

Saviana Stănescu's Barbarian Women: the Empire Writes Back (to Ovid)<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

In this article I discuss the classical receptions of Romanian playwright Saviana Stănescu and particularly her continued engagement with the works of Ovid, tracking the feminist methodology which links her varied work. While Ovid's self-definition against the 'barbarian others' he encounters in Tomis is crucial to an understanding of the exile poetry, in a postcolonial world the ideologically-loaded nature of the term *barbarus* must be recognized, and its use and replication in modern translations and receptions interrogated. With an astute critical awareness and a committed engagement with politics, Stănescu's classical receptions draw out the damaging real-world consequences for a people labelled 'barbarians'. Her work offers a defence of the reviled Black Sea inhabitants of Ovid's exilic poems by providing a critique of the colonial representations of the 'barbarians' therein, and exposing the power mechanisms of ancient and contemporary imperialism alike.

## ARTICLE

I dreamt I was back in Rome [...] *We need to make our empire grow. We need to have everyone speak Latin. The language of culture and civilisation* [...] But Caesar, I whispered, I am not a soldier, I'm a poet. *Nonsense* [...] *The Barbarians must learn Latin. You are the only one who can teach them. We'll help you. The soldiers will be there with you to fight, to kill, to conquer, to extract the gold from those Barbarian lands, to get their riches as you will enrich their spirit. It's just a fair trade.*

---

<sup>1</sup> My title is taken from *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures* (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin: 1989), a title which references Salman Rushdie's 1982 article for *The Times*, 'The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance', itself an allusion to George Lucas' 1980 film *The Empire Strikes Back*. I would like to thank Elena Theodorakopoulos for her help with the preparation of this article, and my two anonymous reviewers for their advice and suggestions.

**Barbarus:**

1. of or belonging to a foreign country or region;
2. ignorant, uncivilized, unpolished, uncouth;
3. cruel, fierce, savage.<sup>3</sup>

*Barbarus* and its cognates appear forty times throughout Ovid's poems from exile, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*;<sup>4</sup> indeed, nine of these instances are used as illustrative citations for the definitions of *barbaria*, *barbaricus* and *barbarus* in the Oxford Latin Dictionary.<sup>5</sup> While Ovid's self-definition against the barbarian 'others' he encounters in Tomis is crucial to an understanding of the exile poetry,<sup>6</sup> in a postcolonial world the ideologically-loaded nature of this term must be recognized and its use and replication in modern translations and receptions interrogated.

In this essay I discuss the work of Romanian playwright Saviana Stănescu, whose poetic cycle 'TRISTIA: Letters of a Barbarian Woman' (2006) and play *For a Barbarian Woman* (2011) provide a fresh and critical contribution to the field of Ovidian reception.<sup>7</sup> The Romanian tradition of Ovidian reception is distinct and rich, characterized by its mix of history and folklore, but Stănescu's contribution is of unique importance through its incorporation of critical theory. Feminist literary criticism and postcolonial theory can help to illuminate the ways in which Stănescu's work may offer a defence of the Black Sea and its inhabitants so reviled by Ovid. Her creative and original works

---

<sup>2</sup> *For a Barbarian Woman*; written by Saviana Stănescu, directed by Niegel Smith, co-produced by Fordham Theatre and Ensemble Studio Theatre. The play is as yet unpublished; the author was extremely generous in forwarding me a copy of the script via email.

<sup>3</sup> Glare (2012: 247).

<sup>4</sup> As an indicator of how significant this frequency is, Hardie cites thirty-six examples of the phrase *ante oculos* as one example to illustrate the importance of presence/ absence in Ovid's poetry, a figure calculated from the *whole* of the Ovidian corpus (2002: 290).

<sup>5</sup> Corresponding entries in Lewis and Short (2002) use six citations from the exile poetry.

<sup>6</sup> Important responses to and surveys of Ovid's exile poetry, particularly in relation to his pre-exilic works, include Hinds (1985) and Claassen (2008). For the Roman conception of 'barbarians', and their construction of 'the barbarian' as an ontological category, see Dauge (1981).

<sup>7</sup> Recent important scholarly works examining the field of Ovidian reception include Ziolkowski (2005), Ingleheart (2011), and Torlone (2013).

offer an important critique of the colonial representations of the 'barbarians' within Ovid's exilic works, and expose the power mechanisms of ancient and contemporary imperialism alike.<sup>8</sup>

\*\*\*

Saviana Stănescu was born in Bucharest in 1967 under the dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu. In contrast to other communist nations that had abolished the teaching of classics (in Russia, for example, the Bolsheviks had removed Latin from the school curriculum when they came to power in 1922),<sup>9</sup> Romania maintained a strong link to its Dacian and Latin past. Ovid has been an important cultural figure in Romania for centuries, and since 1887 a statue of the poet has stood in the town of his exile, today named Constanța.<sup>10</sup> Romania's Latin roots were also supported in the ethnographic studies of the early twentieth-century Romanian historians Vasile Pârvan and Nicolae Iorga,<sup>11</sup> and so the Latin language continued to be taught in Romanian schools with a strong emphasis on Romania's Roman ancestors, as opposed to the neighbouring Slavic countries and languages of Eastern Europe. Stănescu herself learned Latin in the seventh and eighth grades at school, but from a young age she was also familiar with the story of Ovid from his statue; Constanța is a popular sea-side holiday destination for the inhabitants of Bucharest and so every childhood holiday for Stănescu also 'mean[t] a little encounter with Ovid'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1989 as a twenty-two-year-old student and radical poet Stănescu was actively involved in the Romanian Revolution that resulted in the deposition of Ceaușescu and his regime. Although theatre had enjoyed a privileged position of cultural importance in Romania throughout the years of dictatorship, under Ceaușescu all theatres were state-run and subject to government censors. The written text of a play had first to be approved by the Ministry of Culture to ensure that no content

---

<sup>8</sup> For the expansion of the postcolonial framework to include postcommunist nations, see Spivak (2005).

<sup>9</sup> For the classical tradition in Russia, see Ziolkowski (2005: 67-111, 206-07), Torlone (2009), and Kennedy (2011); for central and Eastern Europe see Torlone (2013); for classical pedagogy and reception under communism see Karsai, Klaniczay, Movrin and Olechowska (2013).

<sup>10</sup> A replica of Constanța's statue was later erected in Ovid's home-town of Sulmona in Italy in 1925.

<sup>11</sup> Boia (2001: 120).

<sup>12</sup> Stănescu (email to the author, 25 September 2014).

ran counter to government ideology, after which state officials would watch a dress rehearsal of the (often compulsorily edited) play before a public performance was sanctioned.<sup>13</sup> As a result of this, classical Greek tragedies or new plays set in the Greco-Roman classical past were often performed as they were more likely to be approved for production than contemporary works.<sup>14</sup>

Ceaușescu was executed on Christmas Day in 1989 and within weeks UNITER (Uniunea Teatrală din România), the Romanian Theatre Union, was formed; Stănescu graduated from university in the summer of 1990 and quickly became one of the leading members of the new generation of Romanian playwrights. In 2000 she won the prestigious UNITER Play of the Year Award for *Inflatable Apocalypse*, a work she had submitted under a male pseudonym as no woman had yet won the prize; she revealed her true identity to a stunned audience at the award ceremony.<sup>15</sup> Although it would be fifteen years before she could write explicitly about her personal experience of the horrors of the Revolution, Stănescu's work has always been characterized by political engagement, and by a strong belief in the power of drama to highlight political issues and critically engage her audience with the world. One of her most recent projects, for example, is entitled 'Back to Ithaca: a Contemporary Odyssey', and combines a re-imagining of the classics with the contemporary home-coming experiences of American military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup>

Stănescu currently lives in 'self-imposed "exile"' in New York,<sup>17</sup> where she is Professor of Playwriting and Theatre Studies at Ithaca College and Associate Artistic Director at Richard Schechner's East Coast Artists, having completed her PhD thesis on reconfiguring the classics in contemporary drama. She also curates the experimental women's theatre group *playgroundzero* and is the founder of Immigrant Artists and Scholars in New York (IASNY). Arriving in New York just days

---

<sup>13</sup> Duncan (2008: 85).

<sup>14</sup> Duncan (2008: 85).

<sup>15</sup> Eisner (2010).

<sup>16</sup> The interviews with veterans have been compiled creatively with photographs and drawings, alongside details of the process of turning the material into the play at <<http://backtoithaca.blogspot.co.uk>> [accessed 23 January 2014].

<sup>17</sup> Stănescu (2012).

before the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001, Stănescu notes that she did not miss the irony of witnessing the fall of communism in the East only to arrive in the West and witness the fall of capitalism;<sup>18</sup> explorations of such destructive relationships between imperial centre and the 'barbarian' periphery are central to Stănescu's work. Together with her past experiences in Romania, her dramatic focus can in part be explained by the 'revelation' she had upon emigrating to America:

It is in America that I understood what discourses of power mean: on the radio, in public speeches, American leaders speak about a people destined to lead. Undoubtedly, each discourse varies depending on political coordinates, but it only varies in relation to 'how' this hegemony is imposed on people [...] not to 'why'.<sup>19</sup>

Stănescu's work draws on her own experience of living 'in between' to challenge perceptions of immigrants and the 'barbarian' Other, and to interrogate and cast a feminist critique over capitalism, Romanian identity,<sup>20</sup> and the problems faced by Eastern-European women immigrants in particular.<sup>21</sup> Formally, she often works on collaborative and experimental projects that produce a collage of genres and theatrical styles within one work, creating a multiplicity of voices and perspectives to capture the fragmented female (immigrant) experience.<sup>22</sup> With her 'immigrant I'<sup>23</sup> informed by feminist and postcommunist perspectives, Stănescu offers a unique re-reading of Ovid's exile poetry: a postcolonial act of translation and reception that disturbs power hierarchies by destabilizing the very language that perpetuates this discourse of power.<sup>24</sup> Stănescu simply denies

---

<sup>18</sup> Stănescu (2009).

<sup>19</sup> Mihăilă (2010: 305).

<sup>20</sup> Stănescu (2004, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Stănescu (2007).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Stănescu (2008).

<sup>23</sup> Stănescu (2009).

<sup>24</sup> Bassnett and Trivedi (1999: 15). As a Romanian living and working in New York, Stănescu writes predominantly in English for her American audience; by writing in the dominant language of her host nation, Stănescu can bring minoritarian values and perspectives to a larger audience and allow her plays to embody

the central tenet of logocentrism - that there is a difference between 'you' and 'I' (in terms of power, at least).

### Classical receptions

*For a Barbarian Woman* is not Stănescu's first treatment of classical themes. Her 2003 poetry collection *Diary of a Clone* created a disturbing host of Ovidian women variously metamorphosed under the male gaze: into a loaf of bread ('greased with butter | and set in the oven', p. 10); a flower bed ('Florina burst into bloom | each strand of hair | [...] metamorphosed into a petal', p. 14); an 'artesian well' ('at the very moment | she gave up the ghost | water gushed from her mouth', p. 15); a music box (p. 36); a church bell (p. 40); and a medley of animals with fur, scales and feathers (p. 52). Throughout *Diary of a Clone* her feminist lens repeatedly focuses on the metamorphosis and reduction of woman into a consumable, marketable product, and explores the violent reality of everyday metaphors; a woman repeatedly abused by an unfaithful lover literally becomes a carpet, crushed underfoot (p. 16),<sup>25</sup> and in 'Ruxandra', a neglected daughter treated as mere background in her mother and lover's new home literally and wilfully fades into the concrete walls, cursing them as she goes (pp. 19-20).

Although 'Ruxandra' presents a troubling image of female escape through self-destruction, it also suggests a hope of autonomy for women to reclaim and to rewrite their myths. This approach was made explicit in Stănescu's next classical project, a 2005 feminist reclaiming of the myth of Oedipus, *YokastaS*, devised with Richard Schechner, the director of the ground-breaking *Dionysus in '69*.<sup>26</sup> In *YokastaS*, 'sampling'<sup>27</sup> Euripides, Sophocles and Seneca, Schechner and Stănescu re-tell the myth from Jocasta's perspective, structuring the play around moments of Jocasta's life that are

---

the hybridity she celebrates, mediating between the two languages and cultures. She tells the 'other side' to the story told by Ovid (who wrote in Latin to an audience in the dominant culture).

<sup>25</sup> As the hyacinth is crushed underfoot in Sappho fr. 105b.

<sup>26</sup> On *Dionysus in '69* see Zeitlin (2004). I discuss *YokastaS* further and its second version, *YokastaS Redux*, in a forthcoming piece.

<sup>27</sup> Horn (2005).

never seen in the ancient tragedies: the night her first child is taken away from her; the night she seduces her new husband. Stănescu and Schechner deconstruct then reconstruct their (anti)heroine, enabling Jocasta to break free of the suicidal narrative ending she seems cursed to repeat.<sup>28</sup> Stănescu was also inspired by feminist Hélène Cixous's refiguration of the myth, *Le nom d'Oedipe*, a version which gave voice to Jocasta's desiring female subjectivity and which Stănescu admired for its polyphony (although Cixous's Jocasta did not ultimately escape her narrative fate).<sup>29</sup>

In *YokastaS* four actors play Jocasta at different stages of her life; Yoyo, an adolescent Jocasta who plays with dolls to imagine her escape from cosseted female life; Yoko, a fifteen-year-old Jocasta married off to King Laius, a disgusting old man who rapes her on their marriage night; Yono, newly married to Oedipus and radiantly pregnant; and Yokasta, the mature woman who has seen all that life has to offer and looks back with self-awareness on her actions, refusing to submit to her self-destructive tragic ending. Stănescu chose the four voices to create a strong multi-faceted heroine and to empower Jocasta to reflect on her many inner stories; in this way Stănescu aimed to create 'a full-scale feminist text/ spectacle.'<sup>30</sup>

In one scene, a postmodern parody of contemporary TV chat-shows,<sup>31</sup> Jocasta appears alongside Medea and Phaedra in a 'Tragedy's Baddest Mama' special, each reading passages from 'what my author wrote for me.' Yet beneath the darkly comic surface Stănescu is making an important critical point by exposing how myths and discourses are passed down between generations; throughout the play, the female characters pointedly reference the ancient sources by vocally framing them with 'quote' and 'endquote', highlighting their constructed nature. In contrast, Oedipus simply and unthinkingly replicates the words of the ancient tragedy/ discourse.

On her approach to classical reception in her plays, Stănescu writes that:

---

<sup>28</sup> On written characters already doomed by their previous literary fates, see Barthes (1967).

<sup>29</sup> Stănescu (2013: 30); on Cixous, see Foley (2004: 86-7).

<sup>30</sup> Stănescu (2013: 31).

<sup>31</sup> Mary-Kay Gamel also used the television chat-show formula to elicit the female-only sacred space of the Thesmophoria in her 2002 feminist production of Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai*, *The Julie Thesmo Show*; see Gamel (2002).

In traditional theatre the changes [to the 'original text'] are limited to tiny adjustments, or maybe re-writing the words of the author. In environmental theatre, it is not possible for a principal author to exist, for plays are collages of classical texts, or a mix of several sources and periods. In such cases, 'change' does not fully describe what is happening. Grotowski's 'confrontation' is a more appropriate term.<sup>32</sup>

Stănescu's 'Yokastas' are thus presented in the unapologetic manner that has become a feature of contemporary receptions by women writers. This approach can also be seen, for example, in the representations of Helen by Margaret Atwood, Anne Carson and Elizabeth Cook, whose refusal 'to offer rehabilitation to their female subjects'<sup>33</sup> may be traced all the way back to Sappho, whose Helen in Fragment 16 is justified in her actions by simply following that which she desires the most - her lover to Troy.<sup>34</sup>

### 'Tristia' poems

The play *For a Barbarian Woman* developed from a series of ten poems Stănescu wrote for her collection *Google Me!*, a meditation on the themes of identity and language as a Romanian living in America:

---

<sup>32</sup> Stănescu (2013: 25). Note: Jerzy Grotowski (b. 1933, d. 1999) was a Polish theatre director known for his experimental work. Here, Stănescu is referencing his theory on 'confronting' myth: 'As social groupings are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux... The spectators are more and more individuated in their relation to the myth as corporate truth or group model, and belief is often a matter of intellectual conviction. This means that it is much more difficult to elicit the sort of shock needed to get at those psychic layers behind the life-mask [as ancient tragedy did]. Group identification with myth – the equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth – is virtually impossible today. What is possible? ... **confrontation** with myth rather than identification'; Grotowski (2002: n.p.).

<sup>33</sup> Theodorakopoulos (2013: 278).

<sup>34</sup> '... the loveliest sight | on this dark earth... I say is what- | ever you desire: | and it is perfectly possible to make this clear | to all; for Helen... | ... left her husband - | the best of all men - | behind and sailed far away to Troy; she did not spare | a single thought for her child nor for her dear parents', trans. by J. Balmer (1992: 39).



GOOGLE ME! aims to capture my creative response to the immigrant experience and my on-going love relationship with the English language. All the texts in this book were written directly in English except for [...] two poems [...] which were originally written in Romanian [...] I took the risk of not asking an English native speaker to revise my texts because writing is not only about a language or another, but also about that vibrant space in-between languages and cultures.<sup>35</sup>

Stănescu shares with Ovid's exile poetry a concern with language, language learning, and the cross-pollination of languages, yet unlike Ovid she rejoices in new hybrid forms, seen clearly in her playful melding of English, Latin and Romanian throughout her poetry and plays. Her hyper-awareness of language may stem from her experiences of writing in a language that is not her mother-tongue, revealing to her the way that reality is shaped by culturally-informed language. Thus, in the poems, the character Tristia's struggles with Latin also comment on the difficulty faced by any woman of describing herself in phallogocentric language where she is always constructed as 'other'.<sup>36</sup> Such play with language can be read as a 'resisting' strategy; that is, the misuse of a dominant language by a minoritarian culture<sup>37</sup> - through the embedding of minoritarian words and phrases within the text, idiomatic speech, and new linguistic forms - can act to effect a realignment of power structures between languages.<sup>38</sup>

The cycle 'TRISTIA: Letters of a Barbarian Woman' in *Google Me!* is written in direct response/ 'confrontation' to Ovid's Tomis poems, but it takes 'the perspective of the Barbarian [...] writing for a people without writing'.<sup>39</sup> The opening poem is entitled 'OVID (quote from Ex Ponto, a stupid translation found on the internet)', and consists of a translation of *Tristia* 5.10.13-37 lifted

---

<sup>35</sup> Stănescu (2006: 7).

<sup>36</sup> Irigaray (1985).

<sup>37</sup> On majoritarian and minoritarian languages, see Deleuze and Guattari (1986).

<sup>38</sup> Bassnett and Trivedi (1999: 33-35), and Kramtsch (1997: 368).

<sup>39</sup> <<http://indietheaternow.com>> [accessed 12 August 2013].

directly from poetryintranslation.com.<sup>40</sup> This is the poem in which Ovid describes the appalling conditions at Tomis, a place of rough languages and barbarian men of unkempt and hairy appearance, a place where he lives in constant fear of barbarian raids and where ‘the man who dares to farm the fields is rare | one hand grips the plough, the other a weapon’.<sup>41</sup> As a Romanian and descendent of the ‘barbarians’ that Ovid is describing here, Stănescu offers her indictment of Ovid’s words through her new title (‘Stupid translation’), providing a postcolonial comment not only on the imperial eyes through which Ovid views her people, but also calling out those ‘stupid’ translations that have not thought to challenge this view of Tomis, and unthinkingly reiterated it. This translation is then followed by nine original poems that explore what it feels like to be one of the objectified ‘barbarians’ of Ovid’s exilic world.

‘TRISTIA I (when Tristia can’t help it anymore and starts writing)’, signals Stănescu’s initial direction and intention to follow the objective of second-wave feminist responses to classical texts: to give a voice to the barbarians. Yet her poems spiral darkly to develop and enact a more nuanced postcolonial analysis of language and power through the character of Tristia, a barbarian woman and poetic embodiment of Ovid’s work in exile.<sup>42</sup> A bitter homage to Ovid’s poetic women, Stănescu’s own literary *puella* deconstructs and challenges his constructed elegiac *scriptae puellae*.<sup>43</sup> Tristia has a voice, and with it she defies the exoticization of the colonial subject and the suppliant and eroticized witches or sorceresses in earlier receptions of Ovid’s exile, for example, in Jane Alison’s

---

<sup>40</sup> <[http://poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidTristiaBkFive.htm#\\_Toc34217368](http://poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/OvidTristiaBkFive.htm#_Toc34217368)>, trans. by A.S. Kline © 2003 [accessed 30 November 2013].

<sup>41</sup> *Tr.* 5.10.23-4. The final line quoted by Stănescu is Ovid’s statement that *barbarus hic ego sum* (l. 37). Although this apparent realisation that here *he* is the barbarian hints at Ovid’s awareness that ‘barbarism’ is both linguistically constructed and culturally relative, he still expresses shame at speaking the ‘barbarian’ languages of Tomis (*Tr.* 3.14.49-50, 5.7.55-6; *Pont.* 4.13.17-23). Stănescu rejects Ovid’s self-construction (a powerful Roman from the dominant culture could never be a barbarian) and ‘writes back’ to his presentation of the Tomitians. On Ovid’s linguistic self-construction in exile see Stevens (2009).

<sup>42</sup> My reviewer pointed out that as a neuter plural form of the adjective *tristis*, ‘Tristia’ is an impossible name for a girl; yet Stănescu’s choice of character name chimes nicely with the other conveniently metrical trisyllabic mistresses of elegiac poetry, Corinna, Cynthia, Lesbia, and Delia.

<sup>43</sup> Wyke (1989) and (2002: 46-77, 115-54); Gold (1993); Ingleheart (2012).

*The Love Artist*.<sup>44</sup> Stănescu's *Tristia* confronts such representations, meets Ovid's gaze and answers back: she will no longer be his passive victim. *Tristia* mocks representations of the suppliant barbarian woman through the repetition *ad absurdum* of the phrase 'teach me' (ll. 28-44), and asks Ovid instead to meet her and talk to her 'out of this time' in a 'no man's land'.<sup>45</sup> In this space, Stănescu's *Tristia* will no longer be 'the Gypsy-Venus of your dreams' ('TRISTIA I', l. 27).

Stănescu further explores the devastating consequences for such a narrow view of women in the poem 'CHORUS OF MEN (playing chess with Ovid)'. *Tristia* is dehumanized and her body compartmentalized under Ovid's (male) gaze; she becomes a chess board, her body 'in squares | [...] divided [...] numbered' (ll. 1-2), becoming simply 'A5 B3 C7 the square I9 | was his favourite [...] | B7 [...] | C5 [...] | A1' (ll. 3-4, 11, 13, 14).<sup>46</sup> This division of the female body also suggests the numbered squares of cartography, evoking the territorial encoding of women in patriarchal language as land to be conquered and colonized. Through the use of the personified *Tristia*, Stănescu's poem functions

---

<sup>44</sup> Alison (2003). In Alison's novel, Ovid first catches sight of the barbarian woman Xenia as she bathes, and it seems to him that she is a figure from his *Metamorphoses* brought to life, a Narcissus gazing into his pool (p. 35). However, to the knowing reader, Ovid here assumes rather the role of Actaeon gazing upon Diana at her bath; this obvious omission of the Diana allusion is very telling of Alison's reception. It remains unclear whether it is Alison or her Ovid that has missed the Diana connection here, but in omitting this reference it allows Ovid to evade the guilt and destructive consequences of his male imperial gaze. Alison's personal reaction upon first reading Ovid was 'almost sexually charged' (as quoted in Cox and Theodorakopoulos 2013); as a result her novel romanticizes the troubling relationship between the imperial self and colonial other, ignoring the harmful real-world implications of this representation. By incorporating this fantasy into her reception of Ovid and particularly the character of Xenia, Alison appears to be recreating a colonial stereotype of a suppliant barbarian woman. This is also evident in the choice of the 'fantasy' exotic name of Xenia, compared, for instance, with the complex associations contained in Stănescu's choice of 'Tristia' (an embodiment of the literary *puella*; the absent beloved, Rome; Ovid's melancholy), or Vintilă Horia's 'Dokia', the name of Ovid's slave-girl in his novel *God Was Born in Exile*, a name comprising allusions to Dokia, daughter of Decebalus, ancient King of the Dacians, and Dochia, who represents the return of the spring in Romanian mythology. Alison depicts Xenia for the most part only through Ovid's eyes as a sexually charged and exotic object; Xenia's already tiny voice in the novel is drowned out by this reduction. As a commercial product, Alison's novel has reached a larger audience than Stănescu's avant-garde interrogation of Ovid; on Alison, see Ziolkowski (2009: 217-19), and Michalopoulos (2011). On the Actaeon myth in Ovid's poetry and its significance to his exile, see: Williams (1994: 174-77); Rimell (2006: 27); Ingleheart (2009: 201-2) and (2010, esp. 121-32) on *Tr.* 2.105-8; for parallels with the Actaeon episode in *Met.* 3 see Ingleheart (2010: passim).

<sup>45</sup> This no man's land must allude to the notion of a female literary space first theorized by the feminists Claudine Herrmann (1976), and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1989); also Bassnett (1992). It is a space away from the patriarchal hegemony of language (here, Latin) and a space repeatedly referenced in feminist classical receptions (see, for example, Josephine Balmer (2004: 9; 2009); also Marie Cosnay (2008), whose translations also interrogate the immigrant experience).

<sup>46</sup> This division of the female body into eroticized parts recalls Ovid's compartmentalized description of Corinna in *Am.* 1.5; for feminist responses to this poem, see Cahoon (1988: 296), and Keith (1994: 30-1). Similarly, on Corinna-as-statue in *Am.* 1.7, see, e.g., Greene (1999). Segal (1993) examines the reader's implication in Ovid's violent male erotic gaze; Salzman-Mitchell (2005) provides a more sympathetic reading.

on multiple figurative levels; here, the title CHORUS OF MEN may refer to the litany of male scholars and authors who have interpreted Ovid's body of work and perpetuated colonial stereotypes, or a chorus of men who objectify and dissect the 'barbarian' female body.

As the dehumanisation of Tristia develops, the imagery becomes disturbingly and explicitly violent under Ovid's colonial gaze. She is:

a golden butterfly the masterpiece  
of your insect collection  
prick me through the heart and exhibit me  
on red velvet behind the glass wall  
still warmed by the mist of your laughter<sup>47</sup>

In the same poem Ovid 'slic[es] open her breast with [his] razorblade' (l. 14), until finally Tristia internalizes this violent imagery and describes herself as a catalogue of historical barbarian 'others', concluding with a familiar contemporary media construct, the barbarian terrorist:

here I am  
the goddess of kamikaze butterflies  
the queen of guillotine memory  
the suicide bomber  
of your 2001 arabian nights<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> 'TRISTIA VI', ll. 6-10.

The violent and unsettling misogynist imagery reaches its disturbing climax in the penultimate poem. The barbarian woman Tristia is finally objectified to the extent that she has lost her first-person narrative voice and her appearance is announced in the hyperbolic style of a fairground attraction:

step right up

ladies and gentlemen and try your luck

[...]

that's right one hundred points – THE GRAAAND PRIZE

for a bullet in TRISTIA's chest<sup>49</sup>

In a final act of humiliation, Tristia is mounted on a target:

one hundred points for Tristia

it's not difficult to hit her all you've gotta do

is squeeze the trigger when

she screams *nooo* with women this always

means *yessss*<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> 'arabian [sic]'; 'TRISTIA VI', ll. 18-22.

<sup>49</sup> 'CHORUS OF MEN (fair-y-tale)', ll. 4-5, 8-9.

As well as representing Eastern-European trafficked women and ‘mail-order brides’ as prizes to be won, it is also possible to read Tristia here as Romania personified as woman, displayed like a fairground freak-show attraction for Western eyes after the fall of communism. In its adoption of a rape myth prevalent in contemporary society (‘no means yes’), this poem directly ‘writes back’ to *Pont.* 4.2.16, in which Ovid describes his struggles to write poetry while isolated in Tomis as ‘tilling a dry shore with a sterile plough’, *sed siccum sterili vomere litus aro*. The ploughing metaphor can be linked simply to writing,<sup>51</sup> however, it is also representative of a much more disturbing metaphor prevalent in colonial writings, that of colonization as rape.<sup>52</sup> Colonized lands and peoples are often feminized or personified as woman in colonial writing, and colonized lands are frequently described as ‘raped’ by the colonizing aggressor.<sup>53</sup> This is a recurring metaphor that postcolonial theory and feminism has observed and problematized. In *Pont.* 4.2 Ovid’s literary plough is struggling to rape and pacify the dry shore, and this reading is strengthened by the fact that Ovid employs the same imagery at *Pont.* 1.5.33-4 (*qui, sterili totiens cum sim deceptus ab arvo, | damnosa presto condere semen humo?*);<sup>54</sup> the Tomitians are unwilling to act the suppliant victim to Ovid’s plough.

Two further poems in the TRISTIA cycle begin to explore the issues of language and power that will be developed in greater detail in her play, *For a Barbarian Woman*. ‘TRISTIA V (dead

---

<sup>50</sup> ‘CHORUS OF MEN (fair-y-tale)’, ll. 19-24. The trope ‘no means yes’ recalls Ovid’s account of his ‘fight’ to ‘vanquish’ and coerce the unwilling Corinna into sex at *Am.* 1.5.14-15; we are also reminded of Ovid’s advice to men at *Ars* 1. 664-706 that women ‘enjoy’, even ‘prefer’ being ‘raped’ (*vim licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis*, 673). For feminist readings of rape in Latin literature, see Curran (1978), Hemker (1985), Joplin (1984) and (1990), Richlin (1992), and Packman (1993); on rape in antiquity see Stewart (1995), and Deacy and Pierce (2002).

<sup>51</sup> Habinek (1998: 162).

<sup>52</sup> Hulme (1986).

<sup>53</sup> In the play *For a Barbarian Woman* we see a visual representation of the feminization of colonial subjects under the raping imperial eye. Stănescu’s personified Black Sea is a gender-queer embodiment of her commentary on the ‘barbarian other’ and the intersections of gender and race; in the production notes we are guided that she is to be played by ‘a beautiful and powerful black man, in a long flowing dress’ Stănescu (2011: 2). Just as the woman Tristia in the poems is turned into a mapped and colonized land, so here is the colonized land figured as a woman.

<sup>54</sup> For a list of ploughing metaphors for sexual intercourse in ancient literature, see duBois (1988: 65).

language class) is particularly interesting for its double juxtaposition of language and silence against knowledge and loss, a 'writing back' to Ovid's own fears about forgetting his Latin at *Tr.* 5.12.57 (*ipse mihi videor iam didicisse Latine*).<sup>55</sup> Stănescu weaves in the double concern of feminism and postcolonial theory regarding the silencing of the 'other', opening the poem with the lines, 'my body speaks | the ancient language of silence | a dead idiom' (ll. 1-3), and asking Ovid, 'did you come for the lesson one on silence?' (ll. 5-6). She tells him to start by forgetting everything he knows, beginning with the letters of the alphabet (ll. 7-9); an exhortation also to the reader to drop any preconceived prejudices about the 'barbarians' (at the conclusion of the play Ovid at last falls silent to listen to the voice of the other).

In the final poem, 'TRISTIA VII (after Ovid won the Nobel prize)', Tristia now sounds weary of 'stupid translations', telling Ovid that he has:

claimed the copyright

of my thoughts and registered

ownership of my desires

as the writer

of my body text

rolandbarthes of my pleasures

austin of my performative utterances

phd academic scholar researcher

nobel laureate for inventing

---

<sup>55</sup> Ovid also claims to be forgetting his Latin at *Tr.* 3.14.45-6 (*saepe aliquod quaero verbum nomenque locumque*) and *Tr.* 5.7.57-8 (*iam desuetudine longa | vix subeunt ipsi verba Latina mihi*).

me<sup>56</sup>

The final word of the poem 'me' reveals Stănescu's identification with her Tristia character and is visually and emotionally striking as the final word in the poem, a single word in the final line and a return to the first-person voice that the reader feared lost in the fairground poem. The 'me' feels assertive – just as Ovid's final word in the *Metamorphoses*, *vivam*,<sup>57</sup> asserts authorship - and looks forward to a new beginning; now that Tristia has been fully deconstructed, dehumanized, over-analysed by theory and torn apart, Stănescu can start to re-build her and redress the wrongs of previous receptions and create new representations of Romanian (immigrant) women.

### ***For a Barbarian Woman***

While the letter-poems more brutally 'explore the commerce of imperialism and [...] the conflicting embrace of East and West',<sup>58</sup> the play *For a Barbarian Woman* subtly incorporates contemporary issues such as the alarming number of women trafficked out of Romania to become sex-workers.<sup>59</sup> It is a 'specific reflection' on colonialism and sex-trafficking that 'places the individual in the vortex of history and socio-political context'.<sup>60</sup> On developing the poems into the play, Stănescu writes:

---

<sup>56</sup> 'TRISTIA VII', ll. 5-14.

<sup>57</sup> *Met.* 15.879.

<sup>58</sup> Stănescu (2012).

<sup>59</sup> According to statistics provided by the Romanian National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons, in 2011 around 1048 identified victims were subjected to human trafficking outside the country, although the real figure is probably far higher. Data from 2011 and 2012 reveal the most common forms of exploitation experienced by trafficked persons were sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and forced begging, and it is estimated that 75% of sex workers in the Netherlands originate from Eastern Europe (statistics taken from the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women:

<[http://www.gaatw.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=718:asociatia-pro-refugiu-romania-new-members-work-on-anti-trafficking-in-romania&catid=95:member-profile&Itemid=67](http://www.gaatw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=718:asociatia-pro-refugiu-romania-new-members-work-on-anti-trafficking-in-romania&catid=95:member-profile&Itemid=67)> [accessed 23 January 2014]).

<sup>60</sup> Stănescu (2012).



last summer I went back to Constanța, the city of my childhood summer vacations and of my first poems, and went to the statue of Ovid to have a “chat” with him. I began to think about the power-relationship between empires and the small nations they conquered and assimilated; between major/ influential/ colonialist cultures and minor cultures; and more specifically: about the relationship between a Western man and a woman from the poor East. A woman objectified by her history, by her upbringing, by her “luck” of having been born in a powerless country. All these issues resonate for me in the current social and political context, when sex-traffic from Eastern Europe flourishes and Balkan women still have to struggle to get a voice and life of their own.<sup>61</sup>

*For a Barbarian Woman* shares with Stănescu’s earlier classical receptions a concern with exposing the constructed nature of discourse. It explores the themes of exile and colonialism, and the ‘self’-‘other’ dichotomy imposed by imperialism, through two interwoven narratives set on the shores of the Black Sea.<sup>62</sup> The first details the growing erotic relationship between the exiled Ovid and his slave-girl, Tristia, in the year 9 AD;<sup>63</sup> the second updates the colonizer-colonized dynamic to modern-day Romania, sketching a budding romance between an American NATO general, Rich, and his young interpreter, Theo. The narrative threads of Ovid-Tristia and Rich-Theo run parallel throughout the play but at times overlap, with monologues cross-cut or occurring simultaneously, creating a multiplicity of voices and merging of subjectivities. To emphasize the parallels and to invite further dialogue between the two time periods the script notes that the same actors can play the roles of Ovid-Rich and Tristia-Theo. However, by drawing out the similarities between Ovid and Theo - two lonely figures losing a grip on their identity in this liminal space called the ‘in between’ - Stănescu deconstructs the simplistic dichotomous conception of the relationship between colonizer

---

<sup>61</sup> Stănescu (2012).

<sup>62</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989).

<sup>63</sup> Although Tristia at first rejects Ovid’s forced sexual advances, by the close of the play the relationship has become mutually erotic (Stănescu 2011: 63); on the sexual relationships and sexual abuse of slaves, see Cohen (2014).

and colonized.<sup>64</sup> The four protagonists form a complex matrix across time and space, and the two love stories act as the dramatic mechanism which enables an exploration of the dynamic relationship of knowledge and power between imperial 'self' and colonized 'other' (in one scene, Ovid rebukes his slave with the words 'stop being so knowledgeable!', p. 25). As in Shakespearean comedy, Theo and Ovid each move from misunderstanding to reconciliation through a growing recognition of the 'other', their perception of difference destabilized by the love/ exile experience. Theo's symbolic suicide at the end of the play represents a sloughing off of her past and the necessary steps she must take to be reconciled with the imperial other, her lover Rich. Stănescu celebrates the hybridity and two-way understanding of a postcolonial world.<sup>65</sup>

The two stories are linked by a lost poem composed by Ovid in the Getic language, which Theo is searching for two thousand years later. Ovid makes reference to this poem in *Pont.* 4.13.17-38,<sup>66</sup> where he describes a eulogy for Augustus and his family written (shamefully, he says, *a! pudet!*, l. 19) in Getic.<sup>67</sup> Stănescu subverts this to have her Ovid pen an elegy for Tristia, a love poem 'for a barbarian woman'. The play fuses quotations from the exile poetry with extracts from the *Amores* and *Tristia* (both in Latin and in English)<sup>68</sup> and references to earlier Romanian receptions,<sup>69</sup> using typically feminist literary methodology to create a polyvocal collage. This editorial and narrative manipulation recontextualizes the source material and enables the woman writer to reclaim and

---

<sup>64</sup> Both Theo and Ovid can be read as analogues for Stănescu herself.

<sup>65</sup> Simon (1999: 72).

<sup>66</sup> Ovid claims that he has learned Getic and Sarmatian at *Pont.* 3.2.40 (*nam didici Geticae Sarmaticeque loqui*), although he expresses shame at acquiring these 'barbarian' languages at *Tr.* 3.14.49-50, 5.7.55-56, and *Pont.* 4.13.17-23. On Ovid and language in exile see Stevens (2009), and Hinds (2011).

<sup>67</sup> That Ovid writes a eulogy for Augustus has been disputed by some scholars, e.g., Williams (1994: 91), noting the ambiguity in *laudes* (l. 23) (Williams 1994: 95n99); see also the translation by Wheeler (1996: 476-77); also Casali (1997).

<sup>68</sup> Latin: p. 15 (*Am.* 1.7.1-2) and p. 58 (*Tr.* 4.8.23-30); English: p. 15 (*Tr.* 5.10.13), p. 22 (*Tr.* 5.10.13-37), and pp. 35-6 (*Tr.* 5.2.47-78); there are also references to *Ars Amatoria* (p. 5; at p. 50 Ovid attempts to mould Tristia into an elegiac *puella* using tips from the *Ars*); *Epistulae ex Ponto* (pp. 5 and 20); and Corinna ('my favourite mistress... What a woman! Strong, witty, well-cultured, beautiful... She'd give the best full-body massage ever... She'd entertain the most sophisticated conversation...', p. 50). It is interesting to note that the first Latin quotation that appears in the play (*Am.* 1.7.1-2) is taken from the poem in which Ovid describes himself as a 'barbarian' for striking his mistress (l. 19); the choice of line also foreshadows scene 4 in the play, where the slave-girl Tristia scratches Ovid for kissing her against her will. Ovid responds by slapping Tristia and calling *her* a barbarian (p. 23). On sexual violence in the *Amores*, see, e.g., Cahoon (1988), and Greene (1999).

<sup>69</sup> See section, 'The Romanian tradition of Ovidian reception' (below).

rewrite ancient sources, becoming a 'female director of the male poetic voice'.<sup>70</sup> Such textual manipulations become the mark and demonstration of female power and are a striking characteristic of the literary strategies employed in recent classical receptions by contemporary women writers.<sup>71</sup>

The play uses realistic scenes interwoven with fantastical scenes to 'metaphorically touch[...] on the contradictions of civilization and the primitive, conquered and conqueror, power and poverty, rational and irrational'.<sup>72</sup> It is a collage of theatrical forms, drawing on the dramatic devices of Greek tragedy for its overall structure with a long verse prologue and epilogue narrated by the personified Black Sea and featuring a Chorus of three Muses who comment on and occasionally intervene in the action. Following Greek convention the Muses and Black Sea occupy an orchestra space slightly lower down and in front of the main stage, and remain present for the duration of the play. As well as signalling the tone and themes for the play, the verse prologue provides exposition for the play's setting, the history of Romania, and the history of Ovidian reception in Romania to which Stănescu responds.

### **The Romanian tradition of Ovidian reception**

Theodore Ziolkowski's chronological and geographical surveys of Ovidian reception provide a comprehensive introduction to 'the Romanian connection', citing ancient local folklore that details 'a stranger from the other end of the world' from whose lips 'honey flowed',<sup>73</sup> and tracking a strong lineage of literary works of reception that date back to 1679. The 2013 special edition of the *Classical Receptions Journal* edited by Zara Martirosova Torlone, *Classical Receptions in Central and*

---

<sup>70</sup> Stoker (2012: 86).

<sup>71</sup> On feminist literary techniques see Godard (1990). Compare Anne Carson's 'collage' technique in *Nox* (2010).

<sup>72</sup> Stănescu (2012).

<sup>73</sup> Ziolkowski (2005: 112-3) and (2013); for Ovid's presence in Romanian culture and his status as Romania's first national poet, see Mitescu (1972).

*Eastern European Poetry*, also contributed significantly to the field of Romanian Ovidian reception, highlighting works and scholars previously unknown to English-language scholarship.

The Romantic poet Vasile Alecsandri established the modern Romanian tradition and flavour of Ovidian reception with a play that contains key details replicated in later reversionings. In *Ovidiu* (1885), Ovid converts to the local cult of Zamolxis and dies in Tomis from a mortal arrow wound obtained while defending the walls of the city alongside the 'barbarians' he has now become reconciled with. Important Romanian works in this tradition include: Nicolae Iorga's *Ovidiu* (1931), a reception that also introduces the element of a love affair with a local woman; Grigore Sălceanu's *Ovidius*, a tragedy produced for the national Romanian cultural festival in 1958 that celebrated the two-thousand-year anniversary of Ovid's birth and which portrays Ovid as a communist freedom-fighter; Vintilă Horia's *God was Born in Exile* (1960, in English 1961), which won the prestigious Prix Goncourt in France; and Marin Mincu's *Il diario di Ovidio* (1997), a work unfortunately only available in Romanian and Italian at present. Horia's novel in particular forms a key intertextual foil to Stănescu's *For a Barbarian Woman*, and - as is characteristic of feminist literary works - the intertextuality is employed as a political strategy to expose and interrogate ideology: it is not simply an erudite display of her knowledge of the Romanian tradition.

### **Vintilă Horia's *God was Born in Exile***

*God was Born in Exile* chronicles Ovid's final years on the Black Sea coast through his relationships with three local women, his increasing skills in the Getic language, and a religious quest for spiritual salvation. Increasingly disillusioned by the Rome he was forced to leave behind, Ovid meets a disparate band of Roman deserters who have fled the army to live on the land and seek a

higher spiritual truth; they have converted to the cult of Zamolxis who has prophesied the imminent arrival of 'the one true god'.<sup>74</sup>

Drawing on Vasile Pârvan's seminal archaeological and historical work *Getica: O protoistorie a Daciei* (1926),<sup>75</sup> Horia's novel is peppered with ancient place names, historical Dacian characters, and a more accurate representation of the Black Sea climate and local Greek culture than we meet in Ovid's exile poetry. Likewise, language learning and Ovid's increasing skills in Getic are described in a positive light;<sup>76</sup> however, Ovid still views the locals condescendingly as 'barbarians'. The Dacians are depicted by Horia as romanticized 'noble savages',<sup>77</sup> while the Tomitians live in a Romanian 'golden age', childlike and naïve in their simple agricultural lives and spiritual beliefs. From a postcolonial perspective, this is highly problematic and compounded by the unsubtle plot device of Ovid's salvation at the news of a messiah born in Bethlehem; through his damning critique of the Roman(ian) totalitarian state, Horia simply negates one patriarchal discourse (the Roman Empire) in order to justify another (Christianity).<sup>78</sup>

Confronting this, Stănescu's *For a Barbarian Woman* challenges both the descriptions of the 'barbarians' in Ovid and Horia, and the use of Ovid's story to perpetuate colonial attitudes towards the Romanian people. In her prologue there is a dismissal of Christ,<sup>79</sup> and later, Tristia explains to Ovid how his imperial gaze has misread the beliefs of the god Zamolxis for an excitingly exotic and barbarian celebration of death;<sup>80</sup> Stănescu also surely deliberately follows Horia's spelling here,

---

<sup>74</sup> Horia employs a variant spelling to the usual 'Zalmoxis', as at, for example, Herodotus 4.93-6; also Mincu (1997).

<sup>75</sup> Horia (1961: 'Author's Postscript', n.p.).

<sup>76</sup> 'I am also tempted to translate the *Georgics* into Getic, because it is a language well fitted to describe the charms of nature', Horia (1961: 52).

<sup>77</sup> '[D]ignity tempered with a sort of barbarian kindness'; Horia (1961: 141). See also n73 on Getic as a 'natural' language.

<sup>78</sup> '[F]or what the Messiah will destroy as soon as He shows Himself to men will be the Empire', Horia (1961: 217). The Catholic Church is a system that has traditionally used Latin as a means of maintaining power, see, e.g., Waquet (2001: 41-79). On Horia's treatment of Ovid's religious conversion, see Christensen (1995). Ovid was also 'christianized' by Hughes (1997: x-xi); for a similar approach in scholarship, see Fränkel (1945).

<sup>79</sup> Stănescu (2011: 4).

<sup>80</sup> Stănescu (2011: 16-17).

rather than Herodotus' Zalmoxis.<sup>81</sup> She also references the arrows that mortally wound Ovid in Sălceanu's tragedy,<sup>82</sup> and incorporates the love story with a local woman characteristic of the Romanian Ovidian tradition; her love story, however, becomes a mechanism for mutual understanding rather than simply another stage on the hero's quest for enlightenment. By recalling and incorporating the Romanian Ovidian tradition into her play, Stănescu's Ovid also embodies a reflection on the twentieth-century construction of Romanian identity.

### David Malouf and Christoph Ransmayr

Comparisons can be drawn between Horia's work and the Australian David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*,<sup>83</sup> a novel in which Ovid is also a victim of the power and spite of Augustus, and finally finds salvation away from the superstitious 'barbarians' of Tomis in the figure of a wild boy, 'the Child' (recall Horia's messiah), who teaches him the language of nature. Both Horia and Malouf share an image of the local barbarian languages as 'natural', reflecting the unsophisticated childlike concerns of the noble 'savages', and both authors present Ovid holding a condescending and romanticizing view of the 'other', only learning a new language in his personal search for a higher spiritual understanding. By contrast, in Stănescu, language learning is presented as the only route to understanding the 'other', and it is a mutual journey of shared understanding. Similarly, while Horia and Malouf paint the relationship between the imperial centre and the colonized periphery as a mutually exclusive dichotomy (following Ovid in his belief that he can be *either* Roman or barbarian, *either* a Latin speaker or a Getic speaker),<sup>84</sup> Stănescu uses her postcolonial perspective to create a sophisticated exploration of the dynamic relationship between centre and periphery and to show an emerging hybridity that disrupts the traditional hierarchical relationship. As in her reversioning of

---

<sup>81</sup> Hdt. 4.93-6.

<sup>82</sup> Stănescu (2011: 36).

<sup>83</sup> Matzner (2011); see also Nagle (1985). For a detailed placing of Malouf's novel in the history of Australian exile literature, see Grigorescu Pana (1996).

<sup>84</sup> *Pont.* 4.13.18, *Pont.* 4.14.55-6.

Jocasta, *For a Barbarian Woman* is thus a crucial work of Ovidian reception as, unlike earlier Romanian receptions, she is unapologetic for the ancient Romanians. She does not attempt to create a colonial 'noble savage' to redeem the Tomitians, but instead investigates the very power structures that perpetuate the notion of 'barbarians' in the eyes of the imperial self.

*God was Born in Exile* employed a perceived anti-Augustan strain in Ovid's exile poetry as a thinly-veiled indictment of the Romanian communist government; it is interesting to note that Christoph Ransmayr's reception of Ovid's exile *The Last World* (1988, in English 1990), a novel indebted to Horia in its depiction of Ovid as a victim of a totalitarian regime, was banned in Romania under Ceaușescu (an unedited version did not appear in the country until after Ceaușescu's execution). Stănescu, however, inverts the trope of Ovid-as-victim. In her play, Ovid is the puppet of imperialism accused of writing sincere letters of praise to Augustus,<sup>85</sup> consolidating Rome's status as the centre and source of power by the very act of writing. Although her Ovid exhibits a playful, at times even impishly tongue-in-cheek self-awareness of his future *fama* and mythologized status, due to the colonial and political implications of his letter-writing back to Rome Stănescu can excuse no irony.<sup>86</sup>

### **Stănescu looks back to Ovid**

Read from a postcolonial perspective, Ovid's account of the Scythian Tomitians as civilization's last line of defence against shaggy-haired trouser-wearing barbarism<sup>87</sup> is a deliberate act of 'othering' in its conscious allusions to earlier literary descriptions familiar to his audience from Propertius, Virgil and Horace.<sup>88</sup> While it is now generally accepted in classical scholarship that Ovid's

---

<sup>85</sup> On Ovid's sincerity or irony in his attitude toward Augustus, see Nagle (1980), Williams (1994), Barchiesi (1997), Hardie (2002), Claassen (2008), McGowan (2009), and Ingleheart (2010: 26-7). On the dangers of 'reading more' into Ovid's exile poetry see Casali (1997), and Barchiesi (2001: 85-6).

<sup>86</sup> Cohen (1990).

<sup>87</sup> *Tr.* 3.4.52.

<sup>88</sup> Propertius 3.16.13; Virgil, *Georgics* 3.349-383; Horace, *Odes* 3.24.9-24.

descriptions of Tomis are rhetorical hyperbole and are not to be taken seriously,<sup>89</sup> translations and commentaries continue to replicate without question or note the ideologically-loaded language of ‘barbarians’ and ‘tribes’ (hence Stănescu’s judgement of ‘stupid translations’).<sup>90</sup> Nor has the sceptical view of scholarship toward the factual element of Ovid’s descriptions of Tomis been reflected in popular works of Ovidian reception; as has been shown above, novels such as Ransmayr’s and Malouf’s simply repeat Ovid’s assessment of Tomis in their descriptions of the hostile climate and savage locals, further entrenching this now out-dated view in the minds of readers. Romanian authors such as Horia, Mincu, and Stănescu attempt to rescue Tomis from this commonly disseminated imperial viewpoint of fear and loathing, ‘writing back’ to Ovid by countering his description of the Black Sea coast as a frozen and barren landscape and thus counteracting the negative implications of this representation. For example, in direct opposition to the freezing conditions described at *Tr.* 3.2.8, 3.10.13-16 and *Pont.* 1.3.49-50, Stănescu has her lovers take a balmy evening stroll along the coast,<sup>91</sup> while Theo has fond memories of childhood holidays at Tomis learning how to build sandcastles with her father,<sup>92</sup> and the Muses are seen playing on the beach with buckets and spades.<sup>93</sup>

Stănescu directly voices her frustrations at the Western stereotype of Romania and earlier receptions of Ovid’s exile that have appropriated the poet’s local mythology and ‘othered’ the Romanian people in Theo’s angry words:

THEO A pretty American girl doing her PhD. Does she know anything about death, suffering, passion, exile? Does she know anything about leaving your country? About leaving your land whose history and secrets you haven’t had enough time to discover? Does she understand

---

<sup>89</sup> Pârvan (1926). See also Williams (1994: 5-8, 10), McGowan (2009: 148, 196), and Ingleheart (2010: 191-3).

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Gaertner (2005: 19-24); Ingleheart on *barbara* at *Tr.* 2.206 (2010: ad loc.) refers us to Dauge (1981: 164-6).

<sup>91</sup> Stănescu (2011: 47).

<sup>92</sup> Stănescu (2011: 12).

<sup>93</sup> Stănescu (2011: 19).



anything about leaving this Sea? About already missing its smell? She doesn't. How can she understand Ovid then? Or the Barbarian woman? She can't. Can she... ?<sup>94</sup>

Stănescu has stated in interviews that redressing the stereotypes of Romanian people and culture is part of her poetic mission. She notes how the Romanian view of Vlad III as a folk hero who saved Romania from the invading Ottoman Empire contrasts dramatically with the ghoulish Western view of Romania as the home of Transylvania and the vampire Dracula.<sup>95</sup> In Ransmayr's novel, for example, Ovid lives in the secluded and mountainous Trachila, perhaps punning on 'Dracula', and the Ovidian stories he chooses to include in his novel are suitably bloody;<sup>96</sup> even Ovid provided a grisly etymology for Tomis as the site where Medea dismembered her brother.<sup>97</sup> This attitude is alluded to in Stănescu's play when Theo drunkenly admonishes the American Rich with the words, 'Beware, Romanians are losers and vampires!';<sup>98</sup> 'losers' also reminding the audience of the Western media reports of Romania in the 1990s as a post-communist wasteland.

Through this intertextual web, Stănescu's play anchors itself firmly both in the history of Ovidian exilic reception and the Romanian tradition whilst also 'writing back' to it and daring to break free of the harmful narrative discourse the Romanian people seemed trapped in. Stănescu has an astute critical eye and is clearly well-versed in feminist and postcolonial literature, often writing with a knowing wink to the audience; we may cite her gentle mocking of the PhD student quoted above, or the following exchange between the Muses on Ovid's literary women:

EUXINA Oh, I loved the Barbarian woman, what was her name?

---

<sup>94</sup> Stănescu (2011: 64).

<sup>95</sup> Szymkowicz (2010).

<sup>96</sup> Michalopoulos (2011: 282 n27).

<sup>97</sup> *Tr.* 3.9.33-4; on the etymology of Tomis, see Nawotka (1994) and Ingleheart (2011: 3n7).

<sup>98</sup> Stănescu (2011: 45).

VERBA Tristia. She was no joke that gal!<sup>99</sup>

It is this incorporation of a critical perspective within a fictional narrative that is the hallmark of Stănescu's work, and is her unique contribution to Ovidian reception.

### **The politics of language**

The encoding of ideology in Ovid's exile poetry has been addressed in scholarship in the important works of Kennedy and Habinek, which explored more fully the political implications of Ovid's depiction of the Tomitians.<sup>100</sup> Influenced by poststructuralist and feminist discussions of discourses of power, they demonstrated that the characteristics of Latin literature can be attributed to its production by and for an elite in whose interest it was to control discourse. Through language regulation – that is, by establishing a prestige dialect of Latin at the top of a linguistic hierarchy - Latin literature validated other forms of social control and authority such as patriarchy, culture, and religion, and hierarchically regulated class, behaviours, ethnicities, languages, and land. By controlling what it is possible to read, the elite controls what it is possible to think, and Ovid played an integral role in Augustan literary - and thus discourse - production.

Read like this, the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* serve Rome's imperial mission by perpetuating disdain for non-Roman peoples through their depiction of the Tomitians.<sup>101</sup> This both reinforces the need for Rome's 'civilizing' project and re-asserts Augustus' threatened authority in the northern extreme of the Empire;<sup>102</sup> indeed Horace makes the case for the 'civilizing' benefits of literature to Augustus in *Ep.* 2.1, albeit in a domestic context.

---

<sup>99</sup> Stănescu (2011: 9-10).

<sup>100</sup> Kennedy (1992), Habinek (1993, 1998).

<sup>101</sup> Said (1994:67).

<sup>102</sup> *Pannonia est [...] domanda*, *Tr.* 2.225; Pannonia is modern-day Transylvania. Also Horace, *Odes* 4.15.21-4. On this reference to Pannonia at *Tr.* 2.225 undermining Augustus' imperial project, see Ingleheart (2010: ad loc.).

On a more personal level, the work of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss informs a crucial reading for a psychological insight into the exiled Ovid's concerns about the loss of his identity; in the pleasingly-titled *Tristes Tropiques* he argues that there is no real 'barbarian other',<sup>103</sup> but that the construction of an 'other' is necessary for the maintenance of one's own identity and sense of 'self' (the title *Tristes Tropiques* is consciously recalled in Marie Darrieussecq's French translations of Ovid's exile poetry, *Tristes Pontiques*;<sup>104</sup> Darrieussecq also notes the absurdity of learning 'the way in which we, the Gauls, were viewed as barbarians' by the Romans).<sup>105</sup> As in Lévi-Strauss, by deconstructing the discourse of the 'other' created in Ovid's exile poetry Stănescu's *For a Barbarian Woman* interrogates the mechanisms of imperial ideology and investigates the extent to which each of us, as users of a dominant language, is implicated in this ideology.

Stănescu's concerns with language as power are explicitly signalled from the opening lines of the play, in which the Black Sea says that she speaks English now and gave up Latin a long time ago, changing languages with the empires (pp. 3-4). In an imagined conversation with her dead father, Theo tells him that she is studying 'English and Latin. Two powerful languages, two languages of power' (p. 20).<sup>106</sup> Ovid is characterized in the play as self-assured both in his superior status as a Roman ('I've never EVER had a slave who responded like that to me and got to live afterwards', p. 24) and the superiority of the Latin language:

---

<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Dauge (1981) argues that if there had been no 'barbarians', the Romans would have had to invent them.

<sup>104</sup> Darrieussecq (2008: 11).

<sup>105</sup> Cox and Theodorakopoulos (2013); from France, Darrieussecq is able to view this account of the Gauls as 'amusing'; the difference in power on the world stage between France and Romania (and as reflected in contemporary discourse) allows this liberty.

<sup>106</sup> On Latin as a postclassical marker of power, see Waquet (2001); also Hardwick and Gillespie (2007), and Greenwood (2011). On English as a 'civilizing' tool in colonies of the British Empire see, e.g., wa Thiong'o (1986).

OVID I really wish you could understand my language. Its subtleties. The play on words. The cultural references. The jokes. The wit. The poetry.<sup>107</sup>

Ovid thus represents the imperial self who believes he is bringing civilization to the colonies and who never doubts that to learn Latin would be a good thing for Tristia to do.<sup>108</sup> We also meet the Muse Verba, who can be found reading an 'Oxford Dictionary' [sic]<sup>109</sup> and aptly comments on matters of language and power, spouting neologisms and modern turns of phrase which represent the changes of language that accompany the changes of empires. As an encoding of discourse, a dictionary can be interpreted as inherently ideological, exemplified by the fact that dictionaries feature frequently in feminist writing to highlight the power of logocentrism to impose meaning and create narrow definitions/ discourse; for example, in Anne Carson's translation of Catullus, *Nox*,<sup>110</sup> and Josephine Balmer's translation of Ovid's exile poems, *The Word for Sorrow*.<sup>111</sup>

In a fresh feminist take on Ovid's oft-quoted and hoped-for eternal *fama* at the close of the *Metamorphoses*, the Muses Ponta and Euxina bet on the likelihood of either Ovid or Tristia being 'better known by posterity';<sup>112</sup> Verba offers a Foucauldian analysis of the power of Latin over the Getic dialect:

That's [a] stupid [bet]. We both know it's gonna be Ovid. Roman civilisation takes care of memory slash history.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Stănescu (2011: 14).

<sup>108</sup> On teaching classics in colonial contexts see Goff (2005).

<sup>109</sup> Stănescu (2011: 38, 40, 41).

<sup>110</sup> Carson (2010: passim).

<sup>111</sup> Balmer (2009: xiii-xix, 4, 6, 21, 28, 31, 42, 45-47).

<sup>112</sup> Stănescu (2011: 11).

<sup>113</sup> Stănescu (2011: 26).

But she also concludes finally that she can ‘make the Barbarian woman famous’, which ‘should be enough given the circumstances. The differences in their birth and upbringing’ (pp. 26-7).<sup>114</sup> In Stănescu’s reading, Ovid’s *fama* is conditional upon the enduring power of the Roman Empire and the Latin language, as it is for most careful readers of Ovid’s Augustanism,<sup>115</sup> but the negative implications of this are here made explicit. Again, Stănescu deconstructs the notion of poetic art and political authority as a dichotomous relationship to show the dynamic interplay and indebtedness between the two. This reading is further emphasized by the dream that Ovid relates to Tristia, in which he is tasked by Augustus with ‘civilizing’ the ‘Barbarians’ by teaching them Latin (quoted as the epigraph to this article). In this scene, language is viewed as another weapon to be used in colonization, and the supposed superiority of the Latin language is used to justify Rome’s expansion. The reference by Caesar to ‘the wit and beauty of the Latin language’ directly recalls our first meeting with Ovid in the play, where he is seen wishing that Tristia could understand ‘the wit’ and ‘the beauty’ of Latin (p. 14). Yet the dream also shows us Ovid’s development as a character and his growing recognition of the ‘other’ in his horrified protestations to Caesar (p. 48). The dream forces Ovid to re-assess an earlier conversation with Tristia in which he ‘explains’ the categories of slave and master to her:

OVID I don’t think you really understand the words master-slave. (*pointing at him*) Master.

(*pointing at her*) Slave. MASTER tells SLAVE what to do. Not vice versa.

TRISTIA We borrowed these words from Latin. We didn’t have them twenty years ago.

Slave. Master. Funny words.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Stănescu (2011: 26-27).

<sup>115</sup> For example, Galinsky (1996: 261-66), Gibson (1999), and Hardie (2002).

<sup>116</sup> Stănescu (2011: 24); ‘twenty years’ alluding to the twenty years of the postcommunist period 1989 – 2009 when the play was written (Mihăilă 2010: 304).

## Conclusion

*I am [...] interested in [creating] vibrant theatrical plays about something bigger than the ordinary commerce of emotion, plays that make larger/ bolder comments on socio-political issues, existential turmoil, the irony of history, the global world and its flaws. Yes, big words that might sound bombastic. But if theatre doesn't fill [these words] with meaning and depth, politics will never fail to fill them with rhetoric and demagogy.*

(Stănescu, quoted in Szymkowicz 2010)

There has been a recent trend in scholarship documenting the 'democratic turn' of classics;<sup>117</sup> but if we wish to claim that Latin and Greek are no longer elitist, or a privilege of the (male) elite alone, we cannot do so without interrogating its past as a tool of empire. Stănescu's play forms a vital part of this interrogation, challenging the encoded ideology within Ovid's exile poetry whilst reinvigorating the ancient text for new audiences and old readers alike.

*For a Barbarian Woman* is essentially a power discourse, accentuated by the concerns around and plays with language, and using Ovid's poetry to open discourse and to interrogate what it means to repeat the word 'barbarian'. Stănescu has created a sophisticated exploration of the relationship between periphery and centre, constructing a dynamic and complex dialogue between two languages, cultures, and identities - and demonstrated the necessity of recognising it as such. The space of exile is not a simple 'recentering' of power; it creates a new space, an 'in between', a 'no man's land'.<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> The phrase 'democratic turn' is taken from the subtitle of Hardwick and Harrison's edited volume *Classics in the Modern World* (2013); see also the on-going research project 'Classics and Class' <<http://www.classicsandclass.info>> [accessed 24 September 2014] and the Mayor of London's 'Love Latin' scheme (in association with the Iris Project) <<http://irisonline.org.uk/index.php/component/content/article/7-news/53-london-mayor-launches-love-latin-scheme>> [accessed 24 September 2014]).

<sup>118</sup> See n45 for the feminist significance of the 'no man's land'.

## References

- B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (eds), *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).
- J. Balmer, *Sappho: Poems and Fragments* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1992).
- *Chasing Catullus: Poems, Translations & Transgressions* (Tarnset: Bloodaxe Books, 2004).
- *The Word for Sorrow* (Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2009).
- A. Barchiesi, *The Poet and the Prince: Ovid and Augustan Discourse* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997).
- *Speaking Volumes: Narrative and Intertext in Ovid and Other Latin Poets* (London: Duckworth, 2001).
- R. Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. by A. Lavers and C. Smith (New York: Cape Editions, 1967).
- S. Bassnett, 'Writing in No Man's Land: Questions of Gender and Translation', *Ilha do Desterro* 28 (1992), pp. 63-73.
- S. Bassnett and H. Trivedi (eds), *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).
- H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
- L. Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, trans. by J. C. Brown (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2001), first published in 1997 by Humanitas.
- L. Cahoon, 'The Bed as Battlefield: Erotic Conquest and Military Metaphor in Ovid's *Amores*', *Transactions of the American Philological Society* 118 (1988), pp. 293-307.
- A. Carson, *Nox* (New York: New Directions, 2010).
- S. Casali, '*Quaerenti plura legendum*: on the necessity of reading more in Ovid's exile poetry', *Ramus* 26(1) (1997), pp. 80-112.
- P. G. Christensen, 'Vintila Horia's treatment of Ovid's religious conversion in *Dieu est né en exil*', *Journal of the American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences* 20 (1995), pp. 171-85.
- J.-M. Claassen, *Ovid Revisited: The Poet in Exile* (London: Duckworth, 2008).
- E. E. Cohen, 'Sexual Abuse and Sexual Rights: Slaves' Erotic Experience at Athens and Rome', in T. K. Hubbard (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2014), pp. 184-98.
- R. Cohen, 'Author Updates Ovid Impertinently', *The New York Times*, 10 May 1990, <<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/05/10/arts/author-updates-ovid-impertinently.html>> [accessed 13 January 2014]
- M. Cosnay, *Des metamorphoses* (Devesset: Cheyne éditeur, 2012).
- F. Cox, and E. Theodorakopoulos (eds), *Practitioners Voices in Classical Reception: Special Issue 2013: Contemporary Women Writers*, <<http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/pvcrs/2013>> [accessed 10 September 2013]
- L. Curran, 'Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*', *Arethusa* 11(1978), pp. 213-241.
- M. Darrieussecq, *Tristes Pontiques* (Paris: P.O.L. éditeur, 2008).
- Y. A. Dauge, *Le barbare: recherches sur la conception romaine de la barbare et de la civilisation* (Brussels: Latomus, 1981).
- S. Deacy and K. F. Pierce (eds), *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (London: Duckworth, 2002).
- G. Deleuze, and F. Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by D. Polan (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
- M. Denton, 'Interview with Saviana Stănescu (indietheaternow podcast)', <<http://indietheaternow.com/Playwright/saviana-Stănescu>> [accessed 12 August 2013]
- P. duBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

- J. Duncan, 'The (R)evolution of Romanian Theatre', in D. Barnett and A. Shelton (eds), *Theatre and Performance in Eastern Europe: The Changing Scene* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2008), pp. 85-94.
- J. C. Eisner, 'Introduction: A Writer in R/evolution', in S. Stănescu, *The New York Plays: Waxing West, Lenin's Shoe, Aliens with Extraordinary Skills* (South Gate: NoPassport Press: 2010), pp. 7-37.
- H. Foley, 'Bad Women: Gender Politics in Late Twentieth-Century Performance and Revision of Greek Tragedy', in E. Hall, F. Macintosh and A. Wrigley (eds), *Dionysus Since '69: Greek Tragedy at the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 77-111.
- H. F. Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945).
- K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretative Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- M.-K. Gamel, 'From *Thesmophoriazousai* to *The Julie Thesmo Show*: Adaptation, Performance, Reception', *The American Journal of Philology* 123(3) (2002), pp. 465-499.
- B. Gibson, 'Ovid on Reading: Reading Ovid. Reception in Ovid *Tristia* II', *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999), pp. 19-37.
- S. Gilbert and S. Gubar (eds), *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century. Volume 1: The War of the Words* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).
- Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. by P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- B. Godard, 'Theorizing Feminist Discourse/ Translation', in S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere (eds), *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990), pp. 87-96.
- B. Goff, *Classics and Colonialism* (London: Duckworth, 2005).
- B. K. Gold, "'But Ariadne was Never There in the First Place": Finding the Female in Roman Poetry', in N. S. Rabinowitz and A. Richlin (eds), *Feminist Theory and the Classics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 75-101.
- E. Greene, 'Travesties of Love: Violence and Voyeurism in Ovid's *Amores* 1.7', *Classical World* 92 (1999), pp. 409-418.
- E. Greenwood, 'Between Colonialism and Independence: Eric Williams and the Uses of Classics in Trinidad in the 1950s and 1960s', in L. Hardwick and C. Stray (eds), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), pp. 98-112.
- I. Grigorescu Pana, *The Tomis Complex: Exile and Eros in Australian Literature* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1996).
- J. Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', in E. Barba (ed.), *Towards a Poor Theatre: Jerzy Grotowski* (New York: Routledge, 2002), first published in 1968 by Odin Teatret Forlag, not paginated.
- T. N. Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- P. Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- L. Hardwick and S. Harrison (eds), *Classics in the Modern World: A 'Democratic Turn'?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- L. Hardwick and C. Gillespie (eds), *Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- J. Hemker, 'Rape and the Founding of Rome', *Helios* 12 (1985), pp. 41-47.
- C. Herrmann, *Les Voleuses de langue*, (Paris: Des femmes, 1976).
- S. Hinds, 'Booking the Return Trip: Ovid and *Tristia* 1', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 31 (1985), pp. 13-32.
- 'Black-Sea Latin, Du Bellay, and the Barbarian Turn: *Tristia*, Regrets, Translations', in J. Ingleheart (ed.), *Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile After Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 59-83.
- V. Horia, *God was Born in Exile: Ovid at Tomi* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1961).



- M. Horn, 'Deconstructing the 'Baddest Mom' of Greek Tragedy', *The New York Times*, 22 February 2005, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/22/theater/reviews/22roun.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/22/theater/reviews/22roun.html?_r=0)> [accessed 13 January 2014]
- T. Hughes, *Tales From Ovid* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).
- P. Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986).
- J. Ingleheart, 'The transformations of the Actaeon myth: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3 and Ted Hughes' *Tales from Ovid*', in R. Rees (ed.), *Ted Hughes and the Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 199-215.
- *A Commentary on Ovid, Tristia, Book 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- 'Ovid's *scriptae puellae*: Perilla as Poetic and Political Fiction in *Tristia* 3.7', *Classical Quarterly* 62: 3 (2012), pp. 227-241.
- L. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. by C. Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
- P. Joplin, 'The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours', *Stanford Literary Review* 1 (1984), pp. 25-53.
- 'Ritual work on human flesh: Livy's Lucretia and the rape of the body politic', *Helios* 17 (1990), pp. 51-70.
- G. Karsai, G. Klaniczay, D. Movrin and E. Olechowska (eds), *Classics and Communism: Greek and Latin behind the Iron Curtain* (Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, 2013).
- A. Keith, 'Corpus eroticum: Elegiac Poetics and Elegiac *Puellae* in Ovid's *Amores*', *Classical World* 88 (1994), pp. 27-40.
- D. Kennedy, 'Augustan' and 'Anti-Augustan': Reflections on Terms of Reference', in A. Powell (ed.), *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1992), pp. 26-58.
- C. Kramtsch, 'The Privilege of the Nonnative Speaker', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 112: 3 (1997), pp. 359-369.
- C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955).
- A Latin Dictionary*, ed. by C. T. Lewis and C. Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- M. McGowan, *Ovid in Exile: Power and Poetic Redress in the Tristia and Epistulae Ex Ponto*, (Leiden: Brill, 2009).
- S. Matzner, 'Tomis Writes Back: Politics of Peripheral Identity in David Malouf's and Vintilă Horia's Re-narrations of Ovidian Exile', in J. Ingleheart (ed.), *Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile After Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 307-321.
- C. N. Michalopoulos, 'Jane Alison, *The Love Artist*: Love in Exile or Exile in Love?', in J. Ingleheart (ed.), *Two Thousand Years of Solitude: Exile After Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 259-273
- R. Mihăilă, 'Saviana Stănescu and a Postcolonial Reading of Ovid', *Ovid, Myth and (Literary) Exile* 34 (2010), pp. 299-307.
- A. Miteșcu, 'Ovid's presence in Romanian culture', *Romanian Review* 26 (1972), pp. 54-57.
- B. R. Nagle, *The Poetics of Exile: Program and Polemic in the Tristia and Epistulae ex Ponto of Ovid* (Brussels: Latomus, 1980).
- 'Ovid: A Poet Between Two Novelists (Vintila Horia, *God was Born in Exile*, and David Malouf, *An Imaginary Life*)', *Helios* 12 (1985), pp. 127-37.
- K. Nawotka, 'Tomos, Ovid, and the Name Tomis', in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History, Vol. 7* (Brussels: Latomus, 1994), pp. 406-15.
- Z. M. Packman, 'Call it Rape: A Motif in Roman Comedy and its Suppression in English-Speaking Publications', *Helios* 20 (1993), pp. 42-55.
- M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).
- A. Richlin, 'Reading Ovid's Rapes', *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 158-179.
- S. Rushdie, 'The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance', *The Times*, 3 July 1982.

- E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994).
- P. B. Salzman-Mitchell, *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image, and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005).
- C. Segal, 'Philomela's Web and the Pleasures of the Text: Reader and Violence in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid', in I. J. F. De Jong and J. P. Sullivan (eds), *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 257-80.
- S. Simon, 'Translating and interlingual creation in the contact zone: Border writing in Quebec', in S. Bassnett and H. Trivedi (eds), *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 58-74.
- G. C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 271-313.
- G. C. Spivak, V. Chernetsky, N. Condee, D. Kujundžić and H. Ram (eds), 'Are We Post-Colonial? A Round Table', *Annual Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL)*, Washington, December 2005.
- S. Stănescu, *Diary of a Clone: Five Poems*, trans. by S. Stănescu, A. J. Sorkin, J. Rotescu, A. Sibişan and L. Bleoca (New York: Meeting Eyes Bindery, 2003).
- *Google Me!* (Bucharest and New York: Editura Vinea, 2006).
- *(r)EVOLUTION (Flagstories and other personal histories): NY through an immigrant I*, London Roundhouse, 23 November 2009.
- *The New York Plays: Waxing West, Lenin's Shoe, Aliens with Extraordinary Skills* (South Gate: NoPassport Press: 2010).
- *For a Barbarian Woman* (New York: unpublished, 2011).
- 'A bit of hi/story, 18 January 2012', <<http://www.indietheaternow.com/Play/for-a-barbarian-woman>> [accessed 12 August 2013]
- 'Note From the Author, 2 November 2012', <<http://www.indietheaternow.com/Play/waxing-west>> [accessed 12 August 2013]
- *Back to Ithaca: A Contemporary Odyssey* (New York: unpublished, 2013).
- <<http://backtoithaca.blogspot.co.uk>> [accessed 30 April 2014]
- 'Lucrând cu Richard Schechner: locastele', *Concept* 5-6 (2013), pp. 25-39.
- S. Stănescu and R. Schechner, *YokastaS* (New York: unpublished, 2003).
- *YokastaS Redux* (New York: unpublished, 2005).
- B. Stevens, '*Per gestum res est significanda mihi*: Ovid and Language in Exile', *Classical Philology* 104(2) (2009), pp. 162-183.
- A. Stewart, 'Rape', in E. D. Reeder (ed.), *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 74-90.
- P. Stoker, *Elizabeth Cook's Achilles: Women's Writing of Classical Reception and Feminism* (MPhil thesis, University of Birmingham, 2012), <<http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3443/>> [accessed 17 December 2012]
- A. Szymkowitz, '1 Interview Playwrights Part 258: Saviana Stănescu, 15 September 2010', <<http://aszym.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/i-interview-playwrights-part-258.html>> [accessed 12 August 2013]
- E. Theodorakopoulos, 'Catullus and Lesbia Translated in Women's Historical Novels', in L. Hardwick and S. Harrison (eds), *Classics in the Modern World: A 'Democratic Turn'?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 275-286.
- Z. M. Torlone, *Russia and the Classics: Poetry's Foreign Muse* (London: Duckworth, 2009).
- (ed.), *Classical Receptions Journal Special Issue: Classical Receptions in Central and Eastern European Poetry* 5: 3 (2013).
- F. Waquet, *Latin, or, the Empire of a Sign: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, trans. by J. Howe (London: Verso, 2001).
- N. wa Thiong'o, *N. Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1986).

- A. L. Wheeler, *Ovid: Tristia, Ex Ponto* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), first published in 1924, revised by G. P. Goold.
- G. Williams, *Banished Voices: Readings in Ovid's Exile Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- M. Wyke, 'Mistress and Metaphor in Augustan elegy', *Helios* 16 (1989), pp. 25-47.
- 'Written Women: Propertius' *scripta puella*', in *The Roman Mistress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 46-77.
- 'Reading Female Flesh: Ovid *Amores* 3.1', in *The Roman Mistress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 115-54.
- F. Zeitlin, 'Dionysus in '69', in E. Hall, F. Macintosh and A. Wrigley (eds), *Dionysus Since '69: Greek Tragedy at the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 49-75.
- T. Ziolkowski, *Ovid and the Moderns* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005).
- 'Ovid in the Twentieth Century', in P. Knox (ed.), *A Companion to Ovid* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), pp. 455-468.