Ordo renascendi est crescere posse malis (Rutilius Namatianus I.140): the sack of Rome and the resilience of western Roman aristocracies

Sophie Kultzen

Rutilius Namatianus' poem De reditu suo *was written a few years after the devastation of Rome in 410. It has been read as nostalgia for Rome's past greatness written in a climate of senatorial escapism. This article revises this reading, instead analysing the poem as the literary expression of resilience on the part of the traditional western aristocracies. The collective strategy of conservative western Roman elites was to face the crisis by rebuilding the* beatitudo temporum *of urban structures and consolidating the ideology of the* Urbs aeterna. *By contrast, the increasing importance of ascetic movements can be seen as an alternative coping strategy adopted by the Christian aristocracy, overcoming the trauma of 410 through religious renewal.*

Introduction

When the news of the sack of Rome on 24 August 410 reached Jerome in distant Bethlehem, his confidence in the widespread idea of *Roma aeterna*, eternal Rome, was completely shaken.[1] For the first time in

[1] The shock that the event caused among the population far outweighed the actual damage inflicted on the city by Alaric's Goths. See e.g. M. Meier, *Geschichte der Völkerwanderung. Europa, Asien und Afrika vom 3. bis zum 8. Jahrhundert n.Chr.*, 2nd edn (Munich, 2020), p. 217. For the general idea of *Roma aeterna* in Late Antiquity see F. Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna. Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'occident Latin á l'époque des grandes invasions* (Rome, 1967).

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eight hundred years, the *barbari* had succeeded in entering and plundering the city. It is well known that the Church Father's reaction to Rome's capture reads like the literary antithesis of the hymns of praise penned by the court poet Claudian or the Christian poet Prudentius, which lauded the city's eternity, splendour, and beauty.[2] By contrast, in the two *Praefationes* to his Ezekiel Commentary, Jerome reacts in bewilderment to the shocking news that the 'brightest light of all lands is extinguished, indeed the head of the Roman Empire has been severed and, to speak truly, within a single city the whole world has gone to ruin'.[3] In the second *Praefatio*, Jerome again expresses his astonishment at the arrival of a catastrophe that no one had ever thought possible:

> Who would have believed that Rome would perish, she who through her victories was raised up over the whole world – that she should be both the mother of the nations and their grave [. . .]?[4]

In times of crisis following the turn of the fourth and fifth century, the discourse on *Roma aeterna* reached its peak, finding expression in late antique pagan and Christian prose and poetry.[5] Reasons for the sack of Rome had to be found, and pagans and Christians blamed each other. However, most documents to deal with the topic that have survived were written from a Christian perspective: the pagan sources have all but disappeared, since few people were interested in such opinions after the Christians took control.[6]

One of the major exceptions is the literary poem *De reditu suo* by Rutilius Namatianus, a Gallo-Roman senator of an old Roman mindset.[7] The poem has often been accused of historical romanticism

[2] See Meier, *Geschichte der Völkerwanderung*, p. 214.

[3] See Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem libri* I praef. 12–4, ed. F. Bucchi *et al.*, Corpus Christianorm, Series Latina [hereafter CCSL] 75 (Turnhout, 1964), p. 3: 'uero clarissimum terrarum omnium lumen exstinctum est, immo romani imperii truncatum caput et, ut uerius dicam, in una urbe totus orbis interiit'.

[4] See Hier. comm. in Ez. III praef. 7–9, ed. Bucchi *et al.*, p. 91: 'Quis crederet ut totius orbis exstructa uictoriis Roma corrueret, ut ipsa suis populis et mater fieret et sepulcrum [. . .]'

[5] See M. Fuhrmann, 'Die Romidee der Spätantike', *Historische Zeitschrift* 207.3 (1968), pp. 529–61, here p. 532.

[6] See M. Meier and S. Patzold, *August 410 – Ein Kampf um Rom* (Stuttgart, 2010), p. 69.

[7] The regional division of the western Roman senatorial aristocracies into Gallo-Roman, Italian, North African, or even urban Roman represents an attempt at structuring that is only partially suited to fully capturing the complexities of ancient social dynamics. See H.A. Wagner, *Das spätantike Rom und die stadtrömische Senatsaristokratie (395–455 n. Chr.). Eine althistorisch-archäologische Untersuchung* (Berlin and Boston, 2021), p. 18. In the case of Rutilius Namatianus, for instance, it becomes evident that despite his Gallic origins, he operated on an empire-wide scale. His official duties, for example, bound him first to Ravenna as *magister officiorum* (412), and later, as *praefectus urbi*, closely to Rome (414).

and epigonism, reflecting the collective political incapacity of the western senatorial aristocracies to overcome the political and military crises that they encountered during the barbarian invasions of the fifth century and onwards. A prime example of this view is François Paschoud's now-classic study on the idea of *Roma aeterna* in Latin-speaking Late Antiquity, in which he characterizes Rutilius' *De reditu suo* as a 'swan song'. According to Paschoud, Rutilius metaphorically wears 'blinders', proposing theoretical and impractical solutions and predicting a bright future for Rome – a future in which he, Rutilius, does not truly believe. Thus, there is, in Paschoud's view, no realistic connection between Rutilius' vision of *Roma aeterna* and the concrete historical situation.[8] This historicist interpretation of both poetic and senatorial decadence has been advocated in various ways up to recent times, in the style of Enlightenment histories such as Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* among others.[9] However, it is here rejected. The aim of this article is to show that the poem is more an expression of collective resilience on the part of the traditional western aristocracy after 410, than a nostalgic elegy for a glorious but forever lost Roman past.

Michele Salzman was the first to highlight the resilience with which the urban Roman senatorial class responded in various ways to persistent political and military crises, especially in the final three centuries of its existence. She defines resilience as 'marshalling of resources to reorganize and restore social formations even in the face of fractures and swerves', and declares that the exceptionally great 'political and economic strength of the Romans and their institutions, including the Senate, continue to be underestimated over the *longue durée*'.[10]

Forms of resilience and crisis management can be observed not only in the case of the urban Roman senatorial aristocracy in the aftermath of the

[8] See Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna*, p. 167: 'Mais [Rutilius] est victime de ses préjugés de classe, il porte des œillères, préconise des solutions théoriques et irréalisables, et prédit à Rome un avenir brilant auquel il ne croit pas lui-même. [. . .] l'idéologie dont il est le dernier représentant aboutit à l'échec; elle n'a plus aucun contact avec la situation historique concrète après 410.'

[9] See I. Lana, *Rutilio Namaziano* (Turin, 1961), p. 146; G. Malaurie, Review of É. Wolff *et al.* (eds), *Rutilius Namatianus, Sur son retour.* Texte établi et trad. par e.a. Collection de université de France (Paris, 2007), in *Historia* 849 (2017), p. 83; V. Zarini, 'Histoire, panégyrique et poésie: trois éloges de Rome l'éternelle autour de l'an 400 (Ammien Marcellin, Claudien, Rutilius Namatianus)', *Ktèma: civilisations de l'Orient, de la Grèce et de Rome antiques* 24 (1999), pp. 167–79. For the historiography on the 'decline and fall' of Rome and the late antique Roman aristocracies, see T. Meurer, *Vergangenes Verhandeln. Spätantike Statusdiskurse senatorischer Eliten in Gallien und Italien* (Berlin and Boston, 2019), pp. 1–2; M.R. Salzman, *The Falls of Rome. Crises, Resilience, and Resurgence in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 13–14.

[10] Salzman, *The Falls of Rome*, pp. 18, 19.

sack of Rome, but also among the Gallo-Roman senatorial elite of the fifth century. This region had been far more severely affected by the Gothic invasions than the city itself. A virtually apocalyptic image of the destruction is painted by the Gallo-Roman Christian poet Orientius: 'All Gaul was filled with the smoke of a single pyre.'[11]

In his response to the crisis, Rutilius significantly differs from his Christian Gallo-Roman fellows. Instead of addressing the issues of destruction and barbarization from a theological perspective,[12] he presents his audience with various concepts, all subordinated to the overarching question, 'What will restore Rome to her greatness?'

From this starting point I will first show how Rutilius optimistically treats the goddess Roma, his fellow western Roman aristocrats, and Constantius as symbols of the political awakening of the senatorial aristocracy. I will then focus on Rutilius' critical engagement with the increasing ascetic movement of the Christian Gallo-Roman aristocracy in the aftermath of Rome's sacking. Finally I will touch upon archaeological inscriptions, especially of the urban Roman elite, which directly reflect the resilience inherent in Rutilius' poem as a strategy for coping with the disaster and destruction wreaked by the Goths and ongoing barbarian invasions.

Context, structure, and programme of *De reditu suo*

Describing this travel poem as 'political' may seem paradoxical at first glance, because the protagonist ostensibly withdraws from political life in Rome in order to travel to his country estates in Gaul. However, as Bruno Bureau has shown, political discourse can certainly be discerned within the poem, which is already clear from the purpose of the journey itself.[13] Rutilius is realistic enough to see that immediate action is necessary in order not to exacerbate the damage caused by the invasions in the periphery of the western Roman empire.[14] He wants to use his wealth and authority to help the inhabitants of Gaul. Only a little over half of the poem has survived: 644 verses of Book I, with a

[11] See Orientius, *Commonitorium* II.184, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 61 (Turnhout, 1736), p. 995: 'Uno fumavit Gallia tota rogo.'

[12] For the reaction of the Christian Gallo-Roman poets, M. Roberts, 'Barbarians in Gaul: The Response of the Poets', in J. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds), *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 97–106.

[13] See B. Bureau, 'Rutilius, lecteur critique de Claudien poète politique', in C. Filoche (ed.), *L'intertexte virgilien et sa réception: écriture, récriture et réflexivité chez Virgile et Rutilius Namatianus* (Dijon, 2007), pp. 157–83.

[14] See Rutil. Nam. I.27–8, ed. É. Wolff, *Rutilius Namatianus, Sur son retour* (Paris, 2007), p. 3. For the English translation, M. Malamud, *Rutilius Namatianus' Going Home: De Reditu Suo* (London and New York, 2016), p. 46.

few lines from the beginning missing, and 68 verses from Book II. The fragment of the second book, discovered a few decades ago, may indicate that the author's departure was directly connected with the political figure and rising star of the western Roman general Constantius (r. 421).[15] The commander was responsible for convening the Gallic provincial assembly (*concilium septem provinciarum*) in Arles in 418, which was intended to restore Roman power in Gaul from this location.[16] It is quite possible that Rutilius, as a member of the Gallo-Roman nobility, was also obliged to take part in the provincial assembly in question. This could explain his rapid departure from Rome to Gaul at the end of 417, even in unfavourable weather conditions.[17] As the following interpretation will show, Rutilius additionally supported Constantius' policy in a literary manner by praising his efforts to restore Roman order in the periphery of the empire.

The extremely allusive plot of the travel poem is not as loosely put together as at first appears. Rather, the descriptions of the individual stages of the journey are held together by the idea of *Roma aeterna*. The praise of Rome's greatness, eternity, and beauty at the beginning of the first book is followed by a description of the areas outside the city that have been reduced to ruins by either the Gothic invasions, negligence, or the ravages of time.[18] At the centre of the poem stands the prayer to the goddess Roma, with a plea for a felicitous voyage under her protection.[19] This is followed by a description of the separation of Rutilius from his friends in Rome and at Ostia and his last look at the city.[20] The second part of the first book consists of a description of the sea voyage from Portus Augusti near Rome to Pisa,[21] and Rutlilius' subsequent visit to Pisa while he was waiting for the next voyage, which was delayed due to stormy weather.[22] Here Rutilius switches from mythological digressions to invective against the monks whose hermitages he sees as he passes the islands of Capraria and Gorgon. This passage is followed by a description of a shipping canal

[15] See M. Ferrari, 'Spigolature bobbiesi II. Frammenti ignoti di Rutilio Namaziano', *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 16 (1973), pp. 1–41.
[16] See W. Lütkenhaus, *Constantius III. Studien zu seiner Tätigkeit und Stellung im Westreich (411–421)* (Bonn, 1998), pp. 113–21 and J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court AD 354–425* (Oxford, 1975), p. 334.
[17] For the date, see A. Cameron, 'Rutilius Namatianus, St. Augustine, and the Date of the *De reditu*', *Journal of Roman Studies* 57.1 (1967), pp. 31–9. For the 'political' reason for his journey, see Lütkenhaus, *Constantius III.*, p. 111.
[18] See Rutil. Nam. I.1–34, ed. Wolff, pp. 2–3.
[19] See Rutil. Nam. I.35–164, ed. Wolff, pp. 3–9.
[20] See Rutil. Nam. I.165–216, ed. Wolff, pp. 10–12.
[21] See Rutil. Nam. I.217–540, ed. Wolff, pp. 12–27.
[22] See Rutil. Nam. I.541–644, ed. Wolff, pp. 27–31.

and a rural Osiris festival that the traveller observes in Falesia, to which he adds an invective against the Jews.[23] The stages of the journey are enlivened by the description of visits to Rutilius' aristocratic friends, in whom he recognizes the embodiment of the idea of Rome. The verses offer the reader many entertaining scenes. At the beginning of the second book, analogous to the description and praise of Rome at the beginning of the first book, there is an excursus on the situation and shape of Italy, including a 'praise of Italy' (*Laudes Italiae*),[24] which is followed by invective against Constantius' predecessor Stilicho.[25] Stilicho's policy regarding the Goths, and the destruction of the Sibylline books allegedly brought about by him, are named as reasons for the fact that Alaric was able to penetrate the city two years after Stilicho's death. After the description of the arrival in Luna, the second book breaks off.[26]

The complexity and multi-layered nature of this travel poem invite a wide variety of interpretations. Joëlle Soler sees in it the literary response of an ardent pagan to the Christian poet Prudentius, who attempted to Christianize the western Roman cultural landscape through his pilgrimage literature.[27] Even if not all of her conclusions are convincing to the last detail, the overarching idea of a discourse between Rutilius and Prudentius, for which Petra Schierl has also marshalled evidence, is intriguing.[28] It supports the understanding that traditional Roman aristocrats not only took note of the Christian intellectuals of their time, but also, in reaction to the views of Christians, sharpened their own thinking – in this case the topos of *Roma renascens* – in times of political crises.[29]

[23] See Rutil. Nam. I.371–98, ed. Wolff, pp. 19–20.
[24] See Rutil. Nam. II.17–40, ed. Wolff, p. 33.
[25] See Rutil. Nam. II.41–60, ed. Wolff, p. 34.
[26] See Rutil. Nam. II.61–8, ed. Wolff, p. 35.
[27] See J. Soler, 'Religion et récit de voyage. Le *peristephanon* de Prudence et le *De reditu suo* de Rutilius Namatianus', *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques* 51 (2005), pp. 297–326.
[28] See P. Schierl, '. . . *quod sine fine placet. Roma renascens* bei Rutilius Namatianus und Prudentius', in K. Pollmann and H. Schwarzbauer (eds), *Der Fall Roms und seine Wiederauferstehungen in Antike und Mittelalter* (Berlin and New York, 2013), pp. 233–63.
[29] Not only Rutilius, but also the court poet Claudian had previously dealt intensively with the Christian Prudentius. See I. Gualandri, 'Claudiano e Prudenzio. Polemiche a distanza', in F.E. Consolino (ed.), *Letteratura e propaganda nell'Occidente latino da Augusto ai regni romanobarbarici* (Rome, 2000), pp. 145–71; *eadem*, 'Prudenzio e Claudiano. In margine al Contra Symmachum', in U. Criscuolo and R. Maisano (eds), *Synodia. Studia humanitatis. Antonio Garzya septuagenario ab amicis atque discipulis dicata* (Naples, 1997), pp. 365–87; M. Roberts, 'Rome Personified, Rome Epitomized: Representations of Rome in the Poetry of the Early Fifth Century', *The American Journal of Philology* 122.4 (2001), pp. 533–65.

The 'fall' of Rome and its 'resurrection' in the text: the goddess Roma as symbol of political awakening

The classical philologist Philip R. Hardie has recently emphasized that in the Latin literature of Late Antiquity, which was previously often associated with political and intellectual decline and decadence, the themes of *nouitas* and *renouatio* are treated with astonishing frequency and emphasis.[30] But parallels outside the so-called literary works of the 'Theodosian Renaissance' of the fourth and fifth century can seldom be found. Rutilius devotes himself to the theme of *renouatio* in the hymn to old Roma transforming herself into the youthful goddess:

> Lift your sacred head with laurel crowned, O Rome,
> restore its withered leaves to youthful green.
> Let golden towers blaze upon your diadem
> and let your golden shield spew constant flame![31]

It has long been recognized that in his journeys Rutilius had dealings with the famous court poet Claudian, whose rhetorical talent was praised by pagans and Christians alike.[32] In his time, Claudian was regarded as the city's greatest poet, so it is not surprising that Rutilius chose him as a literary model. Above all, the goddess Roma holds a special significance in Claudian's work, a theme that Rutilius later modifies in his travel poem. A crucial point here is that in Claudian, the goddess is powerless without the emperor; her divine authority pales in comparison to the *virtus* of the empire's ruler.[33] Roma appears similarly powerless in Symmachus' *Third Relatio*, where she takes the form of an aged city goddess. In Symmachus' depiction, she clearly represents the pagan senatorial aristocracy, whose existence seems threatened by the religious policies of the Christian emperor.[34]

[30] See P. Hardie, *Classicism and Christianity in Late Antique Latin Poetry* (Oakland, 2019), p. 135.

[31] Rutil. Nam. I.115–18, ed. Wolff, p. 7; trans. Malamud, p. 46: 'Erige crinales lauros seniumque sacrati / uerticis in uirides, Roma, recinge comas. / Aurea turrigero radient diademata cono / perpetuosque ignes aureus umbo uomat.'

[32] On Rutilius and Claudian, see R. Helm, 'Heidnisches und Christliches bei spätlateinischen Dichtern', in R. Helm *et al.* (eds), *Natalicium. Johannes Geffcken zum 70. Geburtstag, 2. Mai 1931, gewidmet von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Heidelberg, 1931), pp. 41–6; Bureau, 'Rutilius, lecteur critique de Claudien poète politique', , pp. 157–83, who shows to what extent *De reditu suo* can be understood as a response to Claudian's political poetry.

[33] For the *Dea Roma* in Claudian generally, see P. Riedl, 'Die Romidee Claudians', *Gymnasium* 102 (1995), pp. 537–55, here p. 544: 'Claudians Roma tritt dem Rezipienten als Göttin, aber weder als kultische [. . .] noch als machtvolle Göttin mit der Fähigkeit zu eigenständigem Eingreifen entgegen.'

[34] For the critical edition, see R. Klein, *Der Streit um den Victoria-Altar. Die dritte Relatio des Symmachus und die Briefe 17, 18 und 57 des Bischofs Ambrosius* (Darmstadt, 1972).

In Rutilius' work, Roma becomes, for the first time, the subject of a hymn, with the poet highlighting her divinity from the outset. This underscores the importance of the idea of *Roma aeterna* for the senatorial aristocracy in times of crisis, as they drew more than ever on the idealized resources of their past. Roma is no longer a figure who appeals to earthly rulers or is instructed by political leaders; rather, she has become the recipient of prayers and, as the all-powerful mother of all gods and men, even takes the place of Jupiter, the highest of the gods. In the hymn to Roma, the Virgilian idea of temporal and spatial boundlessness is skilfully linked to the notion of *ordo renascendi est crescere posse malis* ('the law of rebirth is the ability to grow through one's hardship'). Roma is portrayed as powerful and resilient, as Rutilius illustrates with examples from Roman history.

Examples from the Roman past show that the city has only grown stronger after every military defeat;[35] the successful defences against Pyrrhus or Hannibal from the walls of Rome are mentioned as examples.[36] The *exempla* mentally strengthen the audience, particularly with regard to the invading barbarians, by highlighting Rome's military strength as a distinctive feature that sets it apart. Cosmological examples, such as the moon and stars – the moon wanes only to rise again, and stars burn out only to be reborn – reinforce the argument for Rome's resilience.[37] The dogma *ordo renascendi est crescere posse malis* – whose roots go down to the Republic – strengthens the belief in Rome's invincibility: Cicero had already stated that in contrast to organic life, death for the *res publica* was not a natural necessity, since the state was able to rejuvenate itself.[38]

As Christian Stadermann has put it, however, the past instilled confidence in Rutilius and helped him to cope with the experience of contingent events in the present, by assuming cyclical movements in Roman history – an eternal cycle of a *Roma renascens*.[39] Rome surpasses the other empires not only because of its size and beauty: the poet also explains its extraordinary age by its special ability not to sink in crises, but to emerge even stronger from them. The poet's appeal to Rome's resilience following his praise of the city should be interpreted in two ways: both as a reminder to himself to rise up to

[35] See Rutil. Nam. I.139, ed. Wolff, p. 8: 'Illud te reparat quod quod cetera regna resoluit.'
[36] See Rutil. Nam. I.127–8, ed. Wolff, p. 8.
[37] See Rutil. Nam. I.123–4, ed. Wolff, p. 8.
[38] SCicero, *De re publica* III.34, ed. C.W. Keyes, Loeb Classical Library 213 (Cambridge, 1928), p. 212: 'nullus interitus est rei publicae naturalis ut hominis'.
[39] See C. Stadermann, '*uno fumavit Gallia tota rogo* . . . Kontingenzbewältigung im Gallien des 5. Jahrhunderts', in M. Becher and H. Hess (eds), *Kontingenzerfahrungen und ihre Bewältigung zwischen imperium und regna. Beispiele aus Gallien und angrenzenden Gebieten vom 5. bis zum 8. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2021), pp. 75–120, here pp. 83–4.

the image of the unshakeable *Dea Roma* in order to face the upcoming tasks in devastated Gaul with renewed vigour, and as an appeal to all members of the western Roman aristocracy whose idea of *Roma aeterna* has been shaken by the crisis. After all, the belief in Rome's rebirth had to be collectively strengthened following the general shock of the city's sacking. Whether the hope for the 'renewal of Rome' expressed in the hymn could be turned into reality now depended crucially on the actions and vigour of the western Roman senatorial aristocracy.

The western Roman aristocracy, Constantius, and *Roma renascens*

Amid the collapse of major institutions and administrative structures, forging close alliances and networks among senatorial aristocrats and cultivating political friendships against the tide of decline became more essential than ever. To steady the deeply unsettled senatorial class, it was crucial to revive traditional ideals of senators as 'bearers of the idea of Rome'.

Rutilius presents himself in the poem's first book as a senatorial aristocrat who is well connected with members of both the Italian and the Gallo-Roman high elite. From his close network of friends, he lists well-known representative figures across different generations – older, contemporary, and younger – who embody *Romanitas* in a world threatened by the *barbari*. From the older generation, he mentions his father Lachanius, and how it moved him to tears when he saw the statue that the inhabitants of Pisa had erected in his father's honour.[40] Then there are the dignitaries Protadius from Pisa[41] and Messala Avienus at Centumcellae.[42] Protadius is a typical Roman 'image of virtue' (*virtutis speciem*) in the manner of the Republican heroes Serranus and Fabricius, who distinguished themselves in the highest political offices through frugality and the renunciation of luxury. Protadius is praised for his sense of justice and his prudence in government service.[43] As city prefect of Rome in 400/1 he was not only a high-ranking politician, but also 'a close correspondent of Symmachus'.[44] Messala, who likewise can be shown to have been a 'member of Symmachus' circle',[45] shone with eloquence. Among the younger men that Rutilius mentions are Decius Acinatius Albinus from

[40] See Rutil. Nam. I.575–96, ed. Wolff, pp. 28–9.
[41] See Rutil. Nam. I.541–58, ed. Wolff, p. 27.
[42] See Rutil. Nam. I.267–76, ed. Wolff, pp. 14–15.
[43] See Rutil. Nam. I.542–50, ed. Wolff, p. 27.
[44] See Meier and Patzold, *August 410*, p. 70.
[45] See Meier and Patzold, *August 410*, p. 70.

Vada Volaterrana[46] and Rufius Antonius Agrypnius Volusianus, 'who had received a whole series of highest honours and – himself a pagan – corresponded as governor of Africa with Augustine, among others'.[47] The depressing description of the ruins of Populonia on the Tuscan coast is immediately followed, after the deictic *hic* ('here'), by the hopeful news of the promotion of the young Volusianus to city prefect of Rome, following in Rutilius' own footsteps.[48] And then there is Exuperantius, who represents the restitution of the Roman *ordo* in Armorica (north-western Gaul) when he teaches Gaul 'to love returning peace by bringing back both law and liberty [*restituit libertatemque reducit*], forbidding men to serve as servants to their slaves'.[49] In Rutilius' eyes, men like these are among the true aristocratic Romans, worthy of the glorious title of *viri clarissimi* ('brilliant, illustrious men').

In his poem, Rutilius gives the overall impression that, 'in Italy at least, a feeling was already in the air that life was resuming its normal style'.[50] The feeling of growing security, despite traumatic experiences of war and crisis, was not only due to newly established networks 'with other elites on more equal footing'.[51] Also significant for the survival of Rome were alliances between the senatorial and military elites, with 'the importance of the military having increased in light of recent invasions from a host of Gothic, Hunnic, and Vandal armies arriving on the northern frontiers after 405–06'.[52] Senators from Italy and Gaul established and strengthened ties with the western Roman general Constantius, whom they saw as pursuing a policy of restoring Roman traditions, especially in the Gallo-Roman region.[53] Constantius, in particular, was associated with the hope of renewal, as the aforementioned fragment discovered in the last century shows.[54]

[46] See Rutil. Nam. I.466–474, ed. Wolff, p. 23–4.
[47] See Meier and Patzold, *August 410*, p. 71.
[48] See Rutil. Nam. I.415–28, ed. Wolff, p. 21.
[49] Rutil. Nam. I.213–16, ed. Wolff, p. 14; trans. Malamud, p. 49. Peter Heather traces Exuperantius' restoration policy back to the 'Constantius regime, [that] hastened to reinstitute imperial order and imperial taxation in Armorica'. See P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire. A New History* (Oxford, 2005), p. 245.
[50] Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court*, p. 352.
[51] Salzman, *Falls of Rome*, p. 109.
[52] Salzman, *Falls of Rome*, p. 109.
[53] See Salzman, *Falls of Rome*, p. 128.
[54] See Rutil. Nam. fragmentum B 1-19, ed. Wolff, pp. 43–4; trans. Malamud, p. 79: ']unt in propugnacula rupes /]m̨eritum machina tollit /]ṣ Tyrias mirari desinat ar[ces / Amp]hionium saxa secuta melos /]m̨eos Neptunia Troia labores /]laudis habet frustra tridente[/]e nouae consul Constantius ur[bis /]tium consiliumque dedit /]gerum trabeis thoraca secu[tus /]Latii nominis una salus /]inuictaque pectora curis /]etit Martia pal[ma /]e̩mo collegae amplectimu[r / r]edeat iam geminatus hono[s /]s sortitus hiatum /].ssem grandia gesta loqu[i /]eritis uerborum l. . . referr[e / q]uam quod soluere lingua qu[eat /]hostilibus ille recepit'.

Due to the lack of precise local information and the incompleteness of the so-called fragment B, much remains uncertain regarding the historical classification and interpretation of the text. The little that can be said with certainty concerns Constantius' building activities and various restorative measures, which are encomiastically exaggerated. According to the verses, Constantius is the founder of an unnamed *noua urbs* (see v. B 7), which Hagith Sivan associates with the then provincial capital Arles, chosen in 417 as the seat of the Gallic provincial assembly.[55] In the same year, Constantius was appointed consul for the second time (v. B 7 *consul Constantius* and v. B 14 *iam geminatus honos*).

In this fateful year of 417, Rutilius was likely motivated to proclaim the idea of Rome's resurrection with renewed enthusiasm. One promising event after another unfolded for the Romans, all resulting from Constantius' successful military policy. In 416, the *magister militum* arranged for the release of Galla Placidia, the daughter of the emperor Theodosius I and half-sister of Honorius, who had been captured by the Gothic king Vallia. He then secured a treaty with the Goths, binding them to provide military aid.[56] In 417, Galla Placidia returned to the western imperial court and, at the behest of her half-brother, was ceremonially married to Constantius in Ravenna. The general joy was crowned by a triumphal procession of Honorius in the *Urbs Aeterna*. This culminated in the symbolic 'refounding' of the city of Rome, which 'took away at least part of the horrific [. . .] power of the previous debacle',[57] instilling new hope in the Romans and once again demonstrating the resilience of the city. In Rutilius' eyes, there was no doubt that the city's renewal was largely due to Constantius, whom he calls 'the one salvation of the Latin name'.[58]

Mocking monks and new ascetic movements

Rutilius also gives negative examples of Roman aristocrats – those who, in his opinion, have taken the wrong path of crisis management in the fifth century.[59] Passing by a monastery on Capraria (today Capraia), an island between Corsica and Elba, Rutilius takes this as an

[55] See H. Sivan, 'Rutilius Namatianus, Constantius III and the Return to Gaul in Light of New Evidence', *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986), pp. 522–32, here pp. 523–5.
[56] For Constantius' work of reconstruction, see Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, pp. 244–50.
[57] See Meier and Patzold, *August 410*, p. 80.
[58] Rutil. Nam. fragmentum B 10, ed. Woolf, p. 43; trans. Malamud, p. 79: 'Latii nominis una salus'.
[59] See Rut. Nam. I.439–52.515–26, ed. Wolff, pp. 22–3.25–6.

occasion for his first diatribe on the hermits living there, whom he straightforwardly insults as *lucifugi viri*:

> As we proceed by sea, Capraria rears itself: the island reeks with men who shun the light (*lucifugi uiri*). They are called *monachoi* – the name is Greek – because they want to live alone, without a witness. They fear both Fortune's gifts and Fortune's punishments: they hug the very misery they dread. What stupid madness of a perverse mind is this, to fear that happiness will cause them harm? Prisoners seeking punishment for crimes, perhaps, or grim hearts swelling with the blackest bile (as Homer thought the worries of Bellerophon came from an illness caused by excess bile, for pierced by savage grief, the story goes, the lad conceived a hatred of the human race).[60]

Passing the island of Gorgon (today Gorgona) Rutilius adds a second diatribe, in which he makes similar accusations – not against a group of monks, but against an individual who abandoned his marriage and wealth 'for exile in [a] filthy den'.[61]

> The wave-girt isle of Gorgon rises from the sea, with Pisa and Corsica on either side. I shun its cliffs, memorials of recent loss. A citizen was lost to living death. Not long ago our friend, a youth of noble birth, appropriately wed, with ample means, went mad, abandoning the world and human race for exile in this filthy den, the fool! This wretch believes divinity can feed on filth. He does himself more harm than the gods he spurned. Is not this sect, I ask you, worse than Circe's drugs? While she changed human bodies, they change minds.[62]

[60] Rutil. Nam. I.439–52, ed. Wolff, pp. 22–3; trans. Malamud, p. 55–6: 'Processu pelagi iam se Capraria tollit; / squalet lucifugis insula plena uiris. / Ipsi se monachos Graio cognomine dicunt, / quod soli nullo uiuere teste uolunt. / Munera Fortunae metuunt, dum damna uerentur:/ Quisquam sponte miser, ne miser esse queat? / Quaenam peruersi rabies tam stulta cerebri, / dum mala formides, nec bona posse pati? / Siue suas repetunt factorum ergastula poenas, / tristia seu nigro uiscera felle tument. / Sic nimiae bilis morbum assignauit Homerus / Bellerophonteis sollicitudinibus: / nam iuueni offenso saeui post tela doloris / dicitur humanum displicuisse genus.'

[61] Rutil. Nam. I.522, ed. Wolff, p. 26; trans. Malamud, p. 58.

[62] Rutil. Nam. I.515–26, ed. Wolff, pp. 25–6; trans. Malamud, pp. 57–8: 'Assurgit ponti medio circumflua Gorgon / inter Pisanum Cyrnaicumque latus. / Aduersus scopulos, damni monumenta recentis: perditus hic uiuo funere ciuis erat. / Noster enim nuper iuuenis maioribus amplis, / nec censu inferior coniugioue minor, / impulsus Furiis homines terrasque reliquit / et turpem latebram credulus exul adit. / Infelix putat illuuie caelestia pasci / seque premit laesis saeuior ipse deis. / Num, rogo, deterior Circaeis secta uenenis? / Tunc mutabuntur corpora, nunc animi.'

Besides Rutilius we have other testimonies from contemporary western Roman aristocrats, pagans and Christians alike, who criticized the extreme forms of asceticism which slowly spread from Egypt to Gaul and Italy, especially through the reading of Athanasius' *Life of Antony* in the western Roman Empire. There had been many reservations about the extreme ascetic movements led, for example, by Martin of Tours or the more aristocratic Paulinus of Nola and Melania the Younger. They found themselves in strong opposition with their peers because of their renunciation of their possessions and social status, for in the long term this deprived the Roman state of its sociopolitical elites, on whose help the senatorial aristocracy, the military commander, and the emperor were dependent.[63]

Many of Rutilius' accusations were made elsewhere and are well worn, but in some ways he considerably amplifies them. In the first invective Rutilius dislikes the monks' way of dealing with the 'blows of fate',[64] which is obviously contrary to his philosophical attitude to life. In contrast to the stoic-minded Roma in the examples cited earlier, who despised and scorned pain, in Rutilius' eyes the monks 'fear both Fortune's gifts and Fortune's punishments'.[65] As 'deportation to an uninhabited island (*relegatio*) had long been a standard form of imprisonment for members of the Roman elite',[66] Rutilius goes on to compare the monks with 'prisoners seeking punishment for crimes', and condemns them as mentally confused and as suffering from a disease of 'a deep black liver'.[67] Using Bellerophon as a mythical exemplar of asceticism – and likely alluding to Ausonius' portrayal of Paulinus of Nola as *Bellerophon redivivus* – Rutilius reveals the antisocial behaviour of his religiously fanatical fellow aristocrats.[68] According to the third book of Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, Bellerophon acts as a negative example of dealing with pain and loss, as he had gone mad in overly passionate grief after the death of his two

[63] See R. Matthisen, '*Roma a Gothis Alarico duce capta est*. Ancient Accounts of the Sack of Rome', in J. Lipps *et al.* (eds), *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD: The Event, its Context and its Impact. Proceedings of the Conference held at the German Archaeological Institute at Rome, 04–06 November 2010* (Wiesbaden, 2013), pp. 87–103, here pp. 96–8.

[64] Rutil. Nam. 443, ed. Wolff, p. 22: 'fortunae [. . .] damna'.

[65] See Rutil. Nam. I.446, ed. Wolff, p. 22: 'dum mala formides, nec bona posse pati'.

[66] Cameron, A., *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford, 2011), p. 211.

[67] Rutil. Nam. I.447, I.448; trans. Malamud, p. 55.

[68] See Rutil. Nam. I.449–52, ed. Wolff, pp. 22–3: 'Sic nimiae bilis morbum assignauit Homerus / Bellerophonteis sollicitudinibus; / nam iuueni offenso saeui post tela doloris / dicitur humanum displicuisse genus.' For the allusion, see G. Kelly, 'Rutilius Namatianus, Melania the Younger, and the Monks of Capraria', in A.H. Chen *et al.* (eds), *Late Antique Studies in Memory of Alan Cameron* (Leiden and Boston, 2021), pp. 66–84, here p. 75.

children.[69] Similarly, Ausonius complained in his letter that Paulinus of Nola had not got over the loss of his brother and child, withdrawing from social life into solitude in bitterness, 'sad, poor, [. . .] wandering secretly through the vaulted mountain peaks of the Alps, just as Bellerophon is said to have wandered through remote places, madly avoiding the tracks of men'.[70]

Rutilius repeats this kind of scolding of the monks, but rhetorically reinforces it: his monks are not just 'weak in mind'. Rather, he diagnoses them with a *peruersi rabies* [. . .] *cerebri* ('stupid madness of a perverse mind').[71] Likewise, the unnamed monk from Gorgon 'had gone mad'[72] and left his place and people. The coded statement, that 'this wretch believes divinity can feed on filth',[73] can only be explained by a second reference to Homer. The hermit's spirit had been transformed by his 'sect', just as the bodies of Odysseus' sailors had once been transformed. The educated reader will recognize the allusion to the Odyssey, in which Circe's drugs cause the sailors' transformation into pigs. However, the 'drugs' (*uenena*) of the Christian sect are far worse than the magical brew of the Homeric witch, as Rutilius makes clear.[74] Alan Cameron categorizes Rutilius' scolding of the monks as part of the rhetorical discourse of the fourth and fifth century, in which Christians and pagans alike had participated. In his opinion, the invectives should not primarily be categorized as anti-Christian, but as 'anti-monastic'.[75] Of course, Christians and even ascetics levelled considerable accusations against extreme forms of monasticism as the monastic invectives of Ausonius, Jovinian, and Jerome demonstrate.[76] Nevertheless, Rutilius surpasses earlier polemic, which in my opinion reveals his general rejection of Christianity itself, attacking the *secta*[77] as a *pars pro toto* of the Christian religion as a whole.

[69] For the discussion of Bellerophon see E. Doblhofer, 'Bellerophon und Circe zwischen Heiden und Christen', in P. Händel and W. Meid (eds), *Festschrift für Robert Muth zum 65. Geburtstag* (Innsbruck, 1983), pp. 73–87.

[70] See Auson. ep. 21, 69–72,Seeed. R.P.H. Green, *Decimi Magni Ausonii, Opera* (Oxford, 1999), p. 252: 'tristis, egens, deserta colat tacitusque pererret / Alpini convexa iugi, ceu dicitur olim / mentis inops coetus hominum et vestigia vitans / avia perlustrasse vagus loca Bellerophontes.'

[71] Rutil. Nam. I.445, ed. Wolff, p. 22; trans. Malamud, p. 55.

[72] See Rutil. Nam. I.521, ed. Wolff, p. 26; trans. Malamud (with slight modification), p. 58.

[73] Rutil. Nam. I.523, ed. Wolff, p. 2; trans. Malamud, p. 58.

[74] See Rutil. Nam. I.525, ed. Wolff, p. 26.

[75] Cameron, *Last Pagans*, p. 213.

[76] See for the monastic invectives C. Fontaine, 'L'aristocratie occidentale devant le monachisme au IV et V siècles', *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 15 (1979), pp. 28–53.

[77] Rutil. Nam. I. 525, ed. Wolff, p. 26.

Beatitudo temporum: staging the renewal of a well-functioning past

In the eyes of Rutilius and like-minded people, opposing the crisis meant recovering Rome's former prestige materially and in the 'world of the text' as well. He therefore brings the glorious past – the *beatitudo temporum* – before the reader's eyes in his description of the city's life and buildings. While he does not minimize the damage caused by the Gothic invasions in Italy and Gaul, the appearance of the city of Rome itself is described as if it had never experienced the invasion by Alaric's Goths:

> To count your lofty monuments and all your trophies is a task
> like numbering the stars!
> The gleaming temples dazzle the eyes of passers-by:
> I could believe the gods themselves live thus.
> What can I say of streams that flow through aqueducts
> higher than Iris spreads her rainy bow?
> You would call them mountains grown as high as stars: the
> Greeks would praise such things as giants' work.
> [. . .]
> No less your dewy fields abound in their own streams,
> your walls echo the sound of splashing springs.
> From here a cooling breath tempers the sweltering wind
> and purest water quenches harmless thirst.
> [. . .]
> The year is ever gentle in your constant spring:
> the winter, conquered, now protects your charms.[78]

We see before our eyes a glorious city, rich in magnificent buildings, temples, mighty aqueducts, huge thermal baths, and luxurious parks that invite the reader to stroll around. The citizens have returned to their 'Roman' style of life, as is clear by the description of the circus, frequented by jeering crowds:

> The Circus often echoes in our startled ears, inflamed applause proclaims the crowded theater: familiar shouts are sent back from the echoing air – do we hear, or only hope we do?[79]

Although Rutilius excessively glorified the city with panegyrical intent, his effort to stage the *beatitudo temporum* nonetheless aligns with the

[78] Rutil. Nam. I. 93–114; trans. Malamud, pp. 45–6.
[79] Rutil. Nam. I. 201–204; trans. Malamud, p. 48.

actual restorative building projects undertaken by the senatorial aristocracy. Urban Roman inscriptions testify that after 410 the Roman emperor and the urban Roman aristocracy spared no effort or expense to preserve or rebuild prominent monuments and structures within the city, including the temples, thermal baths, and entertainment monuments mentioned by Rutilius as emblems of Roman identity.[80]

After general praise of the empire's civilizational and military capabilities, Rutilius invokes the idea of a rapid recovery, even of progress and growth of the empire after its military defeats, through the use of numerous comparatives (e.g. *nisu maiore resurgunt*; *exiliuntque imis altius acta uadis*; *clarior ex humili sorte superna petis*).[81] This same idea can also be found in the urban *tituli* and inscriptions made after the sack of Rome. Most of them follow a consistent pattern, which is always located between the themes of 'decay', 'destruction', and 'restoration'.[82] In doing so, they guide the viewer's aesthetic perception of the restored late antique monuments in a very specific way. For example, several *tituli* can be found on inscription bases that indicate the renewal of statues after the destruction of the *Basilica Aemilia*.

> Gabinius Vettius Probianus, a member of the senatorial class and city prefect, restored this statue, which had fallen due to an unavoidable disaster, with due care in the most famous place in the city.[83]

The phrase 'unavoidable disaster' (*fatalis necessitas*) probably refers to the plundering of the *Forum Romanum* under Alaric in 410. The senator's diligence (*adhibita diligentia*) has restored the splendour of the statues in the city's most frequented marketplace, the political and ideological centre of the city and the empire.

[80] For the impact of the incursion of Alaric and his soldiers to the cityscape from a general archeological perspective see Lipps *et al.* (eds), *The Sack of Rome in 410*. For the rebuilding of urban Roman structures after 410 see Salzman, *Falls of Rome*, pp. 112–21. For the imperial legislation concerning the city of Rome see B. Näf, 'Kaiser Honorius und der Fall Roms: Zur Macht des Glaubens', in H. Harich-Schwarzbauer and K. Pollmann (eds), *Der Fall Roms und seine Wiederauferstehungen in Antike und Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 79–108, here p. 99.

[81] See Rutil. Nam. I.129–32, ed. Wolff, p. 8, trans. Malamud, p. 46: '[it] will rise with greater force; they rise the highest from the lowest depths; you ascend more brightly from mishap'.

[82] See Rutil. Nam. I.129–32, ed. Wolff, p. 8.

[83] 'Gabinius Vettius / Probianus v(ir) c(larissimus) / Praef(ectus) urb(i) / statuam fatali / necessitate con/lapsam celeberri/mo urbis loco adhi/bita diligentia reparavit': CIL VI 3864a=CIL VI 31883. For the epigraphical reference and translation see F.A. Bauer, '*Beatitudo temporum*. Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit im Stadtbild des spätantiken Rom', in F.A. Bauer and N. Zimmermann (eds), *Epochenwandel? Kunst und Kultur zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Mainz, 2001), pp. 75–94, at p. 87. For the epigraphical references see in general T. Mommsen *et al.* (eds), *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum (CIL). Consilio et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae editum*, 17 vols (Berlin, 1862 ff.).

Another inscription, near Sancta Maria Nova, testifies that damage, which was probably caused in 455 by the Vandals, was also immediately repaired with the help of the city prefect.

> Castalius Innocentius Audax, a member of the senatorial class and city prefect, responsible for the court of appeal, restored what had been damaged during a barbarian invasion.[84]

A further inscription commemorated the material restoration of a Minerva image that had likely been set on fire in the course of the renewed plundering of Rome by Ricimer in 472. Here, too, the damage was repaired immediately and the image made even better 'for the happiness of our age':

> The image of Minerva, which had been broken by the collapse of a roof caused by a devastating fire during a civil war, was better and fully restored for the happiness of our age by Aniciuus Acilius Aginantius Faustus, a member of the senatorial class with the rank of *illustris* and city prefect in charge of the Court of Appeal.[85]

Once again, the destruction suffered is not left unmentioned, and deliberate reference is made to Rome's vulnerability. However, in comparison to the statement that the statue has been repaired and the monument has been 'better (*in melius*) and fully restored (*integro proviso*) for the happiness of our age', the damage appears only secondary to the monument's viewer. The main core of the message conveyed by the *titulus* and the restored divine image is a demonstration of the strong resilience of the western senatorial aristocracy. Michele Salzman has further demonstrated that following the sack of Rome, the urban prefects, in particular, increased their power and visibility through restoration projects, fostering a 'statuary habit', and the organization of food distributions.[86] In her view, 'processes of competition for influence among senators [. . .] were central to the recovery of Rome in the aftermath of a series of major political and military crises'.[87]

[84] 'Castalius Innocentius / Audax v(ir) c(larissimus) praef(ectus) urb(is) / vice sacra iudicans / barbarica incursione / sublata restituit': CIL VI 1663; trans. Bauer, '*Beatitudo temporum*', p. 87.
[85] 'Simulacrum Minerbae [*sic*] / abolendo incendio / tumultus civilis igni / tecto cadente confractum / Anicius Acilius Aginantius / Faustus v(ir) c(larissimus) et inl(ustris) praef(ectus) urbi / vic(e) sac(ra) iud(icans) in melius / integro proviso pro beatitudine temporis restituit': CIL VI 526; trans. Bauer, '*Beatitudo temporum*', p. 88.
[86] See Salzman, *The Falls of Rome*, pp. 96–147.
[87] Salzman, *The Falls of Rome*, p. 25.

Conclusion

Over the course of the fifth century, one catastrophe followed another: the sack of Rome in August 410 was followed by further sackings of the city by the Vandals under the leadership of Geiseric in 455 and later under Ricimer, who plundered Rome in 472. The western Roman senatorial aristocracy and the Roman imperial family as defenders of the *Urbs aeterna* were thus in greater demand than ever before. In his poem *De reditu suo*, Rutilius wrote an appeal to the western Roman elite not to let their belief in *Roma aeterna* waver, but to hold fast to the *virtus Romana*. Rutilius portrays himself as succesfully opposing the crisis by investing in the continuity of Rome ideologically, and on a human level by strengthening personal ties with the Italian and Gallo-Roman senatorial aristocracy.

His poetic idea of the 'rebirth of Rome from its ashes' is reflected by the material evidence: Roman building inscriptions of the fifth century document that the Roman senatorial class spared no expense in making Rome's former glory visible, especially central Roman memorial sites and entertainment buildings. From the Gallo-Roman region, the homeland of Rutilius, we also learn of the collective efforts of the senatorial elite to regain Roman authority and reputation. While Constantius temporarily rebuilt parts of the Roman administration in Arles with the help of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy, we hear, for example, of similar efforts in Trier to revive the games in the amphitheatre, 'epitomizing Roman life at its best'.[88]

Meanwhile, ascetic tendencies likewise seemed to be strengthened in the context of the crisis of the fifth century, particularly in Gallo-Roman monastic and ascetic circles, where the ongoing invasions were taken 'as an urgent reason to put off one's ambitions for material possession and to turn to Christ'.[89] Such Christians turned to religion for inward, rather than outward, 'renewal'[90] and strongly rejected the efforts of the traditional senatorial class, who invested in (pagan) Roman traditions that had, in their view, already outlived themselves.[91] Rutilius' travel poem, and even more so its invectives against monks,

[88] J. Stutz, '"When God sees us in the circuses": Salvian of Marseille's *De gubernatione Dei* and the Critique of Roman Society', *Early Medieval Europe* 31 (2023), pp. 3–22, at p. 22.

[89] Stutz, 'When God sees us in the circuses', p. 22. This moral appeal is echoed, for example, in the treatises of Salvianus of Marseilles, in the *Carmen de Providentia Dei* attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, and in the *Epigrammata Paulini*.

[90] For Salvianus of Marseilles see Stutz, 'When God sees us in the circuses'.

[91] A prime example of this is the life of the ascetic and senatorial aristocrat Melania the Younger, who managed to escape the sack of Rome in time, along with her husband Pompeianus, and chose to invest her immense fortune in the church rather than in the defence of the city. See Gerontius, *Vita Melaniae* I.19, ed. D. Gorce, *Vie de Sainte Mélanie* (Paris, 1962), p. 167.

can be placed in this conflict of different strategies to overcome the crisis of the 'fall' of Rome, a conflict played out between traditional and Christian western Roman senatorial aristocrats. Rutilius had the foresight to recognize the dangers associated with the *Weltflucht* of wealthy upper class Christian ascetics: it affected the very core of the senatorial aristocracy and posed a great danger to the social order.[92]

That the strategy of restoring Rome's glory adopted by Rutilius and his like-minded colleagues was successful is not only demonstrated by contemporary historiographers. Olympiodorus states that after 'the Gothic capture of Rome, the city was already recovering to such an extent that Albinus, the city prefect, wrote that the supplies allotted to the inhabitants were insufficient for the increased population of the city' and 'that in one day fourteen thousand persons had been entered onto the rolls'.[93] Rutilius was right to say that 'Rome's downfall' was not a hindrance to Rome, but rather a salutary factor in the rebirth of the city, the western Roman elite, and ultimately of the idea of Rome itself. The conservative western elite may not have emerged from the crisis of the fifth century stronger in material terms, but they certainly did in ideological terms.

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[92] See R. Mathisen, 'Roma a Gothis Alarico duce capta est', in J. Lipps *et al.* (eds), *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD: The Event, its Context and its Impact. Proceedings of the Conference Held at the German Archaeological Institute at Rome, 04–06 November 2010* (Wiesbaden, 2013), pp. 87–100, here pp. 96–8.

[93] See Olympiodorus, *Historikoi logoi*, fr. 25, ed. R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, 2 vols (Liverpool, 1983), vol. 2, pp. 188–9. See alsoPhilostorgius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 12.5, ed. B. Bleckmann and M. Stein, 2 vols (Paderborn, 2015), vol. 1, pp. 428–31. In contrast, only Procopius refers to ruins that have not yet been restored. See Procopius, *Vandalica* 1.2.24, ed. O. Veh, *Prokopios von Caesarea: Werke* (gr.-dt.), 4 vols (Munich, 1971), vol. 4, p. 17.