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## The Colors of Exile

*Abstract: This study deals with the inventory and the analysis of the color terms in Ovid's exile poems, with the aim to determine their function and their symbolical meanings. I found two categories of color terms: one which represents Rome and another one which represents the exile. From a linguistic point of view as well as from a poetic one, there is a great difference between these two categories that our study tries to discuss.*

*Key-words: color, exile, Rome, Scythia, antithesis, darkness*

*Saepe ego digestos uolui numerare colores,*

*nec potui: numero copia maior erat.*

„I often wished to tally the colours set there,

But I couldn't, there were too many to count.”

(*Fasti*, 5, 213; translation by A. S. Kline, 2004)

These verses, written by Ovid in the fifth book of *Fasti*, prompted us take on the issue of color names used by the poet in the works written during his exile, given that the six *Fasti* books, as well as his Tomis exile epistles, *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, are considered by their creator entirely different from the early works characterized by *Musa iocosa*. The main purpose of this paper is to outline the range of color names used in these poems, and to find their symbolic values. From the beginning, we must state that, inevitably, we are to deal with two categories of symbolic values: common values as interpreted by any Roman and symbolic values

added by the poetic genius of Ovid. We will always refer to the color palette of *Fasti* as a term of comparison, considering that this work represents **Rome**, while others are a **paradigm of exile**.

## 1. The inventory of terms used to describe colors in the works of exile

We shall begin by examining the inventory of words designating the color names. This is a poetic work, where such terms may well be used as ornamental epithets, however there are not many to be found. Upon making an inventory, we have found only within the five books of *Tristia* 61 adjectives which do not necessarily symbolize the actual color (as *cruentus*, *cycneus*, *eburnus*, *fumidus*, *marmoreus*, *nitidus*, *niueus*, *pallidus*, *sanguineus*, *Serenus*, *sordidus*, *squalidus*). The numbers are comparable to those found in the six books of *Fasti*, where there are 40 adjectives which do not symbolize the color proper (as *aureus*, *auratus*, *inauratus*, *argenteus*, *aeneus*, *aenatus* etc.) The scenery in *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, like the one in *Fasti* is colored in white, red, yellow, green, black and dark blue. In short, so poor a color range tends to be associated with Ovid and to the subject matter, that we could assume he did not relate to it enough in order to inspire him to use his whole talent. This is applicable for both *Fasti* and for his works of exile. But the important work of Jacques André, *Étude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine*, reveals that the chromatic vocabulary of Latin is in no way inferior to that of the Greeks; however one must not ignore the fact that it was developed mainly in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., *i.e.* after Ovid's death. Moreover, in our opinion, the poet compensates superbly by using a multitude of terms to name the same color.

## 2. Colors

### 2.1. White

To indicate the color white, Ovid uses the words: *albus*, *candidus*, *canens*, *canus* (a beautiful lexical family), *cycneus*, *eburneus*, *marmoreus*, *niueus*, in addition to which he also uses verbs belonging to the same lexical family or phrases that suggest this color: *candor*, *canities*. A special quality of white is the color

gray (*canus*<sup>1</sup>), which Ovid uses with its own meaning to indicate: human hair (the poet speaks of *canitiem meam*).

On the other hand, in his poetry of exile, he speaks of the *cana absinthia*<sup>2</sup> (Tr. V, 13, 21-22: *Cana<sup>3</sup> prius gelido desint absinthia Ponto, / et careat dulci Trinacris Hybla thymo* “Sooner would pale wormwood be missing from icy Pontus, or Sicilian Hybla lack its sweet-scented thyme”), in order to evoke the flora of Italy, and the *canas aristas* (Tr., IV, 6, 11-12: *tempus et in canas semen producit aristas, / et ne sint tristi poma sapore cavet* “time ripens the seed into white ears of wheat, and takes care that the fruits do not taste sour”), to metaphorically suggest the passage of time ripening and softening everything, even – as he was hoping – the hatred of Caesar.

Like most people in countries with a warm climate, the Romans are receptive to the contrast between matte and bright rather than colors themselves. Thus they distinguish *albus*, matte white and *candidus*, shimmering white; *ater*, matte black, and *niger*, shimmering black. Critics have found the same characteristic in Ovid’s poems, when referring to the color red (*ruber* and *rutilus*, *rubens*), an opposition which can be used only partially with white, and never with black.

**The temples and altars of the gods** are bright white in these poems (*candidus* - 11 occurrences) (Tr. III, 1, 59-60 *Inde tenore pari gradibus sublimia celsis / ducor ad intonsi candida templa dei* “Then I was led up the high stairway’s even steps, to the sublime, shining temple of unshorn Apollo”); **the days** counter the nights, especially on the day of imperial forgiveness (Tr. II, 1, 141-142 *sed solet interdum fieri placabile numen: / nube solet pulsa candidus ire dies* “but a god’s sometimes known to be appeased: it’s known for clouds to scatter, the day grow bright”); but also the horns, the round shape of the cylinders of the *uolumina*, in contrast with the

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<sup>1</sup> J. André separates *canus* and its family, taking into account the specific connection it makes between color and age (i.e. white-old) classifying it under grey (), admitting however that the meaning tends to shift towards „white”: *Étude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine* (Paris, 1949), 64-69.

<sup>2</sup> J. André (*op.cit.*, p. 65) believes that in Latin there are only three plants with a foliage of a well defined silver grey, the willow, the poplar and the olive tree.

<sup>3</sup> The privileged place of the main attribute of absinth, its white color, at the head of the phrase, does not seem accidental: the poet would like to see the white leaves of his homeland instead of the eternal white of the frozen landscape.

mourning revealed in their pages (*Tr.* I, 1. 8 *candida nec nigra cornua fronte geras* “no white bosses<sup>4</sup>, ‘horns’ to your dark ‘brow’”). And naturally **the earth or the frozen beard or the frost itself** (*Tr.* III, 10, 9-10 *At cum tristis hiems squalentia protulit ora, / terraque marmoreo est candida facta gelu* “And when dark winter shows its icy face, and the earth is white with marbled frost”; *Tr.* III, 10, 9-10 *Saepe sonant moti glacie pendente capilli, / et niter<sup>5</sup> inducto candida barba gelus* “Often their hair tinkles with hanging icicles, and their beards gleam white with a coat of frost”), **the virgin snow and the breast which is compared to it** (*Pont.* II, 5, 37-38 *Non ego laudandus, sed sunt tua pectora lacte / et non calcata candidiora niue* “And when dark winter shows its icy face, and the earth is white with marbled frost”). Perhaps notably horrified by the snow and the freezing temperatures in Tomis, in *Tristia*, Ovid does not use this comparison, though, from this point of view, he does not try to be original at all. His similes are often fairly common.

One can see that the poet did not choose the bright white for any object offered to a deity (offering without blood), as he did in *Fasti*, even though any divine presence and any religious atmosphere implies brightness. The selection is more or less dictated by the metric necessities. Moreover it is often irrational: a **horse** can be either bright white, *niueus* (*Pont.* II, 8, 49-50 *Sic tibi mature fraterni funeris ultor / purpureus niueis filius instet equis!* “May Tiberius soon drive behind snow-white steeds, the avenger of his brother’s death, clothed in purple”) or a matte white, *albus* (*Tr.* III, 5, 55-56 *Hos utinam nitidi Solis praenuntius ortus / afferat admisso Lucifer albus equo!* “Might such a dawn as that be brought to me, by bright Lucifer with swift horses, herald of the shining Sun!”), although it is Lucifer’s horse and from a syntactical point of view, Lucifer himself is *albus*; it seems that Livia’s son’s horse, in his moment of glory, is brighter than a celestial horse. Similarly the **frost** is sometimes *marmoreus* (*Tr.* III, 10, 9-12 *At cum tristis hiems squalentia protulit ora, / terraque marmoreo est candida facta*

<sup>4</sup> The word *cornus* designates the extremities of the little cylinder on which glued pages were rolled in layers, *candida* points out the fact that the extremities were made of ivory (here we expected *albus* or *eburneus*, as in *Tr.* IV, 2, 63 *invenietque animus, qua currus spectet eburnos* « elle se fraiera une route pour contempler ce char d’ivoire »). *Fronte* designates the written side of a page.

<sup>5</sup> The brightness is occasionally indicated by words such as *nitere*, *nitens*, *nitidus*, *nitidissimus*.

*gelu*<sup>6</sup>, / *dum prohibet Boreas et nix habitare sub Arcto, / tum patet has gentes axe tremente premi* “And when dark winter shows its icy face, and the earth is white with marbled frost, when Boreas and the snow constrain life under the Bears, those tribes must be hard-pressed by the shivering sky”), sometimes *canens* (Tr. V, 2, 64-65 *nec me tam cruciat numquam sine frigore caelum, / glaebaque canenti semper obusta gelu* “yet I’m not so much tormented by this weather, never free of cold, this soil always hardened by white frost”).

**The victims sacrificed on the altars of the gods of heaven should be of matte white**, as in the *Fasti*, but in the works of exile the color of the victims is not specified (with the single exception: Tr. IV, 2, 3-6, see below).

But what makes the works of exile special is the metaphorical usage of the word *candidus* to describe innocence, purity, justice, good spirit, the innocence of the poet, which he is claiming all the time, Caesar’s kindness, which he is asking for all the time, the innocence related to the indulgence of the reader, who is marked as *candide lector* (I, 11, 35). Sometimes *candidus* becomes a synonym for ‘good’ or ‘favorable’, and the poet keeps on waiting for a *fatum candidius* (Tr. III, 4a, 34). Therefore, it revolves around an entirely different semantic field.

## 2.2. Black

The distribution according to the criteria of brightness of the adjectives designating the color black does not exist, because Ovid uses almost everywhere the word *niger*. *Niger* signifies a **bright black** and this epithet is connected to the following: **the depths of Tartarus** (Tr. I, 2, 22-23 *me miserum, quanti montes uoluuntur aquarum! iam iam tacturas Tartara nigra putes!* “What abysses sink beneath the yawning flood! Now, now you think they’ll touch black Tartarus”), **the poet’s lifestory** (Tr. IV, 1, 63-64 *hic quoque cognosco natalis stamina nostri, / stamina de nigro uellere facta mihi* “Here too I recognise the threads spun at my birth, threads of a black fleece, twisted for me”); **the pages of his letters** (Tr. I, 1, 6-7 *nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur, / candida nec nigra*

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<sup>6</sup> The adjective *marmoreus* induces at the same time the idea of brightness and duration, which recommends it as a perfect attribute for the frost.

*cornua fronte geras* “no vermilion tittle, no cedar-oiled paper, no white bosses, ‘horns’ to your dark ‘brow’”) or a youngling’s **hair** (*Tr.* IV, 8, 1-2 *Iam mea cycneas imitantur tempora plumas, / inficit et nigras alba senecta comas* “My temples already take on the colour of swan’s plumage, and white old age is bleaching my dark hair”). By contrast, **the sparks produced by the burnt offerings or the flames** are *atrae*, a matte shade of black (*Tr.*, V, 5, 33-36 *Consilio, commune sacrum cum fiat in ara / fratribus, alterna qui periere manu, / ipsa sibi discors, tamquam mandetur ab illis, / scinditur in partes atra fauilla duas* “Purposefully, when the joint offering’s made on the altar, to the brothers who killed each other, the discordant ashes, as if at their command, separate darkly into two distinct heaps”). This indicates a double murder, a double fratricide of impiety.

The range of black shade is completed by the intensively tinged adjective *decolor*: *Tr.* IV, 2, 41-42 *cornibus hic fractis uiridi male tectus ab ulua / decolor ipse suo sanguine Rhenus erat* “This with broken horns badly covered with green sedge, is the Rhine himself discoloured with his blood”; *Tr.* V, 3, 24 *et quascumque bibit decolor Indus aquas* “and all the waters the dusky Indian drinks”; *Pont.* III, 2, 53-54 *araque, quae fuerat natura candida saxi, / decolor adfuso sanguine tincta rubet* “and the altar, which was white from the colour of the stone, is darkened, reddened by the stains of spilt blood”. It should be noted that in these two examples, the dark shade implied by *decolor* is given by the blood.

As J. André observes, the prefix does not indicate only a loss but also a change of colors. *Decolor* refers to objects that are tinged with blood, marking the progression from white to red. According to some poets, including Ovid, *decolor*, when applied to foreign races, has the meaning of ‘tan, black’, being an epithet for Indians.

### 2.3. Dark Colors

The chromatics in Ovid’s exiles includes other dark colors such as *fuscus*, *fucus* and *caeruleus*.

**2.3.1. Fuscus** has the proper meaning of ‘black, dark’<sup>7</sup>, and it appears only in the derived verb *fuscare*: *Tr.* I, 11, 14-15 *saepe minax Steropes sidere pontus erat, / f u s c a b a t que diem custos Atlantidos Vrsae* „often the sea was menacing under the Pleiades, or the day was darkened by Bootes, the Bear-herd”.

**2.3.2. Fucus** means ‘purple, orchil’ and can be used instead of *purpureus*, or in this case it accompanies *purpureus* and symbolizes beauty (*Tr.* I, 1. 4-7 *nec te purpureo uelent uaccinia<sup>8</sup> fuco<sup>9</sup> — / non est conueniens luctibus ille color* “You’ll not be cloaked, dyed with hyacinthine purple – that’s no fitting colour to go mourning”), glory (because purple symbolizes nobility, royalty, priesthood, see below), makeup (*Tr.* II, 1, 485-487 *Ecce canit formas alius iactusque pilarum, / hic artem nandi praecipit, ille trochi, / composita est aliis fucandi cura coloris* “look, this man tells of various kinds of ball-game, that one teaches swimming, this, bowling hoops. others have written works on painting with cosmetics”).

**2.3.3. Caeruleus.** This color range is complemented by dark *caeruleus*, this word indicating dark blue, and describing the depths of water or aquatic characters. Servius is to be trusted in this aspect, *Ae.* 7, 198, *caerul(e)um est uiride cum nigro, ut est mare*. The Latin word translates the Greek words *kyáneos*, and *aérinos*, and also *kélainos* when referring to ‘dark’. The neutral singular *caerulum* refers to the color azure. Sometimes it works as the poetic equivalent to *caesius*, ‘gray green’. The poems of Ovid’s exile are proof of that status, between dark and light (such as gray green eye color or the greenish blue shades of the sky or waters): *Tr.* I, 11, 39-40 *iactor in indomito brumali luce profundo / ipsaque caeruleis charta feritur aquis* “I’m tossed on the stormy deep, on a wintry day, and the paper itself is exposed to the dark waters”; *Pont.* II, 10, 33-34 *seu rate caeruleas picta sulcauimus undas, / esseda nos agili siue tulere rota* “Whether we cut the blue wave in a painted boat, or drove along in a swift-wheeled carriage”; *Tr.* I, 4, 25

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<sup>7</sup> From an etymological point of view we are more likely dealing with a shade of brown. See also Thomas R. Price, “The color system of Vergil”, *American Journal of Philology*, Vol. IV, 1, Nr. 13, pp. 1-20: “blackness approached through red and brown. Physical standard, negro’s complexion”.

<sup>8</sup> *Vaccinia* is the name of a shrub with black berries, very sought over in Antiquity for their red colorant.

<sup>9</sup> *Fucus* = red dye obtained from a marine plant, dark color (cf. *fuscare*).

*parcite caerulei uos parcite numina ponti* “Mercy, you gods of the blue-green sea, mercy”.

*Caerulei* is an epithet, a common name for the aquatic gods such as *Superi* or *Inferi*, so we did not give too much importance to this particular word as a color name. Moreover, *uirides dei* is just as common.

## 2.4. Green

*Tr. I, 2.59-60 pro superi uiridesque dei, quibus aequora curae, / utraque iam uestras sistite turba minas* “Gods above, and you of the green flood, who rule the seas, both crowds of you, desist from your threats”. These gods aside, few other things are green for Ovid: the river Rhine, defeated by Germanicus and shamefully hidden under its green reeds, (*uiridi ... ulua Tr. IV, 2, 41-42*), the poor grass surrounding the altar at the poet’s birthday (*Tr. V, 5, 9-10 araque gramineo uiridis de caespite fiat, / et uelet tepidos nexa corona focos* “let them erect a green altar of grassy turf, and veil the warm hearth with a woven garland”. Otherwise, the green leaves evoke – even if it is indirectly – the triumph and immortality of Tiberius (*Tr. III, 1, 45-46 utque uiret semper laurus nec fronde caduca / carpitur, aeternum sic habet illa decus?* “Does it possess everlasting glory, as the laurel is evergreen, without a single withered leaf to gather?”), or simply the hope of the poet whose fate may come back to life just as the oak struck by lightning (*Tr. IV, 9, 13-14*). In the Black Sea the green stays within the dream, because “no fields bear fruit, or sweet grapes, here, no willows green the banks, no oaks the hills” (*Non ager hic pomum, non dulces educat uuas, / non salices ripa, robora monte uirent Pont. I, 3, 51-52*).

## 2.5. Yellow

The shades of yellow in Latin alternate – at least in Thomas Price’s opinion – between the mixture between green and blue/violet and the mixture of green and red.

The first category is represented by *pallidus*, *liuidus*, *caeruleus*. In Ovid’s poems we can find that only *pallidus*, *palor* and *pallere* are documented. Yellow is the color of his pain and that of his close friends, the color of his body condition which is metaphorically transposed in his letters: *Pont. I, 10, 27-28 Paruus*



*in exiles sucus mihi peruenit artus / membraque sunt cera pallidiora noua* “No strength penetrates my fragile joints, and my limbs are more pallid than fresh wax”; *Tr.* III, 1, 55-56 *Aspicis exsanguis chartam pallere colore? / Aspicis alternos intremuisse pedes?* “Can you see the paper’s colour, bloodless pale? Can you see each other footstep tremble?”.

On the other hand we have *flauus*, *fuluus*, and *aureus* (*aurum*).

Aulus Gellius, *N. A.* II, 26,8, considered *flauus*, *fuluus* and *luteus* part of the red color spectrum (II, 20, 12 *Flauus contra uidetur ex uiridi et rufo et albo concretus*; its correspondent is *xántos*, but the Greek color lacks green<sup>10</sup>). In fact, *flauus* includes all shades of yellow and yellowish-red. In Ovid’s perspective, *flauus*, according to dictionaries is ‘golden yellow’; ‘reddish blond’, is the color of **gold** (*Tr.* I, 5, 24-25 *scilicet ut flauum spectatur in ignibus aurum, / tempore sic duro est inspicienda fides* “Just as red gold is assessed in the flames, faithfulness is tested by hard times”); of **blond hair** (*Tr.* I, 10, 1 *Est mihi sitque, precor, flauae tutela Mineruae* “Golden-haired Minerva’s protection’s mine, and will be”); the color paper covered in **cedar oil**, (*Tr.* III, 1, 13-14 *quod neque sum cedro flauus nec pumice leuis, / erubui domino cultior esse meo* “If I’m not golden with cedar-oil, smoothed with pumice, I’d blush to be better turned out than my author”<sup>11</sup>). The color of gold itself appears in the description of a triumph: *Pont.* II, 1, 41-42 *deque tropaeorum quod sol incenderet auro / aurea Romani tecta fuisse fori* „the buildings of the Roman forum gilded by the gold of trophies, glittering in the sun”. Theoretically *fuluus* means a darker shade of yellow, bearing a stronger resemblance to red (cf. Aulus Gellius, *N. A.* II, 26, 11 *Fuluus autem uidetur de rufo atque uiridi mixtis, in aliis plus uiridis, in aliis plus rufi habere*). Thus *fuluus* appears as yellow sometimes tinged with red or reddish brown and is the opposite of *flauus*, which relates to a lighter shade of yellow. Those are probably the primary values, perhaps even their original meanings, from which they evolved into their designated meaning. According to Ovid, *flauus* may imply **gold**, ‘yellowed, fauve’: *Tr.* I, 7, 7 *effigiemque meam fuluo complexus in auro* “clasping my

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<sup>10</sup> It seems that the green was added to explain the foliage of the olive tree (cf. Stephen J. Harrison, “The Colour of Olive Leaves: Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.309”, *Ordia Prima, Revista de Estudios Clásicos*, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (2003), pp. 79-81).

<sup>11</sup> By extension, the word *cedrus*: *Tr.* I, 1, 6 *nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur* “no vermilion title, no cedar-oiled paper”.

semblance in the yellow gold”; **sand** is also *flaua*, and sometimes *fulua*: *Tr.* IV, 6, 31 *fortior in fulua nouus est luctator harena* „The new wrestler, on the yellow sand, is stronger”.

## 2.6. Red

**Purpureus** (encountered five times) symbolizes nobility (see the nobility of the first letter *Tr.* I, 1, 4), as well as the imperial glory (*Tr.* IV, 2, 47-50 *hos super in curru, Caesar, uictore ueheris / purpureus*<sup>12</sup> *populi rite per ora tui, / quaque ibis, manibus circumplaudere tuorum, / undique iactato flore tegente uias* “You’ll ride in the victory chariot, Caesar, high above, wearing purple for the people, according to custom, applauded by their clapping, all along the way, flowers falling everywhere to cover your route”. Purple is the color of the East, where the sun rises (*Tr.* I, 2; 27-28). And of course this is the color of blood (*Tr.* IV, 2, 3-6 *altaque uelentur fortasse Palatia sertis, / turaque in igne sonent inficiantque diem / candidaque adducta collum percussa securi / uictima purpureo sanguine pulset humum* “and perhaps the high Palatine is clothed with garlands, and incense is crackling on the flames, staining the light, while dark blood spurts over the earth, from the throat of the bright sacrifice, struck by the axe-blow”).

*Purpurea* is used to illustrate *pudor*, a different kind of blood (*Tr.* IV, 3, 70-71 *nec tibi, quod saeuis ego sum Iouis ignibus ictus, / purpureus molli fiat in ore pudor* “Don’t let the blush of shame redden your cheeks, because I’ve been struck by Jupiter’s fierce lightning”). But this is the sole time Ovid illustrates *pudor* by using the color *purpureus*. Generally speaking, the semantic field used to describe it is represented by the lexical family of *ruber*, a variety of crystal clear red, *erubescere* and *rubor* (*Tr.* IV, 3, 49-50 *me miserum, si tu, cum diceris exulis uxor, / avertis uultus et subit ora rubor!* “I’m wretched if, when they call you an exile’s wife, you turn your head away, and a blush comes to your cheeks!”; *Tr.* IV, 3, 63-64 *cum cecidit Capaneus subito temerarius ictu, / num legis*

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<sup>12</sup> For that matter, the laticlave toga itself requires this shade of purple (*Tr.* IV, 10, 29 *induiturque umeris cum lato purpura clauo* “our shoulders carried the broad purple stripe”).

*Euadnen erubuisse uiro?* “When reckless Capaneus died, at that sudden blow, did you read that Evadne blushed for her husband?”).

Usually *purpureus* and *tingere* as well as dark red (*cruentus*, *decolor*, *sanguineus*), are the colors of blood, whereas *rubor*, *erubescere* (light red) symbolize modesty. But as for colors opposing brightness and exceptionally for *purpureus*, this principle is broken two times: *Tr.* IV, 6, 33-34 and *Pont.* III, 2, 51-54. The following are to be compared: *purpureo sanguine* (*Tr.* IV, 2, 6), *decolor ... sanguine* (*Tr.* IV, 2, 42) et *sanguine tincta rubent* (*Tr.* IV, 6, 34), *decolor... sanguine tincta rubet* (*Pont.*, III, 2, 54). Other terms for red are *fucus* (dark red) and *minium* (vermillion), both of which are used for the artistic impression within pages. Other shades can be added (*Pont.* I, 4, 57-58 *Memnonis hanc utinam, lenito principe, mater / quam primum roseo prouocet ore diem!* “Would that the Dawn, Memnon’s mother, with rosy lips might soon call forth the day when the Prince relents!”, in which the poet can relate to his situation the famous quote ‘rose fingered Dawn’).

### 3. The colors of both worlds

We have examined the colored objects mentioned in the poems of Ovid’s exile. Let us now have a closer look, to find the objects’ meaning: Rome or exile. All the passages describe colorful places in Rome or events that occur there (either placed in the past, either imagined by the poet, such as Caesar’s triumph). In one passage (*Tr.* III, 12, 5-16), he describes spring and a landscape filled with flowers, grass and buds. Color names are not mentioned at all, apart from the name of one flower which shows a single color: *uiola*<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, according to interpreters say, Ovid is referring to Italy’s spring not Scythia’s.

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<sup>13</sup> To be compared to the long description of the triumph of Germanicus (*Pont.* II, 1), where we see soldiers marching covered in rewards, the general wearing embroidered robes with insignia of glory, incense burning on the holy altars with the crowd cheering in the background; in this explicitly colorless landscape, exactly in the middle (v. 35-36), a delicate carpet of red roses with sparkles of rosy: *quaque ierit, felix adiectum plausibus omen / saxaque roratis erubuisse rosis* “how he heard happy omens of applause as he went and the stones were red with dew-wet roses”.

The conclusion of our analysis is that the Scythian landscape illustrates only two colors: black and white (*niger* and *candidus*). However this is a more powerful and striking view than that of any multicolored images. It seems that the exile has created a chromatic fracture for Ovid, and that his suffering and sadness made him achieve a distortion of the light which is focused into two poles: one black and one white.

In all the landscapes which describe life in Scythia we can find these colors; the expression is vast, but the antithesis remains the same:

<i>Tr. I, 1, 8</i>	<i>candida cornua ... nigra fronte</i>
<i>Tr. I, 9, 7-8</i>	<i>candida tecta ... sordida turris</i>
<i>Tr. II, 1,</i>	<i>nube ... candidus dies</i>
<i>Tr. III, 10, 9-10</i>	<i>squalentia ora ... candida terra</i>
<i>Tr. IV, 8, 2</i>	<i>nigras comas ... alba senecta</i>

In these diptychs the dark color is stronger and we are witnessing a phenomenon of neutralization. The darkness of pain and exile, the permanent storm in our lives is served by many words and phrases: *decolor*, *niger*, *nubes*, *nubilus*, *sordidus*, *squalidus* etc. But Ovid's suffering and exile can be summed up in a single word: **color**. All the letters from Tomis are the same color, the color of dust (*pulvis*), of stormy clouds (*nubes/nubile*), of the night (*nox*, *caeca nox*), of Tartarus' darkness and death (*tenebrae*, *tenebrae obortae*, *tenebrae imae*). But all of these are just figures. Ovid himself said:

*ut titulo careas, ipso noscere colore*

“(Don’t think you come as a stranger to the crowd.)  
Though you lack a title, they’ll know the colour”<sup>14</sup> (*Tr.*, I, 1,  
61)

It is the dark color, the color of exile, in one word: **color**.

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<sup>14</sup> I reproduced the translation of the A. S. Kline 2003 edition. He translate the Latin word *color* by ‘style’.

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