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**Ovid and the Exilic Journey of Rutilius Namatianus**

Commentaries on Rutilius Namatianus's elegy *De reditu suo*, in which the author describes his journey home from Rome to Gaul in 417 CE, are full of references not only to his contemporaries and recent predecessors, especially Ausonius and Claudian, but also to older poets such as Vergil and Ovid. Learnedly allusive as it is, his work is no cento but a highly original, indeed unique composition that draws on several traditions of Roman poetry—at once an elegy, an encomium of Rome and Italy, and a poetic itinerary with satiric invective. Although Ovid's works are among the stock resources of late antique classicism, for Rutilius they are more than this: 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 CE), Rutilius regards the city on the one hand as ruined and on the other as ideally perfect, eternal, and indeed divine.

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 can function creatively in this fashion, I consider some features of Rutilius's art of allusion. When, for instance, he cites the *Odyssey* on smoke rising as a sign of home and human habitation (1.193-196), he looks back to Homer through Ovid's exilic verse (*Ex Ponto* 1.3.33-34). Beginning from such double allusions, I develop a larger picture of the 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. The defining importance of Ovid's exilic elegies can be exemplified by examining two topics of Rutilius's elegy to which he assigns significance in language that draws upon Ovid: first, his own poetic journey through an Italian landscape reminiscent of Ovid's poetic Scythia; and second, the destruction of the Sibylline books by Stilicho, whom Rutilius makes parallel both to Althea in the *Metamorphoses*, who destroys her son Meleager, and to Ovid himself in *Tristia* 1.7, who Althea-like tries to destroy the *Metamorphoses*.