

## OID AND THE EXILIC JOURNEY OF RUTILIUS NAMATIANUS

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Rutilius Namatianus's elegy *de Reditu Suo* or *Itinerarium*, in which the author describes his journey home from Rome to Gaul in 417 C.E., is full of references not only to his contemporaries and recent predecessors, especially Ausonius and Claudian, but also to poets who were "classical" authors for him no less than they are for us, especially Vergil and Ovid, poets of a remote past. (Ovid had died in exile almost exactly four centuries before Rutilius wrote.)<sup>1</sup> Learnedly allusive as it is, Rutilius's work is no *cento* but a highly original, indeed unique composition that draws on several traditions of Roman poetry. It is at once an elegy, an encomium of Rome and Italy, and a poetic itinerary with satiric invective along the lines of Horace's *Journey to Brundisium* (*Serm.* 1.5) and Lucilius's *Iter Siculum*. References to Ovid's exilic elegies, though conspicuously numerous among commentators' annotations, are rarely called upon to contribute to the understanding of Rutilius's poem; yet they have much to offer. To be sure, Ovid's works are among the stock resources of late-antique classicism; yet for Rutilius, the exilic elegies in particular provide an allusive context against which to set his own paradoxical understanding of Rome's fate. Writing a few years after the sack of Rome by Alaric (410 C.E.), Rutilius regards the city, on the one hand, as ruined and, on the other, as ideally perfect, eternal, and indeed divine—the

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1 Vessereau 1904.386–401 provides a list of Rutilius's imitations and reminiscences of Latin poets. Ovid heads the list with twenty-eight; Vessereau cites fifteen for Vergil, seventeen for Claudian, eleven for Ausonius.

only deserving object of desire and longing on the part of those separated from it.<sup>2</sup>

For Rutilius, the reception of Ovid, *poeta exulans*, is a mode of defining the author's own imaginative vision. To see how Ovid's exilic poetry functions creatively in this fashion, we can consider some features of Rutilius's art of allusion, for the poet quickly establishes Ovid's presence in his work. No sooner do we begin the poem than we come upon a conspicuous allusion to Ovid's *Tristia* in a significant context—Rutilius's expression of an anticipatory longing or nostalgia for Rome before he has even left it. He opens not with the beginning of his journey but with praises of Rome, identifying as supremely happy those who have been born there and granting a secondary level of happiness to those whom fate has allotted residence in the city, though they presumably were born elsewhere. He introduces the first and happiest group with this couplet (1.5–6):

o quantum et quotiens possum numerare beatos,  
nasci felici qui meruere solo.

How greatly, how many times blest can I count those who  
have deserved to be born on that happy ground!<sup>3</sup>

Rutilius calls to mind this couplet of Ovid's (*Tr.* 3.12.25–26):

o quantum et quotiens non est numerare beatum  
non interdicta cui licet urbe frui.<sup>4</sup>

It is impossible to reckon how greatly, how many times  
blest is he who is allowed enjoyment of the city unforbidden.

In his elegy on the return of spring, Ovid first celebrates the renewal of nature and civic life back in Rome and then proceeds to the far less agreeable return of spring in Tomis. This couplet separates the two halves of

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2 On the praises of Rome in late antiquity, see Doblhofer 1977.2.38–41, Gernentz 1918, Knoche 1949, Paschoud 1967, Fuhrmann 1968a, Klein 1986, Riedl 1995, Roberts 2001.

3 All translations are my own.

4 Some manuscripts offer this reading, others *o quater et quotiens* (printed by Hall, Luck).

the elegy, concluding the nostalgic evocation of the city's springtime delights in emphatic contrast to the desolate landscape of exile. By inviting our recollection of this context in Ovid's *Tristia*, Rutilius establishes an allusive parallel between himself and Ovid, his journey and Ovid's, which remains a constant feature of the poem—always present to be brought to notice by some specific allusion.

This allusion is the starting point for Alessandro Fo's important article on Rutilius, a discussion rich in insight on the reception of Ovid in antiquity (1989.51): "That is how the poem begins: Ovid appears at once, through the sophisticated contrivance of a precise allusion. With it Rutilius seems to mean, 'here I am writing my *Tristia*, and I choose the meter that my Ovid once chose on his own journey, because my return is really an exile—exile from the greatest of good things that the earth can offer.'"

In calling attention to the parallels between Ovid and Rutilius and the similarities in their poetic projects, I do not mean to suggest that Rutilius copies Ovid or attempts to imitate his style. In fact, the *de Reditu Suo* is a characteristically late-antique composition, and its praises of Rome owe much to its more recent predecessors, especially Ausonius and Claudian.<sup>5</sup> Rutilius concludes the section with a prayer to Rome as goddess and mistress of the world, asking her not to forget him as he proceeds to his journey. This conclusion is entirely in keeping with its own rhetorical structure, looking back to the beginning of the encomium where Rutilius declares that no one could ever forget Rome (1.52).<sup>6</sup> Yet it also looks back four centuries to Ovid's *Epistulae ex Ponto* and accommodates the late-antique encomiastic mode to an Ovidian epistolary entreaty. In *ex Ponto* 2.4, Ovid develops the theme that his friend Atticus cannot possibly forget him. Here are the three passages:<sup>7</sup>

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5 Fuhrmann 1968a.553–54 argues that Rutilius aims to outdo Claudian's praises of Rome in *de Cons. Stil.* 3.130–73. See Doblhofer 1977.2.40 on the view that Rutilius's praises of Rome follow the five-part structure described by Menander Rhetor.

6 See Doblhofer 1977.2.83.

7 Doblhofer 1972 on 1.164 describes *si meminisse mei* as an Ovidian reminiscence, citing also *Tr.* 5.13.18, a context in which Ovid prays that he not be forgotten: "di faciant, ut sit temeraria nostra querella, / teque putem falso non meminisse mei," "May the gods bring it about that my complaint be rash, and that I suppose falsely that you do not remember me."

*ex Ponto* 2.4.5–6:

non ita di mihi sunt tristes, ut credere possim  
fasque putem iam te non meminisse mei.<sup>8</sup>

The gods are not so grim toward me that I could believe  
and consider it right that you no longer remember me.

Rutilius 1.161–64:

sive datur patriis vitam componere terris  
sive oculis umquam restituere meis,  
fortunatus agam votoque beator omni,  
semper digneris si meminisse mei.

Whether it is granted to close my life in my ancestral  
country, or whether you shall someday be restored to my  
eyes, I shall lead my life in happiness, blessed beyond all  
desire, if you will deign always to remember me.

Rutilius 1.51–52:

te canimus semperque, sinent dum fata, canemus:  
sospes nemo potest immemor esse tui.

I sing of you and always, so long as the fates allow, shall  
sing of you: no one, while safe and unharmed, can be  
forgetful of you.

The message is not identical, for Ovid never considers it acceptable to conclude his life away from Rome, whereas Rutilius, a native of Gaul, whose journey takes him homeward, can face that possibility as long as Rome—his true home, we may call it—does not forget him. One of the obsessive themes of the exilic elegies is Ovid's desire, should he die in exile, not to be buried in foreign soil;<sup>9</sup> and Rutilius may reflect on this theme, offering a less despairing variation on it.

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8 At line 5, Galasso reads *sint*, "Let the gods not be so grim toward me."

9 E.g., *Tr.* 3.3.37–46, *ex Ponto* 1.2.107–12.

Readers familiar with the allusive traditions of late republican, Augustan, and first-century Latin poets will find Rutilius's practice in this example and others like it familiar and not much different from Ovid's own practice in alluding to earlier texts. Strikingly unlike the allusive tradition of these earlier poets are Rutilius's two explicit citations of Homer by name. Here we are far from the world of, for instance, Catullus, the opening of whose poem 64 on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, as explicated in a well-known article of R. F. Thomas, alludes to five poets' versions of the story of the Argo without naming any of them.<sup>10</sup> Although Ovid mentions Homer twelve times as *Homerus* (six as *Maeonides*), his allusions to specific passages in the Homeric poems are not accompanied by explicit citation of the author's name. Rutilius names Homer when he makes specific reference to a Homeric passage, and, in this respect, his allusive practice differs markedly from Ovid's. Yet Rutilius's citations of Homer are worth examining here; for, as we shall see, they help to illuminate the importance of Ovid's exilic works to Rutilius's allusive practice—and to his understanding of the literary tradition in which he places himself.

Scholars debate about the extent of Rutilius's Greek learning and knowledge of Homeric epic,<sup>11</sup> but the question is less important than it may initially appear because his references to Homer are in each case mediated by references to a predecessor, or several predecessors, in the intervening Latin tradition. When he cites Homer on Bellerophon (*Il.* 6.201–02), he is looking back through Ausonius (*Ep.* 29.69–72) and further back through Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.26.13) to the *Iliad*. This multiple allusion occurs when the sea voyage brings Rutilius within sight of Capraria, “a squalid island full of men who avoid the light” (1.440: “squalet luctifugis insula plena viris”). Rutilius takes the opportunity for one of his several invectives against monks, who, he says, are motivated to embrace misery and reject Fortune's blessings either out of remorse for their misdeeds or because “their wretched guts swell with black bile” (1.448: “tristia seu nigro viscera felle tument”) (1.449–52):

sic nimiae bilis morbum assignavit Homerus  
Bellerophonteis sollicitudinibus:

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas 1982 = 1999.12–32.

<sup>11</sup> See Doblhofer 1972.1.49–51; Doblhofer's own opinion is that the question of Rutilius's knowledge of Greek and of Homer must remain open.

nam iuveni offenso saevi post tela doloris  
dicitur humanum displicuisse genus.

In this way, Homer attributed the disease of excessive bile to Bellerophon's troubles: for the human race is said to have displeased the injured young man after shafts of savage grief.

*Il.* 6.201–02:

ἦτοι ὁ καὶ πεδίον τὸ Ἀλήϊον οἶος ἀλᾶτο  
ὄν θυμὸν κατέδων, πάτον ἀνθρώπων ἀλεείνων.

He wandered alone through the Aleian plain, eating his heart, avoiding the beaten track of men.

Cicero *Tusc. Disp.* 3.26.13:

qui miser in campis maerens errabat Aleis  
ipse suum cor edens, hominum vestigia vitans.

Who, in wretchedness, wandered in the Aleian fields, grieving, eating his heart, avoiding the footsteps of men.

Homer, of course, as Doblhofer observes (1972.1.31–33), does not attribute melancholia or dissatisfaction with humanity to Bellerophon; but through intermediate quotation and reference in Latin writings, Bellerophon had become a type, a standard instance of melancholic isolation. Homer's name gives authority to a Roman and contemporary typology that, however remote from Homeric conceptions, serves Rutilius well in his denunciation of the monks. Implicitly attributing hatred of humankind to them and representing them as enemies to humankind, Rutilius identifies them with Bellerophon in polemical contrast to Christian typology: Bellerophon Christianus, in his role as slayer of the Chimaera, already served as a type of virtue triumphant—a late-antique prototype for St. George.<sup>12</sup>

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12 See Doblhofer 1977.2.205–06 on 1.449–52.

Whereas Rutilius's reference to Bellerophon engages a heroic typology of his own time, his use of multiple allusion links him to a very long tradition in Latin poetry. Scholars of Augustan poetry have examined, especially in the works of Vergil and Ovid, a characteristic technique of alluding to a passage of Homer, Hesiod, or an archaic poet through an intermediate passage, often of an Alexandrian poet. The historically later passage may influence the reader's interpretation of the earlier passage as it intervenes in the reader's understanding, opening a vista on the earlier text. It also may color or distort one's image of the more distant object of vision.<sup>13</sup>

The other citation of Homer passes through Ovid's exilic poetry, which functions as an interpretive prism—or rather a smoked glass that darkens the white light of the Homeric epic. When Rutilius cites the *Odyssey* on smoke rising as a sign of home and human habitation (1.193–96), he looks back to Homer through Ovid's exilic verse (see Fo 1989.51–52). While departing from Rome, Rutilius describes his joyful gaze backward at the city and its hills, while he can still hold them in his sight (1.189–92). When Rome is no longer visible, “a brighter area of the sky, a serene tract” marks its location (1.193–98):

nec locus ille mihi cognoscitur indice fumo,  
   qui dominas arces et caput orbis habet  
 (quamquam signa levis fumi commendat Homerus,  
   dilecto quotiens surgit in astra solo),  
 sed caeli plaga candidior tractusque serenus  
   signat septenis culmina clara iugis.

That place, which holds the imperial citadel and capitol of the world, is not recognized by me by the evidence of smoke (though Homer praises the signs of light smoke, whenever it rises to the stars from well-loved ground), but a brighter area of sky, a serene tract marks the bright summits on its seven ridges.

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13 See the following for multiple allusion of various descriptions: Thomas 1986.188–89 = 1999.130–32, “window reference”; Thomas 1988.252 s. v. “reference,” “conflation”; McKeown 1987.37–45 “double allusion”; Clausen 1987.171 s. v. “Virgil, imitates two or more poets simultaneously”; Hinds 1998.141–42; O’Hara 2001.384.

To be sure, this is a reference to *Odyssey* 1.57–59 and 10.29–30, where Ulysses recognizes human habitations by the sight of smoke; but closer to view than the *Odyssey* is Ovid's impassioned rejection of philosophic consolation, *ex Ponto* 1.3.33–34:

non dubia est Ithaci prudentia, sed tamen optat  
fumum de patriis posse videre focis.

The wisdom of Ulysses is not in doubt—but nevertheless  
he longs to be able to see the smoke from his ancestral  
hearth.

The terms of the two passages are not close, and readers may not necessarily see an allusion here; yet the reader of Rutilius's lines who does recall Ovid will find a richer meaning in Rutilius's citation of Homer. Fo remarks (1989.52), "The connection with the *Odyssey* is effected anew through Ovid, the nearest in the gallery of exiles, who from the Black Sea dreams of being able to see that smoke."

From such examples one can begin to perceive the larger importance of Ovidian exile as a mediating force in Rutilius's creative effort—an effort that calls upon the reader's memory of Ovid as a contribution to the understanding of Rutilius's work. As he journeys from Rome to Gaul, writing up his experiences along the way along with invectives against Goths and monks, Rutilius sees both his own subject matter and his poetic predecessors through Ovid's representation of exile. For Rutilius, his own journey and Rome's plight can best find expression as a revision, a re-imagining, of Ovidian exilic topics and language.

In making this claim, I do not intend to minimize the importance of Rutilius's more recent poetic predecessors and that of other classical poets, especially Vergil. Other works of Ovid's are also present. When, for instance, we read of hot springs gushing forth near the Tarpeian Rock (1.107–08), by means of which Janus rescued the Romans from an attack by Titus Tatius, Rutilius is drawing on accounts of this event in the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* (see also Macrobius *Sat.* 1.9.17f.). But the defining importance of Ovid's exilic elegies can be exemplified in two topics of Rutilius's elegy to which he assigns significance in language that draws upon Ovid: his own poetic journey and Stilicho's destruction of the Sibylline books.

As Rutilius leaves Rome and journeys to his estate in Gaul through a devastated countryside, his description offers many parallels to the open-



ing elegies of *Tristia* 1 on Ovid's departure from Rome; only Rutilius can match the intensity of Ovid's nostalgia for the city. Ovid represents his journey as a symbolic reversal of the heroic journeys of epic, as has often been shown.<sup>14</sup> For Rutilius, no judicial sentence and no long journey are necessary to arrive at a state of exile, for barbarians have occupied Italy and wrecked Rome. His identification of the *Gothi* with the *Getae* (Rutilius never uses any other term for the Goths), was conventional among his contemporaries such as the historian Orosius; but in Rutilius's context of large-scale allusion to Ovid's exilic poetry, this identification gains a special symbolic power. The barbarians have made Italy itself into a land of exile, and to be a Roman is to be in exile.

On the topic of Goths, it is relevant to point out that the reception of Ovid in antiquity had a defining influence on his reception in later times. Shakespeare's *Touchstone*, speaking of "Ovid among the Goths," views Ovid's *Getae* through this late-antique tradition as Shakespeare's contemporaries had absorbed it. For him, the *Getae* long since have become Goths, and hence they are available for a pun on "goats" (*As You Like It* 3.3). In reverse fashion, for Rutilius, the Goths have become the definitively barbaric *Getae*.

I conclude with my own contribution to the list of Rutilius's mediated allusions. Even when he cites the *Metamorphoses*, he views that work, Ovid's answer to epic, through the medium of Ovid's exilic poetry. Near the beginning of Book 2 is one of Rutilius's most impressive invectives, in which he attacks Stilicho for having burned the Sibylline books (2.51–60):

nec tantum Geticis grassatus proditor armis:  
ante Sibyllinae fata cremavit opis.  
odimus Althaeam consumpti funere torris,  
Nisaeum crinem flere putantur aves;  
at Stilicho aeterni fatalia pignora regni  
et plenas voluit praecipitare colos.  
omnia Tartarei cessent tormenta Neronis;  
consumat Stygias tristior umbra faces:  
hic immortalem, mortalem perculit ille,  
hic mundi matrem perculit, ille suam.

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14 See, for instance, Hinds 1985, Williams 1994.107–15, Tissol 2002.

Not only did the traitor make his attack with Getic weapons: first he burned the fateful books that held the Sibyl's help. We hate Althea because of the death she brought about with the torch consumed by fire; birds are thought to bewail the lock of Nisus: but Stilicho wanted to hurl to destruction the fateful pledges of eternal rule, the distaffs still laden with destiny. Let all the torments of Nero in hell come to a halt, and let a grimmer shade waste away over Stygian torches: Stilicho struck his immortal, Nero his mortal mother; the one destroyed the world's mother, the other his own.

The passage draws on a long literary tradition, although no one, to my knowledge, has placed Rutilius in this tradition and attempted to describe his contribution to it. Wolfgang Speyer does mention the burning of the Sibylline books in his illuminating work, *Büchervernichtung*, on the destruction of books in antiquity, but only briefly (1981.137). Scholars refer to this passage mainly for the historical questions it raises, such as the date of Stilicho's act;<sup>15</sup> but some also observe that Rutilius offers an answer to Claudian. Alan Cameron, for instance, discusses the vocabulary of the invective, showing that Rutilius aims to reverse the terms of Claudian's praise of Stilicho.<sup>16</sup> There are also older traditions behind Rutilius's invective, and we can trace further the sources of its rhetorical power, observing that he draws on the reader's memory of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. He refers specifically to Book 8 of that work, in which the tales of both Scylla, daughter of Nisus, and Althea are found. The relevance of Scylla is clear enough: she betrays her city, clipping her father's purple lock on which its safety depends. Like the lock of Nisus, the Sibylline books are a talisman of Rome's destiny. Stilicho aimed to destroy Rome, and, by comparing his act to Scylla's, Rutilius brands it an impious act of betrayal.

Another comparison Rutilius could have chosen is the theft of the Palladium by Ulysses and Diomedes, which ensures the taking of Troy. But what is the relevance of Althea? Indeed, she throws the log, on which the life

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15 On the date of Stilicho's burning of the Sibylline books, see Speyer 1981.137 n. 36. Cameron 1970.220 accepts Demougeot's date of 407–408.

16 Cameron 1970.251: "Indeed it is ironic—and surely no accident—that Rutilius uses in denouncing Stilico the very same motifs Claudian had used to defend him."

of her son Meleager depends, into the fire, and so her tale offers another talisman, as well as a fire parallel to Stilicho's. Also, Rutilius aims to draw a parallel in the destruction of a family member, as we learn when he proceeds to contrast Stilicho with the less impious Nero: Stilicho's violence against the world's mother, Rome, becomes a reversal—vastly more monstrous—of Althea's act, in which a mother destroys a son. Yet the reader of Ovid's exilic elegies who comes to Rutilius's lines will perceive a further relevance in the comparison of Stilicho to Althea. Rutilius makes this allusion to Althea's tale in *Metamorphoses* 8 through an allusion to *Tristia* 1.7, in which Ovid had compared himself to Althea in his unsuccessful attempt to burn the *Metamorphoses* before leaving for exile. Ovid had already made the connection between Althea and book burning, recasting the well-known biographical tradition about Vergil and his orders for destruction of the *Aeneid* (*Tr.* 1.7.15–20):<sup>17</sup>

haec ego discedens, sicut bene multa meorum,  
                   ipse mea posui maestus in igne manu;  
 utque cremasse suum fertur sub stipite natum  
                   Thestias et melior matre fuisse soror,  
 sic ego non meritos mecum peritura libellos  
                   inposui rapidis viscera nostra rogis.

As I departed, I placed these poems—like a good many of  
 my possessions—on the fire with my own hand. And just  
 as Thestius's daughter Althea is said to have burned up her

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17 This tradition, already known in Ovid's time, attained its standard form during the fourth century in Aelius Donatus's life of Vergil: "egerat cum Vario, priusquam Italia decederet, ut siquid sibi accidisset, Aeneida combureret; at is facturum se pernegarat; igitur in extrema uale tudine assidue scrinia desiderauit, crematurus ipse; uerum nemine offerente nihil quidem nominatim de ea cauit. ceterum eidem Vario ac simul Tuccae scripta sua sub ea condicione legauit, ne quid ederent, quod non a se editum esset. edidit autem auctore Augusto Varius, sed summam emendata, ut qui uersus etiam imperfectos sicut erant reliquerit," Donatus *Vita* 39–41. "Before he left Italy, Vergil had made an arrangement with Varius that if anything happened to him, Varius should burn the *Aeneid*; but he had declared that he would not do so. And so, in his last illness, Vergil constantly asked for his book-boxes, intending to burn it himself. But when no one brought them, he made no specific provision concerning it. Yet to the same Varius, and at the same time to Tucca, he bequeathed his writings under this condition: that they not issue anything that had not been issued by himself. But Varius did issue them on Augustus's authority—yet only cursorily corrected, for he even left the unfinished verses just as they were."

own son in the log and to have been a better sister than  
 mother, so I placed on the greedy pyre my undeserving  
 books—my own innards, to perish with me.

But the work existed in other copies, and so survives (*Tr.* 1.7.23–24). For readers of the *Tristia*, Ovid's own version of Althea's story in the *Metamorphoses* had become standard (*Met.* 8.445–525); it remained so for Rutilius's readers. The allusion to Althea in the context of book burning opens a view to this story through Ovid's allusion in the *Tristia*. Hence Rutilius's reference to the *Metamorphoses*, like his reference to Homer through the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, is mediated by Ovid's exilic poetry and contributes to his larger vision of his journey as that of a latter-day Ovidian exile.

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