
This book discusses the major instances of silenced speech in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and connects them to Ovid’s self-representation as “speechless” in his exile poetry. A rich, fairly recent body of scholarship has identified speech deprivation as a major issue in Ovid’s later poetry, observing in particular the close association between speech loss and issues of gender. Natoli takes a new approach. Applying schema theory, he identifies a bipartite pattern for speech loss in the *Metamorphoses* and the exile poetry, namely its association with the nonhuman and the emotional, displayed through animality and isolation from human community. Natoli’s main focus is Ovid’s exile poetry; the *Metamorphoses* establishes schematic patterns and mythological characters that prefigure the linguistic crisis of exile.

The book has four chapters as well as an introduction that usefully surveys the main scholarship on Ovid’s exile poetry. Chapter 1 introduces the concept of schema theory and shows its applicability to ancient conceptions of speechlessness. Chapter 2 discusses the main narratives in the *Metamorphoses* that feature speechlessness, those of Lycaon, Callisto, Io, Echo, Dryope, and Philomela. Chapter 3 discusses Ovid’s use of these myths in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae Ex Ponto* to emphasise the crisis involving his poetic identity and abilities. Chapter 4 concludes the book with an overview of recent work in memory studies; it then discusses Ovid’s efforts in his exile poetry to counteract his loss of a poetic community, which threatens his place in Roman memory as well as his ability to continue to create memory itself.

Bringing together the *Metamorphoses* and the exile poetry is a productive line of research. However, the argument overall is not convincing, and I find the book seriously flawed for several reasons. First of all, Natoli’s adoption of schema theory puts unnecessary constraint on the subtleties of Ovid’s poetry; second, the complete omission of the *Fasti*, a work revised in exile and intimately connected with constraints on speech, as Denis Feeney showed so well in his 1992 article (not cited in the bibliography), means that the author’s conclusions about speechlessness can be only partial; third, the

---

work is very poorly edited and the translations are full of errors. I will take
each point in turn.

First, schema theory creates a rigidity of interpretation. For instance,
Natoli takes Lycaon as the paradigm for all subsequent metamorphoses
in Ovid’s poetry. He skilfully shows how Ovid’s narrative particularly
emphasises Lycaon’s loss of speech (pp. 35-7). However, he argues that
Lycaon demonstrates that with metamorphosis, the inner essence of the
person remains the same, despite a drastic change in form (pp. 7-8). Yet
Lycaon has always, it seems, looked “wolfish” (eadem violentia vultus. .
. eadem feritatis imago, Met. 1.238-9); according to Ovid’s text here, with
the repeated eadem, Lycaon’s outer form coheres with his metamorphosed
inner being. Moreover, as a paradigm, Lycaon does not work for Ovid’s
Metamorphoses, a poem that resists neat classifications and involves change
at all levels of the narrative. For instance, by contrast to Lycaon, Lycaon’s
daughter Callisto loses her beauty when she becomes a bear and her inner
self changes also, for she, a former huntress, now ironically experiences fear.
To take another example, Philomela’s loss of speech. According to Natoli’s
schema, speechlessness means becoming nonhuman and experiencing social
isolation; thus Philomela on losing her tongue and her virginity moves into
the animal realm (pp. 65-79). Yet far from being animal-like, during her
captivity Philomela, though voiceless, uses her human ingenuity and a high
level of art to weave a subtle but telling tapestry that can be conveyed without
suspicion from the hut to her sister in the palace. Natoli also argues that
when Philomela is released from imprisonment by her sister, she is (according
again to his schema) therefore reintegrated into society and “reconnected
with civilization and her family”. What civilization and what family, I have
to ask, exists in the Thracian palace where Philomela’s family includes the
brutal brother-in-law and the disposable nephew? The use of schema theory
leads to the overriding of the complexities of Ovid’s narratives. And to turn
to the exile poetry, surely Ovid there does not enter “into a speechless state”
(p. 115) because he is separated from his poetic community, as Natoli argues;
his existing poetry from exile suggests anxiety about loss of poetic abilities
but not actual loss of articulate speech. Schema theory acts as a straitjacket
on analysis of Ovid’s poetry.

Secondly, the Fasti, a late work intimately concerned with the issue
of speech, is not part of the book’s discussion. (Nor, strangely, are the Heroïdes,
although Ovid drew on them in exile and they too are concerned with social
isolation and problems of communication). The Fasti, which was revised
in exile and announces its exilic status in its opening proem to Germanicus,
is generally agreed to overlap temporally and thematically with both the
Metamorphoses and the Tristia and Epistulae Ex Ponto. Let me take
one example of how failure to acknowledge the Fasti constrains Natoli’s
argument. In his first chapter Natoli offers a schematic analysis of the word

ExClass 22, 2018, 289-292
mutus according to which the loss of articulate speech is associated
with the subhuman and with emotionality (pp. 22-32); this definition is key to
his subsequent analyses of Ovid’s poetry. Yet this schematic definition is
complicated in Book 2 of the Fasti where Ovid introduces the goddess Muta
(Fasti. 2.571-606). She is associated with magic, with cunning, deception and
ingenuity; in Roman culture mutus clearly belongs to a richer semantic field
than Natoli allows.

Third, the book is so poorly edited that it detracts from its arguments. It
gives the impression of having been rushed to the press too soon, for there
are editorial errors and translation errors on almost every page. I will give
examples of just a few, beginning with some editorial errors.

Errors in transcription include “adultery” in place of adulter (p. 25);
mugitus transcribed as “mugatus” (p. 59); nescius transcribed as “nesius”
(p. 91) and dividor as “dividiur” (p. 104, 203). There are grammatical errors
also; for instance, “Inachus’ list . . . serve . . .” (p 65). Words are missing in
sentences or letters from words, for instance, “bout” instead of “about
(p. 100); “the walls (of) the stables” (p. 102). The endnotes do not always
correspond to the main text or are uninformative. For instance in note 22
of the Introduction Newlands (2014) should be Newlands (1998), which is not
in the bibliography; in the same note the date of Hardie’s book is not given.
The formatting of elegiac couplets is sometimes askew (e.g. pp. 92-3); on p.
107 the translation of Tr. 1.2. 33-36, provided on p. 106, is pasted in again as
the translation for Tr. 1.2.53-6.

As regards the translations, from p. 80 on the provision of translation of
the Latin text becomes erratic. Sometimes the Latin text is not translated;
sometimes the translation is placed in the endnotes. Errors in translation
include modern foreign languages; see e.g. the translation of ‘vergleichbar
(p. 87) as ‘clearly’ at p. 202 n. 19 and also p. 47, n. 33 (pp. 192-3). But the
errors in translating Latin are disturbingly persistent throughout, and range
from basic errors to careless ones—e.g. at p. 86 the couplet cum subit illius
tristissima noctis imago, / qua mihi supremum tempus in urbe fuit (Tr.
1.3.1-2) is repeated at p. 151 with quae instead of qua, yet in both instances
the translation given is ‘on which”—to those that affect the interpretation. I
point out a few of these here.

At p. 51, discussing the myth of Echo and Narcissus (in which vision as
well as voice is obviously important), Natoli mistranslates aciem (Met. 3.381)
as ‘high ground’ rather than ‘eye sight.’

In his discussion of the simile of the predatory bird in the myth of
Procris, Philomela and Tereus, Natoli mistranslates deposuit nido leporem
Iovis ales in alto (Met. 6.517) as ‘when the bird of love clutches a hare with
its taloned feet in the bright heights’ (p. 67). Rather, Ovid’s variation on

the conventional predatory simile suggests captivity with no possibility of escape, since the eagle has deposited the hare in its lofty (and thus inaccessible) nest.

The passage describing Philomela’s mutilated tongue is clumsily and inaccurately translated (pp 70-1) and the image of the tongue which “seeks the feet of its mistress as it dies” (et mortis dominae vestigia quaerit, becomes in Natoli’s translation “as if, in dying, it was searching for some sign of her”. The pointed dominae is not translated, and the clause has been made a conditional, diluting the graphic, physical image of dismemberment.

At p. 140 the epigraph felices ornet haec instrumenta libellos (Tr. 1.1.9-10) is translated in the endnote as “these decorations adorn happy little books” (p. 207). The omission of the subjunctive obviates the ironic contrast that the poet is making between poetry books published in Rome and his exile work. In that context too, felices would be more appropriately translated as “unfortunate” (echoing infelix at line 4) rather than as “happy”.

In general the translations lack polish and errors compound the problem of the author’s reliability as a guide to Ovid’s text. I provide a final example, Natoli’s translation of Met. 2. 489-92 offered at p. 101:

Al quotiens, sola non ausa quiescere silva,  
ante domum quondamque suis erravit agris!  
Al quotiens per saxa canum latratibus acta est  
venatrixque metu venantum territa fugit!

‘Ah! How many times she did not dare to relax alone in the forest, she wandered into the fields before her former home! Ah! how many times she, a huntress, was driven through the rocks by the barking of dogs, and, terrified by the fear of the prey, fled!”

The failure to translate ausa as a past participle (having (not) dared) leads to awkward syntax in the translation; in + abl. agris is translated as ‘into’; in the final line the meaning is seriously skewed through the mistranslation of venatum (of the hunters) as the opposite, the prey! (In the following discussion of this passage Natoli refers to Callisto as standing before her home, ignoring erravit, 490).

An intratextual approach to Ovid’s poetry is to be welcomed. But it is a pity that the book is limited in scope, both in terms of the works discussed and in its theoretical approach. And it is a pity that the author and the press editors could not give more attention to proofreading the manuscript before it went to press.

CAROLE E. NEWLANDS  
University of Colorado Boulder  
carole.newlands@colorado.edu

ExCass 22, 2018, 289-292