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*Ovidius Pictus: Afterlives
of the Metamorphoses
in Europe, from Books
to the Arts*



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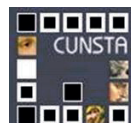
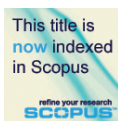
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*Ovidius Pictus: Afterlives of the *Metamorphoses* in Europe, from Books to the Arts*

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“Ovidius inter Sarmatas”. On the Origins of Ovid’s Popularity in Polish Culture and Art

Barbara Hryszko*

Abstract

An extract from Sarnicki’s work *Ovidius inter Sarmatas* expresses the belief – based on Ovid’s words – that the Roman poet lived among the Sarmatians, who were the ancestors of Poles. The aim of this article is to search for the origins of the fascination with Ovid in Poland using historical, literary, and cultural analyses. In the 16th century, Ovid’s links with Sarmatia gave rise to the legend that he had lived in Poland, had learned to speak the Polish language, and had died and been buried near the Black Sea, that is, within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was claimed that Ovid was the first Polish poet, and his ‘naturalisation’ and the ‘discovery of his grave’ shaped the consciousness of the ruling classes and the elites of the Commonwealth. This phenomenon, combined with the widespread popularity of *Metamorphoses*, may have left its mark on the character of the decorations of the Polish palaces, including the 17th- and 18th-century royal residences, such as the Wilanów Palace and the Royal Baths Palace in Warsaw, which are filled with numerous Ovidian motifs.

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Publius Ovidius Ovid (43 BC-17/18 AD) was one of the most eminent Roman poets. His popularity in European culture, based primarily on his most famous narrative poem *Metamorphoses*, began in the late Middle Ages. This monumental work consists of 15 books, in which he described over 200 myths, numerous themes, aspects, and contexts of which have served as an inexhaustible reservoir of inspiration for poets, writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, etc. worldwide. Also in Poland in the modern period, Ovid's works were immensely popular – to such an extent that it was even claimed that the Roman poet was a Pole. How did it happen that several centuries after his death this ancient Roman poet was recognised as the first Polish poet? The aim of this article is to search for the origins of the fascination with Ovid in Poland. It will also outline the popularity of the themes from the Roman poet's work in the decoration of the Polish residences in the early modern period.

The period following the end of the Middle Ages was a fertile ground for the development of interest in ancient works in Poland, primarily thanks to Latin, which was the language of the Catholic Church and thus the language of science and culture, including literary works. Latin, which was of crucial importance in medieval Poland, flourished in the early modern period, as manifested by a revival of classical Latin and the creative use of ancient forms and themes in the spirit of a new era, that is, the Renaissance. Moreover, the fascination with the works of ancient authors motivated Polish writers to write in Latin¹.

Arguably, in medieval Poland Ovid's works were primarily disseminated through schooling. Most probably, his works were read in cathedral schools as early as in the 12th century, as evidenced by the inventories of chapter libraries, for example, the library in the Krakow chapter². His works were also popularised after the establishment of the University of Krakow (*Akademia Krakowska*) – the first Polish university founded by King Casimir the Great in 1364. Manuscripts of Ovid's works, which were first owned by the alumni of this university, were later bequeathed to the University library³. In the 16th century, Ovid's poetry entered the reading canon at other Polish universities, for example, the Lubrański University in Poznań⁴, the Zamoyski University, the Vilnius University, and numerous Jesuit colleges. Over time, the Roman poet's writings were also used at lower levels of education and played a major role in the teaching of Latin and poetics. In this way, Ovid's works were read

¹ Mathias de Miechow 1518; Mathias de Miechow 1521; Sarnicki 1587; Nadolski 1934; Voinovii 1993; Karpowicz 2012.

² This is evidenced by the catalogue of the Library of the Krakow Chapter of 1110, which lists the manuscript *Ovidii Epistolae ex Ponto*: Krókowski 1959-1960, p. 160.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Ivi, pp. 161-162.

in Poland by representatives of the highest social strata, from the nobility to magnates to monarchs⁵.

This growing popularity of the works of the ancient poet became a source of inspiration for the Polish authors in the Renaissance who modelled their works on those by Ovid's. This is best exemplified by the humanist and poet Andrzej Krzycki (Andreas Cricius, 1482-1537), whose Latin works were openly inspired by the oeuvre of the author of *Metamorphoses*. According to Crisostomo Colonna (1455-1539), an envoy of Isabella of Aragon who sent him to the Polish king Sigismund I the Old in 1517 to arrange a marriage of her daughter Bona Sforza⁶, Krzycki's poetry reflected both Ovid's inspiration and talent. In a letter and poem Colonna sent to Krzycki, he wrote that «Ovid's poetry, which, having gone into exile together with the poet, lived for centuries here [in Vilnius] in sorrow and grief after his death, is now shedding this grief at the sight of Krzycki, who so adroitly strikes Ovid's chords»⁷. These words explicitly reveal Colonna's opinion that, after the centuries that separated antiquity and modernity, the spirit of Ovid's work reappeared in Poland in the poetry of Andrzej Krzycki. Undoubtedly, such comment was enthusiastically received by Polish writers and historians and consolidated their belief in Ovid's direct links with Poland.

Almost 70 years later, in his paraphrase of a fragment of *Metamorphoses* (book VI 423-676) entitled *Philomela*, Piotr Wężyk Widawski (who was born before 1550 and died after 1600?)⁸ wrote not only that Ovid was very popular and widely known in Poland but also expressed his belief that Ovid had come to Poland, where he had learned the Polish language and had become a Pole!⁹ What is the origin of such a surprising statement?

⁵ Sarnicki 1587; *Katalog księzek* 1879, pp. 62-63, 66; Baran, Witkowski 2014, pp. 64-71; Oleńska 2011; Biłozór-Salwa 2013.

⁶ Crisostomo Colonna was a humanist and poet from Naples and Bona's teacher: Pinto 1987, p. 9.

⁷ Crisostomo's letter and poem published in: Nadolski 1934, p. 392: «Chrisosiomus Criciae S. S. / Ex duabus *Elegiis* tuis, quarum mihi legendarum copiam fecisti, mi Cricia, quanti faciam ingenium tuum, vix longa oratione possit explicari. Sed aptius mihi videtur esse ad brevitatem et ad rem ipsam accomodatius, ut brevem aliquam sententiam de carmine carmen ferat. Cudebamus igitur hoc *Epigramma*, ex eo cognosce, quid de te sentiam. Vale. / Ausonias Vilnae, in campis cantare Camenas / Dum stupeo, in Scythiam sors rogo quae tulerit? / "Exilii comites fuimus — dixere — poetae, / Quem Sulmo in Getico flet periisse solo. / Squallentes misero in luctu transegimus aevum, / Ex quo illum nobis abstulit atra dies". / Rursus, quae positi luctus sit causa requiro, / Illae haec iucundo verba tulere sono: / "Laetandes Criciam sequimur, Ovidnis in illo, / Quippe vigere aiam cernimus et numeros"». It is also mentioned in: Mikulski 1964, p. 305; Krókowski 1959-1960, pp. 157-158; Trapp 1973, p. 57.

⁸ In the subject literature it is usually claimed that Widawski's work was created in 1586: Skulski 1913, pp. 74-75; Wichowa 1998, p. 109. Sometimes year 1590 is given as an alternative: Przychocki 1920, pp. 12-13; Krókowski 1959-1960, p. 158. Widawski is also mentioned by Mikulski, although he does not mention any date: Mikulski 1964, p. 304.

⁹ «When Ovid arrived in this our land, / He did not fail to learn the Polish language. / [...]

Arguably, it is based on was the words of Ovid himself, who wrote that during his exile he had not only composed poems among the Sarmatians: «Nec me Roma suis debet conferre poetis: inter Sauromatas ingeniosus eram»¹⁰, but also that he had learned to speak Getic and Sarmatian and had unlearned Latin: «Nam didici Getice, Sarmaticeque loqui»¹¹. «Ipse mihi videor iam didicisse Latine: nam didici Getice Sarmaticeque loqui»¹². Moreover, he stated that he had written in Getic and had almost become a Getic poet: «Threicio Scythicoque fere circumsonor ore, et videor Geticis scribere posse modis»¹³. «Nec te mirari, si sint vitiosa, decebit carmina, quae faciam paene poëta Getes. a! pudet, et Getico scripsi sermone libellum, structaque sunt nostris barbara verba modis»¹⁴. He also wondered whether the Sarmatians and the Getae would read his writings: «an mea Sauromatae scripta Getaeque legent?»¹⁵.

These quotations reveal that the author of *Metamorphoses* referred to both the toponyms Getia and Sarmatia and to the inhabitants of the area, the Getae and the Sarmatians. While Getia is generally equated with Dacia, that is the area of present-day Romania, Sarmatia is usually associated with the Polish lands.

It is worth mentioning here that the oldest examples of this association appear in sources from the 10th and 11th centuries, when European chroniclers – such as Flodoard of Reims, Richer of Reims, and Gallus Anonymous – used the term ‘Sarmatia’ to refer to territories east of Germania, that is, Polish lands¹⁶. Jan Długosz also used this name in such a context in his *Annales seu cronicae incliti regni Poloniae of 1455-1480*.¹⁷

The ancient names used to describe Poland fell like a seed on the fertile ground of the 15th-century humanism, when many countries searched for their ancient ancestors. Unsurprisingly, the idea of equating Poland with Sarmatia

/ He became a Pole here: and though he died a long time ago, / He is famous everywhere, as if he were born today» (All translations by author unless otherwise stated) – «Owidiusz w ten nasz kray, kiedy był zaiechał, / Polskiego się języka uczyć nie zaniechał. / [...] / Stał się z niego tu Polak: a choć umarł dawno, / Jakby się dziś urodził, o nim wszędy sławno» – as quoted in: Skulski 1913, p. 75.

¹⁰ «Rome should not compare me with her poets: / it's among the Sarmatians that I'm a talent»: Ovid 2003, translated by A. S. Kline, *Trista*, V, I, 73-74.

¹¹ «Since I've learnt how to speak Getic and Sarmatian»: Ovid 2003, translated by A.S. Kline, *Ex Ponto*, III, II, 40.

¹² «I myself have already un-learned Latin, I think, / now I've learnt to speak Getic and Sarmatian»: Ovid 2003, translated by A. S. Kline, *Trista*, V, XII, 57-58.

¹³ «Thracian and Scythian tongues sound round me, / and I think I could almost write in Getic metres»: Ovid 2003, translated by A. S. Kline, *Trista*, III, XIV, 47-48.

¹⁴ «And you shouldn't marvel if my art's defective, / since I've almost turned into a Getic poet. / Ah! Shameful: I've even written a work in Getic, / where savage words are set to Italian metres»: Ovid 2003, translated by A. S. Kline, *Ex Ponto*, IV, XIII, 17-20.

¹⁵ «Will Sarmatians and Getae read my writings?»: Ovid 2003, translated by A. S. Kline, *Trista*, IV, I, 94.

¹⁶ Ulewicz 1950, pp. 18-20; Cynarski 1977, p. 247.

¹⁷ Ulewicz 1950, pp. 29-34.

was enthusiastically received, especially given its additional territorial dimension. The term 'Sarmatia' was associated with the vast territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as demonstrated by *Ptolemy's Map of European Sarmatia*, where even the Baltic Sea is called *Oceanus Sarmaticus* (Fig. 1)¹⁸. Thus, the name 'Sarmatia', which in antiquity was used to denote a vast territory, was also willingly used in the context of a similarly vast area of the Commonwealth united under the Jagiellonian dynasty.

In the 16th century, the term 'Sarmatia' was used by Polish humanists, as exemplified by numerous publications of the time, the most valuable of which is the work of Mathias de Miechow, *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis Asiatica et Europaeana et de contentis in eis [A Treatise on the Two Sarmatias, Asiatic and European, and what is in them]*, published in Augsburg in 1518¹⁹. It was very popular, as evidenced by its six editions during the 16th century, which, undoubtedly, disseminated and consolidated the image of Poland as vast Sarmatia in Europe.

A similar role was played by a book published under the name of Alexander Guagnini (who most probably plagiarised Maciej Strykowski's work), under the telling title *Descriptio Sarmatiae Europaeae, quae complectitur regnum Poloniae, Lituaniae, Samogitiae, Russiae, Massoviae, Prussiae, Pomeraniae, Livoniae, et Moscoviae, et pars Tartariae*, usually translated as *A Description of Sarmatian Europe*. It offered a lot of information about the areas of Eastern Europe, that is, the lands within the borders of the then Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth²⁰. This book was frequently published and translated into many languages, and thus spread the knowledge of the Commonwealth, which was equated with former Sarmatia.

Both works testify to the popularity of the term 'Sarmatia' used to denote the Commonwealth, both in Europe and in Poland. They strengthened the myth of the ancient origin of Poland and laid the foundations for the Sarmatian ideology.

However, a special role in developing and strengthening the myth of Poland's ancient origin was played by Stanisław Sarnicki (1532-1597), who published a monumental work entitled *Annales, sive de origine et rebus gestis Polonorum et Lituorum [Yearbooks, or the origin and history of Poles and Lithuanians]* in 1587²¹. He thoroughly studied Ovid's poems of exile – *Tristia [Sorrows]* and *Ex*

¹⁸ This is a 16th-century Italian translation of Ptolemy's work, published in Venice: [P] Tolomeo 1574, [unnumbered page]. Referring to Ptolemy's authority was an established tradition at that time.

¹⁹ Mathias de Miechow 1518; Mathias de Miechow 1521.

²⁰ Guagnini 1578. Interestingly, Alexander Guagnini from Verona, whose name appears on the title page, probably committed plagiarism by attributing the work of Maciej Strykowski to himself. In his other work entitled *The Polish, Lithuanian Chronicle*, Strykowski mentions the book entitled *Sarmatiae Europaeae descriptio* and claims it was written by him: Strykowski 1582, [unnumbered page]. Furthermore, Strykowski is the author of other similar publications that make his authorship plausible. Cf. Biedrońska-Słota B 2010, p. 51.

²¹ Sarnicki 1587.

Ponto [*Letters from the Black Sea*] – and used them in his *Annales* as historical sources for the history of Sarmatia, that is, Poland²². Sarnicki repeatedly quoted Ovid's words that when he was among the Sarmatians, he had learned to speak and write their language. Sarnicki also wrote that the poet had died in the land of the Sarmatians²³, which leads to a logical conclusion that Ovid was buried in the place where he died. In a passage which was entitled *Epitaphium Ovidii* in the margin of his book, Sarnicki stated that «a certain man of the prominent Ruthenian nobility said that on a plain near the city of Asau he found a stone on which a poem referring to Ovid's talent was carved»²⁴:

Hic situs est vates, quem divi Casaris ira
Augusti, patria cedere iussit humo.
Saepe miser voluit patriis occumbere terris,
Sed frustra, hunc illi fata dedere locum²⁵.

This description explicitly states that centuries after Ovid's death, his tomb was found! Its 'discoverer' was «a certain man of the prominent Ruthenian nobility», which means a Polish nobleman, since at that time Ruthenia had belonged to Poland for centuries. Although Sarnicki did not give his name, he probably referred to Jeremiasz Wojnowski, a deputy mayor (a deputy starost) in Trembowla, on the Gniezna River, in what was then the Ruthenian province. Wojnowski was mentioned in Lawrence Müller's *Polnische, Liffländische, Moschowiterische, Schwedische und andere Historien*²⁶, which was published two years before Sarnicki's *Annales*. Müller was a German chronicler and envoy at the court of King Stephen Báthory²⁷. In this work, he de-

²² It was also mentioned by: Mikulski 1964, p. 307; Abramowicz 1978, p. 104.

²³ «Ovidius inter Sarmatas et Getas mansit aliquot annis ibique mortuus est»; «Et Ovidium qui gloriatur se intra paucos annos didicisse Getice Sarmaticeque loqui»: Sarnicki 1587, p. 963. «Sed et Ovidius unam linguam intelligens, dicit se didicisse Getice Sarmaticeque loqui»: Sarnicki 1587, p. 987; «Lingua Sarmatica et Getica Ovidio ita cognita fuit, ut loqui ea et scribere potuerit. / Cumque ego de vestra nuper probitate referrem, / Nam didici Getice Sarmaticeque loqui. / Ab pudet et scripsi Getico sermone libellum. / Structaque sunt nostris barbara verba modi. / Et placui, gratiare mihi, coepique poëta / Inter inhumanos nomen habere Getas»: Sarnicki 1587, pp. 863, 899.

²⁴ Sarnicki 1587, p. 904: «Epitaphium Ovidii [on the margin]. Vivus Epitaphium sibi scripserat: Et vir quidam ex Russia spectatae nobilitatis, dixit se reperisse lapidem quandam in planicie quadam ad oppidum Asau, cui hoc carmen incisum fuit, quod venam Ovidii refert». Abramowicz wrote that «there exists in Moldova, on the territory of present-day Romania, the village of Asău, on the river of the same name, at the mouth of the river Trotuşul», which is in fact true: Abramowicz 1978, p. 103.

²⁵ Sarnicki 1587, p. 904: «Here lies buried the poet, where the wrath of the divine emperor, / Augustus ordered him to leave his native land. / He often expressed, poor man, his wish to be laid to rest in his native land, / But in vain! This was the place assigned to him by fate».

²⁶ Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, pp. 14-15, note 35. Müller's chronicle was published in 1585 in Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig.

²⁷ Stavenhagen, Distel 1885, pp. 648-650.

scribed in detail both the 'discoverer' of Ovid's alleged tomb and the circumstances of the 'discovery'.

Müller seemed to have been greatly impressed by Wojnowski, whom he called «a good poet and an excellent historian» and praised «his knowledge of the Greek, Hebrew, and Tartar languages»²⁸. He portrayed him as an admirer of Cicero, as he was the owner of the manuscript of Cicero's treatise *De republica ad Atticum*, «written in gold letters on parchment in an envelope with an unknown seal»²⁹, probably from a library in Wallachia³⁰. Müller emphatically stressed that Wojnowski was «a great man who thought highly of Cicero's writings»³¹, which suggests that the German chronicler treated Wojnowski as a thoroughly trustworthy person, whose knowledge warranted the success of his endeavours.

Müller described the circumstances of the 'discovery' of Ovid's tomb in detail. He wrote that in the spring of 1581 he and his companions were persuaded by Wojnowski to participate in an expedition to see «Ovid's real burial place»³². They set off from the Dnipro River (Borysthenes), and, after six days on horseback, arrived at «a pleasant place where there was a fresh, green, overgrown fountain»³³, «a stone's throw» from where there was a place with tall grass, which they cut together to reveal a gravestone with a moss-covered inscription on it. To read the inscription, they cleaned the letters with their knives and burnt them with gunpowder, after which they concluded that the find was consistent with Wojnowski's earlier account. The inscription read:

Hic situs est vates, quem divi Caesaris ira
Augusti Latio cedere iussit humo.
Saepe miser voluit patriis occumbere terris,
Sed frustra: hunc illi fata dedere locum³⁴.

²⁸ «Ein guter Poet, ein feiner Historicus, ein guter Graecus, und perfectissimus Hebraeus, [...] konnte gut Tartarisch»: Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, p. 14, note 35. Trapp treated these words as an overstatement: Trapp 1973, p. 53. However, based on Wojnowski's poems in Latin and Greek – these words seem to reflect his real erudition: Wyszomirski 1993.

²⁹ «Die libri Ciceronis de Republica ad Atticum mit güldenem Buchstaben auff Pergament geschrieben waren, in einem Umschlage mit einem unbekandten Sigel»: Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, p. 14, note 35.

³⁰ «Bibliotheca in der Walachey»: Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, p. 14, note 35.

³¹ «Und muste sie etwa ein grosser Herr in Werth gehalten haben»: Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, p. 14, note 35.

³² «Das warhaffte Begräbniss dess Ovidi»: Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, p. 15, note 35.

³³ «Einen hübschen lustigen Platz bracht, darauff ein frisches grünes bewachsenes Brünnelein»: Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, p. 15, note 35.

³⁴ Müller 1585, [unnumbered pages], as quoted in: Wyszomirski 1993, p. 14, note 35. Müller used an incorrect masculine grammatical form of the word *latio*, which refers to a feminine form of the word *humo*. Cf. note 25.

Müller described the location of the tombstone with the words «ad fines Graeciae» and not far from the Black Sea and noted that Wojnowski told them that it was said in Volhynia that Ovid's body had been moved to Kiev, but that despite the search for it, no trace of the poet's burial had been found in this city. Thus, it was highly probable that what they had 'discovered' was Ovid's actual burial place³⁵.

However, seven years before this expedition, in 1574, a collection of copper engravings entitled *Monumenta sepulcrorum* was published in Wrocław, which included an image of the tombstone of Ovid's grave with the same text as the one quoted by Müller (Fig. 2)³⁶.

The inscription on Ovid's tombstone was entitled 'FATUM NECESSITATIS LEX' and included in a luxurious edition of 129 copperplate engravings engraved by the Dutch painter and engraver Tobias Fendt (d. 1576). They were modelled on drawings made by Seyfried Rybisch (1530-1584), the humanist and emperor's advisor in Silesia and Hungary, during his two scholarly expeditions across Europe in the period between 1548 and 1554³⁷. The comparison of the words on the two tombstones clearly indicates that Müller copied the epitaph from *Monumenta sepulcrorum*, which is further supported by his attempt to replace the incorrect form of the word 'patrio' with 'latio' (which is also a grammatically incorrect form). Another trace of *Monumenta sepulcrorum* in Müller's work can be found in his description of the location of the tomb. In *Monumenta sepulcrorum* above the image of Ovid's tombstone there is an inscription: «Tumulus Ovidii poetae in finibus Graeciae et Valachiae», which means «The tomb of the poet Ovid on the border of Greece and Wallachia» (Fig. 2). When Müller described his expedition in German, he mentioned the Library in Wallachia and used the Latin term «ad fines Graeciae», which resembles the inscription in *Monumenta sepulcrorum*, that is, the first known publication which contains Ovid's epitaph³⁸.

Since its publication, Ovid's tombstone from *Monumenta sepulcrorum* functioned as a Polish epitaph, and, similarly as Müller's account, was widely disseminated in Europe where it shaped the message of Ovid's Polish tombstone³⁹.

³⁵ Wyszomirski 1993, p. 15. Martin Winkler, who studies the reception of Ovid's works in film, has recently referred to the story with Wojnowski. However, he has erroneously dated the event to the 1780s and has unwarrantedly written that Wojnowski served as a guide to the many humanists who travelled to Ukraine; in fact, the sources mention only the expedition described by Müller: cf. Winkler 2020, p. 306.

³⁶ *Monumenta sepulcrorum* 1574, p. 6.

³⁷ Sergiusz Michalski convincingly argues that the drawings were made by Rybisch, who was an amateur without professional artistic training: Michalski 1977, p. 139.

³⁸ *Monumenta sepulcrorum* 1574, p. 6.

³⁹ References to selected examples of the dissemination of the news of Ovid's Polish tombstone: Trapp, pp. 49-57. Przychocki wrote explicitly that Fendt had published Ovid's Polish epitaph: Przychocki 1920, p. 11.

The words of the epitaph were quoted by later authors, for example, by Szymon Starowolski in his *Monumenta Sarmatarum* (1588-1656) published in Krakow in 1655. It reads:

EPITAPHIUM OVIDII OVIDNIS.
 Non procul a Ponto Euxino
 Woynowski Polonus invenit.
 Hic situs est vates, quem Divi Caesaris ira
 Augusti Latia cedere iussit humo:
 Saepe miser voluit patriis occumbere terris,
 Sed frustra: hunc illi fata dedere locum⁴⁰.

This epitaph clearly demonstrates that Starowolski was familiar with Müller's account, from which he drew information about where and by whom the inscription was found. He wrote: «Ovid Ovid's epitaph / Not far from the Black Sea / was found by a Pole named Wojnowski». Ovid's epitaph is also listed among those placed on the tower of the City Hall in Lviv⁴¹.

The inclusion of Ovid's epitaph in Szymon Starowolski's *Monumenta Sarmatarum* is extremely significant. Suffice it to say that Starowolski's book includes almost 2,000 tombstone inscriptions of the most eminent citizens of the Commonwealth collected from 120 places in the country and abroad, for example, in Italy⁴². The inclusion of Ovid's epitaph in this monumental collection, the title of which can be translated as *Monuments to the Sarmatians*, implies that the Roman poet was considered a Sarmatian⁴³, and thus was fully 'naturalised'. It could even be argued that the inclusion of Ovid's tomb in Starowolski's work is tantamount to recognising Ovid as the first Sarmatian – that is, Polish – poet; indeed, he was treated as such in the 17th and 18th centuries in Poland, to which Starowolski's collection greatly contributed⁴⁴.

In this context, it is not surprising that themes related to Ovid's works – a 'naturalised' Pole – found a permanent place in the visual arts in Poland and in Polish culture of the time, as evidenced by, among others, the interiors of the residences of monarchs, magnates, and the nobility. Although there is no

⁴⁰ Starowolski, 1655, p. 304. It should be noted here that in the second verse the word 'latia' is used in its correct form (in Müller's text it was 'latio'). Cf. note 25 and 34.

⁴¹ Starowolski, 1655, p. 275: «Leopoliensia»; Starowolski, 1655, p. 302: «In Turri Curiae». According to Przychocki, the epitaph was moved to Lviv and built into the tower of the city hall, where it remained until the tower collapsed in 1826: Abramowicz 1978, p. 104.

⁴² Milewska-Ważbińska 2012, pp. 159-160.

⁴³ Przychocki 1920, p. 13; Krókowski 1959-1960, p. 158. In my opinion, the fact that Ovid's epitaph is in penultimate place in the list of the epitaphs from Lviv (followed by the epitaph of Stanisław Daniłowicz, the starost of Czerwonogród) is irrelevant. The order of the epitaphs does not determine the hierarchy of importance or authenticity, as it is linked to their location: Czerenkiewicz 2019, p. 169.

⁴⁴ Krókowski 1959-1960, p. 158; Wichowa 1998 p. 110; Mikulski 1964, p. 309. More on Starowolski's collection in: Milewska-Ważbińska 2012, pp. 159-176; Czerenkiewicz 2019.

direct reflection of the legend of ‘Polish’ Ovid in the decorations of the Polish palaces, the frequency of the occurrence of Ovidian themes may suggest that the Poles’ conviction of the close relationship of their ancestors – the Sarmatians – with Ovid may have influenced this phenomenon. At the same time, it is worth remembering about the phenomenon – widespread in Europe, including Poland at that time – of using *Metamorphoses* as a reservoir of themes in art. It seems that the symbiosis of these two phenomena created a unique climate that was conducive to the flourishing of Ovidian representations, which is perfectly exemplified by royal residences, such as the Royal Palace in Wilanów and the Royal Baths Palace in Warsaw.

In the palace in Wilanów, a portrait of Ovid, who is accompanied by Homer, is placed on the plafond of the library (Fig. 3)⁴⁵. This medallion is one of 16 double images of ancient and modern scholars made around 1681, most probably by Claude Callot (c. 1620-1687), which surrounded two large tondos with the images of the Allegory of Philosophy and the Allegory of Theology. Thus it is not surprising that Ovid, King John III Sobieski’s favourite author, found a place among the images of *viris illustris* – famous men, scholars, and thinkers depicted as models of virtue for the monarch⁴⁶. The library of King John III Sobieski at Wilanów contained several copies of Ovid’s works, including several editions of *Metamorphoses*⁴⁷. We know that Ovid’s work was the royal couple’s favourite book, and they often referred to it and interpreted it symbolically and allegorically⁴⁸.

This aspect is reflected in the palace, which is filled with numerous Ovidian themes, for example, the Queen’s Study, which belonged to Queen Marie Casimire, wife of the famous victor from Vienna John III Sobieski, in the 1690s was painted al fresco and decorated with scenes from *Metamorphoses* by Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski (1660-1711, Fig. 4), who studied in the prestigious Academy of Saint Luke in Rome⁴⁹. The main figure of these scenes is Apollo, who is portrayed in three contexts: with the Cumaean Sibyl, with Isse, and guarding King Admetus’s herds (Fig. 4). These scenes are painted in such a way that they resemble three tapestries with gold borders, which raises their status and adds to their splendour by the fact that are as if a ‘woven’ decoration, thus more prestigious and more expensive than frescoes. It is a sophisticated game with viewers: the artist wanted to create the illusion that they are looking at woven and precious upholstery hanging on the walls. The high level of artistry of Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski’s work is an additional

⁴⁵ Morawski 2022, pp. 60, 62, fig. 53.

⁴⁶ The author of the conceptual design of the library was the Jesuit Adam Kochański, who was the king’s librarian: Morawski 2022, pp. 17-20; Fijałkowski 1979, p. 8, 13.

⁴⁷ *Katalog księzek* 1879, pp. 62-63, 66.

⁴⁸ Baran, Witkowski 2014, pp. 64-71.

⁴⁹ Karpowicz 1986, p. 71-96; Karpowicz 1969b, pp. 221-224.

asset of this decoration. The fact that these scenes are placed in the Queen's Study suggests that *Metamorphoses* were particularly dear to her.

Another Ovidian work of art from Wilanów is also connected with the queen. It is a virginal decorated with scenes from *Metamorphoses*. This keyboard instrument – unusually large for its time – was offered to Marie Casimire as a gift by Eleonore Magdalene of Neuburg, wife of Austrian Emperor Leopold⁵⁰. It is believed that this instrument was sent to her from Vienna to sweeten the time she had to spend away from the king, who set out to Vienna and fought a victorious battle there in 1683. In the first half of the 17th century in Antwerp, Hendrick van Balen (1575-1632) and Jan Breughel the Elder (1568-1625) painted seven mythical scenes from Ovid's poem on the cover of the virginal (Fig. 5). They are dominated by a large composition which depicts *Minerva among the muses on Mount Helicon* and smaller scenes: *Pan and the nymph Syrinx*, *Mercury playing the flute to put Argus to sleep*, and *Mercury killing the hundred-eyed giant* on the left and *Pan playing the syrinx*, *the duel between Apollo and Marsyas*, and *the punishment of Marsyas* on the right⁵¹. The theme shared by all these mythological scenes is music, its symbolism, and its power.

The most numerous series inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is located on the façade of the palace on the side of the courtyard, which is the place where visitors to the residence were welcomed (Fig. 6). These are 15 reliefs on the side wings, which were added to the palace between 1720 and 1730 at the order of the Grand Hetmaness of the Crown, Elżbieta Sieniawska. The reliefs were made between 1725 and 1730 by two stucco workers: Francesco Fumo made the figural parts, and Pietro Comparetti made the ornamental parts. The scenes depict the following topics: on the north wing (left wing), towards the east, that is, towards the main body of the palace: *Pygmalion and Galatea*, *Jupiter and Antiope*, *Neptune and Theophane*, *The Abduction of Europa*, *Bacchus and Erigone*, *Apollo and the Cumaeen Sibyl*, and *Cypris and Apollo*; on the south wing (right), towards the west, that is, away from the main body of the palace: *Callisto and Arcas*, *Apollo guarding King Admetus's herds*, *Neptune and Ceres*, *Perseus killing Medusa – The birth of Pegasus*, *Apollo and Isse*, *Perseus and Andromeda*, and *Apollo and Daphne*. *The Abduction of Ganymede* is located on the shorter side of the north wing⁵². The wings create a magnificent monumental setting of the former royal residence. The elevations of the wings are modelled on antique triumphal arches as a background for semicircular reliefs with Ovidian motifs, which contribute to the splendour and ceremonial overtones of the entire palace.

⁵⁰ Vogel 2014, p. 187.

⁵¹ Ivi, p. 199.

⁵² Karpowicz 1998, pp. 149-174; Wołowicz 2011, p. 125; Milewska-Ważbińska 2008, pp. 60-83; Nestorow 2016, pp. 274-282; Sito 2013, pp. 158-167; Świtek 2020, pp. 139-144.

Another series in the Royal Palace in Wilanów which is based on *Metamorphoses* consist of eight paintings which depict *Jupiter's transformations* (Fig. 7). They were painted in 1732 for King August II the Strong and placed in the former Queen's Anti-Study (which was redecorated in 1730-1733). The scenes present the following love adventures of the Thunderer: *Jupiter and Antiope*, *Abduction of Europa*, *Leda*, *Jupiter and Callisto*, *The seduction of Proserpine*, *The Seduction of Aegina*, *Danae*, and *Asteria and the Eagle*⁵³. The theme of this series is perfectly in line with the taste of the Rococo artists fond of motifs related to flirtation and romance and in line with the tastes of the monarch of the House of Wettin⁵⁴.

As an allegorical 'palace of the sun' described in *Metamorphoses*⁵⁵, the palace in Wilanów is decorated with numerous mythical stories that elevated its ideological status, allegorised its inhabitants, and offered a deeper insight into the meaning of life.

The Royal Baths Palace is another palace in Warsaw with numerous references to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Before it was rebuilt for King Stanisław August Poniatowski, it served as the bathing pavilion, erected in 1683-1689 by Tylman van Gameren (1632-1706) for Grand Marshal of the Crown Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski (1642-1702), a patron of the arts and a poet who wrote in Polish and Latin (Fig. 8)⁵⁶. The bathhouse – with its central rotunda, whose aesthetics were reminiscent of a grotto with a fountain in the middle – was an ideological reflection of Hippocrene, that is, the spring described by Ovid⁵⁷, which was formed when the Pegasus struck his hoof into the rock on Mount Helicon, the seat of the Muses. The water from this mythical spring gave poetic inspiration, which was probably also sought by Lubomirski, the owner of the Baths at the time. The building also housed a Bath Room, the walls of which were decorated with reliefs depicting motifs from *Metamorphoses* associated with water, such as *Pan and Syrinx*, *Arion*, *Andromeda*, *Danaides*, and *Diana and Actaeon*⁵⁸.

Between 1772 and 1793, the building of Lubomirski's Baths was transformed into the Palace on the Isle for King Poniatowski. Ovidian motifs also appeared there, for example, the Ballroom (Fig. 9), adjacent to the Bath Room, was furnished with sculptures of *Apollo Belvedere* (a copy made by Antonio d'Este), *Farnese Hercules* (a copy made by Giuseppe Angelini), *the Satyr Marsyas*, *King Midas*, *the Centaur*, *the three-headed Cerberus* as well as busts

⁵³ Boginie, Muzy, *Bachantki* 1999, p. 34.

⁵⁴ *Bogowie, herosi, śmiertelnicy* 2002; Fijałkowski 1997, pp. 141-142; Gutowska-Dudek 2015, pp. 63-65.

⁵⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II, 1-30. Fijałkowski 1979, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Karpowicz 2012, pp. 46-47, 98-100.

⁵⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, V, 255-272.

⁵⁸ Mrozińska 1953, pp. 33-47. More on this topic in Karpowicz 1969a, pp. 393-403.

of *Bacchus* and *Ceres* made by André Le Brun and his sculpting workshop⁵⁹. Additionally, its walls were decorated with reliefs of, among others, *Hercules and Omphale* and *Apollo and Daphne*. Many other works with mythical figures, for example, *Medici Venus*, *Faun with a goat*, and garden sculptures, for example, *Flora*, *Zephyr*⁶⁰ can be found in the Royal Baths.

Another obvious manifestation of how important Ovid's work was to the last king of Poland is the interior decoration of the chambers on the first floor of the White House in the Baths Park, which is fully devoted to *Metamorphoses* (Fig. 10). Before 1783, the interior of this private royal place was decorated with a collection of almost 100 prints by Noël Le Mire according to the drawings of, among others, François Boucher⁶¹. In the White House chambers, prints in gold frames were hung on white walls which were decorated with small, multicoloured flowers. The same prints were also used in the 1771 Paris edition of Ovid's poem, a copy of which the King had in his library⁶². The floral ornaments used as a background for the prints perfectly complemented the mythological scenes which explained the origin of various plants and natural phenomena. This reflected the function of the White House as the monarch's summer villa in a park, a place of rest amidst nature for King Stanisław August Poniatowski and his family.

Ovid's most famous poem is also represented in the decoration of other palaces in Warsaw and throughout Poland. Numerous examples include the Tyszkiewicz-Potocki Palace on Krakowskie Przedmieście in Warsaw⁶³, the Palace of Primate Michał Poniatowski in Jabłonna⁶⁴, the Palace of Bazyl Walicki in Mała Wieś⁶⁵, the Radziwiłł Palace in Nieborów⁶⁶, the Konięcpolski Castle in Podhorce⁶⁷, the Branicki Palace in Białystok⁶⁸, and the Palace in Romanów in Volhynia (not preserved)⁶⁹. This is only a fraction of what we once had in Poland.

Ovid's works that were the most popular in 16th-century Poland included *Metamorphoses*, *Tristia*, and *Ex Ponto*, in which the poet explicitly talked about his exile in the lands of Getia and Sarmatia. Their popularity meant that at the turn of the 17th century, that is, a period when the legend of ancient

⁵⁹ Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, vol. I, pp. 43-44, vol. II, pp. 175-179, 268-272; Dobrowolski 1990, pp. 131-144.

⁶⁰ Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, vol. II, pp. 379-381.

⁶¹ Biłozór-Salwa 2013, p. 46-55; Laszczkowski 2013, pp. 46-55.

⁶² *Les métamorphoses d'Ovide* 1771. Currently, this beautiful copy with 141 prints is kept in the Print Room of the University of Warsaw Library.

⁶³ Batowski 1956, pp. 305-364.

⁶⁴ Bernatowicz 2001, pp. 273-278.

⁶⁵ Lorentz, Rottermund 1986, p. 257.

⁶⁶ Bernatowicz 2006 pp. 223-238.

⁶⁷ Ostrowski, Petrus 2001, pp. 17, 20-21, 63-65, il. 56, 58, 68, 85-91, 294-307.

⁶⁸ More on the sculptures in Oleńska 2011, pp. 223-232.

⁶⁹ Mikocka-Rachubowa 2016, p. 109.

Sarmatia as a predecessor of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was widely disseminated, the places associated with the Roman poet's sojourn began to be directly linked with the Polish lands.

Associating Ovid with Sarmatia laid the foundations of the ideology of Polish Sarmatism and became its manifestation. This ideology was so strong that Ovid was even 'naturalised' as a Pole. A natural consequence of the processes which reinforced the ideology of Sarmatism was the 'discovery of the grave' of the Roman author of *Metamorphoses* on the territory of Poland of the time.

Both Ovid's 'naturalisation' and the 'discovery of his grave', which were widely disseminated by the publications of the time, shaped the consciousness of the ruling classes and the elites of the Commonwealth. Although it would be difficult to point to direct links between the legend of 'Polish' Ovid and the numerous Ovidian themes present in Polish palaces, the popularity of *Metamorphoses* testifies not only to a widespread European fascination with this poet but also to a unique relationship between Poles and Ovid. It is worth emphasising the existence of numerous Ovidian themes in visual representations in royal residences erected or rebuilt in the early modern period, such as the Wilanów Palace and the Royal Baths Palace in Warsaw. These themes were also used in magnates' residences, but the scale of this phenomenon requires further studies.

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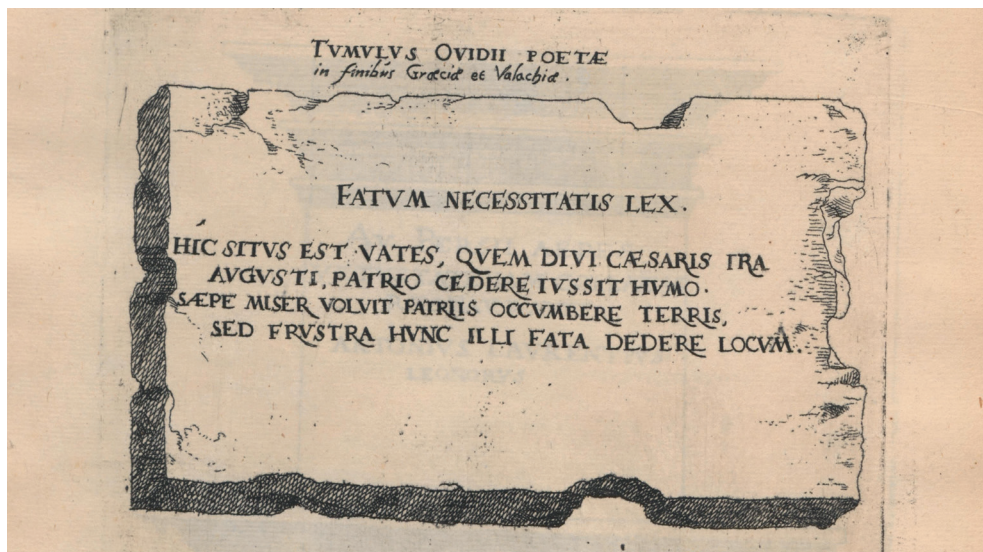


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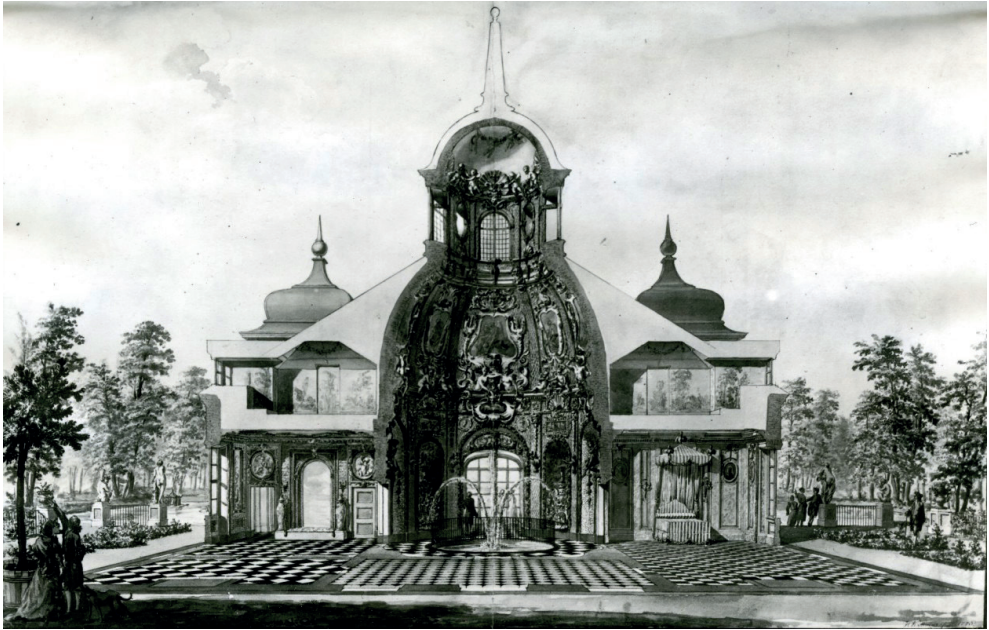


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