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Ukrainian writer, columnist and translator

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Scholarships and Fellowships:

The Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators (Visby, Sweden, 2015)

International writers house Graz (2012, Graz, Austria)

The *Gaude Polonia* Scholarship Programme for Young Foreign Cultural
Professionals (2010, 2012 Warsaw, Poland)

The International Writers' and Translators' House "Ventspilshouse" Scholarship
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Awards

The Debut Prize for Literature (2007, Ukraine)

The Kyiv Laurels Prize for Poetry (2011, Ukraine)

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Carbid (Novel, 2016, Poland)

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Killer (Collection of Short Stories, 2013, Poland)

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SEEKING THE BARBARIANS: ON THE TRAIL OF OVID FROM ODESA TO BALCHIK

Abstract

Publius Ovidius Naso became a peculiar symbol of Eastern Europe after he had been exiled to the very limes of Western civilization by the emperor Octavian Augustus. His impressions from living in Tomis (present-day Constanta) for a long while became the keynote of West-European thought, astonished by the description of the exotic region, where severe barbarians ruled. This research describes stable stereotypes existing on the East-European borders, it is about the neighboring peoples, who we consider to be barbaric for the lack of knowledge about them, and about the frontiers often laid not on the ground but in our heads.

Keywords: Ovid, Tomis, barbarians, border, frontier, literature, stereotypes, western civilization, Eastern Europe.

“What are you transporting?” the Moldavian customs officer asked me on the border in Giurgiulești.

“Nothing,” I replied honestly.

“What’s the purpose of your trip then?” The officer screwed up his eyes slyly as he said this. I could not summon an answer while the public servant set about examining my documents. The border was empty and completely desolate. There was only an indolent dog resting and basking in the sun on the cracked asphalt. Having realized I was not of these parts (not from Odessa) the customs official started examining my papers more meticulously. At some point he even drew out something like a pocket microscope he used to assiduously examine the hologram on the registration certificate of my car.

He could not understand how someone from so far away could cross the frontier here without any significant purpose. I didn’t mention tourism. It would sound totally absurd, since why does one need to drive

430 meters into Moldavian territory? What can one see here? What can one take pictures of? In fact, the border with Romania should have been here, if not Ukraine handing over several hundred meters of its territory to Moldova in 1999, which later built a port at this very location. Its access to the Danube was to make it a near maritime power. In return, Ukraine has received some hundred meters of the highway near Palanka village connecting the northern and southern parts of Odessa region. There was even a talk that this exchange was not advantageous for Ukraine but was done to support Moldova, to give it a significant tool for development and enrichment.

What does Kyiv need such a step for? Can it really be true that Ukraine is such a noble state that while it is unable to develop itself, it keeps supporting other countries? The answer is simple: fortifying Moldova would reduce the chances for this country to join Romania in the nearest future; the idea of “the Great Romania”, of course, could not find adherents apart from Romanians themselves. For this reason Ukraine (or its former Kremlin fathers) has chosen a “divide et impera” strategy. In this way Moldova, elbowing everyone around, just as an old woman on the market, which suddenly shows herself between two stalls and starts to lay out patties for sale, wedged itself in the border between Ukraine and Romania. In this way, all the great geopolitics was reduced here to two villages: Giurgiulești and Palanka, and all this was already worth tourism in totality, but how could I explain that to the officer of Moldavian State Customs Services?

Ten minutes have passed, but the customs officer was still checking my documents, asking something idly or demanding some new papers from time to time. Then I suddenly began to hear some music, it was a sort of Russian criminal songs reaching my ears simply from the air first, but in a few seconds its source – an old smashed Audi – appeared from around the corner, too. Having stopped behind my car, its driver, an obese bold man in a track-suit and a cross over his T-shirt, taking absolutely no notice of me, approached the window of the customs officer and they gladly greeted each other. The latter moved my papers aside and quickly stamped the documents of the newcomer, who, despite his short fat fingers demonstrated wonderous motility as he simultaneously nibbled sunflower seeds with one hand, vigorously turning the bundle of keys on his finger and switching the songs of the record player in his car with the small remote controller. I was standing beside and saw that the customs officer took a 10 Euro bill out of the driver’s passport and moved it to the side of the table. He noticed that I saw this plain fraud and smiled with

satisfaction. This openness was a sign for me – as if the customs officer gave me a hint of how to act. In the next moment, that “Audi” had vanished in the Moldavian side, kicking up the dust, as he drove, while I remained standing next to the window of the checkpoint.

The thing was about money – were I to pay at least a symbolic tribute, I would have already been released. The customs officer nodded to the corner of his cabin and all at once a border guard walked out of it, instantly disproving Darwin’s theory with his expression and way of walking. He ordered me to open all the doors, the bonnet and trunk of my car, then slowly examined my stuff, verifying the car body number, ransacking my suitcase and contemptuously knocking over my books on the back seat. Then he went to the dog, woke it up and led it up to sniff my car all over. Now I had been stuck on this border for more than half an hour already, despite the fact that there was no line. At that very moment I felt sorry not for myself, but for the poor dog that had been vainly dragged out of its quiet slumber.

At the end of the day, I could have paid those guardians of law and frontier, not for the sake of my quick liberation, but to help those two be themselves. Please forgive me the tautology, but I crossed the border here to cross the border, to feel it, to find it. Just that very delay of my passing through, that meticulous papers checkup, a car rummage, the undisguised bribery right in front of my eyes – all this as a whole was the border. The frontier was not a barbed wire but exacting of money, corruption and impudence.

Finally this torture was over, I was set free. For some remaining forty meters I was still driving along the broken Moldavian road with its deep crater-like pits. On the left there was the Danube glistening like silver in the sun, once “described as being a frontier of the known world”.¹ On the right I saw Moldova stretched out, Ukraine remained behind, and Romania was waiting ahead. Some one and a half decades ago a Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk was crossing the frontier here, he “was looking at the opposite side of the Danube, at the large rusty wharf cranes. That was my Romania – that temporary fraternity of “Mercedes”, gold, porcine stink and tragic industry, the desolation of which was equal only to its magnitude”.² Everything has changed here since that time and I have been quickly let through the Romanian border, with no questions at the customs. I drove out to the high-quality road, and due to the feeling that my car was not shaking madly any longer, my body realized that the border, or, maybe, the *limes* was left behind. The road led me to Constanta,

an ancient Greek harbor Tomis, where two thousand years ago Publius Ovidius Naso underwent his exile.

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Was Ovid crossing the frontier in Giurgiulești? No, and if we still try to imagine him in this place, owing to poet's legal education, he would have rather been a customs officer. After all, his legal practice is still perceptible in the structure of his poems. They are logically constructed, the author is capable of adducing arguments and persuasion, and in the case of need he even manipulates skillfully. Although he still could not succeed in defending himself, due to the wrathful will of Augustus, the Roman emperor, the poet was exiled to the very end of the world, to the *limes* of Western civilization.

What do we know about Ovid? He was born in 43 BC in Sulmona (central Italy) in a well-off family. He received a typical rhetoric education for that time, practiced law for a while but then gave up and fully devoted himself to poetry, he proved to be much better at. He quickly earned fame, one could only be jealous of his social position: he resided in the center of Rome, right near the Capitoline; he had a beloved wife, several friends. In other words, he had an absolutely ordinary biography, until one day an incident had changed Ovid's life for good, which, however, in some sense, was useful for his creative work and literary legacy. So in 8 AD Octavian August became angry with the poet and banished him to the remote Tomis, where Publius Ovidius Naso lived nine long years and where he passed away in 17 AD.

What did the emperor punish the writer for? First, because the ruler was a man of a severe disposition, he enjoyed inflicting penalty (remember that Cicero was violently killed during the reign of Octavian Augustus).³ It is still a question and there is still a debate, but most of the scholars agree to the fact that Ovid could have witnessed adultery or an orgy with Julia, Augustus's granddaughter. And the punishment was so severe, probably, for the sake of the lesson for all others. The era of Augustus's reign is called a Golden Age, owing to the peace and wealth which turned Rome into a truly heavenly place of the untroubled life and hedonism overgrowing into dissoluteness. The emperor grew older and within the flow of the years he started to display more and more concern for morality of his people, leaving behind all those numerous sins he had committed

when he himself was young. And Ovid seemed to be a perfect model for a victim: the poet was describing love, not its most delicate and refined spiritual gusts, but mainly its physical calls. One can find the tips of how to seduce a woman, how to skillfully conceal your love affair and even what cosmetics to use in order to entice more lovers.

A number of more serious works also belong to the writer: the lost drama *Medea* was approvingly accepted in Rome (interesting whether the author had a feeling that he would soon follow in her footsteps, as, according to the myth, it was the Black Sea where Medea has torn her brother to pieces, and the name Tomis comes from Greek word meaning “torn”?),⁴ and the *Metamorphoses* is still considered to be the pearl of world literature. Though, throughout the era of Augustus’s reign the author was mostly appreciated for his poems about love and physical pleasure. Using contemporary terms, Ovid could be possibly called a celebrity, a partly scandalous star of his time.

But the thunder crashed and the spoilt child of fortune was sent into exile to Moesia – the extreme province of the Roman Empire. He spent almost nine years there, wrote a few books of *Sorrows* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, in which he first begged the emperor for mercy and to at least revise the place of exile (the poet asked to banish him to some not-so-distant Greek island, so he could live among the civilized people, not among the barbarians in Tomis),⁵ he appealed to his numerous friends and former patrons with requests for protection, he wrote to his wife and imaginary readers. As Claudio Magris mentions in his fundamental book *Danubio*, the place of exile was a tragedy for Ovid, as

he was not a poet of love or sex, but a poet of eroticism. And eroticism requires metropole, mass media, saloon gossiping and publicity. A writer of erotic texts, appreciated by people, as Ovid or D’Annunzio, is a marketing genius, he established a code of behavior, created slogans and advertising devices (D’Annunzio), promoted fashion and cosmetics (Ovid). In order to exist, a writer of eroticism has to stay in the whirlpool of the events, he needs Rome, Byzantine Empire, Paris, New York; practicing literary eroticism in the 19th-century provincial and rather domestic Germany seemed to be too challenging or even impossible; and even harder it seemed to be among the Gets. Those Sarmatian winters must have been truly frosty for Ovid; Augustus was good at choosing vengeance.⁶

So there is nothing strange that the books written in exile were full of bitter complaints about the fate and the place of exile, the author tries

to touch his reader, to evoke compassion. So he was overdrawing much describing the climate, for instance (according to Ovid, Tomis, a Black Sea port, was located almost on the North Pole, that is how rigorous the winters were over there). The poet writes, for example:

*“The snow lies continuously, and once fallen
Neither sun no rains may melt it...
So when an earlier fall is not yet melted
Another has come, and in many places ‘tis
Wont to remain for two years”.*⁷

Ovid depicts bloodthirsty barbarians attacking the city; he complains that no one speaks Latin, that there are no books, but seems to put up with his fate within the flow of the years: he learned the local language and even wrote several poems in it. He was honored with a tax exemption and a laurel wreath:

*“There is not a book here, not a man to lend ear to me,
to know what my words mean. All places are filled
with barbarism and cries of wild animals, all are filled
with the fear of a hostile sound. I myself, I think,
have already unlearned my Latin, for I have learned how
to speak Getic and Sarmatian...”*⁸

But it was a completely different life, and in his poems from exile the poet tried to convince everyone that he remained to live only in a physical way ever since he had been banished from Rome, that, maybe, he or his spirit, his nature died the night he had left the capital. One of his most beautiful elegies is about that night which became an edge, a boundary, a frontier, on the opposite side of which something he was reluctant to call a real life commenced. A person surmounts the first frontier when he or she is born, he or she crosses the border when passing away, too; the fate, however, prepared one more border for Ovid – the exile, and he crossed it in Rome that ominous night, and remained to live, thinking, though, he’s been already dead.

Andriy Sodomora, Ovid’s translator into Ukrainian has very neatly indicated a striking difference of the two sides of the frontier, he told us about that night which became an abyss:

The top of poetic glory in magnificent Rome illuminated by the long-awaited peace, a house on the glorious Capitoline Hill, a vast number of friends, a creative leisure in the countryside villa, books – and an absolute absence of everything mentioned above. Were it only the absence – it was the opposite! Mocking at Latin, a foreign for the local citizens language (not to mention the poetry) – instead of glory; extreme coldness and a constant threat of a violent death instead of family warmth, unkempt Gets wearing animal skins, grasping the knives each time when sorting their relationship – instead of educated friends fostered by civilization.⁹

The exile was terrible, but only on the condition that it really took place. A vast amount of information about the Augustus's age has survived to the present day, there are plenty of diligent historical works of that time, but the paradox lies in the fact that none of them tell us about Ovid's exile! No doubt that such a twist of fate of the glorious poet caused a great scandal, but no one set it down on paper. It can be possible that the historians and scholars were afraid of infuriating the emperor, but the point that the exile did not take place should not be fully neglected, too. We learn about Ovid's banishment only from Ovid's literary works. Let's agree to the fact that it is not the most reliable source.

Especially if you thoroughly read the books written by the poet in exile, you will notice that they are rich on many emotional, sorrowful characters, but at the same time, they lack facts. Describing Tomis and the surroundings, the Danube and the Black Sea, the barbarians and the Romans, Ovid is mainly using the stereotypical ideas: according to him the barbarians have overgrown hair, they are bloodthirsty, and are mostly notable for wearing trousers (this detail is very often repeated in his works, the trousers impressed him more than the threat of being violently killed during one of the hostile raids on the port: "Wrapped in skins, and with trousers sewed, they contend with the weather. And their faces alone of the whole body are seen").¹⁰ The Danube and the Black Sea freeze up in winter, the fish freeze up in solid ice, and the barbarians rush across the ice to rob Tomis. It is so cold there, that even wine freezes up and if one breaks the jar, the wine still keeps its shape and so it has to be cleaved into pieces of ice and be consumed suchwise.¹¹

We should have thought that the books of the writer describing his daily routine in a little-known remote place of the world should have become a priceless source of information about the mode of life of local inhabitants, culture, climate, history and even geography; but, as a matter of fact, these books provide us with some scanty and already well-known

data for Ovid's time.¹² It all raises doubts and thoughts that the poet could have simply fabricated his exile as a means of creative technique or an advertising trick, and simply wrote his mournful books not from Tomis surrounded by the barbarians, but from his luxurious countryside villa.

One could play such a game for several months, or, perhaps, a year, but would a serious poet carry on mystifying everyone for a long nine-year period of his life, up to the end of his days? I doubt that. And why wasn't his grave preserved in Rome then? And why isn't there any information about his burial? For these reasons the investigators of Ovid's life and literary accomplishments have almost unanimously accepted the poet's story about his exile. So the writer was banished, he lived among the barbarians on the far Black Sea coast till the very end of his life, wrote ten books there, acquired the local language, and at the end of 17 or at the beginning of 18 AD he passed away. But, as the school literature teachers usually say, the poet has died, but his works remain to live.

And here we must give credit to the exile which was no doubt a tragic event in Ovid's life, but at the same time fortune did him a kindness. There is still one mystery: we are not aware of the reason emperor punished the poet for. This riddle made his biography merely legendary and even after the writer's death, people, for twenty long centuries, have still been looking for the reason and place of exile and later even for the writer's grave.¹³ Not only that the poet managed to touch his addressees from *Epistulae ex Ponto*, but also he proved able to touch a countless number of his readers of future times, who felt for the writer's miserable fate, who sympathized with him, who admired him. There were also those who wished to appropriate Ovid to their literature: for instance, taking a false consideration that the poet was exiled to some place near Odesa, a Ukrainian classic Ivan Franko, who was one of the first investigators of Ovid's creative work and his translator into Ukrainian, suggested a daring assumption that Publius Ovidius Naso can be considered the first Ukrainian poet, a founder of Ukrainian literature.¹⁴

There is a majority of literary critics, who believe that the author's creative work in exile is of worse quality in comparison to his preceding writings. One cannot but agree, as hard life conditions, absence of any contact with cultural life have negatively influenced poet's work. But we should also admit that even though the exile took away a lot (e.g. quality and refinement of his texts), it also brought a valuable present for Ovid.

The exile gave a myth to the poet – a myth of a sufferer, a recluse, a poet, tormented by a tyrant. Who knows if we would rank Ovid's literary

accomplishments alongside with the most important writers of Antiquity today, if it hadn't been for his exile. His biography made him unique, it made him an object of interest for twenty centuries, it made him a legend, a mystery. As they say, if the exile had not existed, it should have been invented.

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But let's start from the very beginning. No, not from Sulmona, Ovid's birthplace, but from Giurgiulești, a Moldavian village between Ukraine and Romania, the very *limes* of the Roman Empire. How on earth did I happen to be there? I wanted to understand Ovid better, as he is my favorite poet. I was naïve to think that once I step on the ground he used to step on, once I see the same landscape, once I breathe in the same sea air, once I take a good look into the eyes of the local citizens, then I will finally start to better and deeper understand his works. And owing to this I will finally feel deeper the whole Eastern Europe, whose symbol is Ovid.

Such thoughts seem to be so well-timed in this Moldavian Giurgiulești, situated between Ukrainian Reni and Romanian Galati. It was two thousand years ago when Roman Emperor Augustus sent Ovid into exile to those lower reaches of the Danube. It was the end of the Empire, the end of the Western civilization on the opposite side of which the barbarians lived. How did Ovid describe it in the *Fasti*?

"For other nations frontiers are fixed:

For Rome, the city and the world are one".¹⁵

2000 years have passed but another frontier runs on this very place – it is a border of the EU and NATO on the one hand, and Ukraine, on the other. We can assume that Ukraine did not become an EU-member, because our Ukrainian riverbank still looks barbaric out of the windows in Brussels. After all it is enough to estimate the quality of roads – which are, in fact, almost absent on the Ukrainian side (local people keep saying there are no roads but visible directions on the ground) and a flat asphalt on the Romanian side – to start believing that the border – the *limes* of Western civilization exists up to this time and it is here. So, here is the truth: Ovid believed the barbarians were residing on the opposite side of the Danube, so when I was driving to Constanta I could not but think I

was the barbarian myself. To understand, to take a look at Publius Ovidius Naso from the barbarian standpoint – this is what I wanted.

But as I was going to cross the Ukrainian border I could not miss the opportunity to visit a small town in the northern part of Odesa region called Ovidiopol. The legend, the myth generated by the exile and poet's death among the barbarians bothered lots of adventurers, who have been looking for Ovid's grave for centuries. It was almost impossible to find the grave, since there was little data even about Tomis. The only thing known was that the emperor chose an ancient port on the Black Sea for exile, where the Danube ends falling onto the sea, but where exactly? The identification of ancient Tomis and present-day Constanta took place not so long ago; so, there is nothing strange that yet in the 18th century the romantic souls were seeking the traces of exile in much of the eastern direction, as Bessarabian steppes across the Danube. Some desperados even managed to find the grave of Publius Ovidius Naso – at least such a presupposition existed at that time.¹⁶ The consequences were instant: in 1795 the empress Catherine II of Russia ordered to rename a small Turkish settling Acidere into Ovidiopol in honor of the poet which was allegedly exiled there. How could I pass by the city with such a name?

Ovidiopol is a small town located by the lake connected with the sea, but not too close to attract the crowds of tourists. It is quiet and provincially calm nook. I have wandered about the central streets in search of the Ovid's statue. But it turned out that the poet had been banished here, too: the monument is situated on the backyard of the local Culture House, over 10 meters away from the lake. I left the car and went all around this, to be completely honest, the monument not of the best esthetic quality. The poet is sitting on the stone block and looks ahead, deep in thought. I would like to say he is looking into the distance, but no, his gaze is directed into the back wall of the Culture House. Maybe that is the reason he has got such a sorrowful look. The emptiness is all around. Only the pier is overrun with fishermen.

And as I am a fishing lover myself I decided to start a conversation with them. After all, there is information that beside the other books written in exile, Ovid wrote a didactic poem *On Fishing* in which he described the fish of the Black Sea and the Danube, so the poet himself was not indifferent to this kind of leisure. And I wanted to make inquiries about Ovid. What do the local inhabitants know about him? What have they read? Do they believe that the poet was really exiled here? But I had to start the conversation by discussing the weather and whimsical fish reluctant

to bite even the best worms. Fishermen are pretty the same everywhere. Often they tell tales when the fish used to bite better and the fish used to be bigger. As it turned out I scored a bull's eye. A fisherman began his story with how he used to catch fish with his bare hands when he was young, not to mention that some 15 years ago he could have never returned home with his hands empty. And today the catch is so small that one doubts whether it should be released back to the lake or to be taken home in the mayonnaise can. Having found the proper moment, I interrupted him with a question: "Who is this monument honoring?" "It's in honor of an unknown soldier," the fisherman blurted out with no shadow of a doubt.

An interesting response, particularly because of the fact that throughout his exile Ovid did have to put on his military attire a few times when the barbarians attacked Tomis. All the inhabitants of the city had to climb up the walls to beat off the enemy. But to call the statue of a man sitting feebly in Roman tag a monument honoring an unknown soviet soldier, it was too much. So I took one more look at the fisherman, suspecting he was mocking me. But no, he was serious, totally concentrated on his cork-float. Then I tried to take advantage of the pause between his grumbling and asked him one more question: "Why is the town called Ovidiopol?" To my surprise, my companion gave me a partially correct answer. He explained that one Roman poet was exiled here and the town is now named after him. "Bessarabia was the same for Rome as Siberia is for Russia" – this is exactly how he put it as if he had learned about severe frosts from Ovid's poems.

Further on into the conversation it became hard to catch up with his thoughts. He tried to illustrate his own concept of the universe, often mentioning the Masons and the Jews and when I finally asked him where he originated from and what his nationality was, he replied he did not know. As here, in Budzhak in Odessa Region, the blood is so mixed that no one can ever be sure about his origin. After all, he called himself a Slav, while I wanted to add that blood is not the primary basis for nationality and identity, that one can choose his/her nationality, views, but was running short, as the fisherman returned to his favorite topic and was now trying to persuade me that we (he and I in particular and all the Slavs in general) are suffering from the Jewish-Mason supremacy. He seemed to believe that Mason is a nationality, too. So, this conversation became annoying. And I would have probably forgotten it if it hadn't been for the phrase my companion blurted out at the end.

“You see,” he said puffing his cheap cigarette, “there’s a plenty of nationalities that used to live and still continue living here. There’s a great multitude of cultures here in Budzhak. There are the Tatars, the Turkish people, the Jews, the Bulgarians, the Ukrainians, the Romanians, the Gypsies, the Russians, the Moldavians, the Greeks, the Germans. And so the sum of all those cultures gives lack of culture. This is the reason why we live so badly.”

These words made me feel a chill running up and down my spine. The sum of cultures gives lack of culture! This is the brilliant phrase indeed. In a pretty much similar way the Ukrainian essayist Oleksandr Boychenko has described a multicultural richness of Chernivtsi: some of the European traditions still live here, the multiculturalism is not a mere name here, and for this reason you may still be abused in at least three different languages on the street.¹⁷ All in all, it turned out I had driven 1000 kilometers to hear a brilliant phrase from the fisherman, to see Ovid, this unknown soldier and to stick around the customs window because of my reluctance to bribe the customs officer right on the *limes* of civilization, on the frontier, that has been existing here for more than two thousand years.

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The sum of cultures gives lack of culture. This is what I had to start with instead of Ovid. To start from scratch. As for the books the author and the reader are equally important. When one reads a book, he/she learns both about the author and the text itself. The very act of reading, the act of choosing this very book tells pretty much about oneself. How could it happen that Ovid excited my curiosity? That his words started speaking to me in a special way and left me with nothing but anxiety and made me set out in search of something I could not even shape in my head.

Everything started with the border and a prohibition to cross it. I was born in Latvia, but not abroad. Once again, my parents were the Ukrainians, I was born in soviet Latvia, but they did not consider it abroad. Then I was growing up in the Transcarpathian town called Vynohradiv which is situated several kilometers away from Hungary and Romania. One can feel the border at every step there: in religion, language, in the mode of life. Unfortunately, they are almost non-intersecting. And the fisherman’s words can also be applied to my region where people simply don’t know anything about people living nearby. They only know some

swear words and sometimes the recipe of some delicious dish can slip past the border and find itself in some absolutely non-traditional cuisine. And this is it about the celebrated multiculturalism. And when you don't know anything about a person living next to you but just across the border, doesn't such a person seem to be a barbarian? When I was a child there was a woman next door, an old Hungarian woman, and didn't her language resemble some ba-ba-ba-babbling?

Thus the multicultural paradise of my childhood could hardly give me any answers, but it taught me to ask the right questions. Bela Bartok, raised in Vynohradiv, he was the most prominent citizen of the town of all time. He spent his childhood and even gave his first concert there. But you won't find a monument honoring the musician anywhere in the city. In fact, there is a bust without a bust itself, because the head goes straight from the pedestal. It is mounted in the yard of the Hungarian school absolutely hidden in the shade of the trees, so you will never notice it from the street if you have no notion about its existence. Why does the city neglect glorifying its most remarkable residents? Why isn't there any statue, any festival named after the musician? Why isn't there any tourist itinerary connected with Bartok's childhood? May it be for the reason he spoke another language? As the primary meaning of the barbarian is "the person speaking a foreign language".¹⁸ And in this context the composer did speak an incomprehensible for the local inhabitants language – irrespectively of their Ukrainian, Hungarian or Romanian origin – he was speaking the language of music and art which, as we may notice, can also be conceived as a barbaric one.

People learned how to take advantage of those borders. For instance, there is a river called Tysa, which starts high in the Carpathian Mountains and serves as the frontier between Ukraine and Romania and later on as a border between Ukraine and Hungary. So the local fishermen learnt how to throw their spinning far across the whirl of the central stream, to the Hungarian side where they are allowed to legally fish, whereas on the Ukrainian side it is forbidden by law. And that is not to mention the smuggling and a load of ways on how to illegally cross the frontier.

When I was fishing on the above-mentioned Tysa in my childhood I always regretted that I was not allowed to cross this international frontier without the necessary documents. The trip abroad seemed very exotic, almost fairylike. Yet I was sitting on the one bank, peering into the opposite one, 70 meters apart from me, and couldn't see anything fairylike there. Everything seemed to be just the same: the trees, pebbles on the river bank,

the birds and even fish in the water. In fact, there should have been (and actually was) the European Union and NATO. Looking at this frontier, separating two absolutely identical banks a thought came into my mind: thank goodness there is a river here. Once it were the field here, it would be very hard to distinguish the EU from non-EU. And how is it possible to differentiate where Poland ends and the Czech Republic begins or where France ends and Belgium starts with no borders in between them? You are just walking across the field or the forest and at some point find yourself in the different country not having the slightest clue about it. So this is a “borderless” stage on the way of European integration which helps us realize that the border is not about the barbed wire or a wall. Peter Brown writes about the boundary between the so-called civilized people and the barbarians:

Looked at from the steppe land of Eurasia, the Roman frontier along the Rhine and Danube was a non-frontier. Both sides of it were green. Up to 400 A.D., two very different social orders faced each other across the Rhine and Danube. But they were not social orders based upon unbridgeable and unchangeable differences in ecology, in technology and even in mindset. For this reason, the contrast between “Romans” and “barbarians” – though it seemed so clear to the imagination of contemporaries – was constantly eroded by the facts of nature. The two groups shared a temperate climate which ensured that both Romans and “barbarians” were settled farmers. Like all great rivers (one thinks of the Rio Grande between Texas and Mexico), the Rhine and the Danube were as much joining places as they were dividing lines.¹⁹

So the border (from the Ovid’s time and up till today) is in our head, our brain and our consciousness lays it. And a barbed wire is only a projection of our worldview onto the landscape.

But did my romance with Ovid start from the frontier? Perhaps, yes, but not from the civilizational one, and not even from the national one but from the internal frontier. I was growing up in a poor family with no father, that is why, when I turned 14, I entered a military school for various personal, family and financial reasons. The youth is a very queer time in an emotional sense, this is the time of extremes and hyperboles, when the personality is being formed. It revolts against society, it perceives its every scar to be unique, its every experience to be special, and it considers solitude in this universe to be infinite. So what I’m driving to...

I mean if it hadn't been for the long nights in casern of military school, I could have never been able to understand Ovid so accurately, to conceive his texts and his fate so closely. Since Publius Ovidius Naso is a founder of solitude in its present-day modern sense. As it has been mentioned before, sent to live among the barbarians in the middle of nowhere, the poet has fallen from the top of his glory and prosperity to the bottom of life. Regardless of that, Ovid lived in the city, in the port, among the crowds of people, he might have even had a servant, he, probably, performed in public feasts and sent his letters by ships to Rome. And, nevertheless, he felt solitary. Isn't it similar to contemporary people living in metropolis and feeling lonesome? Isn't it the feeling forcing us to put on sunglasses and headphones not to notice the millions of people around?

That is why I'm happy I came across the right book at the proper time. I started reading Ovid in that military school. As far as I remember we were to read his *Metamorphoses*, an absolute bore for the young boy. But before I had started to read the text itself, I read the foreword, the poet's biography, I learned about the exile, solitude and death in the middle of nowhere. I do remember that night: I was lying on the upper store of my bunk bed in the middle of the stuffy casern, some more than 50 heads all around me, but I felt as if I were on a desert island. I was lying, I could not fall asleep, I was thinking about Ovid, and that no one can ever understand me in this world. So in such a childish and banal way I realized one of the greatest existential problems of each barbarian: not only that you speak foreign language but no one can understand you. The solitude in metropolis, loneliness amongst the millions of the crowd.

It was a true reason of my love for Ovid, the first impulse to try and gasp the meaning of his texts, to find a soulmate in them. To one day find myself sitting in the car, turning the key, pushing the gas and hitting the road to Constanta, the city surrounded by the barbarians. And if it is really so, then everyone coming here from outside is the barbarian himself.

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Having tried once, I wanted more. Constanta lies at the Black Sea shore, but is still surrounded by land from the other three sides. So, it would be logical to assume, that Tomis was also completely surrounded by the barbarians, except from the seaside. I felt a strong desire to enter the city from those three barbarian directions. I had already entered the

city from Odesa, i.e. from the eastern side. Now it was time to come to Constanta from the West, from Bulgaria. So, I got into the car and headed off to Balchik, a little town on the Bulgarian coastline of the Black Sea. I fell in love with Balchik at first sight, when I saw dozens of pictures of its suburbs in the Romanian National Museum in Bucharest. During the inter-war period Balchik belonged to Romania. The Queen of Romania built a palace there and planted a gorgeous garden to host her visitors, who were the best Romanian artists of that time and those visits had undoubtedly left their mark in Romanian art. There was another significant argument as to why one should go to Balchik: Ovid arrived to Constanta not by sea but by land, so he passed this territory on his way, this is the region, where borders have changed so many times, that such changes couldn't but leave an exceptional imprint on people, their worldviews and their attitude to the Other.

At last, the third reason to go to Balchik was an opportunity to see the town of Ruse on the way from Bucharest. This is the city on the Danube, where Elias Canetti was born and raised. The very fact of his birth in that place means that the lowland of the Danube was a diverse multitude of nationalities and cultures – like during Ovid's time. Canetti grew up in such a 'climate' and, in fact, that region still looks mostly the same. But what a pleasure was to read Canetti's memoir,²⁰ where he described his colorful childhood in the city near the Danube, and to imagine, how only one hundred years ago here, on the border between Romania and Bulgaria, a child, whose first mother tongue was Spanish (because the poet was a Sephardic Jew), the second was German, was growing up. Many years later, he also picked up different words from Bulgarian and Romanian languages and gypsy dialects. At long last, Canetti was born here, this is his native land and, probably, this is the main reason, why he depicts his childhood with such warmth and tenderness. The Other is a magnet for him, which attracts and stimulates interest.

For Ovid the Other is a bloodthirsty barbarian, dangerous and primitive. The poet is only a newcomer, a stranger here. So does the absence/presence of barbarians and worldview depend so much on the birthplace? I wonder, how Publius Ovidius Naso would describe the Danube lowland if he were born there? And how he would perceive the Romans in such case? As barbarians, invaders, murderers and oppressors? Or like noble colonizers, culture bearers, who are expanding the boundaries of Western civilization? "Creation of racial stereotypes and ideas about barbarians was an integral part of colonizers' ideology. So in such a way those who

were the first to discover and conquer new lands, considered themselves not as the invaders and robbers, but as the apostles of culture and the performers of God's will. The Europeans described themselves as the 'civilized' ones, so, obviously, in the newly discovered lands they were meeting the 'barbarians' (people, whose lifestyle, worldview and values differed)",²¹ writes Bozidar Jezernik in his book *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travelers*. And it is hard to disagree with him.

I kept driving to Balchik with all of these thoughts on my mind. For the last several kilometers the road tangles between chalky rocks and hills overgrown with fruit trees. The serpentine of the road twists only 300 meters away from the sea, not visible at this point. As well as the town itself, which suddenly shows up – with its white walls, red tile roofs, chain of buildings, rising from the sea up to the highest hill, two rays of minarets and a church cross in the valley – there it is, Bulgarian Balchik! The hills protect the city from winds, and the shore sinks in sunrays and the diversity of southern flora. The palace, built at the order of Queen Marie of Romania received a neat name "The Quiet Nest". The botanical garden above it, waterfalls and a boundless skyline make it a heavenly place.

There are two mosques in the town. And so on occasion I asked a local resident about the national and religious structure of the population here. He did not like my question. At first he tried to explain, that all people here are Bulgarians and orthodox Christians. And the mosques, according to his words, were simply a historical misunderstanding. When I repeated my question, my companion confessed that one mosque was still valid. Although, only few Turks still live in the city, there are hardly a few scores of them. But the cornerstone of the local Muslim community are the Roma, who, to his mind, erroneously consider themselves to be the Turks or their descendants. He forced himself when talking about the Roma, as if trying to conceal his disgust. I noted to myself, that I was lucky to meet people, like Ovid: first there was a fisherman in Ovidiopol, now this expert of Turkish ethnogenesis. Just like a great Roman poet at his time, all of them blamed the Other and slandered the surrounding people. Would they look whiter and more culturally developed then?

Wasting no more time, I headed off to Constanta. Having got a bit hungry on my way and having noticed a big billboard with mouth-watering pictures of dishes and an advertising slogan in Romanian, I turned to a restaurant. The menu in that restaurant was also in Romanian and the waiter kindly offered to receive payment in Romanian lei. So, in a quite natural way, I asked about the life of local Romanian minority

here, in Bulgaria, some 20 km away from the Romanian border. Having heard my question, the waiter exasperated and started convincing me, that there were no Romanians there, and had never been any, even in the inter-war period, when this region had been a part of Romania, only pure-blood Bulgarians had lived there, even before the Slavs had come to the Balkan Peninsula. The tone of the conversation was so emotional, that I decided not to ask any clarifying questions, for instance, whom do they make advertisement and menu in Romanian for then? So in order not to offend that pure-blood Bulgarian patriot, I decided not to tip him with my Romanian lei.

That day was full of troubles. I got into my car and drove in the direction of Romania and Constanta. The road was empty and straight, spring was beginning to dye the roadside flora green, and the first warmth from the sun was becoming tangible. And, even though the speed was below-average, as I wanted to longer enjoy the picturesque view, still the invisible horse power of my car didn't stop in time as the colorful spot ran out of nowhere and got right under the wheels. It was a bird and I feel terribly sorry that I have to write about it in past tense. Why wasn't it flying? As the one, born to fly, should not run on provincial roads! Maybe, it was meant to become a colorful explosion of scattered feathers; the best impressionist canvas I have ever seen. Yet alive and already dead.

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The tragic myth of a lonely poet attracted not only the wanderers, who wended their way to Constanta both overland and by sea, but also people, who were looking for a poet in their imagination, every time giving him another life in his works. Yet in the 20th century a couple of noticeable novels dedicated to Ovid's life and literary works were written. In his brilliant novel *Poet Ovidius Naso* a Polish writer, Jacek Bocheński, for instance, concentrates mainly on the Roman period of the poet's life. He tries to find reasons of his exile, gives a detailed description of Ovid's social circle, his friends and peculiarities of the social order of that time, pays much attention to love, lyrics, the poet's real or imaginary muse Corinne; and then introduces his own hypothesis concerning the event, that provoked the emperor's disgrace. Needless to say, that the author's imagination was also dazzled by the abyss between Ovid's life in Rome and in Tomis:

Everything testifies, that it was a smart decision to choose Tomis for exile. The convict by no means will be able to drastically affect the commonwealth or be engaged in any kind of sabotage. And considering a complete isolation and language difficulties, only ordinary crimes like murders, rapes or thefts are possible here.²²

Not everybody imagined Ovid in a bed during orgies or among the bloodthirsty barbarians. For some people the poet's life and his tragic exile became a ground to think about faith that gives us strength at difficult times. At the long last, this idea is not new: even in the Middle Ages there was a popular hypothesis, that Publius Ovidius Naso was one of the first Christian preachers, the so-called Ovidius Christianus.²³ It is a very interesting theory, as Ovid and Jesus Christ were coevals and lived at the same time, but we should remember, that Ovid was much more famous than Jesus. Whichever is true, but a potential relation of the poet and Christianity, which was just establishing, was a matter of concern to many.

It is no wonder, that Vintila Horia dedicates his novel *God Was Born in Exile* to the topic of Ovid's conversion to Christianity. This novel is a real pearl of Ovidiana, so we can assume, that the author managed to describe so skillfully the emotional experience of the exile, because his fate was connected with exile as well. As many Romanian intellectuals of the past century, Vintila Horia had to escape from his Motherland after the 2nd World War. He lived as an outcast in Spain and France. It is logical that professor Daniel Rops wrote in the foreword to the first edition of Horia's novel published in France, in exile: "Reading the «Sorrows» and the «Epistulae ex Ponto», the outcast [Horia] recognized himself".²⁴

Vintila Horia went through the war himself and was also seeking faith, that is why his thoughts sound so convincing when he describes Ovid's situation:

The vast plains that spread away beyond the Tyras towards the unknown East swarmed with tribes which were pushing steadily towards our farlands like insects blindly drawn towards the light. Who could have found the magic word to arrest their advance? Weapons were not enough. But the word, the magic word, would have endowed them with a name and a soul, would have brought them into the community of men, would have taught them to settle down, to pardon each other, to develop a conscience and also to feel the need of a past and future. But that word had not yet been born, and armies were arriving in vain to supply its place, from Spain and Gaul in the west to the Euxine and the Danube in the East.

The Romans were everywhere extending the bounds of Empire by cutting off heads and establishing laws, but they did not suspect that the earth has no boundary and that their enterprise required as many men as all the other men in the world.²⁵

Eventually, Vintila Horia was himself a good object for research about boundaries, primarily as an outcast and wanderer, but also because within the flow of his life he changed dramatically, he crossed the border of himself. The Goncourt Prize was awarded to the writer for his novel *God was Born in Exile*. It was awarded, but not delivered to him. When the journalists started investigating the author's biography, they revealed a scandalous fact that Vintila Horia used to be an active member of the Romanian nationalistic paramilitary organization the Iron Guard. The writer was accused of concealment of his membership and of commitment of military crimes, though his novel was full of fair love to the neighbor, Christian obedience, fate and hope. The impression is that the member of Iron Guard and the author of this kind novel are two absolutely different men with a wall and a border between them.

The last writer belonging to the previous-century plead of those, who wrote novels about Ovid and who I would like to mention here, crosses primarily not spatial, but time frames in his texts. The novel *The Last World* by Austrian author Christoph Ransmayr is a brilliant example of post-modern prose, a text with a nonlinear narrative. An interesting story is connected with it: the publisher asked young Ransmayr to retell the *Metamorphoses* in a more accessible way for a contemporary reader. The writer tackled the problem but shortly after the start he gave up this idea and wrote his own novel. According to its plot, Maxim Cotta, Ovid's friend heads off to Constanta to find the writer's manuscripts. During his search he tells his readers about the poet's fate in exile. And the myths from the *Metamorphoses* are retold in a very innovative way: some man called Cypress arrives to the ancient port of Tomis with the video projector and so he shows the films, the plots of which are the above-mentioned myths.

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I made my last trip to Constanta from Bucharest, which was from the North, also because of a person with camera, who, just as Christoph Ransmayr, was of Austrian origin. The Embassy of Austria was opening an

Honorary Consulate in Constanta, and Austrian Cultural Forum in Romania coincided this event with an opening of an exhibition of the photographic artist Zita Oberwalder. The artist had recently visited Constanta and took a series of photos connected with the contemporary life of the city and the melancholic mood of Ovid's *Epistulae ex Ponto* ("Letters from the Black Sea"). I was to say a few words at the exhibition opening.

So I took the highway from Bucharest and went to Tomis, pardon me, to Constanta, I tried not to miss any detail of the landscape that was changing fast in the windows of my car. I crossed the Danube's bridge and then immediately turned to the nearest gas station, but not because I needed petrol – I was only seeking a place where I could sit and write some notes in calm. I was going to write what I saw during the first part of my trip, mainly about metamorphoses of nature: how plains slowly change into the hills, how hills suddenly become steep riverbanks, and how powerfully the Danube looks from above. I had spent so much time reading everything written by Ovid and about Ovid, so, of course, while crossing the Danube I felt like a barbarian who was rushing on the frozen river to attack the ancient harbor of Tomis. Moreover, when I ordered coffee at that gas station, I noticed that the man working at the cash desk had a really big nose, and the thought flashed in my mind: he is probably the descendent of Ovid, whose family name – Naso – was given because of his ancestors' enormous noses.

After all, I have chosen the best way to fulfill my goal - to see and understand Ovid from the point of view of the barbarian – I chose the road, travelling, as

we must always remember that "barbarian" meant many things; it could mean nothing more than a "foreigner", a vaguely troubling, even fascinating, person from a different culture and language group. For most Greeks and Romans "barbarian" in the strong sense of the word meant, in effect, "nomad". Nomads were seen as human groups placed at the very bottom of the scale of civilized life.²⁶

Now I understand that all the endless travelling was and still is some kind of mania; Ovidomania. It was cold and windy that day in Constanta, and I was recalling more and more quotes from the Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, just trying to make the excursion through the contemporary city using the ancient guidebook. Thanks to the local authorities of Constanta, which forgot about the historical city center and

did no renovations and repairs there, it was not so hard to imagine that I was in some shrinking and deserted ancient harbor, probably immediately after the barbarians attack: nasty weather emptied the streets, and I could hear only whistling of wind and saw wandering dogs, so I went down to the dark ghost of the old casino which, in my imagination, appeared as villa of the Roman governor.

What was I looking for? For Ovid, for traces of his stay here, for the things and landscape that inspired him, and – if to be completely frank – his grave. Since childhood I knew that average trader Heinrich Schliemann discovered the ancient town of Troy by patiently reading *Iliad* by Homer,²⁷ so I also dared to assume that I could discover Ovid's grave by reading his works written during the exile.

There was the only point left in my journey – a small town Ovidiu, located 10 kilometers eastwards from Constanta. There's not much interest in the town itself, but as you drive out of the town, there is the Siutghiol lake separated by a narrow land strip from the sea. And just like in the fairytales from our childhood: there is something in the middle of this lake, and in this "something" another mystery is hidden. So, there is a tiny island on the lake near Constanta, which the locals usually call Ovidiu. There is even a legend, that the poet was buried in this special place and, let's admit, it sounds quite realistic.

Then it turns out, the barbarians took care of Ovid as of the king – not only did they accept him, they also exempted him from taxes, honored him with the laurel wreath and buried him in a special place with all the ceremonials. So why did Ovid himself write so many unpleasant things about those barbarians, who were so hospitable to him? No doubt that he wanted to dramatize a bit, to make his readers feel sorry, to impress the cultural public in Rome with the terrible life conditions of the place he was dispatched to. But the Slovenian anthropologist Božidar Jezernik, is absolutely right saying that such an attitude "says much not only about the object of description, but also about the one who describes. So the contemplation of the other people and their cultures serves as something like a mirror".²⁸

But wouldn't the memoirs of the barbarians sound just as arrogantly and scornfully, if they were written or if they survived? The local inhabitants who Ovid considered to be the barbarians could write that some weirdo arrived from God knows where, who babbles ba-ba-ba in some unknown language and doesn't even wear trousers or skins, who is reluctant to eat local food and is unsatisfied with everything, an idle man, who does not

want and actually is not able to work, doesn't have anything to pay for living but is not rushing for hunting, he just sits in the shadow of the trees and scrapes some incomprehensible and, therefore, barbarian symbols on papyrus. We would hardly sympathize such a person. The view of the "civilized person" does not essentially differ from the reverse view of the barbarian on the "civilized person": both perspectives are defined by much distrust, coming from a simple ignorance of the Other, the stereotypes and own fears directed on the Stranger. After all, the barbarians exist for a reason, they have to exist, as they carry out a number of important functions. First of all, the existence of the barbarians on the opposite side of the border helps the communities and the peoples to understand that they are "better", "more developed", "more civilized". John Drinkwater points out that the existence of the barbarians is also useful for the elites. As the authorities usually create the myth of barbarians to explain high tax rates, to maintain a well-paid army in case of the threat of barbarians' attacks. And the emperor himself receives dividends from the actual or artificial existence of the "barbarians": he can describe himself as a great protector of his people, a leader that defends a high civilization from the primitive, dirty, aggressive tribes.²⁹

So if we believe in exile, described by Ovid, then we have to believe in the legend that had been passed across the generation by the local "barbarians", according to which the poet found his rest here, on this very island. The island Ovidiu is truly very small, as a big yard in area, overgrown with trees, among which a small restaurant takes place. I had parked my car and started to the last destination of my trip. In the same way, the barbarians should have delivered Ovid on the boat to the last point of his life journey. Having wandered about the island and having found nothing worth attention, I took a place on the restaurant terrace and ordered a drink.

It was beautiful and a little bit sad as it always is when you achieve something you have been dreaming about for a long while. I was imaged this island for thousand times, I believed I would come across something important here – an inscription, a thing or at least a sign! But there was nothing. And it was the end, simply the end. A waitress pulled me back from my reflections as she suddenly came to me from behind and started speaking an unknown and, therefore, a barbaric language which might have been Romanian. I might have looked embarrassed as she switched to English in a minute. She asked me if I was going to have lunch only or

I would have a desire to overnight there, as they have a few guest rooms on the second floor.

The idea of spending night on Ovidiu seemed rather appealing. I came upstairs with the waitress to have a look at the room and was impressed by its asceticism: there was only a bed, a bedside table and a tamboured which should have served as a wardrobe. There was a window overlooking the crowns of the trees occupying the island. The island called Ovidiu. Which even for Tomis, Constanta is the end of the world. Here Publius Ovidius Naso crossed his last frontier – life. Everything ended up here.

Or started here. Having examined the room, and having thought for a while that if the island is called Ovidiu, and the restaurant is named just the same, and the town nearby has the same name, too – I have imagined that there would be nothing strange if instead of the Bible inside one of the drawers of the bedside table, there was a book by Ovid, let's say it would be *Epistulae ex Ponto*. A novel could start like this: let's say it is 2016, in the depth of summer a tired traveler arrives to the Romanian Black Sea. But all the costal hotels are overcrowded with tourists and he has no choice but to rent a room on this island. It is growing dusky, the noise of the discotheque is heard from the seaside, the wind stirs the crowns of the trees, the seagulls are shrieking, the man comes up the creaky stairs to his second floor, lies on the bed and then, out of a pure interest, stretches his hand towards the book, starts reading and...

But this is a completely different story.

NOTES

- 1 *Descriptio Danubii: Maps of the Danube Spanning Four Centuries of Cartography*/ Edited by Ovidiu Dimitru & Adrian Nastase, Bucharest, 2015, 17.
- 2 Stasiuk, A. *Dorohoju na Babadag*, Krytyka, Kyjiv, 2007, 158.
- 3 Everitt, Anthony. *Cicero: the life and times of Rome's greatest politician*. New York: Random House, 2001, 33.
- 4 In his 9th elegy of the III book of *Tristia* Ovid himself writes "So was this place called Tomis because here, they say, the sister cut to pieces her brother's body", Ovid, *Tristia*, 137.
- 5 "But I must gaze upon the Sauromatae in place of Caesar's face, upon a land devoid of peace, and waters in the bonds of frost. Yet if you hear my words, if my voice can reach so far, let your winning influence work to change my abode", Ovid. *Tristia, Ex Ponto*, book II, To Messalinus: verses 71-96, *Ibidem*, 323.
- 6 Magris, C. *Dunaj*, Warszawa, 1999, 381.
- 7 Ovid. *Tristia, Ex Ponto* 1996, 137.
- 8 *Ibidem*, 255.
- 9 Sodomora, A. *Dvi barvy chasu Publija Ovidija Nazona*, in: Ovidij. Ljubovni elehiji, Mystectvo koxannja, Skorbotni elehiji, Kyjiv, 1999, 23.
- 10 Ovid. *Tristia, Ex Ponto* 1996, 137.
- 11 "Exposed wine stands upright, retaining the shape of the jar, and they drink, not draughts of wine, but fragments served them!", *Tristia*. Book III, X. The Rigours of Tomis, Ovid 1996, 138.
- 12 There was even a whole book dedicated to the analysis of Ovid's works concerning the presence of information about Eastern Europe of that time in them. But the investigators admit they did not manage to find much: "The investigation done allows us to conclude that it is impossible to interpret historical facts provided by Ovid as "trustworthy chronicle of the events". The analysis of Ovid as Roman, as a private entity and as a poet, the examination of poetic peculiarity of his works, the influence of the rhetoric and the perception stereotypes of the northern barbaric world on his creative work, makes us conclude about Ovid's poor historical data verification", A. V. Podpsinov, *Ovid's Works as a Historic Source of Information about Eastern Europe and Transcaucasia*, Moscow, Nauka, 1985, 25.
- 13 Thibault, J. C., *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile*, Berkeley, Cal., 1964.
- 14 "Almost being confident that the Gets were members of the tribe, which on the remote lands was later called the Slavs and specifically the ancestors of the southern Rus' (Ukrainian) branch of this tribe we now have the right to call Ovid the first poet who had written a poem in the language, close to the old and modern Ukrainian", Ivan Franko, *Publius Ovidius Naso in Tomis*, volume 9, 411.

- 15 Ovid, *Fasti*, II, 683, 107.
- 16 “While fortifying Ovidiopol, in 1795, a military engineer Francois de Wollant (an aristocrat of Brabant, who joined Russian military service in 1787), came across an ancient grave – a stone box with two harps and human bones inside. There was an assumption that the grave could belong to Ovid. Dr. Matthew Hetry sent three reports about the founding to the London Association of Art & Antiques Dealers. The news about the sensational founding of the Russian soldiers on the Dnister river was covered even by the Parisian newspapers”, A. Formozov, *Pushkin and Antiquity. The Outlook of an Archeologist*, Moscow, 41.
- 17 Bojchenko, O. *50 vidsotkiv ratsii/Mezhi tolerantssii*, Chernivtsi, 2016, 60.
- 18 Oxford dictionary: “Middle English (as an adjective used in a derogatory way to denote a person with different speech and customs)”, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/barbarian> (last accessed: July 3, 2016).
- 19 Brown P. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000*. 3rd edition, Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 2013, 14.
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- 21 Jezernik, B. *Dzika Europa. Balkany w oczach zachodnich podroznikow*, Krakow, 2013, 51.
- 22 Bochenskyj, J. *Ovidij Nazon – poet*, Piramida, Lviv, 2011, 137.
- 23 Sanders, Timothy. *Ovid The Christian*, https://www.academia.edu/2051234/Ovid_the_Christian (last accessed: July 3, 2016).
- 24 Horia, V. *God was born in Exile*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1961, 10.
- 25 Ibidem, 125-126.
- 26 Brown 2013, 43.
- 27 Deuel, Leo. *Memoirs of Heinrich Schliemann: A documentary portrait drawn from his autobiographical writings, letters, and excavation reports*, Harper & Row, 1977, 14.
- 28 Jezernik 2013, 10.
- 29 Drinkwater, J. *The Alamanni and Rome, 213-496 (Caracalla to Clovis)*, Oxford, 2007, 262.

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