

FROM ROME TO GAUL: THE VALUE OF DE REDITV SVO BY RUTILIUS NAMATIANUS AS A WITNESS TO THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPE IN LATE ANTIQUITY¹

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Abstract

The return trip to native Gaul documented in the poem *De Redito Svo* by Rutilius Namatianus allowed him to witness the transformations of the physical, human and social landscape of the early 20th century. V. The speech's digressive tone accompanies the sea voyage, punctuating the visual observation with reflective commentary. In this article, we intend to follow the objective view of the rutilian discourse and analyze the reflections that the poet operates on what he sees. We also intend to make a judgment about what seems to be a rutilian enigma: being clearly a good observer, contemporary and privileged witness of remarkable events of the crisis of the beginning of the 4th century, how do you manage to maintain the belief in the conservation of the status quo that made Rome possible? Within the limits of the hodoiporetic literary genre, Rutilio's work is a case of compromised observation, conditioned by the facts that are imposed on the participant involved: his speech balances between the description of spaces and landscapes and his critical appreciation, from the cultural horizon, but also of the expectations of the Roman aristocrat, on the way to a definitive transformation of life.

Key words

Rutilius Namatianus; *De Redito Svo*; Late Antiquity, Landscape; Travel; *Hodoiporia*.

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Resumo

A viagem de regresso à Gália natal documentada no poema *De Reditu Svo* de Rutilio Namaciano permitiu-lhe ser testemunha das transformações da paisagem física, humana e social dos inícios do séc. V. O tom digressivo do discurso acompanha a viagem marítima, pontuando a observação visual com comentários reflexivos. Neste artigo, pretendemos seguir o olhar objetivo do discurso rutiliano e analisar as reflexões que o poeta opera acerca do que vê. Pretendemos também fazer um juízo sobre o que parece ser um enigma rutiliano: sendo claramente bom observador, contemporâneo e testemunha privilegiada de eventos marcantes da crise dos inícios do séc. IV, como consegue manter a crença na conservação do *status quo* que possibilitou a grandeza de Roma? Nos limites do género literário hodoiporético, a obra de Rutilio é um caso de observação comprometida e condicionada pelos factos que se impõem ao seu participante envolvido: o seu discurso balança entre a descrição dos espaços e paisagens e sua apreciação crítica, a partir do horizonte cultural, mas também das expectativas do aristocrata romano, a caminho de uma transformação definitiva de vida.

Palavras-Chave

Rutilio Namaciano; *De Reditu Svo*; Antiguidade Tardia, paisagem; viagem; hodoiporia

Rutilius Namatianus is an author rarely represented in the canon of great Latin literature, integrated in the group of “minor poetry” (Vallina, 1997: 493-499)³, being the youngest of the poets of the lyrical revival of the last phase of pagan literature, since the Tetrarchy from Diocletian (284 AD) until the death of Saint Augustine.

He was the author of a small work that came to us incomplete, the *De Reditu Suo ou Iter Gallicum* (416-417 AD), difficult to fit exactly into the literary genre that develops the *Hodoiporia* - Travel Accounts, as one of its editors recognized⁴. He wrote at the beginning of the 5th century, when Latin literature was given twilight colors, in a literary cosmos dominated, in quantity and quality, by the literary prose of Christian authors.

These same years of consolidation of a Golden Age for Christian literature and literary communication also corresponded to an unusual renaissance of literature coming from non-Christian authors, the so-called “circle of Senator Quintus Aurelius Simachus” by Cameron⁵, which animated the

3 CODOÑER, C. *Historia de la Literatura Latina*, Cátedra, Madrid, 1997, pp. 493-494. Traits of this literature are the provincialization of Roman society; the predominance of the school in the technical formation of an erudite class, both pagan and Christian; imitation of formal classical normative models; thematic dilettantism and “lack of spontaneity and primordial contact with the deepest reality”. The 1934 edition of Loeb, with several reprints by Arnold Duff, considers Rutilius Namatianus the last of the “Minor Poets”, brief, fragmentary authors or authors with specialized themes. (DUFF, A., *Minor Latin Poets*, Volume II: *Florus. Hadrian. Nemesianus. Reposianus. Tiberianus. Dicta Catonis. Phoenix. Avianus. Rutilius Namatianus*. Others, Loeb Classical Library 434, 1934, pp. 752 ss. Rutilius, *De Reditu*, ed. CASTRINA E. (Italian translation and commentary, Florence, 1967. Rutilius, *De Reditu*, ed. DOBLHOFER, E., Heidelberg: 2 vols I (introduction, text, German translation, index verborum) 1972; II (commentary 1977). We refer to the poems, from now on, by the abbreviation DRS.

4 We follow the edition of VESSEREAU J., PRÉCHAC F. *Rutilius Namatianus Sur Son Retour*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1933, inc. I “*Velocem potius reditum...exp. II v. 68 prouocat intactas luxuriosa niues*. New edition by WOLFF, E. Les Belles Lettres, already includes the finding of FERRARI M., 1973, pp. 13. This researcher made known two fragments located in the very rich estate of the abbey of S. Columbano de Bobbio, which add 40 verses to book II, of significant value. Ferrari's analysis of the codex confirms that these fragments report a version prior to the accidental loss of the final part of the poem present in the mss that support the existing critical editions (op. cit. pp. 20-21. See also note 3). DUFF, op. cit. p. 754 about the complexity of the DRS, which goes beyond the previous literary models attributed to it as a source of inspiration: “this was something more elaborate as a travel-poem than Horace’s Journey to Brundisium or Ovid’s sketch of his voyage in the *Tristia* or Statius’ send-off to his patron bound in Egypt”. FO, 1989: 49-74 frames the DRS in the earlier hodoeporetic literary tradition.

5 CAMERON, A., “The Roman Friends of Ammianus”, *JRS*, 54, 1977, pp. 15-28. Id., *The Last Pagans of Rome*, 2011, cap. 11. FERRARI, M., op. cit., p. 26 “the dominant and

letters in Rome, increasingly peripheral compared to the capitals that had been asserting themselves since Diocletian.

Comments on the work of Rutilius Namatianus highlighted its formal perfection in elegiac couplets, indicative of obedience to a rhetorical code dominated by the intertext of its formal models, particularly Ovid. He was praised (Vallina, op. Cit. P. 499) for his expressive description of the landscapes in a “poetic of ruins and desolation”, in contradiction with the optimism about the future of Rome, to which he dedicated a heartfelt and high praise. The composition of the work, just six or seven years after the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410 AD, makes it sound like “a swan song” (Duff, 1934, p. 758); “impressions of a post-410 world” (Clarke, 2014: 89).

In the same way, literary commentators pointed out in Rutilio an “empty erudition”, by the return to the specious mythological allegory, by the use of the ekphrastic technique, accused of being forced and sustaining a literary artificiality empty of recipients, in its detail and context. Some commentators, such as Anker Laugesen, (1961: 54-68) even compare two practically contemporary travel accounts: the *Peregrinatio de Egeria*, composed at the end of the 4th century, a description of a trip to visit the holy places, by a Christian noblewoman and her entourage of pious aristocrats, full of curiosity and naive freshness; and the *DRS*, the return of this Gallic nobleman to his native land, having paid his service to Rome, moved by the urgent reality of the new times, with much more twilight colors. In fact, two journeys, one, of a woman, full of hope on her way to a world that begins; the other, of a pagan aristocrat returning to his origins, in a kind of retirement, exiling himself from a world that is decaying. In this domain, it makes sense to ask about the degree of awareness of Rutilius Namatianus regarding the times he is going through.

Claudius Rutilius Namatianus belonged to the nobility of Gallo-Roman origin, a member of the late-ancient aristocracy. His notoriety and power derived from the large domains he owned in the imperial provinces and from his service to the imperial administration as a high official. He himself

characteristic note of the ensemble, Rutilio and the rest, is paganism: intransigent and heroic, aestheticizing or skeptical, but always exclusive. Whoever designed the archetype structure of this codex must not have been a Christian [...] we are in a pagan environment in the 5th century, in any case connected with the Symmachus Circle ” / “la nota dominante e caratteristica dell'insieme, Rutilio e il resto, è il paganesimo: intransigente ed eroico o estetizzante e scettico, ma sempre esclusivo. Chi architettò la struttura dell'archetipo di questo codice non doveva essere cristiano: [...] siamo in un milieu pagano del secolo V, in qualche modo collegato con el círculo dei Simmachi”.

gives us autobiographical information in his work. Regarding the evocation of friendships and the memory of his father, he tells us that in the capital he held the position of Magister Oficiorum “master of crafts”, a position created by Diocletian, and of Praefectus Vrbi “Mayor of the city”, of paramount importance in the 5th century. After Rome ceased to be the permanent and exclusive capital (since Diocletian, therefore, a century ago), the highest authority in the capital was the Praefectus Vrbi.

The prosopographic and encomiastic excursuses, recurrent in the DRS, are part of the laudatory typology characteristic of the time. It should be noted that Rutilio always seeks to be in line with the excellence that he himself builds: praising his successors or predecessors in office, he also elevates their merits and their inclusion in a sphere of prestigious political and family connections, linked to the service of the empire⁶. This would be contextual information, if the poem were not accurate in the circumstances

6 The autobiographical passages in the work are significant (DRS I 156-157; 415-428; 467-468;). He asks the Goddess Rome and Cytherea to grant him the benefit of the seas, “if she did not displease when she applied justice to the sons of Quirinius and if she honored the venerable senators”. 415-428 – In an excursus initiated *laetior hic* “this good news, which served as advice to desist from returning to Rome (*Consilium Romam paene redire fuit*). Rufus had been elevated to mayor of the city. He extols him for “sharing the honors as half of himself; “one whom he esteems, because in him is renewed the power he had “*Exornent uirides communia gaudia rami:/ prouecta est animae portio anima meae/ sic mihi, sic potius placeat geminata potestas*. 467-468: the arrival at his friend Albinus *villa “Albini patuit proxima uilla mei”* who, he explains, was also the one who replaced him in the *toga*-dependent commitments”. That is, someone still young, but with the prudence of an elder, who was a high official “*Roma meo subiunxit honori/ per quem iura meae continuata togae*. Delays departure because he wants to visit Protasius (v. 542 “*sed mihi Protadium uisere cura fuit*”, opportunity to praise him: former Mayor of the city of Rome, enjoys a modest abode in Umbria, and acquires the aura of a Cincinnati, a “leader of kings” now returned to the rustic world. 561-564 On his visit to Pisa, he recognized as Mayor of the City a tribune, a dear companion in arms “*commilitio carus*” who had been useful to him when, as Master of the Offices, he had governed the imperial house and the guard of the pious sovereign, “*ex commilitio carus et ipse Mihi officiis regerem cum regia magister/armigerasque pii principis excubias*”. There, on a visit to the Forum, he contemplates the statue of his father, who had held important political and administrative positions in the city. The evocation of the father's memory with the Pisanii lends itself to a recurring attitude in these autobiographical excursions, which go through placing themselves in the continuity of those evoked. The locals fondly remember Lacanius, his firmness and sweetness, and are glad that Rutilius is not unworthy of paternal virtues. vv. 591 “*Ipsam me gradibus non degenerasse parentis gaudent et duplici sedulitate fouent*”. The formulation meets this desire of Rutilius to belong to a legacy worthy of servants of Rome, a comforting message at the moment of Rutilio's retirement.

that surround it: the withdrawal from the scene, the renovation of one of Rome's servants, to his birthplace⁷.

Not knowing exactly the exact destination in Gaul, the motivation for embarking on the concrete journey is clear. The reason for documenting his trip, well justified for reasons of higher power, through a poem, remains open. We must weigh, however, the scattered themes, the observations and the laudatory motives: Rome, mother of the world, at the very beginning; its sons and ministers, of which he was a part of.

From the poetic vocation of Rutilius Namatianus, nothing more has come to us than this poem, which makes us think that he was, above all, a man of action, a loyal servant of the public cause, who chose this significant moment in his life to leave to posterity his message: declaration of loyalty to the empire's cause and belief in its strength. At the same time, however, he reveals disquiet in the face of signs of his fragility. Thus, the motivation to assume a poetic voice in this dramatic life-changing moment may well translate a feeling of guilt, self-justification and justification for others, one's peers, for an abandonment.

Of his Gaul, we only know what he himself says. Thus, the poem opens with a rhetorical apostrophe to the reader in an apologetic tone. It is necessary to explain to the reader the speedy return (v. 1 *uelocem reditum*), too long (perhaps forever) for someone who devoted his entire life to Rome. How can one so suddenly (*tam cito*) renounce the beauties of Rome? It is because this blessed land, seed of all virtues and sent from heaven for the good of men, does not tire those who dwell in it or those who serve it.

The contingency of necessity compels him (v. 19-22). The Gallic fields call the indigenous, the landscape degraded by war, (*Gallica rura deformia bellis*) and if they lack beauty, they are more worthy of pity.

It is also the conscience of duty: in times of fortune, it is a slight fault to neglect one's fellow citizens. But public calamities *publica damna* (v.24) call for private dedication (*fidem priuatam*), and tears must be wept in place of loss. The scenario described is very realistic, that of a landscape altered by the wear and tear of the looting wars that lead to a *longam ruinam* (v. 27). Comfort for the survivors and reparation for what is possible are obligations. After the fire, at least the huts of the shepherds must be rebuilt

7 RUGGINI, 2003: 366-382. The importance of relationships and mutual recognition between urban aristocracy. NORWOD, 1947: 37: the rare voice of a non-Christian, a member of the Roman nobility, to contemporary events.

“*uel pastorales aedificare houses*” (v. 30). It is not possible to ignore the endless ruin, aggravated by the delay in the help. It is time to restore the fields and rebuild. In just 16 verses out of a total of 712, the very pragmatic motive of the trip is therefore established.⁸

Rutilius' inner strength to return to Gaul also converges with the opportune window of a historical time, which is that of the pacification of Gaul: between 408 and 417, Gaul faced sack and ruin, until Constantius, general of the Emperor Honorius, received the title of patrician and the hand of Galla Placidia, sister of the emperor and widow of the Visigothic king Ataulf, for his good services in the defeat of the usurper Attalus, defeat of the Vandals and armistice with the Goths, in 418. This general, later Constantius III, is precisely the target of the excerpts discovered by FERRARI, p. 28 (*Latii nominis una salus* (B, v. 10)⁹). The long ruin of Gaul that Rutilius speaks of is therefore not a punctual disaster, but a slow destruction in which the Province saw its ties with the city cut.

The work alternates narrative sequences, alluding to a real journey that skirts the Italian coast towards Gaul. Other interior trips are mixed: some, the result of the observation of the natural landscape, built and human, of a descriptive nature. Others, panegyric and laudatory excursions, addressed to Rome and its faithful servants, in which Rutilio is included. All these are embedded in erudite mythological and historical reflections, belonging to the author's school and cultural library.

The discursive diversity and the sequential discontinuity of the content (Parroni, 2009: 584), in addition to its incomplete character, do not help the cohesion of the work, which, according to the author's own words at the beginning of book II, progresses in a broken rhythm (*trepidus*). The introductory verses of both books, however, manifest the sole purpose of a close dialogue with the reader, along with information about the compositional method¹⁰:

8 VV. 35-36 at the moment of abandoning the foothills of the city, *uincimur* “we are defeated” and “with difficulty and late we yield to the way” *serum uix toleramus iter*.

9 CARCOPINO, J. 2012 “La date et le sens du voyage de Rutilius Namatianus”, *Anabases* 16, pp. 241-263, (p. 248).

10 I, vv.1-2: the purpose of stimulating the reader's curiosity with the rhetorical question “Will you be astonished at this sudden return, reader, how can one be so ready to renounce the goods of Romulus?” II, vv. 1-4. With the subtlety of the prosopopoeia, he himself alludes to the method of composition “the book was not that long, nor did the scroll have so many turns that it could not, in good justice, go on a little longer. The work feared the fatigue that comes with the continuity of the work, were it not for the reader

The awareness of the fragmented and confused character of the speech, the “*trepidum ruborem*” that he prefers to dilute in two small books, is therefore assumed. Single notes, interrupted and dotted by a variety of discursive moments that accompany the course of the narration, whether they are praise for peers, of senatorial status¹¹; whether mythological or picturesque excursions, they are rooted in the stimulation of observing the space and landscape in which the trip takes place¹². Rutilius is consistent in his capture of the evidence of a changing world and of its corroding features, which interfere and clash with the immutability and beauty of a Rome preserved in unblemished grandeur. By highlighting it in one of the most beautiful *Laus Romae* compositions, in the literary tradition of Eulogios a Roma (Cirino, 1934: 40; Roberts, 2001: 534), this greatness is more desired than real. Directed the gaze towards the beloved country, unlike Homer, it is not smoke rising in the air, but the clarity and a brilliant horizon that rises from the seven hills, in a place where the sun does not go down.¹³

The desired memory is, therefore, superimposed on the real vision, when it would be normal to observe, from an urban nucleus teeming with life, the smoke of inhabited houses.¹⁴ What comes to him is the sound of circus games and crowded theaters. The signs are contradictory and do not match the recent history of the city: subjected to painful sieges from 405 onwards, sacked in 410, depopulated, victim of plagues and famines, in the silence of the temples and altars silenced by the Theodosian legislation, it is not

to be frightened by a work that seems to have no end”. It therefore adopts the division into two books in a brief succession of small, varied stages which, like a meal or a journey, are preferable to an effort all at once vv. 10-11 “We have divided the hesitant confusion (*trepidum ruborem*) into two short books, easier to bear than all at once...”. The discontinuous composition combines with the iterative character of the external and concrete journey and the internal and reflective journey, of the poet with his reflections. 11 Exuperantius I, 213-216; Palladius, I, 209; two Gaulish, Protadius (I, 550) and Victorinus (I, 510), members of the prosopographic gallery of the reign of Theodosius and Honorius.

12 Vv. 180-182 The confrontation between a glorious past and a difficult present: the boat follows the right arm of the Tiber, because the left is silted up. It remains for him the glory of having been the one to welcome Aeneas “*Laeuus inaccessis fluuius uitatur arenis: Hospitis Aeneae gloria sola manet*” (cf. Virg. 7,31 the silted mouth of the Tiber “*flauus arena*”).

13 I, 195-205 *Quanquam signa leuis fumi commendat Homerus...sed caeli plaga candidior tractusque serenus... Illic perpetui soles...saepius attonitae resonant Circensibus aures: Nuntiat accensus plena theatra fauor*. PASCHOUD, 1978: 322, about the predominance of visual incentive over auditory ones in the DRS, in this passage.

14 Vv. 191-195 “even if you direct your eyes to where they delight in the fortunate land, because they think they can capture what they desire (*quod cupiunt*)”.

plausible that the poet hears, about thirty kilometers away, the roar from the venues of vibrant public shows¹⁵. Therefore, unlike Homer, he does not visualize the smoke rising from the cities, but listens to the noises of public spectacles. This sounds more like a wish than a real listening experience.

The distance between reality and the literary memory evoked, by Virgil and Homer, are disconcerting, although they fit in with the celebration of Rome's eternity. With 127 vv, the *Praise of Rome* celebrates the glory of the city that dominates the world and that is eternal: Inc. *Exaudi, regina tui pulcherrima mundi* "listen, Oh most beautiful of the queens of the world", a panegyric of the city that is also a exhortation to its rebirth.

But the journey follows the sea path, for the plains are flooded, and the mountains are steep. The observation of this geographical constriction is not innocent, as it tells us of a Rome suffocated in its land connections with the Empire. The author testifies to the bottleneck in communication between the south and the north of Italy, since civilized, humanly traversable paths were destroyed. Men would therefore be left with the hardships of the swamps, or the cliffs. The Via Aurelia and the countryside of Tuscany experienced the iron and fire of the Gothic incursions, so there are no shelters in the forests, nor bridges to cross the rivers. Thus, it is necessary to follow the uncertain sea. It should be noted that the observations of the contingency are real: necessity and duty forced him to leave for Gaul, the state of the land routes forced him to take the sea route. Despite this, the tone that formally stands out is that of glorification of the city, the empire and its agents, crystallized in an optimal time (Roberts 2001: 534, speaks of optimism in counterpoint).

Therefore, the paradigm of safe land transport was broken, and in the end, despite the encomium, Rome passes to the reader as a queen that no longer guarantees the safety of its own surroundings. When praise becomes an

15 Theodosius' repressive laws of traditional religion (389-391) limited the visibility of pagan manifestations. (CTh. 16.10). Circus and theatrical games are suspect for a Christianized state. Not prohibited, they take place according to legal restrictions established between 325 and 425 (Theodosius II). The way for them not to leave their place in the civic space is to control their sponsorship, the calendar and make their manifestation absolutely profane, that is, without any celebrative association with a pagan cult. BOWERSOCK, G., GREEN, P., Grabar, O., *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 674. O último espetáculo, Procopius, *The Gothic Wars*, 3. 37. 4., uma *uenatio* com Tótila, em 549. DEVOE, R. (2002) *Christianity and the Roman Games*, pp. 130-136 points, however, to an increase in spectacles in Rome after 410, promoted by Honorius, as a way of celebrating the restoration of trust.

exhortation to courage, one can see the desire to comfort a city victim of trials¹⁶ “as the falling torch regains new vigor, after the fall you more luminously aspire to heaven”.

Throughout the trip, the description of places in rapid transformation stands out. These, seen on the coast and visited, show the passage of time and the damage caused by men. Deserted spaces, crumbling fortresses occupy the digressive vision of A., which confronts the seen present with the grandiose memory of a known past: At the beginning of the voyage, *Pyrgos* “today large country houses, first small villages” I v. 224 *Nunc uillae grandes, oppida parua prius...*. We identify, in this brief note that confronts the present and the past, the transformation of the occupation of the late-ancient rural world, with the provincial cities occupied by traders, craftsmen and farmers moving towards the model of large autarchic towns, benefiting from the concentration of land ownership.

Farther on, Cere, from whom the years have erased the first name of “Agila” (vv. 225). The navigation approaches Castro, a semi-destroyed city, with an ancient portico (*semi ruti loci; vetusta porta* vv. 227-228). The author attaches himself, in a contemplative ekphrasis, to a solitary statue of Pan, modest in size (*exiguus formatus*), but “ready for the pleasures of Venus”¹⁷. In *Gravisciae*, they contemplate the unfortunate city of Cosa, once associated with the odor of the swamps¹⁸. Now, it is surrounded by thick forests, with the wild space recovering the space before humanized. The poet expresses modesty in revealing the cause of such an ordeal, but he does not want to hide a reason to laugh from the reader. In the past, its population had to flee in the face of a massive infestation of rats, which seems impossible to him.¹⁹. In both these episodes, the same communication strategy is present: great memory of the past in confrontation with the description of the altered present. In both cases, too, the poet ends the subject with a fugue, which instills in the reader an impression of unconscious laughter at the signs: a small statue of Pan with

16 DRS vv. 119-140 vv. 131-2 *Vtque nouas uires fax inclinata resumit,/Clarior ex humili sorte superna petis*. VV 120 “may the total forgetting of the insults suffered cast a shadow over a sinister adventure; may contempt for suffering close and heal your wounds...”.

17 V. 336 *Fingitur in uenerem pronior esse deus*.

18 vv. 285-286 *Cernimus antiquas nullo custode ruinas et desolatae moenia foeda Cosae*.

19 Depeyrot, G. 1993: p. 349, mentions the DRS about the plague of rats, although it hypothesizes that it is a metaphor for robbers. We think that Rutilio really talks about rats, because we do not find in the poem the use of metaphors that are not unfolded by the concrete referents. Besides, the current scenario is plausible: abandoned agricultural fields, deregulation of crops, floods can cause massive migration of rodents.

an erect phallus, announcing the impossible renewal of a ruined world; people running away from mice. Both, scenarios of the disturbance of the fragile human layer that covers nature.

The vision of the island of Igilium (vv. 325-336) allows him to honor it for having been a refuge for Roman citizens in the face of the sack of Rome (409 AD), with the Goths giving in to their natural fear of the sea. Populónia, gifted by a favorable natural harbor, where the ingenuity of the ancients built a castle (castellum I 401), with a lighthouse for defense and for the guidance of travelers.

But “time does not allow us to recognize the monuments of past ages, and time, which devours everything, only left crude traces, among the rubble of collapsed ceilings.²⁰ Observation is accompanied by judgment: cities, like mortal bodies, can also die.

It's not just the ruins, it's also the swamps, the silted ports, like Volaterra (I, 454), making landing difficult. The port of Pisa (532), whose memory reports as frequented by merchants and goods, now, its exposure to the winds and the fury of the autumn waves, causes the author surprise and amazement.

If the degradation of the Roman heritage taught him something about the inexorable law of time, the observation of the other leaves him fixed at a superb distance from someone who preserves himself in his class consciousness. Strangeness and disapproval of the empire's human diversity, associated with aristocratic haughtiness, produce a portrait of the fragmentation of the empire's social landscape, in which the lack of cohesion is notorious.

Exuperâncio, father of his traveling companion and family member Palladio, coming from Gaul to Rome to study laws (I, vv. 208-216), settled in his native Armorica, where “he teaches to love peace after the recovery of the borders, restores the laws, restores freedom, and does not allow serfs to become their masters of slaves”²¹, in a poetic expression that identifies the social disorder known as “Bagaudas”. Internal instability, resource scarcity, and authority voids drive deserters, survivors of defeated armies,

20 I, v. 414 *cernimus exemplis oppida posse mori.*

21 *Cuius Aremoricis pater Exuperantius oras/ nunc postliminium pacis amare docet;/leges restituit libertatemque reducit/ et servos famulis non sinit esse suis.*

and law-resistant servants make the Roman countryside, especially northwest Gaul, chaotic²².

Victorino, a fellow countryman and colleague in the office of serving Rome, also received him in Tuscany. Wanderer, he was forced to settle here, expelled from his Toulouse, by the Gothic sack suffered in 413. Before, *uicarius Britanniarum* (vice Mayor of one of the provinces of the diocese of Britannia) distinguished himself by serving a peripheral region, which was abandoned by the legions, but which he zealously ruled as if he were at the center of the empire.

Doubly exiled, therefore, this Gaul, once by the abandonment of the British limes, once by the capture of Toulouse. He was given by the emperor the honorific title of *illustris comes* (v. 507-8), with advantages which he rejected out of love for the fields²³. It is yet another member of the provincial elites at the service of Rome who opted for withdrawal. In this case, Rutilius himself, by identifying himself with him, anticipates his future enjoyment of rest in Gaul.

Protádio, who he meets on his journey, is also an alter-ego of his future destiny. A Gallic aristocrat, also a former mayor of Rome, he lives in modest fields in Umbria, instead of his homeland (Gaul? Rome?). His Cincinnatied demeanor and soul allow him to regard the small as great, and modest fields are the destiny of conquerors of kings. In other words, the retreat to modest places, far from Rome, in the end of valiant services to the country, must yield to him the memory and witness of Rome²⁴.

Rutilio accounts for the fragmentation of the community, identifying groups as threats. The runaway servants we talked about in connection with Exuperâncio, and two more examples: the encounter with the unsympathetic Jewish innkeeper, the starting point for a fierce but typified invective against “this race”. In Faléria, he and his companions attend the celebration of the rebirth of Osiris, in a joyful and colorful folk festival. They sought rest and food in a *statio*, at the foot of a wood, which turned

22 “*colonatus perpetuus*” (CTh. 14 18, 1, in 382). A measure to repopulate the countryside makes the settlement of rural populations more rigid, but it is accompanied by strong contestation by those affected.

23 In 402 the military contingent in Britannia is called to Gaul and then to Italy to fight the massive invasions. (I 493- 505). Vv. 507-508 “*Illustris nuper sacrae comes additus aulae/ contempsit summos ruris amore gradu.*; Vv. 509-510 “*Hunc ego complexus uentorum aduersa fefelli/ Dum uideor me patriae iam mihi parte frui*”

24 Vv. 542-558.

out to be a bad deal. Their innkeeper, a Jew, “an animal unreconciled with the food of men”, who serves them old fruits and crushed seaweed, complaining about the waste of water. A start as an invective against this race, repeating the commonplaces (mutilation of the genitals, the laziness of the sabbath). Pompey's conquest came face to face with Rome, this nation, a pestis, which, defeated, weighs terribly on the victors, in an obvious intertext with the Horatian maxim of *Graecia capta*²⁵.

The excerpt in which Amiano denounces the “infestation” of the island of Capri by monks is also well known, in what constitutes a valuable document about the dissemination of asceticism in the West and the spatial adaptation of the original reality of Egypt and the eastern deserts, in which the anachoresis "withdrawal into the wilderness" can be literal.

In Italy and southern Gaul, humanized places without deserts, these first escapes from the world are made to Mediterranean islands and rocks²⁶. Near the coast of Cirno, he brings to the poem a *damni monumenta recentis* “the memory of a recent misfortune (v. 517). An aristocrat decided to bury himself alive on a rock. In the past, of our illustrious (v. 519) *noster enim nuper iuuenis maioribus amplis*), he abdicated status, marriage, fortune by a shameful retreat (v. 522) *turpem latebram*.

This Roman was seduced by a sect that withdraws him from the world, and that, more than Circe, metamorphoses bodies and souls²⁷. Capraria and this anonymous young man are two faces of the same social movement that takes place in the Roman West, particularly after Theodosius, and which is transversal. Among the elites, some Christians opt for asceticism, breaking marital ties and abdicating property. St. Jerome is the instigator and witness of this phenomenon, as well as giving an account of the internal opposition and resistance, within moderate Christians, to the radicalism of the monastic option. But the seduction of more fundamentalist ways of living Christianity doesn't just affect elites, it's a popular phenomenon.

Rutilius is a traditional Roman who, coexisting well with Eastern cults, such as that of Isis or that of Pan, looks with reservations at Jewish and

25 I, vv. 382-398 “*Victoresque suos natio uicta premit*”. Cf. Horácio, Epist. II, 1, 156-157.

26 Vv. 439-452. Capraria Island is full of these men “who flee from the light”, bitter and anti-social men, who deserve all their disapproval, taken by black bile.

27 Vv. 517-526.

Christian monotheisms. If, in the first, the religious option is identified with the nation, in the second, this is not the case.

The reason for his silence in relation to this turn in the spirituality of the empire and in the option of political power stems from the discretion required of a high official. Not Christian, but *Praefectus Vrbi* in 414, at the service of an emperor and officially Christian authorities, subjected to laws that outlawed pagan religious manifestations of a public nature, he was only irritated by their manifestations that did not escape the eye of an observer.

We are led to agree with Cameron, (2011: p. 207), when he considers that Rutilio's anti-Christianity is a marginal subject in his poem. We are still at a time when, particularly in Rome, class feeling overcomes religious belonging, and the senatorial class maintains levels of religious ambiguity. Rutilio agrees with the feeling shared by moderate Christians in the West, and by members of the secular church themselves, who view these radical and antisocial ascetics with suspicion (O'Donnell, 1979: 84).

This antipathy towards certain human types reaches its peak in the invective against the perfidious Stilicho, the culmination of the invective against the barbarians, particularly the Goths, who decimated the Roman West (Soler, 2004: 239), a controversial figure in history that contemporaries retain disparate testimonies. Tutor of the young son of Theodosius, Honorius, son of a Vandal prince and a Roman mother, an intrepid military man who coordinated defense and diplomacy in the unstable times of the early 5th century, he was eventually accused of treason and executed as such. For Rutilius, Stilicho was the barbaric version of Tarpeia, opening Italy to barbaric sack.

Just as the praise of Rome is central in book I, book II begins with a praise for the geographical area of the Italian coast, in a kind of amplification, raised by a moment in which the poet's vision, when leaving the north south, allows you to contemplate a wide expanse of the Gulf that extends before the Ligurian Sea. A providential land, destined for fortune and for accumulating the universe of goods, Italy is the natural extension of eternal Rome.

For this reason, greater gravity hangs over the deeds of the sinister Stilicão. He surrendered the heart of the empire, Lazio, to Gothic barbarism. Rome was already captive before it was conquered, says the poet, alluding to the slow suffocation of the capital by the barbarian occupation of northern Italy, cutting off land communications between Rome and its western

provinces. In addition, he had the Sibylline Books, preserved in the temple of Jupiter Capitoline, burned.

Rutilius is the only author to accuse Stilicho of the deed, but it is probable that the Sibylline books were in fact destroyed during the reign of Honorius, on Christian initiative. In Tartarus, says Rutilius, he deserves greater punishment than Nero, since he killed a mortal woman, his mother. Stilicho killed an immortal, the mother of the world²⁸. In his invective against Stilicho, the hostility of the traditional aristocracy to the barbarians also weighs, not only to the declared enemies, but also to those that time was placing in the proximity and at the service of the empire, as was the case.

Conclusions

Rutilius Namatianus has an indisputable place as a source for objective knowledge of Italy from the 5th century after the Sack of 409 and the constant presence of barbarian movements between Gaul and Italy at the beginning of the 5th century. It offers us a subjective vision, filtered by its internal focus, committed and not exempt, about the transformations of the physical landscape, built and humanized, and the transformations of the social landscape. In this domain, we have two types of information:

On the one hand, the knowledge of a time and a space provided by the sea voyage, of the physical landscape, modified by the erosion of time and events. But also the knowledge of the transformations of the social landscape, by reference to episodes of changes in the lives of personalities (changes in positions, voluntary or involuntary exiles, private life choices); by reference to minorities, groups sectarianized in their ethnic or religious condition.

On the other hand, the inner impact of these transformations on Rutilio, not only as an individual, but as a member of a social category. How did they react, how did the Romans feel the events that transformed their world? Did they manage to take a systemic view, connected the signals, or

28 II, 42-43 *Quo magis est facinus diri Stilichonis acerbum,/ proditor arcani quod fuit imperii.(...)* II, 59-60 *hic immortalem, mortalem perculit ille,/ hic mundi matrem perculit, ille suam.*

did they respond on a case-by-case basis to the varied signs of order transformation?

These are questions that are too broad for the subject at hand, although the words and reflections of Rutilius Namatianus allow us to make some considerations: as a member of the traditional Roman aristocracy, he interprets the signs of transformation in his surroundings with the awareness that they represent a crisis to eternal Rome. Rutilio contemplates a continuous civilization with twelve centuries of history, comments what he sees using his literary, historical, mythological cultural archive, and his class identity.

The historical and literary referents that he uses to evaluate the events of the present, the vision fragmented by a look dotted in episodes (*the trepidus rubor*), his class bias made him, probably, opaque for the conception of a prognosis that contemplated an absolute end to a way of life. Hence, he manifests an unshakable faith in the rebirth of Rome.

Therefore, he manifests an unshakable faith in the rebirth of Rome. Therefore, unfocusing the gaze and trying to escape may be attitudes that explain the disconcerting with which he concludes dramatic episodes with jocular and superficial remarks, resorts to erudition, and even the feeling of juxtaposition of episodes with little cohesion between them.

Twice, however, the poet's reflection consciously equates the mortality of civilizations: when he contemplates the ruins of Populónia (I, v. 414) and understands that the examples show him that cities also die; when, in the invective against Stilicho, he compares him to Nero, aggravating the responsibilities of General Vandal, because this Barbarian had killed the mother of the world.

But it seems to us that Rutilio faces, first of all, the fears of his own mortality and oblivion. Faced with the turmoil of his world, he expresses in sub-text the fear that time and the memory of men will not do him justice: Exuperâncio, Victorino and Protádio, also Gallic aristocrats and servants of Rome, anticipated the fate he is consciously facing, pushed to carry on. By including them in such detail in his poem, he recognizes their virtues and merit for a life spent in the service of the public cause. But no less praises his retreat from a now that he crosses, on his journey.

If the awareness of the gravity of the times prevailed over the complimentary tone of his pairs and his land, Rome and its regions,

Rutilius would not have been able to justify his return and retreat, nor to conceive for himself an existence beyond Rome.

So wishful thinking protects him from the moral dilemma. As his pairs leave Rome and their *negotia*, preserving their honor and merit, so he hopes to continue, in Gaul, the life that Rome had taught him. For this reason, leaving the signs without taking a lesson from them is, for Rutilius Namatianus, a survival strategy.

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