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OID'S POLYPHONIC CHARACTER AND HIS FAILURE

One of the famous representatives of the "Golden Youth", its heart and soul – Publius Ovidius Naso was highly gifted. He was handsome, quite well-off, he never served as an official and so, he could, as Quintilianus says, "Freely use his gift"¹ and unlimited time. Ovid was among the recognized poets: Tibullus, Propertius, despite the difference in age-Horace. Ovid aspired to knowledge at rhetorical schools in Rome. It taught him the rhetorical-declamatory style. At the same time he was well accepted among the relatives of Princes, even in the circle of his granddaughter – Julia. But, though the poet did not lose the opportunity to sing Augustus' praises, he was not a preacher of a new regime, as Virgil – the apologist of the politics of Octavius, was. The latter dedicated his poetic talent to the works of Octavius, as the interpretation of the realization of the great historic mission and saw the prosperity of Rome, called the "Golden Century" in the revival of the best traditions of the remote past. When we speak about Ovid, beside Virgil, we must remember the second poet – Horace, but conditionally called of an official tendency. The talented poet did not support Augustus willingly, but from time to time, he praised him, notwithstanding his republican past. Virgil, like Horace, was a safe figure for Princes.

Like world literature and literary criticism, Russian classical literature was extremely well familiar with the talented representatives of Augustus epoch and often referred to it giving certain evaluation. The famous poet – Pushkin called Horace a "clever hypocrite", a "singer of Augustus" and he liked his poetry so much, that he translated his ode that was dedicated to Pompeus Varus. Prominent critic N. Chernishevski estimates him as a "form" poet, "fastidious", but, at the same time, he rejects "submission".² If we estimate the

¹ Quintilianus. *The Institutio Oratoria*, 90, X.

² N. Chernishevski. *Complete works*. V. IV, 508 (In the Russian language).

life of Ovid from the retrospective point of view, we can conclude, that unlike the above – mentioned "pen brothers", he was a great thinker and a real interpreter of the events. He confronts the norms of life made by Princes and by means of his great talent he shows his own opinion about the amorous relations between people. Ovid managed to make the main motives of his works common to mankind that made the readers the images of the society. We must also mention that he brought not serious motives, flippant, thoughtless, doltish characters in his poetry. So, he rejects moral purity, the rules of pure, immaculate life and confronts to Princes. That was why the relations between Augustus and Ovid ended in such a tragic way for the latter. Publius Ovidius Naso as Ovidius Drimba calls him remained "the poet of Rome and Tomis"³ in the memory of posterity. Here is meant, that Octavius Augustus exiled him to the shore of the Black Sea, to far cold Tomis. The last fact became an actual problem for scientists and researchers of all the epochs. The certain part of mankind has had a desire to solve this item for a long time and wants to find those real reasons that made Augustus get rid of the dangerous poet and punish him. The research on this theme made by Iamze Gagua in the Georgian language was added⁴ to the scientific researches published in different countries. To her mind, the reason for Ovid's exile and punishment was his poems. Many researchers of classical philology have the same opinions and not only representatives of the researchers, but also those poets, who admire the Roman poet and regret his exile. Sufficient to mention Alexander Pushkin, who speaks about Ovidius Naso with honour. In "Evgeni Onegin" he says that the Roman poet was opposed⁵ because of his frivolous poems. Pushkin's hero – Evgeni, besides other knowledge, knew Roman poetry; he was a worshipper of Ovid "tender passion". Pushkin says that Ovid ended his life so terribly because of the description of such kind of feelings. We must mention that, unlike Cicero, who suffered the betrayal of Augustus terribly and even thought to enter his palace secretly and commit suicide to provoke the ghosts of vengeance⁶ against Princes, Ovid accused only himself. We do not meet a reproach towards the Emperor anywhere. Though he was taken away from the marvellous society, excellent people.

It is known, that Ovid confessed the credo of his life: we always want something forbidden. If we look through his life and poetic works superficially, we shall see that his ideas had their rhythm in this echo of his soul, i.e.

³ Ovidius Drimba. Ovid a poet of Rome and Tomis, Bucharest, 1967 (In the Russian language).

⁴ I. Gagua. Ambivalent in the works of Ovidius and the politics of Augustus. Doctoral dissertation (manuscript), Tbilisi, 2004 (In the Georgian language).

⁵ A. Pushkin. Evgeni Onegin, chapter VIII (In the Russian language).

⁶ S. Utchenko. Cicero and his time. Moscow, 1972, 351 (In the Russian language).

wanting something forbidden, what was unacceptable for the regime of Octavius. It seems that Ovid did not know with whom he had to do. Even Cicero, oppressed by Octavius, calls him "divine". The senate presented Octavius with an honorable name – "Augustus", that comes from the verb "Augere" and means "raised by the Gods", "bringing kindness for those who praised their government".

We must mention that Augustus, unlike Ovid was brought up in a very strict atmosphere and under constant attention.⁷ Another circumstance must be taken into consideration, as Plutarch says, the fame of Ceasar Gaius Julius, even of the dead one, helped his friends greatly, and those who became the inheritors of his name, turned from weak boys into the first Romans.⁸ The owner of the famous name, taken from the inheritance, having endured so much misfortune, could not stand any resistance from anybody, even from popular Ovid. It is natural, that the Emperor had pretension towards him. In "Divine Augustus' matters" Octavius tells us, that he gathered the army by his decision and own sources. It brought freedom to his government, that was in the hands of conspiratorial gangs.⁹

Augustus tried to behave properly and at the some time modestly. He wanted to return for spoilt Rome by luxury the morality and image of the old Republic. He issued the rules to strengthen the family and root out immorality, dissoluteness. As it is known, he did not spare even the members of his family and spread the rules on them. Of course Ovid could not survive from his rage. I do not think, it is right, when M. Schanz talks about the motive of incest and brings Ovid in this context.¹⁰

Besides dominating challenging character of love motive in his poetry I think, one of the main reasons for the poet's exile must be historical. It is a fact, the reason for Naso's exile remains the secret of the history of Rome and the white spots in the history of multinational world's people, we must discuss it not only in the context of the works of the poet, but also by foreseeing his encirclement.

It becomes more interesting and real, if we take into consideration the fact, that Ovid mentions the reason for his exile nowhere. We can suppose everything from the analysis of his works. If the poet, at the beginning of "Tristia"¹¹ says, he was punished because of his poems, then he talks about

⁷ Nicolas Damascius. About the life of Augustus and his up-bringing, 1960, № 4, 114, IV.

⁸ Plutarch, Brutus, L VII (IV).

⁹ The affairs of divine Augustus, edited by S. Utchenko, Moscow, 1962, P. 527 (In the Russian language).

¹⁰ Geschichte der Römischen Litteratur, von M.Schanz, München, 1911, VIII, II, 1.

¹¹ Ovid, Tristia, II, 7.

the accident, that brought him much harm.¹² In the second chapter he claims that the accident was the reason for his punishment.¹³ In the "Letters from Ponto" he doubts whether to name or not the reasons of his mistake,¹⁴ but fear makes him withdraw, as he wants to avoid the rage of Princeps and he leaves the possibility of pardoning him. When speaking about the poet, another thing remains impenetrable and unsolved, there was a serious, important reason, that made Ovid's fate turn backwards and I want to mention one of the events of Ovid up-to-date epoch. We must stress not only the help of Julia in love affairs by the poet, who unlike Augustus, saw the moral norms differently, but also that secret conspiracy, which meant to make Agrippa Postumus free. If we pay attention to that fact, how carefully Ovid handles the possibility of revealing the secret, we can conclude, that the reason for his exile is connected with the name of Agrippa Postumus. The reason for making this matter confidential and keeping it for a long time, becomes clear. The mystification of the exile reason makes me think about the above-mentioned circumstance. The history has brought us the information, that Augustus thought about reconciling with his grandson. If it had happened Ovid would have had opportunity to come back to Rome. In fact, there was no accusation of the poet, made by the Emperor, nothing threatened his life, and nobody touched his property.

Michael von Albrecht expresses the following viewpoints about the reasons for Ovid's exile: "Our poet claims that the reason is generally known to everybody, but cannot be declared. He hints that he has seen something forbidden – it is not explicit whether he means Julia Junior's lovemaking or his attempt to make Agrippa Postum heir of Augustus' throne".¹⁵

We can, therefore, conclude that the scholar does not give preference to either of his presumed reasons.

So, discussing the events connected with Publius Ovidius Naso this way, gives us the opportunity to make sure, how closely interconnected are the historic and literature facts and a man whatever great person he is, is a toy in the hands of the omnipotent fate. To confirm the fact that Ovid is great, it is enough to remember the words of academician A.Losev: "Ovid together with Homer, is the greatest poet of all times, who represents the main source of acquainting wide society with antique mythology".¹⁶

¹² idid, II, 89.

¹³ idid, II, 122.

¹⁴ Epistolae ex Ponto, II, 2, 55.

¹⁵ М. фон Альбрехт. История римской литературы. Перевод с немецкого А. И. Любжина. Москва, 2002, 863.

¹⁶ A. Losev, G. Sonkina, A. Takho-Godi, N. Timofeeva, N. Cherjomukhina. The Antique Literature. Moscow, 1963, 308 (In the Russian language).