this valediction poem as a type

18. Donne's poems are quoted from *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, ed. Robin Robbins (Harlow: Longman, 2010), hereafter cited parenthetically.

19. Elaine Scarry, "Donne: 'But Yet the Body Is His Booke,'" in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 82–83.

20. See James Kearney, *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), esp. chap. 1. Renaissance Hermeticism also had a particular interest in the power that the proper name might be said to hold. See Cornelius

(or “ectype”) of Jesus’s departure from his disciples, in which his status as incarnation of the Word promises his presence to them even after decay of the body and death through resurrection. If Jesus promises the word made flesh, Donne promises “the flesh made word.”²¹ There is an erotics to this uncarnation, of course; the “firmness” of the poet’s name is a literally phallogocentric engraving. But with “my firmness,” Donne depicts himself as existing prior to and apart from his desire, which (at least at the beginning of the poem) he thinks he can possess or “contribute” as he wishes.

It is in this sense that Donne’s “firmness” resonates with Petrarch’s suggestion that poetry might be used to control love or soothe the suffering caused by desire. This valediction poem posits no prelapsarian past like Petrarch’s first age—this is not Donne’s goal—but it does suggest that poetic inscription can allow the poet to control the desire that exists as something separate from him. The geography of self-hardening is shifted outward, though, from the inside of the self (Petrarch’s internal “abode,” the frozen thoughts that protect his heart) to the glass that reflects the self. This poem promises to impress that poetic self onto the world through an act of writing; the mark of that writing can function as a magical “charm,” a stand-in for his corporeal presence, and preserve the self in and as “firmness.” It is not that the name becomes as hard as the glass once carved; the name bestows the poet’s own firmness to “this glass,” an assurance of continuous masculine sexual power, but also of a self that will not be unmade by desire. If it looks for a moment like the end of the first stanza will demote the name’s firmness by making the beloved’s eye the measure of its value (“Thine eye will give it price enough”), the second stanza clarifies that her “eye” is in the beginning already subject to Donne’s “I”:

’Tis much, that glass should be
As all-confessing and through-shine as I;
’Tis more, that it shows thee to thee,
And clear reflects thee to thine eye.
But all such rules love’s magic can undo:
Here you see me, and I am you.

(Lines 7–12)

Agrippa, “Of the Virtue of Proper Names,” in *The Philosophy of Natural Magic*, ed. L. W. de Laurence (Chicago: Laurence, Scott, 1913), 212–13.

21. See Gary Stringer, “Learning ‘Hard and Deepe’: Biblical Allusion in ‘Valediction: Of My Name, in the Window,’” *South Central Bulletin* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1973): 227–31. Stringer’s claim might make us hesitate when encountering Ramie Targoff’s argument that this valediction poem is “entirely secular and earthly” (*John Donne, Body and Soul* [University of Chicago Press, 2008], 70).

The conceit here is that the beloved sees a composite image: to the name in the glass that looks like it is written across—and thus magically merged with—the poet's body, this stanza adds the reflection of her own image. In figuring the medium of the glass as both linguistically textual surface and visually reflective mirror, the poet emphasizes the beloved's passive role, her eye trained on a name that is "through-shine" and thus does not require her assessment.²² The glass merely "shows" the beloved to herself, and "clear reflects thee to thine eye." The inscription of his name in the window, therefore, will not only make Donne present as a person to his beloved, sustaining his hardness; it will also make the beloved present to herself ("thee to thee").²³ Looking at the name sustains her erotic desire for him even as he withdraws from her side, and she sees herself through his "I," as though here the myth of Narcissus that Petrarch also draws on explicitly has ostensibly been redeemed for heterosexuality: she loves her reflection, but her reflection is his name, which is in turn, through "charm," his physical firmness. The "name" thus preserves the poet's "I," which stands before and controls the vectors of desire during and after this complex moment of seeing and departing.

Yet the second stanza's concluding couplet also undercuts the initial proposition of Donne's name as an active uncarnation of his self and its firmness. It implies not only that the beloved but also that the poet is in some sense passive in this scene of reflection. The name had been presented as magically making the poet's firmness present to his beloved in absentia, while the glass narcissistically reflected the beloved back equal to herself. "Love's magic" undertakes its own assault on Donne's intentions, though, as in Petrarch. Here it repurposes the magic of language, which was supposed to make the lovers mutually present, to its own ends: "But all such rules, love's magic can undo, / Here you see me, and I am you." Rather than confirming the overcoming of absence through magical, mutual presence, desire's power to "undo" spins the two into a chiasmic syntax—"Here you see me, and I am you"—in which the beloved still has her "eye" on Donne's name, but her eye and her identity are overtaken by the poet's "I": "and I am you." On the one hand, this imperialistic expansion of the name—the name absorbs the beloved by thoroughly identifying "I" and "you"—merely contributes to its potent presence and firmness: the poet controls not only his identity and desire but also the beloved's.

22. For more on transparency in these passages, see Barbara L. Estrin, "Framing and Imagining the 'You': Donne's 'A Valediction of My Name in the Window' and 'Elegy: Change,'" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 30, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 345–62.

23. On the confusion that early editors had with the pronomial game Donne plays in this stanza, leading to a series of questions about who sees whom here, see Brian Cummings, "Passion in Donne," in *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis (London: Routledge, 2013), 55–56.

But on the other hand, the chiasmus dizzily disperses and entangles identities, introducing the possibility that the inscription of the name, and the lover's reflection in it, could recast desire as a series of vexed identifications, as though they are melting into each other. Read this way, what seemed so firm has been unmade. The "engrav[ing]" of the name has graver consequences than the poet expected, and the poet's "harsh undoing" is indeed on the horizon.

The initial assertion of the third stanza works against such vertiginous crossings. There, the poet declares again the "entireness" and consistency of his name, as seemingly well protected as Petrarch's abode was in "the sweet time of [his] first age":

As no one point nor dash,
Which are but accessory to this name,
The showers and tempests can outwash,
So shall all times find me the same.
You this entireness better may fulfil,
Who have the pattern with you still.

(Lines 13–18)

"So shall all times find me the same": the certainty of this stanza "undoes" the language of identification and appropriation that the second stanza introduced as it insists that no material element can efface or "outwash" it. Its firmness is here to stay, apparently, unlike Petrarch's more perishable frozen thoughts. The name promises self-identity outside of time, beyond recognition and identification. But the "undoing" at the end of stanza 2 is never wholly suppressed in the poem; the interlacing of the name and desire undercuts the name's status as talisman of the poet's firmness. The points and dashes that presumably make up the lines of inscription by which the name is read (these are the things that no shower or tempest can "outwash") turn out to be but "accessory to this name." We also learn at the end of the stanza that the beloved seems to "have" the name with her, or at least the "pattern" of it, and if she can have it herself, then she can also discard it, too.

Despite the fact that stanza 3 initially seems to try to "undo" the doubts that stanza 2 introduced, it brings us to perhaps an even deeper skepticism regarding the name's ability to embody Donne and stabilize his and his beloved's desire through its firmness. The narrative that takes shape across the whole poem makes this clear too. Whereas the first stanzas seem remarkable for their "magical" description of the name's power to control desire and maintain the poet's present identity as "all times . . . the same," the poem's unfolding plot of rivalry and resistance associates his name with death ("death's-head" [line 21]) and fragmentation ("scattered body" [line 32]). By stanza 4, the name has been changed from "firm" to "ragged bony," becoming a "ruinous anatomy" (lines 23–24). Its earlier hallowed

magic is hollowed out. Rather than embodying the hardness of the poet, the name becomes a sign whose only association with the poet's firm presence has to be actively imposed by the beloved. Donne's magical act of writing turns out to be more like Petrarch's than he hoped, repeating the poetic self-undoing that poetry itself was supposed to help somehow circumvent.

Donne's attempt to stand before and stabilize his desire also is linked with a fantasy about controlling his beloved's desire, but insofar as the layered reflection triangulates her with his name, her desire and identity will, not surprisingly, shift radically over the course of the poem too. If in the first stanzas the beloved's "eye" merely perceived the name as a meditative tool for erotic devotion, giving the name its "price" without ever actually interpreting or repurposing it, then by the sixth stanza, whatever firmness the name may have depends entirely upon the beloved's own hermeneutic work: "Till my return repair / And recompact my scattered body so" (lines 31–32). The name can no longer hold together—"recompact"—the poet's body against desire's scattering force, nor does it contribute the poet's firmness to the glass.²⁴ By contrast, the name must be recompact now by the all-too-mortal beloved. Or perhaps it is out of her control too: the poem goes on to attribute the name's well-being to some vague astronomical "virtuous powers which are / Fixed in the stars," powers that "are said to flow / Into such characters, as graved be" (lines 32–34).²⁵ By stanza 8, the once firm, rock-hard moniker becomes a "trembling name," as enervated as Petrarchan sighing. Donne warns against the entrance of a "one" (a rival name or lover), declaring that if such a person should arrive, then the name would only maintain any influence if the beloved would "then think this name alive" (line 46). With the intimation that this name can only have any life insofar as the beloved will "think" it alive, the name becomes absolutely dependent on what the beloved is attending to or distracted by.²⁶ The hypothetical entrance of this third party offers another layer to Donne's

24. The imperative for the beloved to recompact the body in the name shifts the Christic metaphors of the poem too. Compare with Donne's description of resurrection as recompacting: "And by recompacting this dust into the same body, and reanimating the same body with the same soule, hee shall in a blessed and glorious resurrection give mee such an issue from this death" (*The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962], 10:239–40).

25. On the astronomical allusions here and the hints they may give to the dating of this poem, see Tony Kline, "The Date of John Donne's 'A Valediction: Of My Name in the Window': A Query," *Notes and Queries* 44, no. 1 (March 1997): 80–81; and Robin Robins, in response, 81–83.

26. Kenneth Gross notes that the Petrarchan structure of the poem—especially its giving no voice to the female beloved—ironically "becomes the background against which the speaker's fears emerge" ("John Donne's Lyric Skepticism: In Strange Way," *Modern Philology*, 101, no. 3 [February 2004]: 377).

image (“May my name step in, and hide his” [line 54]) that scrambles the poet’s original name and the hypothetical suitor’s secondary superscript (“And if this treason go / T’ an overt act, and that thou write again, / In superscribing” [lines 55–57]). In the last two stanzas of the poem, whatever force the name might be said to retain is, ironically, dependent on the beloved’s “forgetting,” such that the “name”—which was once so firm as to incarnate the poet—is in the ultimate stanza but a “murmur” that lingers unconsciously within the poet’s sleep as “idle talk” that “must be / No means our firm substantial love to keep,” an inarticulate utterance that can do little more than mark off the failure of this attempt to gain subjective priority over or chasten desire. The poem progressively loses faith in the poet’s original desire for his inscribed name—his poetry and signature—to maintain the firmness of his identity and manage desire.

How does the poet’s name go from magical “charm” to substanceless “murmur,” from presenting the beloved with an embodiment of Donne’s firmness to having the name present only as an unconscious phantasm? It seems that, from the beginning, Donne’s “name” has been far too deeply “engraved,” shadowed by its own death—with the pun on writing and grav-ing (death and entombment) echoing throughout the poem (compare lines 1, 4, and 35). Rayna Kalas has thoughtfully claimed that the downfall of the name’s powers in the poem maps “a shift from iconic resemblance to the representational sign,”²⁷ but I think the name originally promised more than iconic resemblance. The poem disenchant—s—and charts the cultural fall away from a belief in—a conception of language as able to embody physical presence, the myth of a magical identity of name and thing, which in this instance also authorizes the Narcissistic conception of a poet whose identity preexists and can be protected by self-hardening from desire’s self-scattering force. Donne’s poem is centrally concerned with how writing offers new possibilities for identity and desire that are at the same time threats to their integrity—threats, that is, to any Narcissistic assumption of the self’s ability to attain, especially through writing, a state of Petrarchan autonomy separate from desire. Donne surveys this self, precisely, as a Petrarchan poet, namely, as one who seeks to overcome distance or the agonies of desire in and through writing. The poet’s name is no sooner firmly inscribed than does its power and potency disappear, draining its ability to set itself apart from desire and to save the poet from a fate of sighing and murmuring.

27. Rayna Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse: The Technology of Poetic Invention in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 205.

III. WROTH'S ECHO

I then fear myself who knows how to paint the horror, I, creature
of echoing caverns that I am, and I suffocate because I am word
and also its echo.

(CLARICE LISPECTOR, *Água viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler)

In Donne's "Valediction: Of My Name in the Window," we witness the longing for the inscription of a name as a magical talisman that would ward off desire's self-scattering by controlling it, as though it is something exterior to the self. I have argued that this longing for a name that could transcend desire's self-unmaking enacts, at least circuitously, what I described in the first part of this essay as the Narcissistic paradigm in Petrarch, which presupposes the possibility that writing might aid one in returning to a freedom that preceded desire: Petrarch's blissful abode and hard affect, aligned with Narcissus's stony refusal to be touched. Yet we have seen in Donne, a possibility already glimpsed in Petrarch himself, that poetry makes the possibility of returning to some state of freedom before desire, or even trying to maintain one's firmly voiced intention by chastening desire, all but impossible. For Donne, even more explicitly than in Petrarch, self-unmaking is not just "the condition for poetic utterance," as Enterline has so compellingly argued it is in Petrarch, but is also the effect of poetic utterance. In this valediction poem, the constitution of the poet's name in language cannot be separated from its ruin, nor can the self be cordoned off from desire that continually scatters it in a state of indefinite "dying."

In the final part of this essay I suggest that in the first sonnet of Mary Wroth's *The Countesse of Montgomery's Urania*, we can find an implicit response to the Narcissistic paradigm of desire that was complexly evoked in Petrarch and further complicated in Donne. The poetic voice that emerges here displaces the Narcissistic paradigm with an Echoic one, seeking neither an idea of self that preexists desire and suffering nor a self-hardening that could recollect such a vision of self. Though Petrarch also occasionally identifies himself implicitly as Echo and Laura as Narcissus—mostly famously in *Rime* 45, where he labels his main competitor for Laura's affections the mirror in which she, as Narcissus, views her own eyes—Petrarch evades any explicit identification with Echo.²⁸ Wroth's fair shepherdess critiques the presuppositions of Petrarchan Narcissism and the fantasy of hard affect, grounding her poetic voice in something like disordered affect and

28. Durling notes that the connection between Petrarch and Echo is "both established and evaded" in these poems (*Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, 31–32).

embracing desire and its deprivations as the condition for a different kind of poetic project. This is how Urania's poetic voice emerges:

Unseene, unknowne, I here alone complaine
 To Rocks, to Hills, to Meadows, and to Springs,
 Which can no helpe returne to ease my paine,
 But back my sorrowes the sad Eccho brings.
 Thus still encreasing are my woes to me,
 Doubly resounded by that monefull voice,
 Which seemes to second me in miserie,
 And answere gives like friend of mine owne choice.
 Thus onely she doth my companion prove,
 The others silently doe offer ease:
 But those that grieve, a grieving note doe love;
 Pleasures to dying eies bring but disease:
 And such am I, who daily ending live,
 Wayling a state which can no comfort give.²⁹

Wroth's poem tracks a trope in Petrarch's *Rime* 23, where "almost every valley echoes to the sound of my heavy sighs which prove how painful my life is" (lines 12–14). Yet Wroth's poem emerges from another perspective, one that the Narcissistic paradigm silences in Petrarch: the perspective of a woman. Scholars have rightly argued that the poem is very much still engaged with the discursive milieu of Petrarchism, but it turns Petrarchism on its head. As Maureen Quilligan has demonstrated, the beginning of Wroth's first poem in the *Urania* makes us initially think that Urania is confronting "the absence of a beloved," only then to reveal that she is mourning "a lost sense of self as a member of a family."³⁰ Despite this unsettling of Petrarchan expectation, Wroth's poem, like Petrarch's, also begins with a worry that poetry will only increase woe. That worry is redoubled by the threat of the silent treatment that Petrarchism has historically imposed on women, denying from the start their chance to sing a sonnet like the one Wroth presents here. The fact of being denied a place is registered in the very first line of the poem, with the repetition of negatives (unseene/unkowne) and the opening caesuras, the discord of which stands out against the otherwise soothing consonance that proliferates in the line. Looking beyond Urania's immediate context, I take the beginning of Wroth's poem to figure the Petrarchan tradition as one that has been organized to exclude her presence and the possibility of her poetic

29. Mary Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 1995), 1–2.

30. Maureen Quilligan, "The Constant Subject: Instability and Female Authority in Wroth's *Urania* Poems," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (University of Chicago Press, 1990), 311.

articulation. Yet here lies the fundamental provocation of Urania's poem: it is in the landscape of tradition that deprives her of her poetic voice that her poetic voice, the double echo of her voice, resounds.

The emergence of Urania's voice in this poem is not compensatory or consolatory; it arises through a "complaint" that makes loss the essential cause of the poem. Petrarch is full of complaints, of course, but Petrarch's complaints, as I have already suggested, alternate between soothing the pain of desire provoked by an unattainable beloved and "inflaming" the self—and that term that I mentioned at the start of this essay in reference to Petrarch's *Rime* 71, inflammation ("m'infihammi"), importantly shows how inwardly directed song is for Petrarch, even if that sense of inward stability is constantly being stolen from him. For Wroth's Urania, by contrast, the "complaint" she airs by addressing the landscape cannot "returne" any "helpe" to "ease" the pain of frustrated desire and alienation, and there's no projection backward of a stable identity, protected by hard affect, that preexisted loss or sorrow. Instead, as line 4 has it, "Back my sorrowes the sad Eccho brings." The composition of poetic song in Petrarch always bears with it this possibility—that it will only futilely amplify and traumatically repeat sorrow. But in Wroth's poem, Petrarch's dialectic of self-scattering and self-recollection is replaced by a poetics of echo, in which presence and absence, self-reflection and self-loss, become both allusive and sonic techniques that produce only the "still encreasing" of Urania's "woes to me." For Urania, and unlike for Petrarch, poetry does not seem to offer any possibility of consolation for the agitating desire of a lost recognition. Poetry only increases her sorrow, "doubly resounded by that monefull voice." In contrast to Petrarch's dramatically inward inflammation, which causes countless repetitions with differences in his scattered rhymes, Urania's resounding literally offers more of the same grief. Moreover, Wroth's song is very much outwardly directed, a marked contrast to Narcissus's "copia" or Petrarch's internal abode, which is hoarded rather than outwardly projected—about which I'll elaborate shortly.

As this quotation from line 6 makes clear, Wroth's Urania conceives her "monefull voice" with direct reference to the Ovidian figure of Echo. Even if this is not an "Echo poem" in the strictest sense (where parts of or entire lines are repeated), Echo is not only an allusion here: she is the organizing technique of the verse, through, for example, repetitions in diction, anaphoric iterations, and constellations of assonance on the *ō* that ends Echo's name (alone, Meadows, sorrowes, woes, monefull).³¹ The inclusion of Echo's name and the reverberation of that name's "doubly resounded"

31. On the syllabic echoes of the last vowel of Echo's name throughout the poem, see Mary B. Moore, *Desiring Voices: Women Sonneteers and Petrarchism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 141.

qualities allude to the introduction of Echo in Ovid's text as "resonabilis Echo" (resounding Echo) (3.358), an introduction that is itself a redundancy, a double doubling, echoing Echo. We first meet Echo in Ovid's text immediately after the narrator describes Narcissus's attempt to preserve his own hardness by keeping himself untouchable—at the very moment, that is, I have proposed was influential for Petrarch's Narcissistic projection of his past freedom before desire, achieved through hard affect. The self-conscious allusion to the story of Echo in Ovid seems to me to function in Wroth's poems on two conceptual levels.

First, by invoking Echo explicitly at the moment before she refers to her own voice as being "doubly resounded," Urania suggests a possibility that feminist critics have sought to recuperate in Ovid's tale itself:³² Wroth spins the status of originary utterance and its echo into an indeterminate cycle. Who's echoing whom here? Urania at first seems to render the sound that returns to her a secondary reflection of her voice. But Urania also figures herself as an Echo receiving another echo—"doubly resounded" suggests the doubling of something that is already doubled, re-sounded—as though Echo were there before Urania, patiently awaiting the arrival of an unknown voice to be able to bring back sorrows that are already sounded before Urania's articulation of them. Wroth's "doubly resounded" is in this sense not only an echo but a doubling of Ovid's already self-doubled "resounding Echo." This double-echo effect bars the poem from indulging in that Narcissistic fantasy of stabilizing voice and identity that attempts to return to a time when the self was protected from desire or loss. The poem instead transforms this experience of dizzying, sorrowful echo into the foundation of a bond of friendship: Urania recognizes Echo as her "companion," "like friend of mine own choice."³³ This new community is based on an embrace of destabilizing affect, which means losing a clear sense of whether one's voice is even one's own.³⁴

But at the same time that she movingly instantiates Echo as her new friend, in her emphasis on how her woes are increasing Urania evokes

32. See, e.g., Claire Nouvet, "An Impossible Response: The Disaster of Narcissus," *Yale French Studies*, no. 79 (1991): 103–34.

33. On the significance of friendship in Wroth's writing more generally, see Naomi Miller, *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), esp. chap. 2. Miller writes suggestively of this sonnet: "Urania addresses her poem not to a male lover, but to a female 'friend' who is at once herself and not herself, thus erasing the masculine parameters of Petrarchan representations of desire" (56).

34. On Wroth's abiding concern with constituting new forms of community elsewhere in her work, see Leila Watkins, "The Poetics of Consolation and Community in Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," *Studies in Philology* 121, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 139–61.

the end of Echo's corporal life in Ovid's poem, the literal wasting away that happens when her desire goes unrequited and unsatisfied:

sed tamen haeret amor crescitque dolore repulsae;
 extenuant vigiles corpus miserabile curae
 adducitque cutem macies et in aera sucus
 corporis omnis abit; vox tantum atque ossa supersunt:
 vox manet, ossa ferunt lapidis traxisse figuram.
 inde latet silvis nulloque in monte videtur,
 omnibus auditur: sonus est, qui vivit in illa.

(3.395–401)

[But still, though spurned, her love remains and grows on grief; her sleepless cares waste away her wretched form; she becomes gaunt and wrinkled and all moisture fades from her body into the air. Only her voice and her bones remain: then, only voice; for they say that her bones were turned to stone. She hides in woods and is seen no more upon the mountain-sides; but all may hear her, for voice, and voice alone, still lives in her.]

Though spurned, Echo's love, remarkably, actually grows on grief even as she wastes away, turning into nothing but pure voice: sound itself, stripped of all traces of the body except for the stones left behind. With the loss of her body, Echo's desire turns to another object. When she reappears at the end of the myth as witness to Narcissus's own final ruin, it appears as if Echo no longer desires Narcissus—the narrator explicitly states that Echo "once," in the pluperfect tense, "had loved" (*quondam quod amaverat* Echo) (3.493) the form of Narcissus that barely remains as the myth ends. At the end of the tale, nothing but voice, Echo can only be pained or grieved (*"indoluit"*) (3.495) by Narcissus's plight.

Wroth's poem is remarkable not least because it foregrounds Urania as a double of Echo, whose desire and voice both grow on grief in just this sense that Ovid had explored. Urania underscores the fact that her own desire is linked with loss and that it cannot be soothed by song in lines 11–12: "But those that grieve, a grieving note doe love; / Pleasures to dying eies bring but disease." It is the echo of her own grieving note, as opposed to the "pleasures" that would only bring "disease," that constitutes Urania's poetic voice. For her "dying eies," there is no fantasy of return to a state of freedom from desire, secured by hard affect, as, ambivalently, there is in Petrarch. By contrast, it is the "grieving note" itself that allows Urania's poetic voice to emerge at the nexus of grief and love that Petrarch finds so threatening. It would be a mistake to dismiss Urania's performance of Echo as melancholy self-absorption, as though grief (as Johnson said harshly of Milton's "Lycidas") were merely an occasion to announce oneself to the world as a poet. I resist this reading not only because Urania is not in any obvious sense

performing for an audience or readership within the poem, even if an idea of community is produced in her song. It is not accurate to say that Urania embraces grief as the ground of her voice because her voice is not exactly her own, either, caught up as it is in a resounding echo. Here are the last two lines again: "And such am I, who daily ending live, / Wayling a state which can no comfort give." The penultimate line performs a curious self-dislocation; the caesura intrudes after the "I" and suspends the definition of identity momentarily. And then living is described, paradoxically, as daily ending. Or, to put it another way, this is the kind of "I" that lives precisely through daily ending. The daily death offers an eerie echo of Donne's "Since I die daily, daily mourn," which had already been an echo of Petrarch's "mille volte il dí moro et mille nasco" (a thousand times a day I die and a thousand am born) (*Rime* 164.13). There, reflected back to him in the Narcissistic paradigm that he inherits from Petrarch, Donne recognizes that the very fact of being in language means that there is no hope of the poet's returning to or regaining any freedom before desire's privations—hence the poet dies daily, in every reading and writing of his name. By marked contrast, Urania declares that she is constituted in the mortal absence from herself, and by doing so through an echo of Petrarch and Donne, she—to borrow a phrase from John Hollander—distorts their voices to interpret them and create a new kind of poetic voice.³⁵ There is no free self—no "I" that might be protected by hard affect before or beyond this condition—and no hope to fashion a self that could be separate from and in control of its desire. In this "state" of perpetual "wayling," with no refuge in "comfort" or consolation, Urania harnesses the desire and sorrow that Petrarch fears as the negative possibility for her voice. The poem resounds in the productive failure to be free of or separate from desire. Foregrounding Echo rather than Narcissus, Urania's cryptic freedom is promised only by the echo-effect of her poetic voice, in concert with "companion[s]"—"like friend[s] of [her] own choice"—whose voices resound with her own. Her poem thus shows not only how disordered affect and self-loss might make possible women's poetic production in the Renaissance but also models echo and resonance as communal—or at least dialogic—modes of life that sustain themselves precisely by wailing the states, both individual and political, that give no comfort.

35. "The rebounds of intertextual echo generally, then, distort the original voice in order to interpret it" (John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981], 111).