

Wim Verbaal

A Man and his Gods

Religion in the *De reditu suo* of Rutilius Claudius Namatianus

Summary – Rutilius’ poem on his return to Gaul around 417 has evoked strikingly little attention for its literary value. Yet a lecture which is focused on its literary aspects might also give some answers to questions raised by the poem and its writer. In this article, Rutilius’ attitude toward religion, and especially Jewish and Christian religion, is considered from the perspective of their appearance within the poem and from the internal resonances and allusions that occur. Its objective is to demonstrate that some consistent and coherent lines of thought underlie the apparently loose and disparate sections into which the poem as a whole seems to fall apart.

The *De reditu suo* of Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, describing his journey home from Rome to Gaul, remains an intriguing piece of poetry. At first sight, it seems to offer nothing more than a pleasing example of a poetic itinerary, such as had been written before by several Latin poets. The most important predecessors for Rutilius must have been Horace and his *Iter Brundisinum* (Sat. 1, 5), Ovid’s description of his voyage to Tomi (*Trist.* 1, 10) and Ausonius’ *Mosella*, his evocation of a voyage on the Mosel.¹ Especially the last poem comes very close to Rutilius’ work, with which it shares a similar sense of episodic variation, of realistic observations and of poetical elaboration.

Yet again, some large differences remain and strike the reader. Ausonius’ poem impresses as a poetic description of what appears to have been a true pleasure trip, even when its author at that moment ‘was an established member of Valentinian’s court’.² The poem might even have been written at the request of the emperor Valentinian I, but it lacks almost any allusion to him and to the

¹ See J. Vessereau, *Cl. Rutilius Namatianus. Édition critique. Traduction française. Étude historique et littéraire sur l’œuvre et l’auteur*, Paris 1904, 324–328, with an enumeration of all known but lost poems of Antiquity. See also Ernst Doblhofer, *Rutilius Claudius Namatianus. De reditu suo vel Iter Gallicum*, I. II., Heidelberg, 1972, 33/34. Surely, some of the more didactic and learned poetry may have influenced Rutilius too. Avienus might be mentioned with his metrical descriptions of sea coasts (*Ora maritima*) and of the known world (*Descriptio orbis terrae*). The differences with Rutilius’ poem, however, are too obvious to conclude a direct relation.

² R. P. H. Green, *The Works of Ausonius*, Oxford 1991, 456.

actual political situation. It seems to be a work of leisure, written by a poet enjoying his *otia* during a period of quiet and peace.³

This impression of poetical recreation is quite absent from Rutilius' poem. Even when the poet alludes only slightly to the acute problems of his day (the collapse of Roman power in the West, the decline of central government, the ravaged provinces and sacked towns),⁴ a tension is felt in every episode and each observation he makes. The poet seems to be torn between hopes for the future (in 416 a relative peace had been established in Gaul and in 418 the first *concilium septem provinciarum* in ten years was assembled at Arles)⁵ and a deep pessimism, caused by the ruin and destruction of the past decade.⁶

Exactly this tension between hope and despair, between a seemingly relaxed sea voyage and the threatening actuality, makes the poem fascinating reading. The poet's ostensible insouciance is constantly felt to hover over an abyss, into which he, apparently, does not want to cast a glance but of which he is always very conscious. Elsewhere I have tried to demonstrate how the poet works out this tension in a poetical structure.⁷ The seemingly loosely connected episodes are kept together by an all-pervading opposition of stability and impermanence, of decay and lasting fame, of human mortality and the eternity of Roma. This tension between the passing and the lasting provides Rutilius' poem with what Michael Roberts has called the 'higher integrative principle', which prevents the poems of Late Antiquity from falling apart.⁸

In elaborating this unifying principle, Rutilius comes to a remarkable profession of his faith in Roma. She is not just the ancient goddess of the City and the Roman Empire. In Rutilius' poem, she has become an all-embracing, universal

³ For the years 370–373, in which the *Mosella* probably was written, see Green (note 2), 28/29. For Ausonius, it was a period of high political responsibility demanding the utmost tact.

⁴ For an overview of the general situation of the Empire in the years around 417, the year of Rutilius' trip, see Ernest Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire I: de l'état romain à l'état byzantin* (284–476), Amsterdam 1968, 266–274; and R. C. Blockley, *The Dynasty of Theodosius*, in: *The Cambridge Ancient History XIII: The Late Empire, A. D. 337–425*, Cambridge 1998, 111–137 (129–133).

⁵ See Stein (note 4), 270. This council of the seven meridional provinces of Gaul had been established before 408 by the praetorian prefect Petronius.

⁶ Characterized by Doblhofer II (note 1), 139/140 and *passim* as true „Ruinentimentalität“.

⁷ An article *Divine Bureaucracy. Religiosity in Late Antiquity* according to the poem *De reditu suo* of Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, in which I also give a more extended bibliography, is being prepared for publication.

⁸ Michael Roberts, *The treatment of narrative in late antique literature. Ammianus Marcellinus* (16. 10), *Rutilius Namatianus and Paulinus of Pella*, *Philologus* 132 (1988), 181–195 (194).

divine power, mother of men and gods alike (1,49), capable of divinizing man and human activity, as she did with medicine and with Hercules (1,75/76). In his verses, Rutilius evokes a truly universal religion of Roma, for which a priesthood is supplied by the functionaries in office. Governmental administration comes close to an initiatory experience. Rutilius, speaking of his own urban prefecture, almost describes it as an experience of transition: he became part of that same genius, which, before, he had been adoring in the Senate. He was himself admitted into the council which he can only compare with the one gathered around the supreme god. Or rather, as he was the *praefectus urbi*, one of whose tasks it was to preside over the senatorial assemblies,⁹ the logic of the comparison obliges the reader to take Rutilius himself as 'the supreme god' calling together his divine council. Thus, Roma has the power to divinize man by the eternal value of her laws and institutions.¹⁰

But when Roma's divinity itself has become the centre of an initiatory, almost mystical cult for Rutilius, how then may his attitude towards other cults, ancient and recent, be interpreted? Do the remnants of the poem permit the modern reader to reach any conclusions on the inner disposition of this Gallo-Roman landowner towards the religiosity of his time? Can Rutilius indeed still be called a traditional pagan, as he often is?¹¹ And what is his actual disposition towards Christianity, the state religion of the Empire? Did not his poetical vision of Roma's divinity clash with official directives emanating from the emperor himself?¹²

These are the questions which I want to raise in this paper and for which I hope to find an answer inside the poem itself. First Rutilius' use of classical gods and mythology will be considered in order to deduce in what sense they still had significance for the poet. Then his treatment of the Eastern religions will be discussed, these being the Osiris-festivity at Faleria, followed by the invective against the Jews. Rutilius' outburst against the Jews cannot be separated from his invectives against the monks of Capraria and Gorgon. Finally, all these different elements have to be combined in order to uncover the possible tension

⁹ Peter Heather, *Senators and senates*, in: *Cambridge Ancient History XIII*, Cambridge 1998, 184–210 (191/192).

¹⁰ For a further and detailed elaboration of Roma's divinizing administration as professed by Rutilius in his poem, see my article *Divine Bureaucracy* (above note 7).

¹¹ Doblhofer I (note 1), 27–33, whereas Francesco Corsaro, *Studi rutiliani*, Bologna 1981, 69–93 pleads for a moderate Christianity.

¹² Honorius had issued a directive under which civil and military posts had to be occupied by Catholic Christians only, but he saw himself obliged to withdraw it in 408/409, when he appointed Generius, a pagan, as *magister militum*. See Michele Renee Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy. Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire*, Cambridge (Ma) 2002, 131.

between Rutilius' divinization of Roma and the actual religious situation, in which Christianity has the upper hand.

1. The worn-out gods

At first reading, it becomes clear that the classical gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon no longer have any true significance for Rutilius.¹³ Many of them appear in the poem but they hardly seem to represent anything more than a more or less customary metaphor. Phoebus is used most frequently but always as a simple indication of the sun. Mars means war (with one subtle exception), Thetis the sea, Iris the rainbow.

A similar conventional use is made of the *Musae*, also indifferently alluded to as *nymphae*, *Pierides* or *Camenae*. Here, however, a more specifically poetical meaning can be discovered. The first three names are mentioned in the section introducing the poet Messala and they appear in three successive verses, which enhances their synonymity (1,265–267). Rutilius uses the Roman name *Camenae* when referring to Lucillus' satires (1,603).¹⁴ Thus, his choice of words proves to obey a well-considered, underlying thought. In the section on Messala, Rutilius opposes the Italian *Thermae Taurini* to the Greek fountain of the Hippocrene, stressing the equality (or even supremacy) of Italy vis à vis Greece. In the section on Lucillus, Rutilius mentions an indigenous, truly Roman genre, the satire, which thus can only obey the Roman *Camenae*.

Equally conventional but without any specific connotation seems to be his allusion to the domestic gods, the *penates*. Once they are simply synonymous with Rutilius' own house, which has been honoured for a second time by the nomination of his young friend Ceionius Rufius Antonius Agrypnius Volusianus (≈ 392 – 437) to the urban prefecture of Rome (1,423).¹⁵ They are mentioned once more in an allusion to the arrival of Aeneas in Italy, bringing with him the *Troiugenas penates* (1,571). Here again, they serve some sort of opposition between the ancient foundation of Pisa by the Greeks of Elis and the more recent landing of the Trojans in Italy.

Some of the classical gods mentioned by Rutilius seem to have escaped such conventional use. The most important is Venus, who is twice named explicitly and once alluded to under the still conventional epithet of *dux Cytherea*. She is

¹³ For the slow and final degeneration of classical polytheism towards the end of the fourth century, see Garth Fowden, *Polytheist religion and philosophy*, in: *Cambridge Ancient History XIII*, Cambridge 1998, 538–560.

¹⁴ The poet and statesman Lucillus (not to be mistaken for the archaic satirical poet Lucilius) is only known from Rutilius' poem.

¹⁵ For the importance of this section in understanding Rutilius' 'cult of Roma', see my forthcoming article *Divine Bureaucracy* (above note 7).

first mentioned as one of the two ancestors of the Roman people, the mother of Aeneas. As such she is associated with Mars, the father of Romulus and Remus (1, 67/68). Although one might thus expect Rutilius to take both gods as true divinities of classical Roman religion, this expectation is immediately disappointed. For Rutilius gives in the following verses a clear allegorical interpretation of this divine parenthood: ‘clemency (*Clementia*) as a victrix softens the armed forces’. The names of both come together in Roman nature, Rutilius concludes (1, 69/70). Mars thus remains the synonym of warfare, whereas Venus is identified with *Clementia*, her original sense of goddess of love transformed into Roma’s magnanimity towards vanquished enemies (1, 72).

Perhaps even more conventional is the appellation of Venus as *dux Cytherea* which closes the eulogy of Roma. Now she is named together with both of the *Castores*, the Dioscures, in order to grant Rutilius a peaceful journey. The Euploia-prayer is well-established among the traditional rituals of departure. Yet the prayer is not addressed to Venus in person. She is mentioned as the one who may calm the sea road, but Rutilius’ actual petition is still addressed to Roma,¹⁶ as becomes clear when he continues by expressing his wish to see Roma again or to be always remembered by her (1, 161–164).¹⁷ The Dioscures and the Cytherean guiding star appear to be merely ministers of Roma’s supreme and universal power.

Venus is mentioned once more in the poem. This time, however, she is clearly no more than a synonym for love and carnal desire. Because Faunus raised an impressive mortal progeny, he is thought to have been ‘a god strongly inclined to Venus’ (1, 236: *in Venerem pronior deus*).

Rutilius’ treatment of Faunus is significant for his late antique (but also characteristically Roman) skepsis towards the traditional Greco-Roman religion. The name of *Castrum Inui*, which Rutilius supposes to be the original name of the *Castrum* which he passes after Caere, is explained by the poet as the place where either the Greek god Pan entered Italy after having left his homeland, or Faunus as an inhabitant entered the fatherly bays (1, 233/234). Neither of them is called a god. The mention of Pan in the first place might suppose an equally divine status for Faunus. Yet the following verses cast immediate doubt on this. Faunus, whether a god or not, had a large mortal offspring (*mortalia semina*) and this made people believe him to be a god with a strong inclination for love (*fingitur in Venerem pronior esse deum*: 1, 235/236). Rutilius keeps himself firmly in the line of traditional Roman pragmatic rationalism.

¹⁶ Doblhofer II (note 1), 90, on the contrary, assumes that the prayer is addressed to Venus, but neither the *Castores* nor Venus is put in the vocative. They seem to be nothing more than forces obeying Roma.

¹⁷ See my *Divine Bureaucracy* (above note 7).

A similar deification of mortals has proved to be one of the essential characteristics of Rutilius' faith in Roma's divinity.¹⁸ She divinized Hercules for his nobility (*nobilitas*), just as she raised altars to the honour of medicine, i. e. for Asclepius (1, 75/76). Yet these appear to have been true deifications, whereas the divine status of Faunus remains uncertain, indeed seems even to be false: he was supposed (*fingitur*) to be a god because of his rich offspring. The difference from the former deifications seems all too clear. Faunus' divine status is founded on human opinion which took into consideration only the number of his mortal descendants. Divinization by Roma, on the contrary, is true and merited by those who proved to be real benefactors of humanity. On the one hand, earthly and passing profit, on the other, noble and lasting merits: the tension between the impermanence and stability which pervades the entire poem is also felt in the divinization of mortals. Only Roma has the power to endow man with true divine glory.

It follows that the divine status of those gods to whom the poet alludes, just before mentioning medicine and Hercules, also becomes questionable. Rutilius says that Roma adores her who 'discovered' the olive tree, him who 'found' wine and the boy who used the plough first (1, 73/74). No names are given. Each divinity is only identified by the gift which, according to Rutilius, merits worship. Olive tree, wine and plough are the reasons for adoring Minerva, Bacchus and Triptolemus. Yet none of them is presented as a true divinity spending her or his blessings on mankind: they rather discovered (*inventrix*), found (*repertor*) or demonstrated what then may be considered a gift. In the same way, Asclepius' name is suppressed. It is his medical art which merited (*meruit*) human adoration. Here Roma clearly offers divine status as a reward for human excellence.¹⁹ Thus even the divinity of these benefactors of mankind, who earned religious adoration in Rome, is nowhere explicitly expressed by the poet. He

¹⁸ See my forthcoming article Divine Bureaucracy (note 7).

¹⁹ The word-group *merere/meritum* constitutes one of the key terms in the poem. It appears eight times (and perhaps once in one of the two recently rediscovered fragments) and always in a clearly programmatic context. Thrice Rutilius uses them to characterize the *cur-sus honorum* of his young friend Rufus: as a boy, he 'merited' the function of *quaestor sacri palatii* (1, 171/172; for the function, Doblhofer II [note 1], 97); he will be consul, when one may trust on his 'merits' (1, 176); he gained by his 'merits' the nomination to urban prefect (1, 418). In a similar sense, it is said of Protadius that the best portrait one can imagine of him is a mixture of his 'merits', which are specified as *prudencia* and *iustitia* (1, 545–548). Besides, Roma 'merited' to reign by her noble glory, righteous wars and compassionate peace (1, 89–91), just as she 'merited' to be protected by multiple fortifications (2, 39). Thus, equally, those who 'merited' to be born on the fortunate soil of Roma (1, 5/6) may be called truly blessed.

seems rather to suggest that they were mortals just like Hercules, whose nobility made him a god.²⁰

There remains one classical god to treat. Jupiter is twice alluded to and in almost the same way. The first time he is mentioned in connection with the bull that opened the springs of the *Thermae Taurini*. The suggestion that it might have been the god in the shape of a bull evokes the abduction of Europa to Crete (1,259–262). The divinity of the other Olympic gods is ignored: this time Rutilius clearly associates the bull with a god, and more specifically with Jupiter. Once more, however, his main objective seems to have been rivalry with Greece. The identification of the bull with Jupiter gives a primacy of the thermal springs he uncovered over the Greek spring which welled up under the hooves of Pegasus (1,263–266). Italian soil thus enjoys a greater preference than Greek even in the mythical sense.

The second allusion to Jupiter is slight. In his rhetorical complaint on the crimes committed by means of gold, he mentions ‘the golden rain’ that buys the womb of virgins, clearly thinking of Jupiter’s conjunction with Danae (1,360). As the verse has to be understood in a negative sense, it casts a more gloomy light upon Jupiter’s role as a god, opposed to his former appearance as a bull discovering the riches of the earth to mankind. Thus even Jupiter fails to command Rutilius’ unquestioning awe as identifying the supreme god.

The gods of classical Rome do not inspire Rutilius with particularly strong and unconditional religious feelings. He no longer even uses their names in a metonymical sense. For him, Phoebus amounts to no more than a synonym for ‘sun’, stripped of all his ancient divine connotations. The consequent suppression of their names even suggests a deliberate omission of the classical gods from the poem. They are still fit for some mythological colour, an obligatory ornament of poetry, but even as such Rutilius prefers not to name them, though he has no problem in clearly identifying mythological heroes such as Hercules, Meleager, Bellerophon, Lynceus, Nisus and of course Aeneas.

Before we leave the classical pantheon, the appearance of a certain type of mythical personality invites a closer glance. Explicitly named are several mon-

²⁰ Not taken into account are the occurrences of Ceres and Neptune in the recovered fragments, resp. A. 2 and B. 5. The verses in which Ceres is named are much too fragmentary to reveal whether she is mentioned as a goddess or simply as a metonymy for corn. Neptune is associated with the building of the walls of Troy, but nothing more can be made of the passage than that this is mentioned in comparison with the walls Constantius III was to erect, probably those around Arles. See for the identification of the town as Arles instead of Albinga, Hagith Sivan, Rutilius Namatianus, Constantius III and the Return to Gaul in Light of New Evidence, *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986), 522–532. In my forthcoming article *Divine Bureaucracy* (above note 7) I have added some small arguments to Sivan’s conclusion.

strous beings: Antiphates, Circe, the Harpies, Briareus. Did Rutilius scruple less to name these fantastic creatures of death and destruction? Is it a concession to a contemporary taste, one that enjoyed the dark spectacles of night and the underworld? Or do they fit into the fundamental plan of his poem and can they assist the modern reader to decipher Rutilius' ultimate aims? I think they can, but before we analyse their appearance and functioning in Rutilius' poetical objectives we must first consider more closely the poet's attitude towards the other ancient religions of his days.

2. The tired god

Not only classical Greco-Roman religion appears in the poem. Rutilius also mentions two Eastern cults, the worship of Osiris and the Jewish religion. But whereas the gods of the Olympic pantheon play no role of any importance and seem to be limited to the obligatory mythical décor of the poem, Osiris and the Jewish religion constitute a fundamental part of the whole work.

They appear in close connection on the fourth day of Rutilius' journey. It was a hard day without the least breath of wind. The small fleet left the beach where they had been forced the evening before to make their bivouac and advanced very slowly along Elba up to Faleria, which they reached around midday (1, 349–372). It has often been noticed that the time span of one morning could by no means suffice to cover a distance of approximately forty-eight nautical miles.²¹ This stage is one of the longest during the journey, but it was traversed faster than any of the preceding ones. Yet it was calm and the fleet could only advance by putting out the oars.

The explanation for this overt poetical liberty has always been sought in Rutilius' desire to describe the *Heuresis*-celebration of the Isis-festivities. As the culmination of this festivity takes place at noon, he had to be in the proper place at the proper hour, i. e. midday in Faleria.²² Modern research apparently does not consider it a little strange that the poet spends only four verses on this celebration, which he ought to be so eager to describe and for which he demonstrates 'an undeniable sympathy' (1, 373–376).²³ It has not been asked if Rutil-

²¹ For the distance, cf. the classical itinerary as transmitted by the *Itinerarium portuum vel positionum navium ab Urbe Arelato usque*. For the critics on Rutilius' time reckoning, see Doblhofer I (note 1), 38, referring to Italo Lana, *Rutilio Namaziano*, Torino 1961, 122/123.

²² Lana (note 21), 122–124. For the *heuresis* or *inventio*, see the summary of literature in Doblhofer II (note 1), 175/176.

²³ See Doblhofer II (note 1), 175/176: "Des Rutilius Sympathie ist dagegen unverkennbar." Other similar opinions are quoted ad loc.

ius might not have another reason for introducing Osiris, and if his objective might not simply be found in the poem itself.

The verses on Osiris belong to a section describing the end of the fourth travelling day.²⁴ Tired, the fleet arrives in Faleria. It happens to be the day of the *Heuresis* of Osiris, celebrated by the *Hilaria*.²⁵ At the rural crossroads, the villagers comfort 'their tired hearts' by sacred jesting. On this day Osiris, finally recalled from the dead, excites the new crops from fertile seed (1, 373–376). Rutilius leaves the town to visit a nearby manor which possesses delightful gardens. The pleasure is however spoiled by the tenant, a Jew, who demands an absurd price for the damage he claims to have suffered from his visitors (1, 377–386). An intemperate attack on the Jews and their religion follows (1, 387–398).

As so often in Rutilius, the section is built upon strong contrasts. The tiredness of the travellers and the farmers is opposed to the joy of the festival day, the delights of the garden to the harshness of its tenant. Thus a certain parallelism is created between both parts within this section, opposing each a sense of joy and delight to a degree of depression. The link between both parts, contrasting the joyful evocation of the Osiris-festivity and the gloomy Jew, has been noted before,²⁶ but the consequences for Rutilius' poetical glance at the Jewish religion seem not to have been pursued.

Still other parallels might be noticed in this section. The jesting of the farmers is resumed by the playing fishes in the garden ponds, the relaxation of the farmers by Rutilius' recreative walk in the manor gardens. More striking still are the parallels evoked in the invective against Jewish religion. These are concentrated around the Sabbath, a festival day for the Jews, but presented by Rutilius as a day of doom, a *dies nefastus*, 'damned in shameful lethargy, as it were the feeble image of a tired god': *Septima quaeque dies turpi damnata veterno / tamquam lassati mollis imago dei* (1, 391/392).

First a literal parallelism has to be remarked. Just as Rutilius and his companions are tired upon entering Faleria after their long haul upstream and just as the farmers are weary after a long summer of work, so the Jewish god is tired too. Rutilius clearly refers to the Creation in six days, which apparently had exhausted the Jewish god to such an extent that he was reduced to a state of

²⁴ The first part is constituted by the passing of Elba and Rutilius' digression on iron as opposed to gold. For an interesting and elucidating analysis of Rutilius' verses on iron and its mining, see P. L. Pelet, *Techniques sidérurgiques et poésie. Note sur quelques vers de Rutilius Namatianus*, REL 48 (1970), 398–410. The author demonstrates that Rutilius' description of the extraction of iron is not a poetical fantasy but closely follows reality, thus underscoring the accuracy of the poet in his poetics.

²⁵ Doblhofer II (note 1), 175.

²⁶ See Schuster, quoted by Doblhofer II (note 1), 175.

lethargy, obliging his followers to observe a similar absolute inactivity once a week. Rutilius does not conceal his sarcasm. Whereas the farmers and his fellow sailors can hardly be reproached for being tired, human beings who have laboured, the fatigue of the Jewish god evokes only contempt. Such vulnerability is scarcely compatible with godhead.

Simultaneously, this parallel between the tired god and the weary mortals calls forth a further contrast. Whereas common man tries to console himself for the fatigues of life with joy and festivity, the Jew in remembrance of his god's tiredness spends his festival day in complete inactivity. Instead of the delight and joy that accompany the Osiris-celebration, Rutilius calls the Jewish festival a day of cold: *frigida sabbata*, which has caused the Jewish heart to be even colder than their religion (1, 389/390).

Rutilius demonstrates a still deeper knowledge of the history of Creation in Genesis, when he calls the Sabbath 'the feeble image of a tired god'. Undoubtedly, he has in mind the creation of man: *Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam: ad imaginem Dei creavit illum, masculum et feminam creavit eos* (Gen. 1, 27). The word *imago*, moreover, is used of figures charged with a certain significance in the poem. It appears three times and always in a context comparable with its appearance in the invective against the Jews, referring to some material or humanly inspired reflection of divinity.²⁷

First it is used for a worn-out statue at the town gate of deserted *Castrum*. The horns on its head prove that it is a statue of Pan (1, 229/230), but as we have seen above, Rutilius is not at all explicit about the divine status of the Greek shepherd god. When Rutilius visits Pisa, the first thing he meets is a statue of his father (*genitoris imago*), which the Pisans have erected in his honour on their market place. Although such an honour has been accorded to others, Rutilius uses it to stress the almost divine status which his father enjoys among the Tuscans: 'They adore the fame of Lachanius like divine power', *famam Lachanii veneratur numinis instar* (1, 595). The immediate object of this adoration, however, can be nothing other than the statue.

Rutilius' use of the word *imago* in the first book builds up to a climax: *exigui imago saxi* for the statue of Pan, *lassati imago dei* for the image of the Jewish god, *sancti genitoris imago* for the statue of Rutilius' father. For Rutilius, only once a true reflection of the atmosphere of the divine becomes visible and this happens in the last image. Only his father has merited by his pains and devotion

²⁷ Rutilius' very specific use of certain words is striking. I have demonstrated the careful structured use of the complex *nobilis/nobilitas* in my forthcoming article Divine bureaucracy (note 7). In the same article I have been able to draw some conclusions on the place of the discovered fragment B within the composition of the second book, thanks to the appearance of the rare and weighty word *machina*.

to Roma the adoration which brings him near to the divine.²⁸ The Jewish god did nothing to earn adoration. On the contrary, he is qualified as ‘tired’ (*lassatus*), overcome by ‘lethargy’ (*veternum*), showing no merit whatsoever and thus remaining far behind the divinized Hercules or the unnamed benefactors from the Olympic pantheon.²⁹

All this criticism of the Sabbath, just like Rutilius’ other denigratory remarks on the circumcision and the conquest of Judaea, are directed at the Jewish religion and people. It has often been asked if these remarks may be extrapolated to Christianity. Of course, there is the one accusation that Judaism is the ‘root of folly’ (1,389: *radix stultitiae*), which is normally interpreted as an allusion to Christianity, although it follows immediately the verses on the circumcision, almost belonging to one and the same poetical image.³⁰ Yet there is another indication that Rutilius also (and perhaps even mostly) tilts at Christianity as well as Judaism in these verses. This brings us, however, back to the opening verses of the section.

The villagers of Faleria celebrated the *Hilaria*, the culmination of the Isis-festivities, when the murdered Osiris was found by Isis and brought back to life. For this reason, the celebration was called the *Heuresis* or, in Latin, the *Inventio*. Rutilius, however, speaks of the *revocatus Osiris*, thus stressing a particular phase in the mysterium of Osiris. Not the finding but the resurrection of Osiris draws his attention. The chosen word (*revocatus*) in this context, however, can easily be understood as alluding to the resurrection of Christ. Of Christ also St. Paul says that he is called back to life from the dead (Rom. 10,7: *hoc est Christum a mortuis revocare*). Osiris thus becomes a pagan parallel, or rather counterweight, to Christ.³¹ Thus, when Rutilius concludes his invective against the Jews with the assertion that the conquered country weighs heavily on its conquerors,

²⁸ See my Divine Bureaucracy for a more elaborate argumentation of Lachanius’ almost divine status.

²⁹ In spite of his contempt for the Jewish sabbath and perhaps also for the Christian Sunday, which was introduced by Constantine in 321 (see Doblhofer II [1977], 184), it must be remarked, however, that the seventh day of Rutilius’ journey is a day of rest! When arriving on the sixth day in Vada Volaterrana, the fleet is blocked there by bad weather. How long the delay has lasted is not mentioned, but it can have been hardly more than one day, according to those scholars who have spent much energy in tracing exactly year, day and hour of Rutilius’ trip. See Doblhofer I (1972), 39 and Lana (1961; note 21), 130/131. More important than knowing the exact time of the stay seems to me the fact that Rutilius apparently wanted to introduce a seventh day of ‘lethargy’ into his poem, thus well-nigh contradicting his strictures on the Jewish sabbath.

³⁰ See Doblhofer II (note 1), 183.

³¹ The link between Romans 10,7 and verse 1,375 has been made by Doblhofer II (note 1), 177, but he uses it only to reject a conjecture by Castorina.

he may well have Christianity in mind, while concealing his opinion under a more acceptable attack on the Jews.³²

3. The forces of darkness

The Jewish tenant of the delightful manor is introduced by a mythical comparison. He is called ‘harder than the host Antiphates’ (*hospite durior Antiphate*: 1, 382). Antiphates, king of the Laistrygones (Odyssey 10, 80–134), is the first of a series of monstrous mythological beings to appear in the poem.³³ The comparison is successful in a double sense. First, as has been remarked, the situation is comparable: the fleet of Odysseus as well as that of Rutilius have put behind them a difficult and tiresome journey. They both hope to find hospitality but instead encounter an inhuman host.³⁴

More decisive for the poet, however, seems to have been a second parallel: the food of both Antiphates and the Jews. The king of the Laistrygones was a cannibal, thus showing himself no human being. To Antiphates can be applied the same words that Rutilius uses of the Jews: ‘a creature that places itself outside the fellowship of man in the food of mankind’ (1, 384: *humanis animal dissociale cibis*). Rutilius seems to accuse the Jews for their refusal to eat pork, the staple meat in Roman kitchens.³⁵ By this refusal, the Jews place themselves outside the society of human beings, thus no longer characterising themselves as an *animal sociale* but as an *animal dissociale*.³⁶

Now this same complex, of placing oneself outside human society in association with a mythical model, returns later in the poem. The monks on the island of Capraria for example are compared to Bellerophon. Because of an of-

³² For the anti-judaic atmosphere in the Late Empire, see Doblhofer II (note 1), 187/188; A. D. Lee, The army, in: The Cambridge Ancient History XIII: The Late Empire, A. D. 337–425, Cambridge 1998, 211–237 (228); Peter Brown, Christianization and religious conflict, *ib.*, 632–664 (640–643) and Karlheinz Deschner, *Kriminalgeschichte des Christentums II: Die Spätantike*, Hamburg 1988, 48–50.

³³ Doblhofer has rightly pointed out that this and other references to Homer do not at all involve a direct knowledge of the Homeric poems by Rutilius. It seems more likely that the poet no more mastered Greek than so many other of his western compatriots. The consequent eclipse of Greece by Rome in the poem shows the growing distance between the two parts of the Empire. For his mythological imagery, Rutilius could find enough Latin antecedents. See Doblhofer I (note 1), 48–51.

³⁴ Doblhofer II (note 1), 180.

³⁵ Doblhofer II (note 1), 181 with parallel passages in Latin literature. The verse can, however, also be read as if the Jews place themselves outside society by their ‘human food’, which then might constitute another allusion to Christianity and the eating of the body and blood of Christ.

³⁶ Clear reference to Seneca *De clementia* 1, 3, 2, quoted by Doblhofer II (note 1), 181.

fence during his youth, he is said to have hated the human race (1, 451/452).³⁷ Likewise, the monk on the island of Gorgon is credited with being a 'credulous exile', thus putting himself outside human society. This is stressed by the immediate allusion to Circe and her power to change man into beast. But while she, Rutilius assures us, was capable of changing only the body, now the spirit changes too, thanks to this actual *secta* (1, 521–526).³⁸

Antiphates, Bellerophon and Circe all appear as the embodiment of forces that threaten to destroy the unity of mankind and more specifically to disturb the social functioning of man inside the sacred body of the state, of Roma. The Jews, the monks on Capraria and the monk on Gorgon cut themselves off from social life and from the responsibilities of man as a political being. Like Antiphates, the Jews do this by dietary customs which are hideous to the poet. The monks on Capraria resemble Bellerophon in their misanthropy arising out of some sort of undefined guilt. The monk on Gorgon is treated less harshly. He himself has no mythical antecedent. He is rather portrayed as the victim of a *secta*, which appears to be more dangerous than Circe's poisonous charms.

Nonetheless, it is the monk of Gorgon who shows best the nature of the crimes for which Rutilius blames Jews and monks. For the anonymous monk once had everything which might make him a companion to the admired Rufus.³⁹ He sprang from an illustrious lineage, belonged to a wealthy house and was married to a woman of the same class. Descent, fortune and class feeling: these constitute the 'patent of nobility' in the eyes of Rutilius. They destine a young man to occupy the highest positions in Roman government, thus securing its perpetuity and assuring himself of a fame near to divinity. Instead the young man of Gorgon has chosen a living tomb: he has to be considered 'a lost citizen' (*perditus civis*).⁴⁰

The impact of these dark forces must be contrasted with those people who withstand them. Two other monstrous creatures out of the mythical past are mentioned in Rutilius' poem: the Harpies and hundred-armed Briareus. They appear in the eulogy on Lucillus at the end of Rutilius' visit to Pisa (1, 603–

³⁷ For the elaboration of Bellerophon's meaning in the poem, see Doblhofer II (note 1), 205/206.

³⁸ For the importance of Circe in the dialectic between Christianity and paganism, see Doblhofer II (note 1), 227/228.

³⁹ The young Ceionius Rufius Antonius Agrypnus Volusianus (≈ 392 – 437) plays a rather prominent role in the poem. He is one of the last friends to leave Rutilius on his departing from Rome, on which occasion Rutilius spends some ten verses on his eulogy (1, 167–178). His name is honoured a second time when Rutilius hears of his being nominated as *praefectus urbi* (1, 427/428). For some biographical notes, see Doblhofer II (note 1), 97.

⁴⁰ I can only refer once more to my forthcoming article Divine bureaucracy, in which this underlying plan is elaborated more fully.

614). In his function of *comes sacrarum largitionum*, i. e. administrator of the public funds, he proved to be not only incorruptible himself but also a determined enemy of all corrupted officials. Thus he is afforded by the poet the almost mythical proportions of the vanquisher of the Harpies and of Briareus. Lucillus thus proves to be exactly at the opposite side of the Jews and the monks, who have fled their responsibilities and preferred to submit themselves to the forces of darkness, which they rather ought to fight as true servants and priests of the cult of Roma.

4. Conclusion

What does our analysis of these sections in Rutilius' poem finally tell us? First, I hope to have demonstrated that the poem is much less loosely constructed than has sometimes been suggested.⁴¹ Rutilius had clear objectives when dedicating a literary work on his home journey from Rome to Gaul. He did more than hope to describe his adventures and the places he passed. Underlying his poetical journey is a sharp dialectic with the contemporary situation. He saw people withdrawing from their responsibilities as Roman citizens and thus threatening the continuity of Roman government and Roman justice.

In order to counter this tendency he evokes in his poem a true religion of Roma. Roma becomes synonymous with justice, peace, and clemency, embracing the entire universe and even going beyond its limits. Roma is the mother of men and gods. She can give mortal man a nearly divine status if he only wants to serve her, i. e. if he does not refuse the responsibilities of the *cursus honorum*, which allows him to approach mythical greatness and which assures him eternal glory and divine adoration after his death. Apparently Rutilius considers Christianity to be a dangerous enemy of this mythologized Roman bureaucracy, especially in its more radical forms as incorporated by the monks and hermits. For this reason, his poem is a much stronger attack on Christianity than it has been considered until now. I hope to have shown this in the fragments considered here.

Yet this conclusion must be qualified. The poet is not such an enemy of Christianity that he cannot bring himself to close the poem with the eulogy on the Christian Constantius. He attacks Christianity only in so far as it prevents people from facing up to their responsibilities. As soon as Christians show themselves in their acts to be good Romans, i. e. adherents of Rutilius' 'cult' of Roma, their religious background becomes less important. According to our

⁴¹ See Roberts (note 8), 185–187.

poet, a man has to be first of all a Roman citizen. His other convictions, whatever they may be, are of little account.

The analyses here have been limited to the first book, which alone is transmitted almost in its entirety. In this book, the cult of Roma, opposed to the anti-social sects of Jews and monks, constitutes the central theme. If Rutilius followed a similar working scheme in the second book, then the opposition of Stilicho in the beginning to Constantius at the end might indicate that the underlying theme in the second book may confront rather the other danger for Roma's eternity: the power of the barbarians. Several indications point in this direction.

First, Stilicho's greatest crime, according to Rutilius, was the burning of the Sibylline books, an attempt to destroy 'the fatal guarantees of Roma's eternal reign' (1, 55). He could do this only because he was a barbarian (1, 45/46). The fragments that have been recovered seem to elaborate this opposition between Rome and the barbarians. In fragment A, a stop is described somewhere in Liguria. Hagith Sivan has convincingly argued for an identification of this stop with Pollentia and the battlefield of 402 where Stilicho was able to stop Alaric but not to destroy his forces. In fragment B, Constantius is praised for erecting the huge walls of a town (probably Arles), which can only be understood as a defence against the raids of plundering Gothic tribes and their allies who have been ravaging Gaul for so many decades.⁴²

Thus Rutilius' division of his poem into two books will correspond to a thematic dichotomy in his approach to the eternity of Rome and her institutions. In the first book, the inimical forces from within are uncovered and opposed, being in the first place of a religious nature. In the second book, the problem of the enemy without, the many barbarian tribes, is treated, and concluded with the eulogy of a true new Roman who shall ensure the perpetuity of Roman government. Constantius embodies Roman political responsibility and patrician tradition, as well as the new Christian creed and strong opposition to the barbarians. He is the 'one salvation for Latium's name' (*Latii nominis una salus*: 2, B 10).

Rutilius' poem, then, proves to be a final attempt to turn the tide. It is destined to fail, but, even according to the first half which alone is preserved in its entirety, it surely is a magisterial attempt.

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⁴² See for both interpretations Sivan (note 20), 525–530.