Transforming Roman and/or Christian nobilitas? A new approach to reading Jerome's epistolary correspondence with the socialites of his day.

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Transforming Roman and/or Christian *nobilitas*? A new approach to reading Jerome's epistolary correspondence with the *socialites* of his day.

Jessica van 't Westeinde

Jerome of Stridon argues that "the most distinguished privilege loses its prestige when lavished on a crowd" (*Ep.* 66.7). The senatorial aristocracy have been faced with a devaluation of their order due to recent imperial changes. A number of its *illustres* show an appetite for Christian asceticism. When Jerome liaises with them, he offers a *nobilitas*-model which preserves the exclusivity of Roman *nobilitas* through appropriation of Christian asceticism. It emerges that Jerome's modelling of Christian *nobilitas* allows his patron-students to remain *nobilitas* in the old Roman sense, and even restores the traditional Roman understanding of it within a new and only emerging Christian framework. What needs to be asked is how 'Christian' was Jerome's model, and how should we understand the social relation between this provincial advocate of asceticism and his aristocratic associates? In my thesis I apply a new methodology which considers actors (Jerome) as individual agents fully embodied in their contemporary context; it reorients "research on materiality, localised and temporal embodiments of the individual" (M. Vinzent). I have applied this broader framework to a particular focus on one individual religious agent, Jerome, and his relations with individual actors situated primarily in Rome (Aventine area), secondarily in the provinces (Spain, Gaul, Dalmatia, and northern Italy), embedded in an aristocratic milieu, with a temporal range from the late 380s to the early 410s. It follows that Jerome's model restored the old Roman exclusivist notion of *nobilitas* as an antidote against the opening-up of senatorial rank to "country boors" by creating a status group of Christian elite. The letters reveal a careful selection of Christian ascetic elements, which in practice did not radically alter aristocratic daily life. Jerome offers a 'Christian ascetic' *nobilitas*-model that embodies continuation which breathes Roman aristocratic status culture of the *illustres.*

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Submitted for the partial fulfilment of the qualification for the Ph.D.

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2016

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Abbreviations

AJA = American Journal of Archaeology

AJS = American Journal of Sociology

ANF = Ante Nicene Fathers

BBKL = Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon

BSNAF = Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France, de Boccard, Paris,

CCSL = Corpus Christianorum Series Latina

CH = Church History

CIJ = Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum (J.B. Frey)

CP = Classical Philology

CQ = The Classical Quarterly

CSEL = Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum

CTh = Codex Theodosianus

CV = Echos du Monde/Classical Views

CW = The Classical World

Ep = Epistola

Gest. Pel. = De gestis Pelagii

Historia = Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte

JECS = Journal for Early Christian Studies

JFSR = Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion

JLARC = Journal of Late Antique Religion and Culture

JMEMS = Journal for Medieval and Early Modern Studies

JRS = the Journal of Roman Studies

JTS = the Journal of Theological Studies

LAA = Late Antique Archaeology

LRE = The Later Roman Empire, 284-602, A. H. M. Jones.

MP = Medieval Prosopography

NPNF = Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Fremantle)

NRT = Nouvelle Revue Théologique

PL = Patrologia Latina

PLRE = Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire (A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, and J. Morris eds.)

REA = Révue des études augustiniennes

Rev hist = Revue historique. du droit français et etranger

RLT = Roman Legal Tradition

RRE = Religion in the Roman Empire

SC = Sources chrétiennes

SO = Symbole Osloenses

StudPatr = Studia Patristica

TJT = Toronto Journal of Theology

WS = Wiener Studien

Acknowledgements

As the days grow longer, and the first inklings of spring appear, a new dawn sets as a long and weary process is drawn to a close. Jerome never had to commit himself to the pursuit of a doctoral degree, yet I assume if he would have had to, his introduction lines would be grimmer. However, he was a master of writing prefaces. Therefore, what would a thesis on Jerome be without a proper preface?

It has been a long journey which right from the start already had to manoeuvre through rocky waters, at times tortured by temperamental tides that almost shipwrecked the entire mission. An expression of gratitude is therefore in order for those without whose help I would not have managed to reach the other shore.

First, I would like to thank my supervisors Lewis Ayres and, in the first stage of the doctoral programme, Carol Harrison. Many thanks to Lewis in particular for his confidence in my abilities which helped me get through the last stages of writing and submitting the thesis. Needless to say, this work could not have been completed if it were not for their continued support. Secondly, I would like to thank my examiners, Neil McLynn and Robert Hayward, for their constructive feedback, instructive remarks, and for the inspiring discussion during the viva. Much gratitude also goes to Josef Lössl, especially for the conversations had on Jerome and Pammachius, and to Thomas Hunt, in particular for conversations on Jerome we had at Durham, and for pointing my awareness to the creational and relational character of literary correspondence. Many thanks to Éric Rebillard for so generously sharing the proofs of his article "Everyday Christianity in Carthage at the Time of Tertullian," in which he develops a new methodology which is important to take into account in the study of Jerome's Roman aristocrats. I also thank Peter Gemeinhardt who, when I had just embarked on my doctoral journey, taught me valuable insights into the role of education in the formation of identity, particularly in Jerome's *vitae*. Expressions of gratitude also extend to David Hunter for valuable research suggestions, as well as to the respondents at the Oxford Patristics Conference 2015, particularly Christopher Nunn, Sivlia Georgieva, and those whose names I have unfortunately forgotten. Furthermore I thank Matthias Brand for his helpful suggestions on the "Pammachius section" particularly with regard to social network theory and social identity theory.

Although the road to a Ph.D. can be a solitary and lonesome one, it cannot be achieved without the support of cheering backers on the sideline or the athletes who walk

with you for parts of the journey. Many thanks go to Andrew Moss for being my academic partner and buddy in Durham: thank you so much for the joint moan-and-groan sessions in Dun Cow Cottage, the rants we could both have when faced with research that seemed not to be moving in any direction, but equally fun and laughter. For much of my university 'career' Laurens de Rooij has been a stable factor of presence, and now we have both completed our doctoral programmes this feels like the end of an era: thank you for your friendship, and I hope this lasts wherever (academic) life may take us. Likewise, a massive *todah rabah* to my fellow-sufferers at J-soc, particularly Ben Kasstan (thank you for being a safe harbour in the tumultuous sea of the last-stage Ph.D.) and Lee Goldfarb. Friday nights reminded us that a good chicken soup is a cure to most ills, even PhD-*mesjoggene*.

But when it comes to academic friendship, there is no person of greater virtue than Markus Vinzent. Extended thanks go to him for his incredible support, trust, and confidence; and for passing on the running bug which helped clear my mind, provided better structure to my day, and gave me that healthy glow Jerome was so frightened of. Markus' refreshing take on texts inspired me greatly and opened up new avenues for interpreting Jerome's rhetoric. We even came to the conclusion Jerome did (presumably) not wear underwear at night. Markus has personally encountered Jerome's grumpiness and moodiness channelled through me, yet he was always willing to read my unfinished thoughts and drafts (and he managed to convince me to send them off), and offered valuable advice. He challenged my thinking in a way only he could do, and it is thanks to him that I could apply a new methodology to the analysis of Jerome's correspondence with aristocrats. That Markus could cope with me on top of everything else makes him a true saint.

Last but not least, I thank my family for their continuous support even at the hardest of times. Special thanks go to my father of blessed memory who, despite everything, convinced me to pursue doctoral studies. I wished he could have lived to see the result. In honour of his memory I dedicate the fruit of these studies to him.

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Dedicated to Petrus Franciscus Leonardus van 't Westeinde

My beloved father

Who sailed in to the west in 2013

Introduction

"The most distinguished privilege loses its prestige when lavished on a crowd, and dignities themselves become less dignified in the eyes of good men when held by persons who have no dignity."[1] These words of Jerome capture exactly what this thesis is about: the preservation of the exclusivity of Roman *nobilitas* through appropriation of Christian asceticism to create the perfect "Christian" *nobilitas*. It is not an appropriation of *nobilitas* for the sake of Christianity, but an appropriation of Christian asceticism for Roman aristocrats so that they can retain their noble superiority in an environment where their senatorial status seems to be in decline. As such, I am turning upside down the approach which perceives Christianity as adopting Roman aristocratic values and manners in order to accommodate aristocratic converts. I will show that the careful selection of Christian ascetic elements by these aristocrats into their daily lives forces us to nuance our perception of an otherwise overrated powerful and dominant, institutional Christianity.

What needs to be asked is how 'Christian' was Jerome's model, and how should we understand the social relation between this provincial advocate of asceticism and his aristocratic associates? These are the primary questions of my research project, where I have analysed Jerome and his epistolary correspondence with Roman aristocrats. As such my research concentrates on an individual agent, embodied and embedded in Roman aristocratic society. In other words, it starts from Jerome as an individual agent rather than the more common approach of seeing Jerome as spokesperson of an institution[2] or Jerome wishing for himself to be seen as such yet portraying him as more of a marginal figure.[3] These scholars tend to present an interpretation of Jerome's advances to the Roman aristocracy as attempts to convert, or to fit these attempts into the 'conversion model.' Instead, my thesis looks at Jerome's highly idiosyncratic efforts to redefine and, to a certain extent, transform Christian *nobilitas* by adopting the basic notions of Roman *nobilitas,* even though he seems to do the

[1] *Ep.* 66.7 (CSEL 54), translation by Fremantle, NPNF 206.
[2] See for example Michele Salzman, "Elite Realities and Mentalités: The Making of a Western Christian Aristocracy," in *Arethusa* 33/3 (2000), 347-362, at 355. See also John Curran who refers to Jerome as a churchman: *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 316.
[3] See Andrew Cain who argues that Jerome is a rather marginal figure yet he fashions himself as a representative of the 'orthodox' Christian institution, *The Letters of Jerome. Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially 130ff.

opposite and make Roman nobles adopt a Christian form of life.[4] Of course, the process is intertwined, and becomes more complex, taking into account the various differing backgrounds of the noble people with whom Jerome interacts. It emerges that Jerome's modelling of Christian *nobilitas* allows his patron-students to retain *nobilitas* in the old Roman sense, and even restores the traditional Roman understanding of it within a new and slowly emerging Christian framework which contrasts with the recent changes that had been brought by the emperor to the *clarissimate* and had triggered a devaluation of the original aristocracy.[5] Although 'the institution' and Christian tradition have been eager to emphasise a radical rupture between the former Roman 'pagan' state and highlighted conversion to Christianity, between the old life of abundance, luxury, and status in contrast to asceticism, I argue that reality was much more complex and that the example of Jerome, formerly used as an example *par excellence* for this model of a Christianity of discontinuity,[6] offers in fact insight into the entanglement of concepts where lines between traditions, social customs, and religions are very much blurred. Jerome can be regarded as mediating agent, but he is also a 'counter' agent. Often scholars have argued there is a broken line between Christian asceticism and Roman *nobilitas*,[7] although recently there has been a shift in scholarly thinking which reveals a more nuanced view.[8] Although Jerome seems to sound like he is

[4] John Curran appears to have accepted Jerome's rhetoric and contrasts those aristocrats whom Jerome (and others) successfully 'converted' with their more moderate Christian peers; see chapter 7 of his *Pagan City*.

[5] This is exactly what Jerome is alluding to in the segment quoted at the beginning. For imperial changes see Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, esp. 178ff. See already Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2002) who has observed that the adaptation took place more at the side of the Christian 'missionaries' than on the side of the aristocrats, see in particular p. 34: "[...] [Jerome] sought to reconcile Christian virtues with the traditional primacy of the Roman senatorial aristocracy [...]. Ascetic virtues now guaranteed the superiority of the Roman ladies and transcended their noble origin. [...] Jerome Christianized aristocratic competitiveness and emphasized that the holy women of asceticism surpassed the old nobility of birth and office [...]. The better part of mankind, to use Symmachus' definition of the senatorial aristocracy, still identified itself by impressive genealogies, immense fortunes, overwhelming prestige, and social munificence; Jerome just added ascetic values, above all sexual renunciation and virginity." But Stefan Rebenich *et al* all have their eyes set on the Roman ladies (not unlike Jerome, to some extent…), whereas I try to take their conclusions further and see if we can argue along similar lines, or even more radical lines, for the male aristocrats.

[6] See still Alfons Fürst, *Hieronymus: Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2003), 43, who illustrates Jerome as „ein militanter Propagandist des Mönchtums [der] die asketische Lebensform ausdrücklich als kritische Reaktion auf das reichskirchlich bedingte Missverhältnis zwischen Reichtum und Einfluss der Kirche einerseits, Aushöhlung ihrer ethischen Substanz anderseits."

[7] So still John Curran, who suggests that conversion to extreme asceticism often implied a wholesale relinquishing of property, *Pagan City*, p. 280. Yet Peter Brown has recently convincingly shown, using the example of Paulinus of Nola, that such a 'wholesale' might have been a theoretical ideal but could never be executed in practice, see *Through the Eye of a Needle*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 208ff.

[8] This scholarly shift is aptly captured by Alfons Fürst (quoted above, and) "das asketische Ideal [k]onziptiert als elitäre Absage und die Integration des Christentums in 'weltliche' Strukturen [und getragen von freien Gruppen wohlhabender Laien, vor allem aristokratischer Frauen, die in solchem Protest eine Möglichkeit der Befreiung aus traditionällen Zwängen erblickten]," and further p. 44 „Im Bruch mit der Familie, in der Absage an Reichtum und Nachkommenschaft, in der Abkehr von weltlicher Macht und Prestige erblickten sie einen

subscribing to this, in effect by reading his work from an embodied perspective he argues quite often the opposite and advocates for the contrary. The findings of my thesis challenge our most fundamental sense of identity, i.e. 'us' vs. 'them' which is often how history is portrayed by scholars, institutions, religious agents and affiliations. This was particularly true for the *clarissimate*, and within the *clarissimate* for the *nobilitas*. We observe how Jerome plays to this sentiment and desire to define boundaries and to emphasise distinction. However, other than definition of identity based on social standing, it has become clear that other identity markers – religion, tradition, customs, and ethical behaviour – are much more vague and complex than what is often represented to be the case.[9]

In what follows I will elaborate the methodology applied for the analysis of the epistolary correspondence, and I will explain the terminology used. Subsequently, I shall review the many scholars on Jerome and late antiquity before me, and I will take the reader back to Jerome's world. In this section I will briefly discuss the state of the art. The section on Jerome's world consists of a biography and an illustration of the context in which Jerome was so fully emerged: Roman society – particularly in the metropolis Rome –, including the senatorial aristocracy, its values and social norms, patronage, literature and literacy (including *paideia*), Roman legislation, social geography, religion, and the emergence of Christianity in its manifold manifestations. All these sections will exhibit the fluidity of categories and shifting paradigms, which all depend on literary and historical context. This introduction together with chapter one should offer a substantial basis for the analyses of the letters. The second and third chapter deal primarily with Jerome's correspondence with Pammachius, and extend to his other patron-students of patrician pedigree. This group of aristocratic associates are all based in the 'epicentre' Rome. The fourth chapter considers Jerome's correspondence with 'peripheral' aristocrats: senior aristocrats from the provinces, respectively Lucinus from Spain (Baetica), Julian from Dalmatia, and 'naughty' Rusticus from Gaul. In order to assess if transformation did take place and to compare Jerome's

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Verrat an der staatstragenden Idealen der römischen Tradition. Die Hinwendung von Angehörigen der römischen Oberschicht zu einem asketischen Lebensstil wurde als Angriff auf die altrömische aristokratische Identität betrachtet." However, subsequently Fürst, p. 44-45, does stipulate that this changes in the fifth century, and, referring to Jerome's letters 108, 118, and 130, he argues that the ascetic model has changed and that now the ascetic is the true aristocrat. He summarises it as "das christliche Askeseideal durchlief eine aristokratische Metamorphose… Hieronymus hat diese Entwicklung mit seiner asketischen Propaganda in den oberen und obersten Schichten des Römerreiches maßgeblich mitgestaltet." This transitional thinking also comes to the fore in the works of for example Peter Brown, Michele Salzman, and John Curran.

[9] As Éric Rebillard has recently pointed out, "religion is only one among other membership categories, and does not necessarily have salience," see É. Rebillard, "Everyday Christianity in Carthage at the Time of Tertullian," in *RRE* 2 (2016), 114 (forthcoming). See also his earlier monograph *Christians and their Many Identities in Late Antiquity: North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012).

language and attitude towards his correspondents, the last two chapters of the thesis analyse his correspondence with young aristocrats. Again, a similar division is employed: chapter five analyses Jerome's letters to young patricians, whilst chapter six considers letters to young 'peripherals'. It must be stipulated that although I have tried to not make a gender divide, the chapters on young aristocrats which originally were one entity, have because of the patrician-peripheral divide automatically resulted in a gender division. Furthermore, the letters analysed in chapter six are addressed to young Rusticus and to Nepotian: their social status is obscure and we cannot fully determine if they could be considered aristocrats, but they have definitely come from well-off provincial families, which allows the categorisation as 'peripheral'. It makes them the odd ones out, yet as such they are closest to Jerome himself. In the original plan this thesis also incorporated a chapter on widows. Yet much research has already focussed on Jerome and women, one of the most comprehensive studies being Patrick Laurence's *Jérôme et le nouveau model féminin*.[10] Therefore, I will only cross-reference those letters where relevant.

Methodology

Whilst I am aware of the risks that come with adopting new approaches to study aspects of Late Antiquity, as aptly pointed out by Stefan Rebenich,[11] I have chosen to adopt a new methodology to analyse Jerome's correspondence with Roman aristocrats in order to see if a new perspective might lead to refreshing insights beyond the veil that has been put up by institutions and apologetic authors. I believe that this methodology, in combination with

[10] Patrick Laurence, *Jérôme et le nouveau model féminin* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1997). See also Elizabeth Clark (ed.), *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Studies in Women and Religion, 20), (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1986), Philip Rousseau, '"Learned Women" and the Development of a Christian Culture in Late Antiquity,' in *SO* 70 (1995), 116-47, Kate Cooper, "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianisation of the Roman Aristocracy," in *JRS* 82 (1992), 150-64, Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Barbara Feichtinger, *Apostolae apostolorum. Frauenaskese als Befreiung und Zwang bei Hieronymus* (Frankfurt: Herder, 1995).

[11] Stefan Rebenich, "Late Antiquity in Modern Eyes," in *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (ed. Philip Rousseau), (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 77-92. However, although on p. 85 he points at the nineteenth-century scholarly tendency to turn "evolutionary biology into a paradigm of historical discovery," and where "scholars tried to transfer the discoveries made by the natural sciences…to the cultural evolution of mankind," he writes positively of twentieth century approaches that borrow from insights of other social sciences (cf. p. 91). Of course we should be cautious when appropriating modern concepts and theories to ancient times – as I will explain in the 'terminology' section – yet with regard to insights from the social sciences there are some helpful tools which might allow us to better understand the world of late antiquity, or which allow us to look at the world of late antiquity from a different perspective. Similarly, see Jörg Rüpke who acknowledges that "ancient religions are only partially receptive of techniques established in social studies so as to create new data by means of empirical or experimental procedures," J. Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion: Questioning 'Cults' and 'Polis Religion'," in *Mythos* 5 (2011), 191-204, 197.

insights from social network and social identity theories, could lay bare those aspects that have been obscured by centuries of ideological (confessional) scholarship and textual transmission,[12] and as such it could reshape the picture of alleged 'Christianisation' and (radical) 'transformation' of the Roman aristocracy.

The methodological approach taken to analyse Jerome's letters and their context is based on Markus Vinzent's newly developed method of *Embodied Early and Medieval Christianity* (EEMC), which itself takes up from Erfurt's model of *Lived Ancient Religion* (LAR).[13] I have also used Daniel Boyarin's approach of 'reading against the sources,'[14] and applied JörgRüpke's insights on individuality and individuation.[15] Furthermore, I took into consideration Éric Rebillard's adaptation of Brubraker's concept of 'everyday nationhood' to 'everyday Christianity.'[16] In addition, I have built upon theories about social network analysis, appropriated for 'prosopographical network analysis' or, maybe even more precise, 'narrative network analysis;'[17] as well as Mark Granovetter's theory of strong ties-weak ties.[18] Although Manuel Castells' theory[19] is focussed on modern society and electronic communication, his argument that social networks empower people and that communication is able to transform society is also relevant for ancient Roman society: it is through exchange of literature and communication (cross-community, cross-borders) that such networks are established, power and authority is expressed and confirmed (or confuted) through these (written) communication channels. Particularly if one connects this with Granovetter's theory of weak ties, as we will see the connection through communication (textual) between the central actor (*in casu* Jerome) and weak ties (*in casu* peripheral aristocrats) has the ability to

[12] See below for the difficulties the manuscript tradition brings. See Wendy Mayer who also points to the problem that this thesis partially hopes to alleviate, namely the problem that sources and groups have been looked at from a 'Christianist' perspective. As Mayer argues "the "Christianist" lens is due as much to the bias of the surviving (textual) sources as the biases of the ideological approaches brought to bear in analyzing them […] it is important to resist (if we are to move beyond them) modes of viewing the late antique world that stem from the late antique world itself," Wendy Mayer, "Approaching Late Antiquity," in *Companion*, 10.

[13] Markus Vinzent, "Embodied Early and Medieval Christianity: Challenging its 'Canonical' and 'Institutional' Origin," in *RRE* 2 (2016) (forthcoming), 91-112. 'LAR' is a methodology developed at the Max-Weber-Kolleg, Erfurt, by the LAR research group chaired by Rüpke, see below.

[14] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines. The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), where he advocates this approach.

[15] Rüpke, "Individualization and Individuation as Concepts for Historical Research," in *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Rüpke, ed.), (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2014), 3-38 (uncorrected proofs); these ideas and concepts are closely connected to the LAR-model.

[16] Éric Rebillard, "Everyday Christianity," 113-124.

[17] This implies a form of social network analysis tailored to historical research based on prosopography, yet 'narrative network analysis' seems more appropriate since the research and evidence considered is text-based with texts in most cases only by the hand of one author, Jerome, about the subjects (aristocrats) whose profiles and lives we try to grasp and fit within this particular social network.

[18] Mark Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," in *AJS* 78/6 (1973), 1360-80.

[19] Manuel Castells, "Communication, Power and Counter-Power in the Network Society," in *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007), 238-66.

build and facilitate networks and empower both parties by expanding their respective social networks, outreach, reputation, and authority.

Embodied Early and Medieval Christianity[20]

EEMC is the principal methodology of this thesis and therefore requires some further elaboration. Against common scholarly approaches to early Christianity through a canonical or institutional perspective, this new methodology starts from the bottom up.[21] It considers actors (*in casu* the author Jerome) as individual agents fully embodied in their contemporary context; it reorients "research on materiality, localised and temporal embodiments of the individual – namely the signifiers of an embodied, not only lived, but living religion … Its methodology combines a situational, cross-temporal, and multi-local perspective of varied and complex forms of Christianity."[22] I have applied this broader framework to a particular focus on one individual religious agent, Jerome, and his relations – through literary communication – with individual actors situated primarily in Rome (Aventine area), secondarily in the provinces (Spain – Baetica -, Gaul, Dalmatia, and Altinum (northern Italy)), embedded in an aristocratic milieu, with a temporal range from the late 380s to the early 410s.

The methodological approach of EEMC departs from the stance which takes "people's differing (and often overlapping and interlinking) perceptions, positions, views and – if one can grasp them – emotions seriously as individual expressions of unique attempts at making sense in life. These have to be placed in the broader framework of ancient societies as part of an even wider scenery of traditions to which the developed positions were responses, and which changed together with the traditions that they were part of."[23] In a three-fold way, it seeks to "1) address the undervalued individual religious agent; 2) look at actions of individuals within non-essentialist frames, and 3) take into account archaeology, iconography

[20] For an full discussion of the methodology, see M. Vinzent, "Embodied Early and Medieval Christianity."
[21] As Vinzent explains "the bottom-up perspective of embodied Christianity of individuals will point to overlooked resistance to such changes [e.g. Christianisation of the Roman Empire], to ideological historicising of contingent developments, and will develop historical accounts that go beyond positivistic accumulation of data within given frameworks, and highlight shared and entangled experiences within different religious traditions, instead of writing a teleologically oriented history of exclusion and avoidance of what often has been termed syncretism," see Vinzent, *op.cit*., 108. Of course, it goes beyond the scope of this thesis to expand on different religious traditions, but I have already embarked on this path by looking at Jerome and his "Jewish network" in Rome, of which an article version is soon to be submitted to *Judaïsme Ancien*. For the bottom-up approach, compare Rüpke, "Individualization," 14, and 15 *Figure* 1 for a schematic illustration of his model.
[22] Vinzent, 107.
[23] Vinzent, 101.

and reception history, not mainly canonical and institutionalised belief systems, with a particular regard not mainly for 'typical' features, but for those which in the past have been seen as strange or deviating ones."[24] Rather than committing the same fallacies of institutional typology, one needs firstly to be aware of "the precedence of individual religious activities" and secondly, "much of Christian identity…is intrinsically linked to local memory, individual and often fictitious biographies and religious activities which hardly go beyond the specific context of those individuals or at best a local group."[25] A fine example here are Jerome's *vitae* which are all tailored for a very particular and limited audience.

As EEMC takes off from LAR it is evident that I have also used this methodology for my research. LAR focuses on "individual appropriation of traditions and embodiment, religious experiences and communication on religion in different social spaces, and the interaction of different levels facilitated by religious specialists."[26] Applied to the concrete context of this thesis, the individual appropriation takes place both on the level of the aristocrats who are Jerome's correspondents, as well as on the level of the author, Jerome himself. The different social spaces refer to the temporal and spatial realms of metropolitan Rome and the provinces. Jerome is both the one who signifies individual appropriation of traditions as well as the facilitator, who presents or represents himself as religious specialist (Biblical scholar and ascetic expert). The thesis offers an "analysis of the interaction of individuals [*in casu* Roman and peripheral aristocrats] with the agents of traditions and providers of religious services [*in casu* Jerome],"[27] but as I just mentioned, Jerome has the dualistic role of being both an agent as well as a – peripheral – individual embodied in Roman society. Therefore I would de-emphasise a perceived dichotomy between individuals and agents, and stipulate that aspect of the methodology which looks at the forming of social coalitions between individuals, individual agents, and religious specialists.[28] In other words, individual appraisal and interaction will be analysed in diverse social spaces, but primarily in

[24] Vinzent, 101.
[25] *Ibid.*, 104.
[26] Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion," 191.
[27] *Ibid.*, 191.
[28] It is not entirely clear what distinction is advocated by LAR, as particularly the terms 'individual' and 'individual agent' are used interchangeably, as well as the seemingly interchangeable use of 'individual agent' and 'religious specialist', see especially Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion," 197-8: "[…] scattered evidence will be contextualised and interpreted by relating it to individual agents, their use of space and time, their forming of social coalitions, their negotiation with religious specialists or "providers", and their attempts to "make sense" of religion in a situational manner and thus render it effective."

what Rüpke calls "the virtual space of literary communication [and the intellectual discourses formed therein],"[29] which I have then teamed up with narrative network analysis.

Similarly, EEMC is connected to Rüpke's ideas of individuation where the individual agent is regarded as agent for religious individuation.[30] In Roman society, the emphasis was put on honour and dignity as values that informed individuation.[31] Particularly *memoria dignus* was important and regarded as one of the highest achievements for aristocrats who sought for recognition of reputation and respect. *Memoria dignus* was a sign of honour and dignity that would not only bestow respect upon the '*dignus'* in their life time, but it extended beyond.[32] As such it existed beyond death, and this is an important facet to bear in mind when reading Jerome's claims for novelty when he argues that honour and praise will be bestowed upon his patron-students *even* beyond death.

It must be stipulated that when speaking of religious individuation, it must not be understood as "a wish to be different but rather the contrary … being different was not a value-informing individuation."[33] The values that were to be acquired included dignity, honour, being better or being perfect:[34] all situated within notions of competition. These fields of competition also included religious practices, euergetic activities (i.e. generosity),[35] displays of cultured taste, and intensive relationship with a deity or deities.[36] This proves that for example ascetic competition as Jerome presents it is not something uniquely Christian but a phenomenon that occurred across multiple religions. This is rather important in order to understand the degree of appropriation (aristocrats to ascetic Christianity, ascetic Christianity to aristocrats, see above). When it comes to existing models of individuality in antiquity, Rüpke distinguishes five different types. For the purpose of our research, it suffices to highlight two of them: 1) competitive individuality, which, according to Rüpke, "refers to the widespread aristocratic struggle for distinctiveness," and it is important to add that these

[29] Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion," 200.
[30] This approach distances itself from and allows to correct the modernist method of the 19th and 20th centuries which focussed on difference because difference was regarded a central implication, and hence a problem of individuality in antiquity, see Rüpke, "Individualization and Individuation," 10. Of course, this is closely tied in with the LAR-model which also focuses on the experiences and practices of individuals: see Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion," 191.
[31] Rüpke, "Individualization and Individuation," 11.
[32] As Rüpke explains, "*Memoria dignus*, worthy of memory, would prolong this beyond the space of one's own lifetime, but to achieve such a memory, a much higher degree of being remarkable, excellent, and different had to be attained," "Individualization and Individuation," 10.
[33] *Ibid.,* 8.
[34] *Ibid.,*8.
[35] With particular emphasis on female euergetic activities, see Emily Hemelrijk, "City Patronesses in the Roman Empire," in *Historia* 53/2 (2004), 209-245.
[36] Rüpke, "Individualization," 8, 10.

"established aims towards which other social groups would orient themselves."[37] This is an aspect that will come to the fore in the chapter "Peripheral Aristocrats;" and 2) representative individuality, where "individuals may strive to become exemplary and those who succeed would be cited as examples. The aim is not individual difference, but perfection in fulfilling a social or religious role, whether as Roman general, Christian martyr, or male Jew, yet fulfilment is a personal feat."[38] Again, this is an aspect we will come across multiple times in the analyses of the letters, those addressed to patricians in particular. These patricians, in turn, will be mentioned as the 'examples,' or, in Rüpke's words "representative individuals," in epistolary correspondence with 'peripherals.' Yet, "rules on representative individuality could easily outlaw a more general understanding of what behaviour is acceptable and preferable in competitive individuality."[39] It is also in this context that Granovetter's theory is applied: Jerome functions as the facilitator to establish ties between the peripherals who seek to achieve recognition and respect from their Rome-based senatorial peers and superiors, namely the Roman patricians with whom Jerome holds stronger ties. At the same time, both Jerome and the peripherals seek to be recognised by these same patricians, and seek to achieve the same noble status. The 'weak' ties between Jerome and the peripherals – that is to say, only single letters have survived, there is little to no evidence of more frequent correspondence, which has lead me to determine the ties as 'weak' – could actually better serve to achieve that goal than the strong ties, and this is, in an adapted form, what Granovetter argues when he explains the 'strength of weak ties'. Applied to Jerome's case, the weak ties serve the peripherals in that they are put into contact with the patricians; the ties serve Jerome because he can now claim to be an authority, the ties also serve the peripherals because they have evidence that they consult the same experts or that they patronise the same mentors. Furthermore, the ties serve Jerome because they indicate his strong embeddedness in Roman aristocratic society, and like his aristocrats he has contacts across the Empire; relations which he maintains through the medium of epistolary correspondence, the exchange of literature and gifts.

Yet, it has to be acknowledged that the evidence that has been preserved is only textual and fragmentary (see 'manuscript tradition' below). What needs to be mentioned here

[37] Rüpke, "Individualization,", 13. Rüpke also explains that it would often give rise to conflict, and how "individual differences would be sharply noticed by contemporary observers, but evaluated against a discursively constructed common ethos that would stress the commonwealth. The concrete norms would be very much shaped and modified by actual competitive behaviour." This aspect of 'common ethos' and reflections that match the idea of 'commonwealth' are equally apparent in Jerome's model of Christian ascetic *nobilitas.*
[38] Rüpke, "Individualization," 13.
[39] *Ibid.*, 14.

is that when dealing with this type of evidence one has to bear in mind author, text, addressee, and second-level recipients, as well as voluntary associations which help to realise certain options; in other words, as Rüpke shows, writing helps to develop notions of individuality, inscriptions might help to express it.[40] The epistolary correspondence analysed in this work has to be regarded and interpreted "neither as 'authentic' individual expression nor as institutional 'survival', but as media, rhetoric and representation – i.e. as cultural work created in interaction."[41] This makes it particularly difficult to try say something about the addressees, their motives, their habits, and their daily conduct, but it is an approach that at least needs to be tested. The evidence analysed in the thesis should not simply be taken as 'representative' of any (mostly) assumed institution, which are mostly aggregates retrospectively, and anachronistically retrojected into history. As we will see below, we cannot speak of authenticity or 'authentic individual expression' because most of the evidence we have got is fabricated at a later date based on fragmentary findings. As a result, there is the problem of how we understand 'authentic'. Rather, according to the EEMC methodology the evidence should be interpreted as individual expression, not as an authentic one, but as always a mediated one. Here it supports Rüpke's approach which considers evidence as media, "the results of a culture created in interaction."[42] It follows that our evidence must be related to individual agents and furthermore it must be related to these agents' use of space and time, their forming of social coalitions, their negotiation with religious specialists or 'providers' and their attempts to 'make sense' of religion in a situational manner and thus render it effective.[43] From this it is clear that Jerome is not the only 'individual agent': his correspondents are likewise to be regarded as 'agents,' and Jerome is, apart from an agent, also a 'religious specialist', and a 'provider' in that he provides services at his patrons' demands. Again, the 'social coalition' that is formed links in with the strong ties – weak ties theory and (more general) network analysis in that a social coalition is formed on the basis of literary correspondence, between actors spread across the Empire: patricians in the Roman metropolis, peripherals in Spain, Gaul, Italy, Dalmatia, and Jerome in Bethlehem. Spatially spoken, these are very different situational contexts: from a rural village in Judea, Jerome corresponds with patricians in a multicultural metropolis, which is very different from a provincial town in Baetica, Spain, or Goth-pestered towns in Dalmatia and across the Alps in Gaul.

[40] Rüpke, "Individualization," 14.
[41] Rüpke, "Religion in the Roman Empire," in *RRE* 1 (2015), 3.
[42] Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion," 200.
[43] Rüpke, "Religion," 3.

Terminology

In line with methodological considerations, it is necessary to provide a compact glossary of terms used in the thesis. First, there is the frequently used concept of 'patron-students'. This is a categorical term which I have invented to identify the core of Jerome's correspondents. I believe the best way to denote them is to call them 'patron-students': only calling them students would wrongly picture Jerome in a higher 'hierarchical' place of authority (an image which he might be eager to convey), but simply calling them his patrons would denigrate or underemphasise the instructive character of their relationship in which Jerome was the teacher. The term 'patron-student' both acknowledges Jerome's dependence on them, as well as the learning aspect, the instructive character (teacher-student) of their interaction. It might well be interpreted as more of a convention or enactment which both Jerome and his correspondents adopt, but this should not diminish Jerome's correspondents' hunger for learning and the centrality of *paideia* in their tradition or culture.

Jerome's patron-students are to be divided – as far as those analysed in this thesis are concerned – into 'patricians' and 'peripherals'. A secondary division may involve 'senior aristocrats' and 'young aristocrats'. 'Patricians' here is used adopting Jerome's vocabulary; while I am aware that by this time the title is merely honorary and not tied to administrative office, in the context of this thesis and particularly in light of Jerome's use of the term, it remains the best fitting descriptor. All of Jerome's patron-students are 'Roman,' which implies they all have citizenship status of the Empire. The distinction lies therefore not in citizenship but in spatial location and intra-senatorial rank: there is the aristocracy of the *urbs,* i.e. the city of Rome, who belong or claim to belong to the ancient aristocratic families, to the '*nobilitas*' or '*illustres*'; and there is the 'peripheral' aristocracy in the provinces. Although they are also 'Roman,' and have been promoted to senatorial rank and have, as such, become members of the 'Roman aristocracy,' they are to be distinguished from the noble, Rome-based patricians in that they are social climbers and located in the provinces rather than in Rome. Their geographical location is even to be situated outside of Italy. Although they are now of senatorial rank they used to be mere 'provincial' or 'local' elites, or simply prosperous families, who through military or imperial service have gained promotion for senatorial rank. Since they lack the prestigious pedigree of their Roman 'peers,' they belong to the lower or lowest rank of the 'ordinary' *clarissimate*. The *clarissimate* is the

Roman 'umbrella term' for senatorial rank.[44] When I speak of 'Roman aristocrat' I have the Rome-based patricians in mind, and I have sought to avoid using the term to identify aristocratic 'peripherals' as much as possible. Similarly, Aloys Winterling has shown it is best to avoid the concept of 'class' or 'upper class' since the 'class system' is anachronistic to describe the aristocracy of late Roman antiquity.[45]

When the concept 'individual'[46] is used, it should not be confused with our modern, post-Enlightenment understanding of individual and individualism. As mentioned above and below, there is certainly a notion of self-awareness, which particularly comes to the fore in the importance granted to appearance and self-representation, but this is always in relation to a collective (of peers, family, society) and never sought for the mere sake of the individual him- or herself. Closely connected to this are the concepts of 'embeddedness,' 'embodied,' and 'embodiment,' where a definition of the latter suffices to explain the concepts. Derived from Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'embodied cognition,' Rüpke defines 'embodiment' as "a notion of conjoining material and corporeal experience (and as such occupies a central position in contemporary epistemology and anthropology of religion)."[47]

Last but not least, there are the concepts of 'addressees' vs. 'correspondents.' 'Addressees' refers to the dedication of the letter: who is addressed in its heading. It has a more passive connotation. 'Correspondents' would imply mutual exchange of letters, and is therefore by nature more 'active'. Although Jerome claims to be responding to requests, and often refers to other letters (and gifts) received: there is no such evidence extant with regard to the persons discussed in this thesis other than the letter from Pammachius and Oceanus. The lack of evidence and the reliability of the sources are discussed below under 'manuscript tradition,' which summarises what Andrew Cain has concisely discussed in his monograph *The Letters of Jerome*. However, considering the number of letters addressed to Roman patricians, 'correspondents' seems a more appropriate denominator for this group, whereas 'addressees' seems more apt for the 'peripherals.' Lastly, the use of 'addressees' and/or 'correspondents' also obscures the second-level recipients. 'Correspondents' could imply the role of interlocutor or mediator (and as such 'individual agent), which seems to be a role taken on by Pammachius. Although 'addressee' in our modern understanding evokes a sense

[44] For the senatorial rank and its subdivisions, see Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 19-24, 37-42.
[45] Our understanding of 'class' does not quite apply to the world of late antique aristocrats, see Aloys Winterling, "Freundschaft und Klientel im kaiserzeitlichen Rom," in *Historia* 57 (2008), 298-316.
[46] For a philosophical background of ideas of 'individual' and 'individualization' in ancient times, see Rüpke's brief discussion of the topic, "Individuals," 9. See also p. 10-11 for the concept of 'person' and 'relation to self.'
[47] Rüpke, "Lived Ancient Religion," 198.

of privacy and personal character, in antiquity it was regarded more a titular concept: a dedication of the work or letter in question, or an attempt of self-representation ('boasting') from the author to show off his well-connectedness to the wider public for which the work was intended.[48]

Analysis letters: common denominator

The new methodology and aim of the thesis call for a careful selection from Jerome's epistolary corpus which encompasses 123 extant letters.[49] The primary selection was made on the basis of addressees, approach, and theme.

The first denominator is Jerome's addressees. Every senior person that is scrutinised in this thesis seems to belong to the *clarissimate*, although only a selection of them can be considered members of the Roman nobility, the true *socialites* of the Empire. One does well to remember that we are dealing with a minority group *an sich* as aristocrats, and even more: a minority group within their own minority group as nobles who seem to have chosen to commit to the perfection of the ascetic way of life, in a pursuit to become "the ideal Christian." As such this is one of the tiniest fractions of Roman society and no attempts at generalisation should be made, be it reflecting patterns within the Roman aristocracy or society at large.

The corpus of letters that will be analysed in this thesis include, as stated above, letters of instruction sent to aristocrats of various 'rank', i.e. members of the most ancient of Roman noble families as well as provincial aristocrats (the '*nouveau riche'*). We will see below that this self-representation and determination of distinct orders within the senatorial order are existential components that characterise the Roman aristocracy. Although hagiographies, eulogies, and letters of consolidation would serve this aristocratic tendency by describing the object of the letter or narrative glorifying their virtuous lives and holy example, I have decided to not include such works in the analysis but I will only deal with correspondence addressed to 'living' subjects. The hagiographical and consolidating letters

[48] The 'letter' or rather treatise addressed to Eustochium, *De uirginitate seruanda* is one fine example of this. For the argument that this was not a letter meant for personal use by Eustochium but rather a treatise to instruct (and criticise) a wider Roman audience, see for example Neil Adkin, *Jerome on Virginity. A Commentary on the Libellus de virginitate servanda (Letter 22)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). The title of the letter to Furia, '*De uiduidate seruanda*' seems deliberately to hint to the treatise dedicated to Eustochium, and could therefore be interpreted along similar lines. See for a more detailed discussion of this practice the section on 'literature' in 'Jerome's World'.

[49] Considered Jerome's substantial social network, Cain asserts that this means the letters only "represent the tiniest fraction of all of the letters [Jerome] wrote during his long career," see *Letters,* 220.

are those which describe the lives of Lea, Blesilla, Nepotian, Lucinus, Fabiola, Paula, and Marcella.[50] There are also hagiographies which have not been distributed in the form of epistles, namely *Life of Paul the first Hermit*, *Life of Malchus the Captive Monk,* and the *Life of S. Hilarion*. Since my analysis will be limited to epistolary correspondence only, I shall omit these hagiographies because of their altogether different character, albeit aware that these *vitae* certainly served as instructions and models as well.

As a result, the select letters in the analysis are those addressed to Pammachius, Oceanus, Marcella, Lucinus, Julian, "naughty" Rusticus,[51] Furia, Demetrias, "young" Rusticus, and Nepotian. Some of these people are related to each other, others are members of a particular circle of friends, a study group, and some seem to have been more remote; that is to say provincial aristocrats who only corresponded with Jerome and other like-minded ascetic students or mentors at distance via the exchange of letters, treatises, and books. The letters all deal with (ideal) modes of living or could reveal daily interaction and social patterns of aristocratic life. Therefore, correspondence which deals with expert exegetical topics has not been taken into account. Since the principal aim is to look at how, to what extent, and if epistolary correspondence served as instruction to establish or enable a reconstruction of identity, I had to select those letters which explicitly offer or discuss models and role models. These letters include the three aspects on which these models are built, namely exegesis (study of Scripture, which takes a central place), moral virtue, and doctrine; however they are not purely exegetical. In other words, since the exegetical epistles only reflect on one aspect of the model of ideal Christian life, they should better be analysed in another study. Including them would vastly increase the number of letters to be analysed and obscure the argument I am trying to make. Jerome's exegetical correspondence could better be studied in combination with his other scriptural works, which are often addressed or dedicated to (the best of) his patron-students. This is one of the reasons why I have omitted a detailed analysis of Jerome's vast number of letters addressed to Marcella: the majority of the *Liber ad Marcellam* deals with such exegetical queries. Furthermore, the (historical) figure of Marcella (and her relation to Jerome) has been concisely dealt with by Sylvia Letsch-

[50] A list of this taxonomy can be found in Cain, *Letters*, 212. He has also included letter 79 to Salvina on the death of her husband Nebridius, although it is besides a eulogy also a recommendation on how she should live as a chaste widow, and Cain mentions letter 66 to Pammachius on the death of his wife Paulina. However, I have argued that the letter defies the expectations of the consolatory genre, see chapter 2 below.

[51] In an attempt to distinguish this Rusticus from 'young' Rusticus, since both come from Gaul, I shall nickname him 'naughty' Rusticus as the letter addressed to him is a reprimand for his transgression of a vow of continence.

Brunner.[52] More recently Andrew Cain has published important insights concerning the *Liber ad Marcellam* and their *Redaktionsgeschichte*,[53] which means it would be difficult to determine the historicity and personal relation between Marcella and Jerome.

Since my aim is to look at the aristocracy and the degree of aristocratic adoption of asceticism, the addressees have been selected on the basis of this qualification and those who have become clerics or even bishops have not been taken into consideration as they went on to represent institutions which evidently must have changed their position and role in society. This is one of the reasons why Jerome's correspondence with Paulinus of Nola has not been included in the analysis. Furthermore, the relation between Jerome and Paulinus raises many more questions than could be dealt with within the limits of this thesis, but would form a project of their own.[54] Most strikingly for the reader perhaps is the absence of a discussion on Jerome's relation with Paula.[55] She is different from the other Roman patricians in that she decided to leave Rome for good to accompany Jerome and settle in remote Bethlehem. Other aristocrats might go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, yet they would always return to Rome; Fabiola is a fine example. Paula and her daughter Eustochium, however, completely left Roman aristocratic society by means of emigration to the Holy Land.[56] The interest of the current work focuses on aristocrats who remained in Rome, or who remained in their local societies.

Most if not all of these aristocrats would have known one another, particularly those who resided or had their roots in Rome. Pammachius was a former fellow student of Jerome and an heir of the ancient Roman *gens Furia*. He had married one of Paula's daughters, Paulina, and thus has to be situated in the family of Paula and Eustochium, although it must

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[52] Sylvia Letsch-Brunner, *Marcella – Discipula et Magistra. Auf den Spuren einer römischen Christin des 4. Jahrhunderts*, (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1998).

[53] Cain, *Letters*, 68-98.

[54] As a matter of fact, one could dedicate a research project on Paulinus of Nola as individual religious agent, applying EEMC, maybe similar to the current work on Jerome. Paulinus of Nola would be a very interesting subject considered his aristocratic pedigree, his embeddedness in that society, and his social network which spreads across the Empire and is maintained by means of literary correspondence as well as visits.

[55] On Jerome and Paula, see most recently Andrew Cain, *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula. A Commentary on the* Epitaphum Sanctae Paulae *with an Introduction, Text, and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[56] There are however parallels to the case of Paula and Eustochium. One example is Rufinus of Aquileia's patron Melania the Elder, who also left Rome for the Holy Land, yet did not completely part from her properties. Her granddaughter Melania the Younger and her husband Pinianus sought to do the same and tried to sell off their assets, which even meant they had to get the court involved in order to win their case, see Curran, *Pagan City*, 298ff, yet it is also clear that still they did not completely renounce all their wealth: they were still able to escape to their estates in Africa after the fall of Rome, which no doubt was a costly business, and before this they had retired to a family villa outside Rome, which also indicates that it was still in their possession, see Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 61.7. When they sought to win the court's support for their case, they were able to offer precious gifts to the empress, see Curran, *Pagan City* p. 304.The travels of both Melanias similarly contradict claims that they had renounced all their wealth.

be stressed that Pammachius would stay in Rome and did not venture to the Holy Land after his wife's death. Marcella, from the *gens Marcella* lived in a palace on the Aventine, where she had a study group whose members included Principia, Marcella's 'sister' Asella,[57] and Fabiola (possibly *gens Iuliana* or *gens Furia*).[58] It could be possible that Furia, *gens Furia,* and her mother also frequented Marcella's house and study group. Demetrias was the daughter of Olybrius and Juliana from one of the most renowned patrician families: *gens Anicia*.[59] With regards to the 'peripherals,' living at remote distance from Rome and not member of any of the illustrious *gens* or one of those peer-based study groups, there are Lucinus and Theodora from Baetica, Spanish aristocrats from southern Spain; Julian from Dalmatia (like Jerome), but we are not informed about the exact location nor do we learn any more biographical details about his ancestry. The precise status of "naughty" Rusticus from Gaul is equally undetermined other than that he, as a wealthy man, must have belonged to the local elite and presumably was a senatorial aristocrat who kept his residence in Gaul.[60] Nepotian (and his uncle, Jerome's long-time friend Heliodorus) presumably came from a military family, but whether their family achieved aristocratic status is hard to tell. Similar difficulties occur when trying to determine "young" Rusticus' status. Nonetheless, they had in common that they came from wealthy or well-to-do families which were able to provide them with good education which should lead to a prosperous career, and a clerical career was not their first point of call. It is evident that as such we are dealing with addressees of different degrees of aristocratic standing. The Roman aristocrats, or rather Rome-based aristocrats belong to the oldest of Roman patricians; their wealth is enormous, with family estates all across the Empire,[61] almost incomparable with 'second degree' Roman aristocrats, or 'third degree' provincial elite. The 'second degree' Roman aristocrats would be those on

[57] John Curran suggests she "almost certainly" was Marcella's sister, yet firm evidence seems to be lacking, see Curran, *Pagan City*, 270.

[58] See the chapters about Pammachius for more details on pedigree.

[59] With regard to the illustrious house of the *Anicia*, see Andrew Jacobs' contribution which proposes that Jerome's rivalry with Pelagius is partially due to the latter's success to count the Anician house as one of his patrons, whilst Jerome failed to 'trophy' them, Andrew Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity," in *Church History* 69 (2000) 719-748, see also Hagith Sivan, "Anician Women, the Cento of Proba, and Aristocratic Conversion in the Fourth Century," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 47/2 (1993), 147-57, Patrick Laurence, "Proba, Juliana et Démétrias: le christianisme des femmes de la *gens Anicia* dans la première moitié du V siècle," in *Révue des études augustiniennes* 48/I (2002), 131-163, and M. Testard "Demetrias, une disciple de saint Jérôme et la solicitudo animi,"in*Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, (Paris: de Boccard, 1999), 238-256.

[60] Constantine's amendments of the residency requirements of the senatorial aristocracy had made it possible for provincial aristocrats to remain in their countryside estates and not take up residence in Rome, see Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 32-3.

[61] Curran gives the example of Melania the Younger, whose family owned vast estates across the Empire, see Curran, *Pagan City*, 302, who refers to *Vita Melaniae* 10.21 (Latin) and 7, 11, 18-20 (Greek) which mention the estates in Campania, Apulia, Sicily, Africa, Mauretania, Numidia, Spain, and Britain.

whom senatorial status is confirmed or most likely, i.e. Lucinus, Julian, and possibly 'naughty' Rusticus. The 'third degree' would include those whose status is most questionable: Nepotian, his uncle Heliodorus, 'young' Rusticus, and, of course, Jerome himself. However, Jerome seems to manage to offer a common model for these aristocrats, although a difference in vocabulary and style may be observed, and when using examples Jerome will be careful to respect the hierarchy of ranks within the *clarissimate*: a Pammachius is recommended as an example to peripheral addressees, but never the other way around.

Apart from a pedigree-division to group the letters or the addressees of the letters, one could also choose to distinguish them based on gender, ordination, or marital status. There are letters addressed to men and to women, to virgins, to monks, to widows, and sometimes to married couples – although, remarkably enough, we observe how relatively soon one of the partners gets widowed. However, for the purpose of this work I have chosen to make the selection based on status only, and I have deliberately tried to avoid the gender-divide which is so often emphasised in research that deals with Jerome and his social relations, with a particular emphasis on his seemingly peculiar relation with, and fascination for, women. Much research has already been conducted on Jerome and his relation with Roman aristocratic women. Even as early as Martin Luther's days scholars have been intrigued by the apparent appeal the "monk-scholar" had on wealthy Roman women with a hunger for Christian asceticism, and more specifically by Jerome's remarkable, at times contradictory attitude towards them.[62] Jerome's contribution to ancient feminist developments – in the sense that his ascetic model granted them an opportunity to achieve a freedom otherwise thought impossible in Roman patriarchal society – has been widely addressed.[63] Similarly, Jerome's dispute with Jovinian cannot be fully addressed without a focus on the role of

[62] Martin Luther, writes in his *Commentary on* 1 *Cor* 7:9"Oh how much pious time he must have wasted with carnal thoughts!...You see, the man lay in heat and should have taken a wife," see Martin Luther, "1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy," in *Luther's Works* vol. 28, (eds.) Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 28.

[63] Patrick Laurence, *Jérôme et le nouveau modèle feminine*; Anne Jensen, *God's Self-Confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women*, **(**Louisville, Ky. : Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Lynda Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Anne Yarbrough, "Christianisation in the Fourth Century: The Example of Roman Women," in *CH* 45/2 (1976), 149-56; R. Rüther and E. McLaughlin (eds.), "Mothers of the Church: Ascetic Women in the Late Patristic Age*,"* in *Women of Spirit. Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 72-98; and especially Christine Steiniger, *Die ideale christliche Frau: Virgo-vidua-nupte. Eine studie zum Bild der ideale christlichen Frau bei Hieronymus und Pelagius*, PhD. diss. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München,(St Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1997).

women.[64] Even Wiesen has dedicated a chapter to Jerome's correspondence with women in a monograph where he sheds light on Jerome's satirical skills.[65] However, I am not seeking to repeat once more what an extraordinary relationship Jerome must have had with his female correspondents. Rather, the focus of my thesis is on an aspect which seems to have been overlooked: Jerome's relation with aristocratic men who are not clergy and the question whether these aristocrats 'converted' at all. In order to determine if such conversion took place, it would not be sufficient to only look at Jerome's correspondence with aristocratic men such as Pammachius, Oceanus, and Lucinus who were already well established in Roman society as senior men, senior officials, at the time of their alleged conversion to ascetic Christianity. In order to assess the transformation or appropriation correctly one needs to include an analysis of the correspondence with young aristocrats: adolescents who are yet to take up their place in Roman society, who do not hold official positions yet, but are still in their formation years to become the Roman citizens their families wish them to become, but at the same time they are immersed in that very Roman aristocratic culture, aware of this and their responsibilities towards it (parents, ancestry, the whole tradition of education, values, etc.). It is our task to scrutinise the differences in approach, language, and rhetoric Jerome adopts when addressing these young aristocrats, and to assess if the requirements for their adoption of his model of ascetic Christian perfection differ at all from the model he presents to their senior relatives. Of course, these young aristocrats include women, and likewise, a discussion of Jerome's strong ties with his Roman circle cannot completely omit figures like Marcella or Paula. But the focus will not be on their venerated vow of continence, but rather sees them as embedded in Roman society as members of the patrician order with their expectations of how they should be addressed, how they take up their role in this senatorial society, and how senatorial social mechanisms operate.

Similarly, the absence of women in the chapter on peripheral aristocrats is not to say there were no peripheral aristocratic women with whom Jerome kept in contact, *au contraire*.[66] The first chapters of the thesis deal with Roman aristocrats, with heavy emphasis on the relation between Pammachius and Jerome. The final two chapters on 'young aristocrats' originally formed one entity, but as the chapter matured it became clear it had to be divided into two separate chapters. Taking on from the approach applied in the first three

[64] David Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.
[65] David Wiesen, *St Jerome the Satirist. A Study in Christian Latin Thought and Letters*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 113-65.
[66] My original chapter on widows included for example letters to Theodora, Salvina, and Ageruchia.

chapters, I made the division 'patrician' – 'peripheral' for the young aristocrats, too. Unintentionally, this resulted in the gender-divide I had been eager to avoid.

Each letter relies heavily on background formation of the correspondent in the classical tradition, and the language reflects both commonplace concepts and stress on competition and reputation. Related to this process of formation of the person is the common theme we observe in the letters: the transformation from a Roman noble man or noble woman to Christian *nobilitas*, with the often repeated 'noble by birth, but even nobler in Christ'. The aim of the rhetoric is to evoke the intention to 'reconstruct' identity': sometimes for the addressee of the letter, but often for a 'wider public', although 'wider' has to be seen within the boundaries of the upper strata of society (and in addition presumably restricted to study groups which like-minded Christian aristocrats had formed). The transformation process offered through instructive epistolary correspondence pictures a model of the ideal ascetic Christian which is the ultimate goal, drawing on both Biblical examples and living and dead holy examples of Christian virtue – often, if not always, from the same noble rank as the addressee. Furthermore, there is a second manner to describe a common approach in these letters: namely the three-fold approach in which ascetic Christian life ought to be perfected: 1) study of Scripture, 2) moral virtues, and 3) knowledge of doctrine (according to Jerome this would be Nicene orthodoxy, yet one should familiarise oneself with the arguments of adherents, too). With the latter comes in authority to speak up in doctrinal disputes, to influence institutional policy, and to contribute to 'polemic' (Jerome's polemic).

The themes of the letters also show a parallel with the Roman (classical) tradition both in its competitive character (incl. strive for perfection) and in its emphasis on *exemplum* (and *paideia*) – the trajectory of classical education forming the process to become the ideal Roman citizen.

Manuscript tradition

In the section on methodology it was mentioned that we cannot take any of our literary evidence as 'authentic' because of a questionable *Redaktionsgeschichte*. Although I have only worked with critical text editions of Hilberg, Brepolis' database *Library of Latin Texts*, and the translations of Wright (Loeb), Labourt (Budé), and Fremantle (NPNF), and as such I have not worked with actual manuscripts, it is nonetheless necessary to briefly elaborate on the manuscript tradition of Jerome's letters. Andrew Cain has pointed to the complicated

manuscript tradition of the epistles, and, as Clare Stancliffe acknowledged, "Andrew Cain did us a very good job, making our lives a lot easier."[67] Although, as will become apparent in the chapters, I do not always follow Cain's taxonomy, it is important to dwell on some of his considerations before moving on to the texts.

The most serious problem confronting us in pursuing our argument is a lack of evidence and, where evidence is to be found, its somewhat one-sided nature. Jerome's epistolary correspondence has only partially been preserved and transmitted, leaving us subject to copyists decisions what to copy and transmit, and what they did not find worthy of preservation. Andrew Jacobs suggested that Jerome might have kept an organised archive of his correspondence in his Bethlehem library, including keeping copies of letters received, but this archive might have been lost in the fire set at his monastery.[68] This is just one speculative suggestion as to why none of the letters from his correspondents have been preserved, save those from institutional figures (Augustine, Damasus) and the one letter from Pammachius and Oceanus. The authorship of letter that has been signed in name of Paula and Eustochium and has been addressed to Marcella is disputed. It has been suggested that the author was none other than Jerome himself.[69]

Interestingly, as Andrew Cain has pointed out, Jerome had already started to collect letters and have them published as '*liber,*' to be distributed in one coherent volume. There are several of such volumes, namely two collections chiefly containing correspondence with Marcella (as in letters *to* Marcella, without any letters of her hand incorporated) *Epistularum ad diversos liber* and *Ad Marcellam epistularum liber*, then small collections containing *mutual* exchanges with Damasus, and then several as Cain qualifies them "stand-alone literary showpieces."[70] This clear purpose Jerome had foreseen for these letters is one of the reasons why I have not considered them for incorporation in my analysis. Andrew Cain has presented challenging hypotheses that at least some of these letters might have been forged

[67] Comment made by Stancliffe during a discussion after a gathering of the Durham Patristic research group, Durham, January 2016.
[68] This is a hypothesis he proposed during his talk at the Oxford Patristics Conference 2015 which I have attended, hence I do not have a textual reference. However, Andrew Cain also alludes to this disastrous event, mentioning the "near-destruction in 416 of Jerome's two Bethlehem monasteries by a band of marauders," *Letters* 227. In letter 139 to Apronius Jerome mourns "his monastery had been left in shambles as far as its worldly possessions were concerned," Cain, *Letters*, 228, yet Cain asserts that although plausible, it is not possible to figure if indeed Jerome's epistolary archive, including outgoing and incoming correspondence, was destroyed by the flames.
[69] See Neil Adkin, "The Letter of Paula and Eustochium to Marcella: Some Notes," in *Maia* 51 (1999), 97-110.
[70] Cain, *Letters*, 223. The literary showpieces are *Letter* 14 (to Heliodorus), 22 (to Eustochium), and 39 (eulogy on Blesilla).

by Jerome to fit his ambitions, and were never part of a real correspondence.[71] Furthermore, as Wendy Mayer points out, letters were often dictated and not written by the author. This means that a scribe composed the letter in written form, and as a result their "formulaic phrases" are conveyed in the letter, rather than the author's.[72]

Jerome himself has offered no indications of an intention to group together letters written after 393, and neither did any of his contemporaries.[73] The collections of letters in the critical edition by Hilberg lack a *prolegomena* which explains use of the 139 manuscripts consulted by the author and his collaborators, and according to Cain there were many important manuscripts the researchers did not have access to.[74]

The dating of the texts would become a main problem if I were to argue that there is a development in Jerome's thought, but apart from him sounding less radical in his views on asceticism in his later letters, there are seemingly contradictory elements from 'early on'.[75] Furthermore, my aim is to capture the Roman aristocrats behind the letters, and their social relation with Jerome. A strictly accurate chronology of the letters is therefore of slightly less importance. However, I must add that all the letters analysed in this thesis relate to Jerome's post-Roman years.

Without going in full detail, the oldest manuscripts containing collections of individual letters date back to the sixth century, despite evidence of Jerome's own efforts to group together letters and have them publicised. From the seventh century there emerge slightly larger dossiers or groupings.[76] The letter by Pammachius and Oceanus appears, together with Jerome's response, in one of these collections and as such is part of one of the oldest manuscripts.[77] In the eighth century collections disseminated grow even larger (40-80 letters per collection) and start to show an internal coherence.[78] Strikingly perhaps, the letter dossiers that start to be circulated now are often those between Jerome and other members of the clergy, such as Augustine of Hippo and Theophilus of Alexandria.[79] The small and loosely-arranged letter collections that emerged in the first four centuries after his death would form the basis of the larger compilations from the eighth and ninth century onwards.

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[71] Cain, *Letters*, especially 13-19, 53-67, 68-70.
[72] Wendy Mayer, "Approaching Late Antiquity," 5.
[73] Cain, *Letters*, 223.
[74] Cain, *Letters*, 224-5.
[75] Again, Wendy Mayer, "Approaching Late Antiquity," 7.
[76] Cain, *Letters*, 225.
[77] *Ibid.*, 226.
[78] *Ibid.*, 226.
[79] Cain, *Letters*, 226-7.

Late antique or medieval archetypes of Jerome's correspondence were non-existent, which adds to the tenuousness of the epistolary manuscript tradition.[80]

[80] *Ibid*., 227.

Chapter 1. Jerome's World

Eusebius Hieronymus Stridonensis[81] is a figure who has grown from obscurity to prominence, and through the ages he has been moved back and forth between those two extremes. Even today scholars still regard him with some reserve, with Neil Adkin referring to him as someone with "a magpie mind and a vast memory," hinting at Jerome's mastery of stealing texts without proper acknowledgments.[82] Whilst in his own time Jerome seems to have enjoyed some popularity and respect among ascetic and intellectually minded aristocrats, he also experienced the other extreme by his expulsion from Rome in 384 CE, his bitter fights with Rufinus in the so-called 'Origenist controversy,' his on-off relationship with ecclesial authorities and the clergy,[83] and a questionable relation with Augustine of Hippo. Not to mention the fact that his scholarly efforts to translate the Hebrew Bible from the Hebrew original into Latin were not particularly well received in his own days.[84]

The reception history is equally dualistic. At some point in history Jerome has been declared a Doctor and Father of the Catholic Church, and it is not until the Council of Trent (1545-1563 CE) that Jerome's Vulgate translation becomes the standardised version for the Church, when he finally gets the recognition as an exegetical expert and translator he had sought for so long. On the other hand there is Martin Luther whose disdain of Jerome resembles Jerome's own vituperative rhetoric against, for example, Jovinian, Onasus, and Rufinus.[85] Yet, Jerome is also referenced – and as such 'recognised' – by medieval Jewish scholars such as David Kimhi (RaDaK) and Abraham ibn Ezra:[86] recognition from successors of those scholars whose company he seems to have sought out wherever he went.[87]

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[81] Sometimes also referred to as 'Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus Stridonensis.' 'Eusebius' was his father's name, and according to John Kelly this might hint at plausible Greek roots of the family, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies,* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 6.

[82] Neil Adkin, *Jerome on Virginity,* 2.

[83] One can think of Jerome's position as advisor or secretary to Bishop Damasus of Rome and his far less amicable attitude towards Damasus' successor Siricius; Jerome's rants at the Roman clergy who live in abundant luxury (e.g. in *Epp.* 22, 52, 130, see below), including rants at monks and priests who presumably compete for the same patrons; the conflict with John of Jerusalem in which he – together with all those in his monastery – ends up being excommunicated; his friendly relation with Epiphanius of Salamis, and his lap dog attitude towards Theophilus of Alexandria which causes his U-turn with regard to his opinion on Origen.

[84] See the criticism of Augustine, *Ep.* 71 (PL 33).

[85] Martin Luther, quoted above.

[86] Jewish scholars named are David Kimhi, Abu al-Walid ("Sefer ha-Shorashim," גלל anדום), Abraham ibn Ezra (Gen. 37:35), Samuel b. Meir (Ex. 20:13), Nahmanides (Gen. 41:45), Joseph Albo (Gen 3:25), and Isaac Troki (Hizzuk Emunah), see Crawford Howell Toy, Samuel Krauss, "Jerome," *Jewish Encyclopedia* via http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8601-jerome-eusebius-hieronymus-sophronius (accessed 08.02.2016).

[87] It is quite fascinating to observe how Jerome, although at times wary of accusations of being a Judaizer, had contacts in Jewish groups whilst sojourning in the 'Syrian desert', in Rome, and in Bethlehem. See for example

Modern scholars have been intrigued by the Roman aristocracy, and Jerome as point of access to them, starting with Samuel Dill's study published in 1898.[88] As Mathisen narrates, Adolf von Harnack and Theodor Mommsen had planned to publish a study on the prosopography of the Roman Empire, but the Great War barred their plans, to only be resuscitated in the late 1940s by Jones and Bell, who would liaise with French colleagues under Marrou.[89] This joint project would eventually result in the *Prosopograhy of the Later Roman Empire* (PLRE) and the *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire* (PCBE).[90] Peter Brown picked up the topic again in 1961.[91] Arnheim's 1972 prosopographical study has brought important insights into the senatorial aristocracy, the family ties between the ancient aristocrat houses, and their role in imperial administration.[92] Scholarship on the Roman aristocracy (in the west) has been particularly strong since the British-French coalition on prosopographical research, M. T. W. Arnheim, and John Matthew's publication which took a turn to analyse the diversity of the senatorial aristocracy.[93] Scholars have often emphasised the aristocracy's decadence and even promoted this as one of the reasons of the fall of the empire.[94] In more recent times, Peter Brown shows himself still quite under the influence of

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Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the* quaestiones hebraicae in Genesim(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Hillel Newman, *Jerome and the Jews,* Ph.D. diss. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1997); Id., „Jerome's Judaizers," in *JECS* 9 (2001), 421-52, G. Stemberger, „Hieronymus und die Juden seiner Zeit" in D.A. Koch and H. Lichtenberger (eds), *Begegnungen zwischen Christentum und Judentum in Antike und Mittelalter: Festschrift für H. Schreckenberg* (Göttingen, 1993) 347-64

[88] Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1898); Curran, *Pagan City*, 261, n. 2 criticises Dill's Christian moralising.

[89] Ralph Mathisen, "The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," in *Fifty Years of Prosopography: The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium, and Beyond*, A. Cameron (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23-4. For Mommsen and von Harnack, see Stefan Rebenich, "Mommsen, Harnack, and the Prosopography of Late Antiquity," in R. Mathisen, *Late Antiquity and Byzantium* (MP 17/1: 1996), 149-67.

[90] For an overview of this project and its progress, see Ralph Mathisen, "The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire," 23-40.

[91] Peter Brown, "Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman Aristocracy," *JRS* 51 (1961), see also Id., *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 161ff, and 208-26 for members of the Roman aristocracy, the *Anicii* in particular, who act as patrons of Pelagius, much to Jerome's dismay ("The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West"). Yet, worth mentioning is also the earlier A. McGeachy, *Q. Aurelius Symmachus and the Aristocracy of the West* (Chicago, 1942).

[92] M. T. W. Arnheim, *The Senatorial Aristocracy in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[93] John Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364-425* (Oxford: OUP, 1975), see also A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602. A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964) on late Roman aristocracy as one entity; P. Arsac, "La dignité senatoriale au Bas-Empire," in *Rev. hist.* 47 (1969), 198-243; A. Chastagnol, "L'evolution de l'ordre sénatorial aux Ille et IVe siècles de notre ère," in *Rev. hist*. 244 (1970) 305-314; J. Harries, "Treasure in Heaven: Property and Inheritance among Senators of Late Rome," in E. M. Craik (ed.), *Marriage and Property* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), 54-70; and T. D. Barnes, "Statistics and the Conversion of the Roman Aristocracy," in *JRS* 85 (1995), 135-47.

[94] A classic example is Edward Gibbon, who in his six-volume *magnum opus The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1776-89) gave a loss of virtue as one of the reasons of the decline, yet

said apologists in his 1972 publication *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine*.[95] Entering the 21st century, John Curran and particularly Michele Salzman have made significant contributions to our understanding of the senatorial aristocracy and their "conversion" to Christianity.[96] Although sections of their research focus on Jerome and his relation to aristocrats, this is mostly limited to his relation with women,[97] or else remains rather superficial.[98] I propose that Curran and Salzman's studies on aristocratic conversion to Christianity and social mechanisms at work could be pushed further, so my thesis picks up from there by a much stronger focus on individual relations and a more critical approach towards the 'conversion' hypothesis.[99]

Jerome himself has equally been at the centre of scholarly attention, with the most significant modern contribution made still being Ferdinand Cavallera's two volume work on Jerome and his bibliography.[100] It was only in 1975 that John Kelly published an English biography of the ascetic scholar.[101] Stefan Rebenich currently offers the most comprehensive study of Jerome in the German world,[102] although Alfons Fürst has made a significant contribution in which he offers a prosopography of Roman aristocrats and other important individuals based on Jerome's works, although the biography he offers is only a schematic one.[103] David Wiesen has shown how embedded Jerome is in classical literary culture, a thesis which sounds more plausible than Curran's criticism of it.[104] In most studies Jerome

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Gibbon was also one of the first modern scholars to challenge Christianity and to suggest it had a share in the decline and fall, too.

[95] Even in his 2012 monograph *Through the Eye of a Needle* Brown still emphasises conversion and change, although much more nuanced.

[96] John Curran, *Pagan City*, chapter 7 "Jerome, Asceticism, and the Roman Aristocracy AD 340-410," 260-320; Michele Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, Id. "Elite Realities and Mentalités;" Id. "Competing Claims to 'Nobilitas' in the Western Empire of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," in *JECS* 9/3 (2001), 359-85, and M. Salzman, M. Sághy, R. Lizzi Testa (eds.), *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Coexistence in the Fourth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[97] Similarly, P. Rousseau explores Jerome's involvement in the Aventine circle, see P. Rousseau, *Ascetics, Authority, and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), particularly chapter 1.

[98] John Curran, *Pagan City*, 315 for example only dedicates a minor section to two male senators: Pammachius and Paulinus of Nola, but does not draw any clear distinction between the two, whereas it is, I believe, quite important to see the difference between Paulinus who becomes ordained, even a bishop, and who retreats to a countryside estate, and Pammachius who remains a senator in Rome.

[99] John Curran (2002) also chiefly focuses on Jerome's widows and virgins.

[100] Ferdinand Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1922).

[101] J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (London: Duckworth, 1975).

[102] Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis: Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag,1992). In 2002 he published an abbreviated English translation, *Jerome* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[103] Alfons Fuerst, *Hieronymus: Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spaetantike* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003).

[104] D. S. Wiesen, *Saint Jerome as a Satirist* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1964),criticised by John Curran, *Pagan City*, 281-2. Curran describes Jerome's satire as 'Christian' and argues that Wiesen did not interpret it correctly, seeing it as mostly or only 'classical'. Yet Wiesen might have had it right: Curran suggests that "all Christians were under greater of lesser pressure to conduct themselves in conformity with a set of

has been the centre of attention rather than his addressees,[105] and scholars have pondered Jerome's incentives for maintaining correspondence with these *socialites*, and more importantly – see the contributions of Andrew Cain in particular – why Jerome has publicised exactly those letters or letter collections containing correspondence with exactly those named individuals?[106] It may be obvious that Jerome is well-schooled in the techniques of elite self-representation.[107]As such, his rhetorical claims about his converted aristocrats require scrutiny and we should even question if these aristocrats converted and assimilated at all; or rather, if Jerome's model of the ideal Christian is not simply synchronised with, and appropriated to, the traditional Roman understanding of *nobilitas*. Moreover, the function of patronage has been underrepresented in favour of an institutional way of thinking, whereby the attempt has been to fit both people and ideas in strictly defined and segregated categories which, I believe, did not yet really exist.

Jerome of Stridon

Jerome writes of himself in the concluding chapter of *De viriis illustribus*: "Jerome, son of Eusebius, born in the town of Stridon which, overrun by the Goths, was once a border town between Dalmatia and Pannonia, up to the present year, that is, the fourteenth year of the reign of Theodosius, has written the following works."[108] He continues to give an up-to-date bibliography. Andrew Cain, amongst others, has already stipulated how this bears evidence of Jerome's self-representation: portraying himself in the concluding chapter, as such concluding the line of illustrious men, Jerome is the '*grand finale*'; he seems to have regarded himself the climax, the culmination of all *illustres*. Furthermore, and this will become clear below, Jerome might have consciously decided to use the word '*illustribus,'* thereby subtly referring to the highest rank of nobles within the Roman senatorial aristocracy.

Based on Jerome's epistolary correspondence, prefaces, and treatises we can distil a fair amount of autobiographical information, yet we must be vigilant for Jerome's mastery of

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ethical guidelines," arguing that "Christianity had become … an interlocking system of ethical prescriptions." Curran seems to neglect the fact that senatorial aristocrats were very much influenced by the noble set of values and norms they had to adhere to in order to retain, keep, and advance their reputation and respect. In the chapters that follow, it will become clear that the alleged "Christian form of behaviour" was actually not all that different from traditional Roman (aristocratic) values.

[105] An exception being Sylvia Letsch-Brunner whose monograph focuses on Marcella.

[106] Andrew Cain, *Letters*, Id., *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula*. See also J. Lössl and A. Cain (eds), *Jerome of Stridon: His Life, Writings, and Legacy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

[107]On this topic, see H. I. Flower, "Elite Self-Representation in Rome," in M. Peachin (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 271-85.

[108] Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 135 (*On Illustrious Men* 135, transl. E. C Richardson, NPNF series 2, vol. 3)

rhetoric, as the above example illustrates. Therefore, we cannot take all autobiographical claims at face value. It has often resulted in biographies which range from those which mimic Jerome's grandiose claims[109] to those composed by biographers who got seemingly fed up with their subject and portray him as a grumpy old git. Although Andrew Cain has strictly not published any biography, his monograph *The Letters of Jerome* ventures through Jerome's life by means of his epistolary productions. Important nuances are introduced, and emphasis is put on Jerome's rhetoric and self-promoting agenda.[110] Stefan Rebenich's published doctoral thesis of 1992, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis*, opens a window into Jerome's world, with a focus on social context and social relations of Jerome, but the title already hints at the controversial character of the ascetic biblical scholar who more often than not finds himself immersed in conflict.[111] Although the purpose of this thesis is not to offer a biography either, it is necessary to portray the author of the letters so that we may grasp how this provincial ended up in a network of '*socialites*.'

Born in a town of obscure geographical location,[112] Jerome originates from the outskirts of the Roman Empire and as such is a provincial Roman citizen. The family seem to have been rather well-off, and could therefore be counted among the local elites. They live on their estate near Stridon, where the household consists of the nuclear family – Jerome's father, Eusebius, his mother, his brother Paulinianus, and his sister[113] – extended by a live-in aunt Castorina, their maternal grandmother, and domestic servants.[114] Jerome claims his parents were Christian, but they did not have him baptised.[115] Young Jerome was looked after by a nanny, as was common practice for elite families. He also learned basic literacy in the comfort of his own home before he was sent off to a local school. Since his parents had envisaged a promising career in the public services for their son, they sent him to Rome to receive further education. Again, this was common practice for those provincial families with social climbing ambitions, and who had access to sufficient funds to invest in such education for their offspring.[116] Jerome got enrolled in the school of the famous grammarian Donatus,

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[109] For example, Martin McGuire, "Letters and Letter Carriers in Christian Antiquity," in *CW* 53/5 (1960), 148-153, 152, who describes Jerome as "the greatest scholar among the Latin Fathers, the gifted translator of the Bible, and the champion of ascetical life," whose works "bear the indelible stamp of Jerome's vehement personality."
[110] Cain, *Letters*, esp. 33-42 for Jerome's self-fashioning of his 'public profile'.
[111] Rebenich, *Hieronymus.*
[112] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 4.
[113] *Ep.* 22.30.
[114] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 4-5.
[115] *Ep.* 82.2.
[116] To put this into perspective: Augustine's parents seem to have had similar ambitions for their son, yet they lacked the financial means, despite sponsorship of a local patron, to send their son all the way to Rome.

and after successfully completing his grammar studies he progressed to a school of rhetoric. Fellow students who became close friends were Bonosus, also from Dalmatia, Rufinus of Aquileia, Heliodorus of Altinum, and Pammachius. Whereas the first three were provincials like Jerome, Pammachius appears to be the odd one out: a young Roman aristocrat of patrician pedigree would conventionally not have been expected to socialise with those of significantly lower social status.[117] Jerome reports how he enjoyed student life to the fullest, indulging in frivolous affairs powered by the steaming heat of his adolescent body.[118] However, it is in this metropolitan life where he seems to develop his interest for Christianity, and it is in Rome where he will receive his baptism. Upon graduation, conforming with imperial legislation, Jerome and his provincial friends leave Rome.[119] As is common for young men of their background, they move to the imperial city of Trier to pursue a career at the court.[120] Although Jerome initially seems to succeed, at some point he decides to abandon his position, and seeks to set up an ascetic community of like-minded men.[121] Internal conflicts might have caused the community to dismantle prematurely; and a disappointed Jerome embarks on a pilgrimage east.[122] He arrives at Antioch where he encounters Evagrius of Antioch, a wealthy priest who offers him a place at his estate.[123] This 'estate' is the setting of Jerome's famous 'Syrian desert experience'.[124] Although it is not the isolation often illustrated in rhetorical records, it is obvious that Jerome is an urban figure who craves for social contact. He manages to maintain correspondence with Antioch and the Latin world (his beloved Rome) with the help of his patron Evagrius, who, according to Rebenich, seems to be used by Jerome as his personal courier.[125] Poor health and conflicts with local 'desert-

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Augustine received his further education in Carthage, but even had to suspend his studies in 370 when his father ran out of money to cover tuition fees, see Augustine, *Confessions*, book 2.

[117] There is no evidence that Jerome and Pammachius kept in contact after the former had graduated and left Rome, neither are there any records that would support that they had sought to revive contact or friendship again when Jerome returned to Rome in the 380s. The first evidence of their interaction is, in the context of Jerome's claims, very young: it dates from Jerome's early Bethlehem years. I will discuss this peculiar partnership in detail in the first chapters. For illustration purposes, a speculative parallel may be drawn between a year-seven pupil (Jerome) and a Head Boy (Pammachius).

[118] For Jerome's time at Rome as a student, see Kelly, *Jerome*, 18-24. Lust and temptation, and his succumbing to it, is something he regularly refers to when he extols virginity as the highest form of perfection: a level he himself is unable to achieve, see for example *Ep.* 14.4, 6, *Ep.* 22.7.

[119] For regulations concerning provincial students in Rome, see for example H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*(Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1955), 412-414.

[120] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 6ff.

[121] Rebenich suggests that Augustine's narrative of a conversion of two court officials might be interpreted as referring to Jerome and Bonosus, yet stipulates that this cannot be confirmed. The history of Jerome's first ascetic community is equally obscure, see Rebenich, *Jerome*, 7, 9-11.

[122] Suggestions for the break-up and motives to move east, see Rebenich, *Jerome*, 12.

[123] *Ibid*., 12.

[124] Critical, Cain, *Letters*, 13-42; Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 85-98.

[125] Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 67-71.

dwellers'[126] motivate Jerome to return to Antioch.[127] In Antioch he starts working for – then schismatic – bishop Paulinus, and at some point in his Antiochene period Jerome is ordained a priest. In 381 he accompanies Paulinus to the assembly in Constantinople.[128] At Constantinople, Jerome is introduced to the Theodosian court, and it is in this city where he hears Gregory of Nazianzus.[129] Jerome continues to function as Paulinus's secretary, and in 382 they set out for Rome to attend another synod, together with Epiphanius of Salamis.[130] It is in this context where he gets introduced to Damasus. The introduction to Marcella's circle on the Aventine is facilitated through the senatorial aristocracy who host the delegation in their houses.[131] Jerome succeeds to secure a post in Damasus' administration, probably as one of his secretaries.[132] Confident from his appointment where he might have also been responsible for Biblical translations and dealing with exegetical problems, Jerome shapes his portfolio to reach out to potential patrons looking for spiritual guidance, and so he enters the competitive market for patronage. Profiling himself as an exegetical expert who masters the original languages of Scripture and emphasising his ascetic authority having lived through the experience in the Syrian desert Jerome is not unsuccessful in attracting aristocratic attention.[133] He is hired as a spiritual mentor to teach Scripture to a gathering of Roman aristocratic ladies who convene at Marcella's palace on the Aventine.[134] This service provides

[126] Jerome laments the foul tongue of Syrian-speaking monks surrounding him, see *Ep.* 7.2. See also Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 93.

[127] The conflicts seem to have dealt with Jerome's Latin pro-Nicene theological views, which clashed with the Syrian eastern ideas. For the development of Jerome's Nicene thought see Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 104ff, see also Rebenich, "Asceticism, Orthodoxy, and Patronage: Jerome in Constantinople," in *StudPatr* 33 (1997), 358-77.

[128] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 22ff. Rebenich seems to suggest that Jerome offered his services to Paulinus, which suits the self-fashioning image of Jerome advocated by Cain, rather than that Paulinus might have actively recruited Jerome. He adds that the assembly they attend was later to be recognised as the Second Ecumenical Council.

[129] The extent to which Jerome has been taught by Gregory is ambiguous, as also mentioned by Rebenich, *Jerome*, 21. Rebenich suggests that it is through Gregory that Jerome is being put in contact with the court. For a detailed recollection of Jerome's time in Constantinople, see Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 115-139. In his letter to Nepotian, *Ep.* 52.8, Jerome recalls having challenged Gregory, but the setting reads as it could have been liturgical (during a sermon).

[130] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 31.

[131] For the probability of this hypothesis, including Damasus' social network, see Andrew Cain, *Letters*, 47ff, and Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 159ff. Rebenich, *Jerome*, 31, mentions this aristocratic hospitality, and at p. 33 proposes Damasus introduced Jerome into the network of aristocratic ladies.

[132] Rather than Jerome often being portrayed as Damasus' secretary in the singular, which gives the impression that he might have been his only administrator, Jerome is likely to have been one of the secretaries in a larger team in the Episcopal administration office, see Andrew Cain, *Letters*, 48-52; Rebenich, *Jerome*, 32, mentions he "is likely to have worked in the ecclesiastical archive."

[133] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 33ff.

[134] From this we may not conclude, although the allusion is often made, that Jerome was their only spiritual mentor. It is well possible, and quite likely, that other mentors were consulted, too. Jerome's (desperate) attempts to make it appear as if he were the only one, and his repetitive claims of this group of aristocrats – particularly when in exile – could support the proposition that there were competitors at the stage: not only when Jerome had left Rome, but even during his time there. See chapters 2 and 3 on Jerome's Roman circle.

him with seemingly plentiful credentials to add to his portfolio. However, the radical ascetic views he publicises are not very well received beyond the immediate circles of Marcella and Paula.[135] Jerome's decision to insert in his publications vigilant criticism directed at the Roman clergy did not find favour either. When one of Paula's daughters, Blesilla, decides to opt for the ascetic life after her husband's death, and subsequently succumbs to the rigid demands she poses on her body, the blame for this young lady's passing is put on Jerome.[136] By this time, Damasus had died and as such Jerome had lost his protective shield. In addition, he did not find himself on good terms with Damasus' successor Siricius. Jerome was made to appear in front of a court, which subsequently ordered the defendant to leave Rome.[137] As such, in 385 Jerome's years in the metropolis come to an involuntary, premature end. He decides to travel east and ends up settling in Bethlehem. What the court and the Aemilian family had probably not anticipated was Paula's decision to follow Jerome east. Her daughter Eustochium, who had dedicated her life to perpetual virginity, accompanied her.[138] After a tour of the Holy Land they join Jerome in Bethlehem.[139] Despite the great distance between the remote village and the Latin metropolis, Jerome is eager to maintain contact with his 'base,' and he continues to profile himself as the scriptural and ascetic expert whose services ascetic-minded aristocrats should hire. However, to follow Andrew Cain, we might even propose that it is only here where he starts his epistolary exchange with the Roman aristocracy.[140] Jerome secures the publication of his *Liber ad Marcellam* and a letter collection of correspondence with Damasus. This form of self-representation or 'marketing strategies' are not unique but could be regarded as quintessential characteristics of Roman aristocratic behaviour: it all has to do with self-promotion and self-representation, as we will see below. Jerome perfectly matches the picture. Furthermore, his Rome-based patron-students secure the circulation of his works – letters, translations, treatises – and they possibly

[135] In defence of these 'moderate' Christian aristocrats, see John Curran, *Pagan City*, 261ff.
[136] In *Ep.* 39 Jerome complains about these accusations.
[137] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 39.
[138] Rebenich, *Jerome*, 41.
[139] For Paula's pilgrimage, see Jerome, *Ep.* 108, 7-14, but see Cain's critique in "Jerome's Epitaphium Paulae: Hagiography, Pilgrimage, and the Cult of Saint Paula," in *JECS* 18/1 (2010), 105-139, particularly 118-120.
[140] Because of the ambiguous manuscript tradition (see above) it is difficult to determine exactly if Jerome's letters to Marcella and her group had genuinely been sent as letters at the time Jerome was in Rome, and if they were not later recollections of his encounters with them, put in writing only when he got to Bethlehem and sought to establish his reputation with an ascetic-minded (aristocratic) audience by translating his experience into letters that serve his self-representation. The letters from Damasus' hand are few and maybe their authenticity could also be disputed, and again, they could have been recollections of Jerome's encounters with Damasus (in this case I prefer 'recollections' over a more suggestive 'forgeries').

facilitate a widening of Jerome's network to the provinces.[141] These networks not only serve to bolster Jerome's image through self-representation, they also serve to secure funds for his (ambitious) scholarly activities and building projects.[142]

Of course, and here I adopt the common scholarly discourse on Jerome, Jerome would not be Jerome if this Bethlehem-stage of his life would go smoothly and without disturbances. In the roughly thirty-one years spent in Bethlehem he gets involved in a fair number of controversies both local and 'imperial', and even finds himself excommunicated. Most of these conflicts are fought out in the literary space which enables a transportation of the conflicts across borders. There is the Jovinian controversy where Jerome from distant Bethlehem decides to weigh in his voice as an elephant in a china shop over word he had received that a monk named Jovinian had defended marriage, and, more importantly, had dared to criticise Jerome's ascetic teaching.[143] Expressions of dismay over Jerome's exaggerated attack were heard beyond Rome, and led Augustine, for example, to intervene.[144] The criticism received, even from those whom he regarded his close allies, did not prevent Jerome from entering another argument: the so-called 'Origenist' controversy.[145] This dispute turned out particularly badly for Jerome and his fellow monks when John of Jerusalem ordered their excommunication.[146] Although they were eventually readmitted, it had caused a definitive rift between Jerome's monastery and the episcopate of Jerusalem. The conflict also found its way to Rome, both through Jerome's correspondence with his patrons Pammachius and Marcella, as well as through Rufinus and Melania's return to the metropolis.

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[141] I will test and discuss this hypothesis in more detail in the chapters to follow. The pertaining question is 'who was the facilitator': was Jerome the facilitator who could assist peripherals to achieve their ambitious social climbing aiming for recognition as *nobilitas* (by Jerome's model: 'Christian' nobility) by the true nobility (Roman patricians), or were the facilitators Roman patricians (the patrons with whom Jerome has 'strong' ties) who facilitated Jerome's liaison with peripherals ('weak' ties)?

[142] The building projects refer to the monasteries: Jerome's monastery, the hospice for pilgrims, and Paula's convent. His scholarly projects would presumably have been regarded as of higher importance, considered his ambitions and his un-quenching thirst to expand his library. For a detailed description of Jerome's library and his scholarly pursuits, see Megan Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 133ff.

[143] For an excellent study on the Jovinianist controversy, see David Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity.*

[144] Augustine, *De bono coniugali* is a defence of marriage and clearly seeks the middle ground in between the two extremes presented by Jovinian and Jerome. Pelagius might have intervened as well, which would explain why Jerome saw a revival of the Jovinian controversy in the later 'Pelagian' dispute.

[145] This was really a battle between titans Jerome and Rufinus, both parties backed by wealthy Roman aristocrats. See Elizabeth Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), particularly chapter 1 "Elite Networks and Heresy Accusations: Towards a Social Description of the Origenist Controversy," 11ff.

[146] The excommunication was justified because of an undermining of John's authority, since Jerome's brother secured ordination by bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, see Kelly, *Jerome*, 201, and Rebenich, *Jerome*, 44.

Entering into the fifth century, the social and political situation in the Empire was seriously shifting and it was particularly felt in Israel where word had spread that the invading alien armies in Syria would soon reach the Holy Land. Jerome and his company set off to what was assumed safer ground along the coast, and some left for Rome. The first decade of the fifth century did not bring Jerome much good. Apart from the anxiety of alien invasions, Jerome was faced with a much greater, personal bereavement: the death of Paula in 404.[147]

Whereas the invasion of the Holy Land was kept at bay Rome was not going to be spared that fate, and in 410 there was the final siege of the city which triggered its famous 'fall'.[148] The impact was felt all the way until Bethlehem: Jerome mourned the loss of his beloved city,[149] but above all did he mourn the death of his patron-student Marcella.[150] His other patron-student Pammachius seems to have faced the same fate during the Gothic invasion of Rome.[151] Unfortunately, Jerome has not composed a eulogy on him. It could almost be regarded as the closure of the Rome-chapter for Jerome, although he still has some patrons left who are based in Rome, such as Oceanus. Yet, a spark lights up as Jerome manages to be among the selected expert spiritual mentors who are addressed by the Anician family ordered to provide an instruction for young Demetrias, who, aged fourteen, has decided to make a vow of consecrated virginity.[152] This letter – dated around 414 and preserved as letter 130 in Jerome's epistolary corpus – is one of the last letters addressed to a Roman aristocrat.

During the last five years of his life Jerome would find himself again immersed in a bitter quarrel in which he does not even seem to grasp what it is all about.[153] Most frustrating of all is that he finds himself again in a clash with John of Jerusalem, who appears favourable to Pelagius – presumably Jerome's rival-of-old from his Roman days. John acquits Pelagius at the synod of Diospolis in 415, to Jerome's great dismay. In 416 he witnesses what he claims to be an arson attack on his monastery,[154] and which might have caused the loss of

[147] Jerome, *Ep.* 108 is his eulogy on Paula which he addressed to Eustochium. The letter has recently been translated in a critical edition with commentary and introduction by Andrew Cain, *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula. A Commentary on the* Epitaphum Sanctae Paulae *with an Introduction, Text, and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[148] For a summary of the unfolding of the events, see John Curran, *Pagan City*, 304-311.
[149] See in particular *Ep.* 128 to Gaudentius.
[150] See his lament in *Letter* 127, Jerome's eulogy on Marcella, addressed to Principia.
[151] Jerome, *Comm. in Ezekiel* 1.1.
[152] See chapter five 'Young Aristocrats: Patricians'.
[153] See for example J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome*, chapter "The Last Controversy," 309ff.
[154] Jerome, *Ep.* 139. Augustine famously blames sympathisers of Pelagius for this attack, see Augustine, *Gest. Pel*. 66.

much of his precious library and archives. As mentioned, it has been proposed that this could be one of the explanations why we lack any evidence of letters from his correspondents' hands. The 'Pelagian' controversy continues, and Jerome sides with Augustine's party. He will even live to see Pelagius and his ally Caelestius excommunicated in 418. However, Jerome's health is deteriorating and with the caring hands of Eustochium having gone cold about a year earlier, Jerome succumbs to illness and old age in September 419.[155]

Embodied in Roman society

Jerome's biography already indicates his rootedness in Roman society: his upbringing, education, his social network. Likewise, his aristocratic associates are embodied and embedded in this society: even more, they remained physically present or immersed in this social space, whereas Jerome, although not voluntarily, sought at least physical seclusion in rural Bethlehem. In order to test the hypothesis that there was no radical transformation or 'conversion' of these aristocrats the phenomena that characterise Roman society in general and the aristocracy in particular need to be illustrated.

Roman society and metropolitan life

In the early empire, the *Urbs* had attracted many immigrants from across the Mediterranean who were, according to Carlos Machado, "attracted by the privileges and benefits showered upon the population of the city," whereby affordable accommodation and public facilities can be interpreted as "urbanistic response to the needs of the city as an imperial city."[156] Late antique Rome, although still a bustling and diverse metropolis, had lost much of its original grandeur due to the imperial court's relocation and the establishment of the "new Rome," Constantinople.[157] These shifting roles of power only partially resulted in a shift of focus from aspiring provincials away from Rome to the cities where the imperial

[155] Cain, *Letters*, 202 proposes c. 419, while Rebenich, *Jerome*, 59 notes that 420 is more likely, but does not substantiate his claim.
[156] Carlos Machado, "Aristocratic Houses and the Making of Late Antique Rome and Constantinople," in L. Grig and G.Kelly (eds.), *Two Romes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 136-158, 145.
[157] Mark Humphries, „The Shapes and Shaping of the Late Antique World: Global and Local Perspectives," in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 97-109; Lucy Grig, "Competing Capitals, Competing Representations: Late Antique Cityscapes in Words and Pictures," in L. Grig and G. Kelly (eds.), *Two Romes*, 31-52. One should also bear in mind the relocations of the imperial court in the west: Trier, Milan, Ravenna, and of course Constantinople (as such more of a constant) in the East.

court was located. Rome also portrayed a continued success which was related to the fact that the city had been, and still was, chiefly governed by its Senate rather than by the Emperor: this decentralised, city-state model of (semi-)autonomous government was what preserved it.[158] Although the Emperor might have intended otherwise by relocating his court, Rome did not seem to have lost its appeal. It was still the place to go for young provincials to pursue further education; it remained a melting pot of cultures, ethnicities, and religions.[159] On the other hand, Rome was a very dependent city. With no natural resources of its own, it relied on the provinces to provide the population with grain and other produce. Most of the Roman aristocrats, particularly the 'patricians', would own estates in the provinces: Gaul, Spain, northern Italy, and North Africa (*cfr. infra*). The resources and produce from these estates would (or could) be sold at the Roman markets.[160] This dependency could be exploited to broker deals with the emperor, for example for the benefit of the (quasi-) autonomous role of the Senate[161] or, as has been suggested, to influence imperial decision making processes or to provoke imperial interference.[162] Its distinctive character meant that Rome had much to offer: from education, employment, and public facilities to anonymity and a certain degree of *laissez-faire*. The megalopolis could allow individuals or (smaller scale) groups to escape in anonymity and as such live in relative tranquillity, yet to a certain degree they could, or were allowed to express their own identities as long as it did not provoke or disturb cohesion of society.[163] As we will see, the architecture and nature of (aristocratic) private houses was a

[158] S. Loseby, "Mediterranean Cities," in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 139. It must be observed however that it was not the Senate itself which had so much power, but rather its power depended on the individuals who made up the Senate, and who owned most of Rome.

[159] See for example Neville Morley, "Migration and the Metropolis," in C. Edwards and G. Woolf (eds.), *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 2003, 147-57; R. Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). For megalopoleis in late antiquity, see C. Nicolet, R. Ilbert, J.-C. Depaule (eds), *Mégapoles méditeranéennes: géographie urbaine retrospective*, Actes du colloque organisé par l'École Française de Rome et la Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, Rome, 8-11 Mai 1996, Rome, École Française de Rome. For religious topography see John Curran, *Pagan City*, particularly chapter 4 "The Christianization of the Topography of Rome, AD 337-384," 116-57, and the 'religion' section below.

[160] Paul Erdkamp, *The Grain Market in the Roman Empire: A Social, Political, and Economic Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 206ff. See also Curran, *Pagan City*, 303 who refers to Symmachus' estates' significant agricultural production.

[161] See Robert Chenault, *Rome Without Emperors: The Survival of a Senatorial City in the Fourth Century CE*, Ph.D. diss. (University of Michigan, 2008), 71ff. This could also be seen from the Senate's autonomous handling of the first sieges of the city by Alaric, of which Curran gives an excellent account, see *Pagan City*, 304-11.

[162] For example the North African bishops who exercised pressure on the emperor (then based at Ravenna) to get Pelagius and his adherents condemned. I have already suggested in my bachelor thesis ("The Context of the Pelagian Controversy," unpublished) that economic power and monopoly might have played a primary role in the emperor's eventual decision to interfere in what would appear an 'internal' Christian conflict.

[163] As we learned in the biography, Jerome sought to test these boundaries and seems to have been expelled as a result of it. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that he was condemned by one 'institution' within Roman society, and that he only seems to have provoked but a fraction of that society, yet a fraction that regarded itself

contributing factor to this as well. In other words, the metropolis facilitated diversity. Moreover, due to the political focus having been shifted away, Rome's urban space offered a platform for even more diversity, at least in the sense that it was now more fragmented and exposed to senatorial interests.[164] Machado offers an important consideration stating that "we should not let the conclusion of [the Christianisation] process obscure the fact that, at least from the early fourth to the middle of the fifth century, the evolution of Rome's urban space was much more complex than concepts such as "Christianization" suggest…Roman aristocrats were able to take advantage of the changing circumstances of the world in which they lived. Their houses invaded the city-space, changing the layout of streets, privatizing public spaces, and transforming the appearance of the city."[165] The development of privatisation of public spaces is interesting, as it forms part of a process of 'appropriation' which extended to the architecture of aristocratic houses. Their houses were never entirely private, but often had a shared function: they could incorporate designated areas or rooms for public use, in the sense that groups would convene there ('semi-public'), clients would be received, or libraries would be 'open access.' As Machado states, these *domūs* reflect the vitality of late Roman society which contrasts with the alleged decay of a classical landscape.[166] When Jerome tries to argue that Marcella, for instance, withdrew in her palace, it says something about the use of these palaces as meeting places for peers, and the establishment of 'monastic communities' exactly in these aristocratic houses reflects a mixing of 'public' and 'private' spheres, albeit the notion of 'public' in this context should be understood in the limited manner of like-minded peers of equal status.

Closely related to the notion of urban space and aristocratic use and design of it, is monumental patronage. It was obvious (and still is today) that this form of patronage affected Rome's topography, including religious topography.[167] Large private houses and public buildings were commissioned by aristocrats who wished to make a statement of power, and

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as responsible for the well-being of a wider group or public. Rhetoric serves to convince the reader that it was the whole of Rome who condemned him and chased him out.

[164] Machado, "Aristocratic Houses," 154, note the plural 'interests'.

[165] *Ibid.,* 157. Aristocratic houses occupied a prominent place in the urban topography and where well-integrated in it.

[166] Machado, "Aristocratic Houses,", 157.

[167] Bryan Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy, AD 300-850,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), for shifting patterns in monumental patronage. Curran, *Pagan City,* 290ff, argues that monumental patronage, once this included the commission of churches and shrines, also had a decisive impact on the city's Christian topography, see also his chapter 3 "Christianization of the Topography of Rome, AD 337-384."

as such are to be regarded as forms of self-representation (see below).[168] The practice of spoliation was particularly popular.[169] One classic example of such appropriation given by Machado is that of Vestina, who donated for the construction of a complex comprising both a church and houses, as such creating the typical *insula*.[170] However, there were efforts from urban prefects (for example Praetextatus) to regulate building activities and to separate private buildings from sacred ones.[171] Paradoxically, however, as Machado admits, "the enforcement of public authority was usually left to precisely the same agents who were interested in contravening it. For [late antique Rome], the urban prefecture was occupied by members of the senatorial aristocracy…in fact, the whole office of the urban prefecture seems to have been involved in the spoliation and dilapidation of public monuments."[172] The inner spaces of such buildings, and the private houses in particular, where ornamented to the likes of the owner (or commissioner) and would often include a rich blend of images (see below) not necessarily linked to the owner's alleged (primary) denomination. So Jerome complains in his letter to Marcella about dinner plates which depict idols, and other artefacts embellished with mythical scenes and spectacles.[173] Similarly, epitaphs, prominent burial places, and traditional themes of imperial and aristocratic patronage did not appear to have changed much, but rather remained the same.[174]

Not only was there a conflict of interest between government officials and individuals with regard to architecture and the aesthetics of urban space, possible conflicts would go beyond the doorstep. Both Machado and Maier have shown how aristocratic houses contributed significantly to tensions between their owners and the imperial court. As such, we can find laws in the Theodosian Code which try to regulate the use of private houses as

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[168] Machado, "Aristocratic Houses*,"* 147, for example the fourth-century *domus* built on top of the Sette Salle, the enormous cistern that supplied the Baths of Trajan.
[169] *Ibid.*, 148. Such practices "point to the increased role of private house owners in defining urban space."
[170] *Ibid.,* 150. Vestina financed "the Church of S. Vitale (located next to the Palazzo delle Esposizioni) in the pontificate of Innocent I (401-17). She also donated the houses adjoining the area to support this foundation, and the building beneath Palazzo delle Esposizioni was probably part of the donations. It is more likely that the adaptation of this *insula* was carried out by a secular builder and house owner rather than a bishop: the latter would have rented the house to others as a source of income for the church."
[171] *Ibid.,* 150. The Thedosian Code indicates similar efforts to establish 'minimal distance between private and public structures', e.g. *C.Th.* 4.24, see also Ammianus 27.9.10.
[172] Machado, 151.
[173] *Ep.* 27.2: "Have I ever embellished my dinner plates with engravings of idols? Have I ever, at a Christian banquet, set before the eyes of virgins the polluting spectacle of satyrs embracing bacchanals?"
[174] Curran, *Pagan City*, 292-3, where he illustrates by means of the examples of the Porticus Maximae, a second porticus at tomb of Hadrian, shrine of Peter with its 'irresistible attraction of grand, imperially sponsored architecture'… Epitaph of Sextus Petronius Probus in an abutting mausoleum… Imperial mausoleum for the Honorian dynasty." See also Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages,* for the second porticus, see 64.

shelter or strongholds of aristocratic anarchy.[175] Jerome made both allusions to secret sexual gatherings in such houses,[176] as well as frequenting such private spaces himself.[177]

Roman law

Although I am arguing against the institutional perspective, legislation must be granted some attention to understand the context of certain practices and phenomena. As Salzman suggests changes were often legal and did not have a sudden or destructive impact.[178] That said, there are two areas that are important for the contextualisation of the subsequent chapters: 1) marriage and inheritance law, and 2) the regulations with regard to clergy and ordination. I will particularly pay attention to those laws which seek to secure social structures, rather than to positive legislation which grants privileges and seeks to enhance the progress of new institutional structures (of Christian church and clergy).[179]

As for 1) it would suffice to state that Constantine had repealed the earlier Augustan laws with regard to inheritance law for celibate or childless individuals.[180] However, the law had little impact since relatives by blood would continue to have priority over in-laws in cases of inheritance claims,[181] and dowries would remain in possession of the family (or the woman in question) in case of widowhood or divorce.[182] A woman would only become legally independent when her father would die.[183] On the other hand, as Curran states "the pressure on women to marry and produce children was considerable and on girls like

[175] Machado "Aristocratic Houses," 153. See also H. Maier, "The Topography of Heresy". Military occupation of senatorial *domus* (*militaris inpressio*) seems to have been a common form of punishing aristocrats involved in rebellions against the court, Machado, 153.
[176] *Ep.* 22.14, 28.
[177] For example *Ep.* 23.1.
[178] M. Salzman, *The Making of*, 164.
[179] Salzman gives a list of examples of positive legislation by Constantine and successors, which privileged the position of the Church in the Empire. This was mostly important when dealing with influencing upwardly mobile local elites, *in casu* codes granting exemptions to clergy for serving on local town councils and performing compulsory public service. It is remarkable that privileges to the church and its officials went beyond those generally allowed to the pagan cults and their priests, i.e. to those of lower rank; through legislation prestige and honours were given to the church and its clergy, which made Christianity appealing to aristocrats, particularly local elites and social climbers, imbued with the values of their status culture: this was, according to Salzman, essentially the intent behind certain legal privileges, see M. Salzman, *The Making of*, 195.
[180] Salzman, *The Making of*, 165. See also Joshua Tate, "Inheritance Rights of Nonmarital Children in Late Roman Law," *RLT* 4 (2008), 1-36.
[181] *Ibid*., 165.
[182] For different types of *heredes* see J. Harries, "Treasure in Heaven: Property and Inheritance Among Senators of Late Rome," in E. M. Craik (ed.), *Marriage and Property* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), 54-70.
[183] Salzman, *The Making of*, 165.

Eustochium this pressure was all the stronger because of the necessity of maintaining the great senatorial houses of the city."[184] However, there must have been some concern about the expenditure of family inheritance and property, significant enough for the emperors to promulgate a law which restricted clerical inheritance and sought to control wealthy widows' behaviour by explicitly stating that they could not leave anything to the church or a member of the clergy.[185] Yet this law was repealed only two months after its promulgation.[186]

As for 2) laws pertaining to clergy and ordination, it is worth mentioning that the emperors Valentinian I, Valens, and Gratian saw it necessary to promulgate a law prohibiting clergy from entering the houses of widows and female wards.[187] Curran adds that this implies that "contact between holy men and lay Christians had been sanctioned at the highest level of society."[188] In addition, there are a number of laws promulgated chiefly between the 370s and 390s which seek to control the (potential) damage to public structures and services caused if high ranking officials 'abandon the world' and enter ecclesial office. Those laws that prevent those holding senatorial status from becoming ordained are most significant for the purpose of the current work, as it directly affects Jerome's aristocratic addressees. Valentinian and Valens' code from 364 starts vaguely, stating that wealthy persons are not allowed to become clergy.[189] Subsequent definitions become stronger and more specific, adding that it is the 'convert's' responsibility to first seek replacement, or are not allowed to abandon their public or senatorial positions and responsibilities at all; they have to see to the fulfilment of compulsory public services, and to leave property to relatives or to the state. Although the clergy had initially been granted exemption from compulsory public services, in 399 Arcadius and Honorius promulgate a law in which the clergy are called back to their municipalities.[190] This is repeated by Honorius and Theodosius II in a law from the 24th of

[184] Curran, *Pagan City*, 277. Salzman, 165, also asserts that this pressure was greater and easier to exercise on young virgins than on widows. Peter Brown refers to marriage as 'a reassuring microcosm of the social order,' see *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 17.

[185] Promulgated by emperors Valentinian II, Theodosius, and Arcadius, Constantinople in 390 CE, this law concerned women's property executive rights and inheritance regulations (*C.Th.* 16.2.27 of 21 June 390).

[186] *C.Th.* 16.2.28 (23 August 390). See also J. F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London: Routledge, 1986), 5 ff, 163-204.

[187] *C.Th.* 16.2.20.

[188] Curran, *Pagan City*, 286.

[189] *C.Th.* 16.2.17.

[190] *C.Th.* 12.1.59 (364, member of curial class wishing to become clergyman must give property to relative or state); *C.Th.* 12.1.63 (370, members of upper classes not to abandon public responsibilities by becoming monks, or property to be given to someone who will fulfil their compulsory public service); *C.Th.* 12.1.104 (383, municipal senators and property); *C.Th.* 12.1.115 (386, senatorial replacement must be sought, but property could be kept), *C.Th.* 12.1.123 (391, curial members can join clergy but cannot leave senatorial position), *C.Th.* 12.1.163 (399, lower clergy must return to the senate).

May 410 which states that those "born into a situation which owes municipal service must fulfil it." Failure to comply will necessarily lead to a surrender of patrimony to the municipal senate.[191]

Senatorial aristocracy

Jerome's patrons were part and parcel of Roman society. Although they only made up a fraction of Rome's highly diverse population, they were visible: by means of their physical presence and going about town in their distinctive dress, by means of the services they provided for the city and the representative role they took on in the Senate, and by means of their stately houses. It has been argued by Aloys Winterling that one cannot use the class model as a reference for Roman society, or at least not to address the aristocracy as a separate class because of the rapid turnover in rise and demise of status-holders due to swiftly changing political and economic situations.[192] There is only one denominator which could be considered a constant to determine status, and that is self-representation.[193] Wealth is nonetheless a significant factor when it comes to self-representation. As Jones argued, the status and status culture of the senatorial aristocracy was founded on three aspects, comprising 1) the importance of high birth, 2) the possession of landed property, and 3) moral rectitude.[194] It follows that an impeccable reputation would win the desired respect from peers. I will argue that this is a persistent phenomenon that continues beyond the alleged 'conversion of the aristocracy,' and that it in fact will remain the most important aspect of this status culture. *Memoria dignus*, as mentioned by Rüpke,[195] is neither a Christian invention nor an abandoned or transformed Roman concept, but remains rooted in Roman aristocratic culture as one of the highest possible achievements.

One of the most obvious methods to win respect and to enhance reputation is munificence: to invest in public services or facilities. This form of patronage was exercised in various ways: to financially assist clients and friends, to make donations to one's local community, to build a shrine, a temple, to finance a public bath, to fund local children so they can attend school.[196] Moreover, those promoted to senatorial status were obliged to host

[191] *C.Th.* 12.1.17.
[192] Aloys Winterling, „Freundschaft und Klientel im kaiserzeitlichen Rom," in *Historia* 57 (2008), 298-316.
[193] The argument of the centrality of status culture is also made by M. Salzman, see particularly *Competing Claims to Nobilitas*.
[194] Jones, *LRE*, 523ff, I discuss these three aspects in more detail below.
[195] Rüpke, "Individualization and Individuation," 10.
[196] See for example Lellia Cracco Ruggini, "Rome in Late Antiquity: Clientship, Urban Topography and Prosopography," in *CP* 98/4 (2003), 366-82.

public games, which might cost a small fortune and as such one had to be affluent.[197] Patronage was not exclusively reserved for male aristocrats: women are also attested for their munificence, even as city patronesses,[198] and Jerome is a fine example of a client who was consulted and financially supported by female aristocrats. I would add to that that there is no distinct form of 'Christian patronage' but rather that it is part of a common form of patronage: Christian teachers or mentors are consulted, but not different from other teachers or mentors (philosophers, non-Christian religious mentors, doctors).[199] The Anician family, for example, were patrons both to the Christian religious agent or mentor Pelagius as well as to the "pagan" poet Claudian. From the perspective of the patron, this is an interesting piece of evidence which weakens the 'Christian exclusivity' claim, thus turning Cameron's approach upside down to stress not the apparently 'remarkable' fact that pagans are supported by Christians,[200] but rather that those families claimed by Christian apologists or agents might not have taken their being Christian as restricting their daily lives, business, and networks all too much, as has also been suggested by Éric Rebillard: Christianity was but one aspect and people could be members of multiple voluntary associations at the same time.[201] This illustrates how conceptions of religious boundaries or restrictions concerning the interaction between people adhering to different wakes belonged more to the realm of rhetoric rather than that they were a reflection of everyday reality. It could be indicating that the place of religion was less prominent and has to be regarded more as one aspect among many that constitute social life.[202] Similarly, shrines and churches are commissioned just like other public buildings, reflecting "traditional patterns of monumental patronage."[203] Curran explains how Christians "patronized the Vatican, demonstrating *their* status."[204] These acts of 'generosity' for Christian and non-Christian projects alike form the basis of a carefully constructed method of self-representation, whereby the denominational character is subordinate to the self-representative function of the act. However, when Curran indicates

[197] See Salzman, *The Making of*, 22, 192.
[198] Emily Hemelrijk, "City Patronesses in the Roman Empire," 210ff.
[199] Compare the argument developed in Stefan Rebenich, "Wolhtäter und Heilige. Von der heidnischen zur christlichen Patronage," in F. A. Bauer and N. Zimmerman (eds), *Epochenwandel? Kunst und Kultur zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2001), 27-35.
[200] Alan Cameron, "Paganism and Literature in Late Fourth Century Rome," in *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'Antiquité tardive en Occident*, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique, 23 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1977), 1-30.
[201] Éric Rebillard "Everyday Christianity," 120.
[202] Compare *Ibid.*, 122.
[203] Curran, *Pagan City*, 291-2. As Curran suggests, "the aristocracy were becoming increasingly aware of the significance of the new topography of [Rome], made up of the great basilicas, martyr shrines, and small urban churches," see 289.
[204] *Ibid.*, 291. Italics are Curran's, context is the 'isolated incident' around the 'ambitious pagan nobleman C. Ceionius Rufius Volusianus Lampadius' as recorded by Ammianus 27.3.6, for a summary see Curran 290-1.

that "the extent to which ascetics at Rome had rejected the city can be exaggerated" he fails to see the link between senatorial almsgiving to the Roman populace and the 'Christian' almsgiving, only pointing at the link between the wealthy Christian senators criticised by Jerome for their alms giving to the church, and the alms-giving by ascetics.[205]

Another aspect of self-representation was self-legacy based on pedigree: along with wealth (inherited property such as the estates in various provinces mentioned above) and dignity (impeccable moral standards, *memoria dignus*), high birth and the ability to trace back your ancestry (dynasty) for centuries were prerequisites for high status and respect paid by peers.[206] Curran notes that even in relation to ascetics, "the significance and status of noble birth was never submerged beneath the exhortations to renunciation."[207] Although Salzman has argued that pedigree became subordinate to piety,[208] it will become clear that for Jerome this is not the case. Evidently, the *nouveau riche* were looked down upon by the Rome-based senatorial aristocracy[209] who could (convincingly) argue their lineage back to the glory days of the high empire or the Republic. Even with the patriciate becoming an honorary status granted by the emperor rather than merited on the basis of pedigree (and office), as Mathisen mentions "no longer a hereditary title of a privileged upper class,"[210] there was more need than ever to distinguish oneself from the 'plebs' that were admitted to senatorial status at the convenience of the emperor, which polluted the once so prestigious group. With the 'opening up' of the *clarissimate* for the 'up and coming' provincials came this need to further distinguish, and different ranks were created within the senatorial aristocracy.[211] Structural reforms had made it possible for provincial elites, although they had been denied these posts in earlier generations, to posts which "provided an entrée to the charmed circles of imperial power" with added benefits of immunity for government

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[205] Curran, *Pagan City*, 312.

[206] See M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, particularly 97-106, 107-123; also B. Feichtinger, "Zäsuren, Brüche, Kontinuitäten. Zur aristokratischen Metamorphose des christlichen Askeseideals am Beispiel des Hieronymus," in *WS* 110 (1997), 187-220, 191-2, 199-202, see also A. Chastagnol, "Le sénat romain sous le règne d'Odoacre. Recherches sur l'épigraphie du Colisée au Ve siècle,"in *Antiquitas* 3/3 (1966); J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court A. D.364-425* (Oxford 1975).

[207] Curran, *Pagan City*, 317

[208] M. Salzman, "Competing Claims to Nobilitas," 362.

[209] For this distinction, and a comprehensive study on the 'Rome-based' senatorial aristocracy, see R. Chenault, *Rome Without Emperors*.

[210] R. Mathisen, "Patricians as Diplomats in Late Antiquity," in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* (1986), 35.

[211] P. Heather, "Senators and Senates," in A. Cameron and P. Garnsey, *The Cambridge Ancient History* vol. 13: *The Late Empire, AD 337-425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184-210, at 190, formalised in legislation of 372 this gives, in ascending order "*clarissimi* (consular orders and some junior bureaucrats) *spectabiles* (proconsular governors, and the four *comites consistoriani* and *duces,* high military officers) and *illustres* (praetorian prefects, urban prefects, consuls and *magistri militium*, top generals)."

officials.[212] However, disdain was felt towards the provincial elites who climbed up to senatorial standing through imperial service, or, to put it differently, who were granted senatorial status by imperial favour (or favouritism).[213] Therefore, it was in the interest of the provincial senatorial aristocrats to enhance their reputation and to win the respect, and as such recognition of their status, from their Roman 'peers'. I would argue that consulting the same religious agents, or patronising the same clients, could have possibly been regarded as an effort to achieve the desired approval.

The role of dignity for the image of the aristocrat is an important feature when it comes to assessing the degree of 'transformation.' Compliance to values, social norms, and expectations with regard to moral conduct, together with mastery of virtues are key factors to determine the reputation of a subject. They are facets judged by peers, and Jones has suggested that this senatorial code of conduct had austere moral overtones.[214] John Curran adds that particularly for the later Roman aristocracy, to these values and virtues are added a "different kind of quest for religious truth," namely "a search for purity in which traditional offices and rewards of a senator's career played no part."[215] This is a phenomenon which occurs both among Christian senators as well as adherents of traditional religions. In order to facilitate compliance with these values, norms, and expectations, and presumably also out of interest and, again, self-representation, religious agents are hired by patrons who represent themselves as cultivated citizens for whom intellectual engagement is a favourite pastime. It signifies their superiority because they show themselves unconcerned with mundane matters but they are at leisure to engage in intellectual perusal with like-minded and equally free peers, who are invited along whenever they host such consultations. The religious agents for their part regard it important for their own self-representation to be seen supported by such patrons, and it is likely that competition for patrons is high. There is a mutual dependence which centres for both parties around self-representation. Religious agents wish to be seen supported by patrons of the highest standards, and likewise patrons wish to be seen

[212] S. Loseby, "Mediterranean Cities," 143-4.
[213] Similarly, Constantine's creation of a senate in Constantinople, which served to decrease the Roman Senate's influence as well as Rome's reputation in general, did never have the desired effect, or at least Constantinople's aristocrats did never gain the glamorous image and reputation of their Roman models.
[214] Jones, *LRE* 523, 'peer approval' is also stressed by Salzman, "Elite Realities," 352: "Peer acceptance was the final touchstone of status. Imperial grants of office and the *clarissimate* could confer aristocratic standing, and they could be seen as points of pride, but they did not bring the confirmation of social prestige that peer acceptance did."
[215] Curran, *Pagan City*, 266. Yet Curran does not explicitly discuss the virtue *pudicitia*, which signifies the importance of purity not only for Christians (this was not a novelty) but a virtue which belongs to the traditional Roman realm of virtues to which both men and women were expected to adhere. I discuss this in more detail in the final chapter.

consulting clients of highest and impeccable reputation. Consequently, it is in the interest of patrons that their clients do not get into disrepute. When one bears in mind the importance of self-representation, the actions of Marcella and Pammachius to defend, correct, reprimand, or censure Jerome – as we will see in the subsequent chapters – make perfect sense.

As an aside, one does well to remember that Jerome's patrons of course are not restricted to aristocrats alone: he has contacts with affluent clergy whom are also approached, who receive the dedication of his scholarly output, and in return send him financial assistance to fund such pursuits. Domnio is an example of a Roman priest and patron of Jerome, who received the dedication of Jerome's commentary on Ezra. Similarly, Chromatius of Aquileia is a provincial bishop who acts as patron to Jerome.[216]

Literature and literacy

Another medium to promote and disseminate self-representation is literature. In this context, Flower narrates of Pliny, that "born under Nero, Pliny had lived under the reigns of, and been promoted by, a series of emperors from the Flavians to Trajan. In this politically unstable and changing world, [Pliny] offers a carefully crafted and reassuring picture of intellectual rigor, scrupulous honesty, professional expertise, and personal cultivation in contexts in which the emperor only rarely makes a direct appearance."[217] This citation opens the stage for Jerome and his aristocratic associates, who likewise find themselves in a changing and political unstable context, trying to hold on to status and the values and norms that are connected to it. The medium of literature is one fairly stable method to preserve and continue one's tradition. In what follows I will briefly reflect the importance of education in this Roman tradition, but most attention will be drawn to one specific literary form: the epistolary genre.

A person's social upbringing was all about constructing the correct identity, and the tradition of Roman education, with its rich literary history, has to be seen in light of this aim.[218] The Roman adoption of Greek *paideia* implies that education extends well beyond the

[216] Kelly, *Jerome*: p. 190: "[...] significant is his dedication of his new translations of Ezra and Nehemiah (394/5) to his Roman friends, Domnio and Rogatianus (otherwise unknown), and of Chronicles (395) to Chromatius of Aquileia." Furthermore, Kelly asserts that Jerome "[...] bids Domnio and Rogatianus [to] keep his versions strictly to themselves and such enlightened people as could appreciate them. But they equally confirm that he now had in the west at least some intelligent, well-informed admirers who were positively insistent that he should carry on with the great enterprise [n.: Chromatius took great interest in the work, and provided funds to help Jerome to carry it out, see p. 284]."

[217] H. I. FLOWER, "Elite Self-Representation in Rome," 281.

[218] See for example S. Rappe, "Pagan Elements," 407-8, who, referring to Matthews (1989), 78, contends that "the late antique rhetorical culture shared by privileged pagans and Christians alike, whether provincial bishops

sum of basic literacy and numeracy, or indeed the liberal arts: it was about developing a person to become an ideal Roman citizen. This all-encompassing trail of education -which would start at infant age in the parental residence, continues either in the form of private tuition when a respectable teacher is hired or at a local school, and in Rome for further studies - would not cease but flow into a 'life-long' learning by means of exchange of literature among peers, patronage of philosophers and (religious) teachers, literary- or 'study' retreats at country estates: it is obvious that such an education was only reserved for those who could afford its luxury, namely the senatorial aristocracy. As such, *askeisis*, which literally means training or discipline[219] and which aims at perfection of it, would fit perfectly in such a tradition: it should not be understood as alien to it. In addition, John Curran has indicated how "Christian ascetical ideas did not enter a psychological vacuum," but that "senators had long been exposed to ideas which invited them to contemplate different levels of reality."[220] Similarly, as Peter Brown has shown, there was a late Roman aristocratic tendency to form themselves into exclusive spiritual groups.[221] We may assume that Jerome's aristocratic associates had all completed the formal stages of Roman education, and had been well-shaped by its classical tradition. Jerome's use of rhetoric and language, with its frequent uses of classical metaphors and literary references – often only vaguely or not at all referencing the sources[222] – reveals that his addressees were well-accustomed with the material and would recognise the tropes, literature, and hints Jerome was conveying.

As stated, literature played a significant role in Roman senatorial society. It served as a means for communication over time and space, and as a pastime also; and it served to enhance historical awareness, and preserve tradition. Furthermore, it served as a method of self-representation by means of literary exchange but also by having a well-stocked library or libraries which enable one to show off and demand respect and recognition from peers.[223]

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or urban magistrates, 'in an important sense, the function of this culture was precisely to define an elite over against the ordinary run of mankind'."

[219] See for example Krastu Banev, *Theophilus of Alexandria and the first Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the vision of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Rafaele Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[220] Curran, *Pagan City*, 268.

[221] P. Brown, "Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment," in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 183-207.

[222] Neil Adkin, "Some Features of Jerome's Compositional Technique in the *Libellus de virginitate servanda* (Ep. 22)," in *Philologus* 136 (1992), 234-55, 251-52. Jerome's alleged plagiarism as Adkin sees it, could also be interpreted as an indication that he expects his readers to be so familiar with the sources that they would recognise the citations instantly.

[223] It is however remarkable that for a long time Jerome's "letters circulated as *disiecta membra* and never *en masse* as did those of Pliny, Ambrose, and Sidonius [except *Liber ad Marcellam* and *Ep. div. lib.*]. Unlike some

Patronage also extended to the literary realm: not only would euergetism be exercised by facilitating education through schools, but also by commissioning (public) libraries.[224] Jerome's social network could be understood as a community, or an 'imagined community' based on correspondence which was of primarily literary nature. What is created is a narrative or textual community with its own group identity, where we can apply Benedict Anderson's description of 'imagined community' where members "will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear them, yet the minds of each lives the image of their community."[225] Although there might be a group identity, which is promoted through literary correspondence, these communities will always incorporate multiple identities, which, according to Miles, could even be contradictory.[226] This could be applied to the literary community created through Jerome, his Roman, and his peripheral aristocrats, where individuals in the network might only know one another through literary exchange (Rome-based and peripherals; individuals from both groups and Jerome), yet the literature they exchange reveals a shared concern for shared aims and a shared identity. There are however some characteristics of this specific literary exchange that must be taken into consideration, and might nuance the 'shared aspect.'

There is of course the obvious function of letters to serve basic communication such as administrative business, communication between individuals and the government, where scribes and copyists were at the service of the (less literate) or (illiterate) citizens who could have read their letters out loud, and respond by dictating a scribe the message they wished to convey. In fact, most letters would be dictated by the author and put into writing by scribes. Only "if the author enjoyed a special relationship with the correspondent, he might personalize his letter with the addition of a postscript in his own hand."[227] So "private letters were usually dictated to a secretary, and copies of important letters at least were kept in personal archives."[228] The delivery of private mail was arranged through servants and

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of his fellow Latin epistolographers, Jerome did not compile his complete letters for publication in his mature years," Cain, *Letters*, 227.

[224] As Megan Hale Williams contends: "It was an element in the larger system of patronage that linked Mediterranean elites to the mass of the population, and sustained sub-elites who participated in the culture, if not the vast wealth, of the pinnacle of the social pyramid." M. H. Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 137.

[225] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1991), 6-7. See also R. Miles, "Introduction," in R. Miles (ed.), *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1999) 1-15, 5.

[226] Miles, "Introduction," 5.

[227] Jennifer Ebbeler, "Tradition, Innovation, and Epistolary Mores," in P. Rousseau (ed.), *Companion*, 270-84, 270. Only a "literate author with time on his hands might write his own letters. More typically, though, letters were dictated to an amanuensis (*librarius, servus ab epistulis*)."

[228] Martin McGuire, "Letters and Letter Carriers," in *CW* 53/5 (1960), 148-153, 150.

travelling friends and the government's postal system could not be used for that purpose.[229] As already quoted from Wendy Mayer, we are faced with the problem posed by the use of scribes who might have obscured the 'original author' behind the text, namely the one who dictated the letter. In addition, Ebbeler argues that:

> "the messenger served as a stand-in for the letter's absent author and might even be expected to provide supplementary information or answer questions raised by the letter. Similarly, he might bring additional, extra-epistolary gifts (for example consecrated bread, wine, produce, or books). His arrival at the addressee's locale might be greeted with excitement, as the community anticipated a public reading of a letter from someone like Jerome or Augustine. The letter exchange, then, could be understood as a 'historical event' that included the messenger's supplements to the written letter text. Messengers were not always mere bearers of a written message; they could, and, in Late Antiquity, often did become … participants in the performance of letter exchange."[230]

What is of interest for the purpose of our research is the function of letters to maintain, and sometimes establish friendships. Classical epistolography had to comply with a set of standards and expected etiquette of forms of address, language, and even role-play. As Ebbeler argues, "letter exchange was central to the practice of friendship in imperial Roman culture…letters are the textual remains of performed *amicitiae*."[231] Letters were a means to instruct as well, and to create presence in absence.[232] As Ebbeler remarks, "the persistence of long-distance relationships depended on predictability and close observance of traditional epistolary mores. Any violations generated suspicion and disrupted the smooth exchange of letters."[233] Jerome was a skilful master in that respect who was able to create literary communities across the empire, where letters were sent, copied, and distributed. It follows that Jerome's letters did not have the private, personal character we would ascribe to modern

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[229] The *cursus publicus* was restricted to government business, see Ebbeler, "Tradition," 270; McGuire, "Letters," 150.
[230] Ebbeler, "Tradition," 271.
[231] *Ibid.*, 274; compare also 275:"Cicero was not above the occasional indirect jab at a correspondent, but it was always carefully couched in impersonal, formulaic language."
[232] For "conversations *in absentia*," see Ebbeler, "Tradition," 273. This shows how deeply embedded Jerome was in this tradition, as speaking of late antique letter-writers in general, Ebbeler remarks "they lamented silence and reproached a correspondent who failed to respond quickly or substantially. They longed for an absent correspondent and protested the failings of the letter they received. They used conventional forms (f.e. consolation, recommendation) and language (friendship, kinship)…the forms and functions of individual letters (and collections of letters) remained remarkably consistent." Other than Paulinus and Augustine, who sought to innovate traditional epistolary customs and forms, as Ebbeler shows, it seems to me that Jerome very much adhered to the classical tradition.
[233] Ebbeler, "Tradition," 276.

letters, but a very modern comparison that could be drawn is the 'writing on the wall' on social media such as Facebook, whereby messages can be read by friends, and friends-of-friends, or even the wider public: although one can to a certain extent decide for oneself how public one has one's settings, letters once sent in antiquity were under less control of the author, who had to rely on his couriers and addressees for discretion where appropriate. Again, Jerome was not always that lucky. Yet, as Cain argues, "Jerome, who by 393 and perhaps much earlier regarded himself as a public literary figure in the loftiest of terms, did in fact expect the vast majority of his correspondence to be copied and read by an audience that included but at the same time extended well beyond the immediate addressees."[234]

However, all these requirements and conventions add to the problematic genre of letters already 'contaminated' by the scribes and messengers that are involved in the communication process. It is also the use of rhetoric which might obscure the historical facts and reports we hope or expect to read in them. As Van Dam has suggested, "authors were concerned more about protocol than candor, more about form than substance and emotion."[235] Most of our extant late antique letters, following Ebbeler, "are sophisticated textual performances intended to advertise their author's literary skill to their contemporaries and posterity."[236] The letters had to comply with a code of conduct which, particularly in our case of elite correspondence, included reciprocity, rhetoric, and the use of reliable messengers.[237] Andrew Cain has already shown this for Jerome's letter collections in particular, as well as for some of the individual letters, but one should bear in mind Ebbeler's suggestions when we move on to the analysis: all letters are addressed to members of the elite. The lack of evidence of letters from Jerome's correspondents might therefore be considered as 'made up for' by the existence of Jerome's responses: the mere fact that he responded is conventional. However, it should also help our insight into the rhetoric of 'friendship,' which can now be better assessed based on the formulaic and 'cold' rhetoric of Pammachius and Oceanus' letter to Jerome (see below). It is certainly not the case that these are distinctively 'Christian' letters that would validate the reason for a lack of conventional manners. Although Ebbeler asserts that there were 'fundamentalist' converts who sought to

[234] Cain, *Letters*, 223 and 180-1.
[235] Raymond van Dam, *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 132.
[236] Ebbeler, "Tradition," 272.
[237] *Ibid.*, 272-3. She adds that "the scholarly interpretation of these letters demands that we go beyond literal reading to take into account these rules and their sophisticated manipulation by individual authors. Surviving ancient letters are not so much transparent windows as a reflective lens designed to distort as much as reveal."

establish a Christian 'counter culture' and tried to develop a genre of *epistula Christiana*,[238] Jerome seems to be the epitome of the surviving classical letter-writer. Indeed, his letters reveal that he "adhered to traditional epistolary mores: their flavour was no more distinctive than the Stoic philosophical letters of Seneca or the studiously deferential letters of Pliny."[239] In fact, "most late antique letter-writers, regardless of their religious identity, adhered to traditional epistolary protocol," and the alleged 'Christian practice' seems not widespread.[240]. Rather, the formulaic characteristics and customs show that such 'Christian' letters are remarkably similar to classical letters in idiom, form, and function.[241] It is most unfortunate that the scribes or editors who transmitted the manuscripts of Jerome's letters often have omitted the greeting formulas.

Books were, other than part of this system of correspondence and courtesy, equally publicly accessible either through public libraries, church- or private aristocratic libraries which were also often publicly accessible, or made accessible through personal efforts of publicising books for (wider) circulation. People could borrow books and have them copied by their own scribes, secretaries, or by 'public scribes' and copy services offered in town. It is known that Jerome had his own scribes, whom he took on his travels to Syria, and presumably back to Rome, via Constantinople, and then east again to Bethlehem, together with his library which must have been ever-expanding. A costly business supported by his patrons, yet also an indication that he must have been quite well-off indeed, since his biographical record indicates he was taking his library with him ever since he graduated from school in Rome. Jerome's library, extensively researched by Megan Hale Williams, contained classical and Christian literature throughout his life. His alleged break with pagan literature never did take practical effect. One can observe this from Jerome's letter to Magnus, orator in Rome,[242] but also from Rufinus's sneering comments in his Apology.[243]

Religion and the emergence of Christianity in its manifold manifestations

[238] *Ibid.*, 283, mentioning specifically Augustine and Paulinus of Nola, but she acknowledges that they (and their innovations) are exceptions rather than rule.
[239] Ebbeler, "Tradition," 283.
[240] *Ibid.*, 270-84, 283.
[241] *Ibid.*, 282.
[242] *Ep.* 70.
[243] Rufinus, *Apol. c. Hier.* 2, 4-8, where he complains about Jerome's return to pagan literature and his alleged teaching of it to local children in Bethlehem.

The Roman metropolis facilitated diversity, and this included a diversity of religions and religious agents. In late Roman society religion is only one of the identity markers for its citizens and its senatorial aristocracy in particular. I have already referred to Rebillard's suggestion that Christian 'membership' should be regarded as one of multiple voluntary associations a citizen could be part of at any given time. In addition, Christianity did not emerge in one single, let alone institutional form, but rather as a wide diversity of Christian identities which were only in the process of becoming identified as sectarian, heretical, or 'orthodox', and then it still depended on time and locale how their fate would be determined. Moreover, we can speak of a diversity of identities not only intra-Christian but across multiple religions with not yet very well-defined boundaries: these definitions are later (apologetic) inventions.[244] The various conflicts and controversies Jerome got himself involved in across the empire, and where he witnessed the diversity of opinions, are one indication of this fragmentary character of Christian or 'Christ-religion'. Until the fourth century, this 'Christ religion' should be considered as one of the manifold manifestations of Judaism. Yet, by the fourth and early fifth centuries it had emerged that this 'Christ-religion' in itself existed in manifold manifestations, too. The blurred boundaries between Christianities and Judaisms are well attested and not only in the east.[245] Council acts until the sixth century repeat condemnations against Jewish observations by members of Christian communities even in the west, which indicates that Jewish religious observances were still practiced by Christians. The determination of Christianity as being a different religion should therefore be interpreted as a phenomenon enforced top-down, and endorsed or advocated by religious agents – apologists or representatives who act on behalf of institutions – who identify as Christian. Furthermore, for written records, although to some extent for archaeological evidence too, we can only rely on material that has been passed down through a Christian *Redaktionsgeschichte*: through monasteries where scribes were monks, and where their agendas have massively influenced the (eventually) distorted picture of late antiquity from an emergence to an allegedly swift dominance, the victory of Christianity. Archaeological records however, as far as they have survived the test of human history, might help us nuance this picture. The Roman catacombs, for example, show how similar tombs

[244] Paula Frederiksen, "Christians in the Roman Empire in the First Three Centuries," in D. S. Potter (ed.), *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 587-606, 589.
[245] John Chrysostom against Judaizers in Antioch is the most obvious example, see R. L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 4), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); J. L. Maxwell, *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity. John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch*, Cambridge – New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

were regardless of whether they served clients adhering to Jewish, Christian, or Roman religion. Similarly, the decoration of private houses (see above) did not radically change. It is however interesting to note that although Christian identity markers become increasingly visible after the 'Constantine conversion,' so do Jewish identity markers: it is a parallel development. Damasus' contribution to an increased Christian topography to put a Christian stamp on Rome is often referred to,[246] but there are also at least 11synagogues scattered across the city.[247] The fact that people did not conform to those categories, defined in later times, into which modern scholars wish to fit them, is revealed in widespread practices of magic spells, curse tablets, votives, and Christian oaths that go hand in hand and which indicate a tailoring to the needs or appropriation of elements considered useful. These examples can even be found in legal practice.[248] The numerous efforts from Church representatives (chiefly bishops) to have these and related practices banned show that practices such as these were persistent, and equally archaeological evidence shows that their bans and rhetoric did not quite achieve the effect it sought to trigger.

Another fine example of not clearly defined religious boundaries is to be found in the phenomenon of patronage, already alluded to above in the example of the Anician family. Yet there are also records of aristocrats converting to Judaism,[249] and patrons consulting agents of different religious groups. Jerome's two letters to Marcella in which he exposes the dangers of Novatian and Montanist teachings could be interpreted as evidence that Marcella also patronised religious agents of these groups.[250] Thus we could argue that the significant role of patronage extends to the religious realm: not only patronising of spiritual mentors and financing scholarly projects, or commissioning shrines and churches, also exercising influence in polemic, and backing candidates for the episcopate. Damasus is one such example,[251] and if we add his relation with Jerome, it is revealed once again how deeply immersed Jerome was in this society: it hints at the significant role these individual agents

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[246] See for example R. Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[247] Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: the First Thousand Years* (New York, London: Yale University Press, 1999), 264, particularly n. 59 on the lack of scholarly consensus to the exact number of synagogues.

[248] Caroline Humfress, "Law in Practice," in P. Rousseau (ed.), *Companion*, 377-391, 390.

[249] Beturia Paulla, who lived either in the 3rd or 4th century, see *CIJ* 1.523.

[250] *Epp*. 41 and 42, see chapter 3.

[251] Cracco Ruggini, "Rome in Late Antiquity," 374. It would also explain Damasus's active efforts to put his stamp on Rome, and particularly on a 'Christian Rome,' by the commission of numerous buildings and shrines that exhibit inscriptions with his name, see Thomas Hunt, "*'...Ibi et cor tuum'* (Jer. *Ep.* 22.30): Roman Christian Topography and Statements of Christian Identity in Jerome," in *JLARC* 2 (2008), 17-32, 21, also Dennis Trout, "Damasus and the Invention of Early Christian Rome," in *JMEMS* 33 (2003), 517-537; for epigraphy as a means of distinction and to express identity, see Carlo Carletti, *Iscrizioni cristiane di Roma: Testimonianze di vita Cristiana (secoli III-VII),* (Florence: Nardini Editore, 1986).

played at the public stage of Church and society, rather than that the institutional Church was the decisive power. Moreover, according to Hunt these inscriptions reveal a 'syncretism.'[252] Yet rather than what Hunt *et al* seem to argue, namely that classical tropes were used as a marketing strategy to reach the aristocracy, we could also regard the presence of both traditional and 'Christian' elements as something that occurred more 'naturally': audience and commissioners did not see why they could not be combined, and did not feel the need to have it completely, immaculately 'Christian'. Rather, it reflects the fluidity of religious 'boundaries' in everyday life. We could add to that the use of private residences as sacred or religious spaces (*tituli*), which again contributed to the diversity of identities (see above). Hunt, quoting Maier, states that "aristocratic households … offered the opportunity of resistance (against officialdom) and of asserting and professing an individual Christianity."[253] *Letter* 23 of Jerome (on the death of Lea) hints at this. Machado has also alluded to this possibility, and it could be argued that this enabled 'mixing and matching' of elements from different religions as the aristocrats pleased. The use of these private houses enabled segregation rather than encouraging liturgical participation in local churches.[254] As we will learn, the nature of Jerome's ascetic model could quite smoothly fit into these existing structures. Curran has argued that "the appearance of asceticism caused internal difficulties in the aristocratic houses," and he suggests that "these domestic problems focus on three areas: 1) the fate of the share of family property possessed by or due to the converting party, 2) the perpetuation of the family line, and 3) the common perception of the life of the ascetic." Although they might indeed have caused domestic problems to some extent, in what follows I

[252] Hunt, "Roman Christian Topography," 22. Another point of comparison is the Jewish catacombs in Rome, which also exhibit "traditional" imagery and ornaments, see Leonard Rutgers, "Archaeological evidence for the Interaction of Jews and non-Jews in Late Antiquity," *AJA* 96/1 (1992), 101-18, Id. "The Jewish Catacombs of Rome Reconsidered," in *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* div. B vol. II: The History of the Jewish People (1989), 29-36. For more on "early Christian" displays of art, see Markus Vinzent, "Earliest Christian Art is Jewish Art," in U. Leibner and C. Hezser (eds.), *Jewish Art in its Late Antique Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 263-277. See also J. M. Huskinson, *Concordia Apostolorum: Christian Propaganda at Rome in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries: A Study of Early Christian Iconography and Iconology,* BAR, 148, (Oxford: BAR, 1982), 24.

[253] Hunt, "Roman Christian Topography," 20, see also H. Maier, "Private Space as the Social Context of Arianism in Ambrose's Milan," in *JTS* 45 (1994), 72-93, 77.

[254] This could lead to conflicts with the wider Christian community or the bishops. Interestingly, Jerome, as individual religious agent, never seems to encourage church attendance or liturgical participation. It is yet another indication that he supports traditional structures rather than that he seeks to reform them. As such, he stands in clear contrast with those institutional representatives such as bishops who seek cohesion and unity among their communities, for example Augustine. Another example can be found in Priscillian, who is accused by local bishops to be too lenient towards aristocratic members of the community, allowing them to celebrate Easter in their own small circles which convene in their countryside villas rather than attending service in the urban basilica, see for example K. Bowes, "'*Nec sedere in villam'*: Villa Churches, Rural Piety and the Priscillianist Controversy," in T.S. Burns and J.W. Edie (eds.), *Urban Centres and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 323-348.

will argue, and eventually conclude, that only the second area is a valid point: the first is both protected by imperial law and renunciation of property is mostly reserved to the realm of rhetoric, not reality; the third is equally mostly rhetoric from unreliable sources and/or not all that different from the virtue-centred aristocratic status culture. The extinction of an impressive family line was a genuine concern, but the number of aristocrats eventually 'converting' to a childless celibate life was very small, as Curran himself admits.[255]

[255] Curran, *Pagan City*, 319.

Chapter 2. Pammachius and the 'inner Roman circle'

Jerome's idealised model of the perfect Christian is epitomised in the person of Pammachius. This Christian senator of noble ancestry is presented as someone who has completed the 'transformation' Jerome envisaged for his audience: a learned man who has become perfect and for whom instruction would be redundant.[1] The current chapter will serve as the platform for an analysis of Jerome's correspondence with this illustrious Roman aristocrat, which should reveal at least a tip of Jerome's rhetorical veil which obscures the historical Pammachius and his 'friendship' with Jerome. One knows that one could easily be deceived by Jerome's excellent mastery of rhetoric and eloquence in *glorificatio* and *captatio*.[2] Maybe we should wonder if the addressee might be but a literary device, merely there to give the letter more authority, and the text itself is actually aimed at a wider audience through a 'figurative' Pammachius, in other words: there is only a literary Pammachius (like Patricia Cox Miller has argued for Eustochium[3]) who has replaced the historical Pammachius. I am not convinced that this is the case. True, Jerome is the Livy of Latin Christian literature, and his patron-students, particularly the women, serve as the Christian equivalents of Roman *exempla* and are, as such, romanticised (idealised, turned into literary devices) to some extent, but one can still distil elements from the historical figures, particularly in Jerome's correspondence with men.[4] My aim is to show that for Pammachius in particular, we do get a chance to trace the historical figure in the extant correspondence between Jerome and Pammachius.

In order to offer a viable contrast with the peripheral aristocracy whom we will encounter in the subsequent chapter, an analysis restricted to Jerome's correspondence with Pammachius would not suffice. Rather, so as to show the contrast between what I have called 'peripheral' on the one, and 'Roman' aristocracy on the other side, one is required to incorporate several more examples of addressees that fit the description and whose correspondence with Jerome – or rather Jerome's correspondence with them, as our only

[1] *Ep.* 77.1.
[2] Similarly Cain, *Letters*, 58.
[3] Patricia Cox Miller, "The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome's Letter to Eustochium," in *JECS* 1/1 (1993), 21-45.
[4] These men 'converted' at a later age: a difference to be made with those young aristocrats whom we will encounter in the final two chapters.

evidence consists of Jerome's responses to their apparent enquiries[5] - could support our hypothesis. Therefore this chapter will offer an analysis of the correspondence between Jerome and Pammachius, but also refer to his correspondence with an 'inner' Roman circle of aristocrats. 'Inner' as it is applied in this thesis has a double meaning: 1) it refers to the aristocrats from the city of Rome, in other words the truly 'Roman' aristocrats, the urban aristocracy who belonged to the old *nobilitas* and who would, after the devaluation (see below) of the *clarissimate* try to re-distinguish themselves by adding *illustres* to their names,[6] and 2) it refers to these urban aristocrats with whom Jerome developed 'close' relationships (strong ties) whose circles he frequented as a mentor when he resided in Rome, and with whom he kept in contact by means of epistolary correspondence and exchange of gifts (financial, literature, his scholarly productions; they were his publishers and mediators at Rome, see below). To this 'inner' circle also belong figures such as Oceanus, Marcella, and Fabiola,[7] and it is Jerome's epistolary exchange with them which will be subject to analysis in this chapter in addition to the Jerome-Pammachius correspondence. It is important to see that the genre of these letters is almost altogether different from that of the correspondence with peripheral aristocracy. The characteristics of the correspondence distinguishes itself from that with the peripheral aristocracy as it appears 'equally levelled' – which thus presupposes Jerome's self-definition as belonging to this *nobilitas* –, it is technical (linguistics), includes expert exegesis, and debates doctrinal matters; rather than that it is solely 'instructive' or aimed at a certain 'transformation'. The expert exegetical correspondence with Marcella is quite unique, yet its analysis would require an additional study. Nevertheless, Jerome's correspondence with the Roman aristocrats appears also aimed at adopting, shaping, transforming, and redefining addressees according to Jerome's model of the ideal Christian *nobilitas,* but in this case the aims seem to be more destined for second level recipients, i.e. the wider public among which Jerome expects his letters to be disseminated. As such one could claim that Jerome's correspondence (including his *vitae*) creates the (moral) examples of Livy *et al* for Christians. Although this is correspondence with historical people it serves as much to create literary models out of these historical figures for future generations, and in line

[5] The fact that only a very small number of letters remain from his correspondent's hands, makes one wonder what ideological agenda lies behind their conservation. Andrew Cain has pointed to Jerome's self-promoting agenda and his search for legitimising his authority with regard to some of Damasus's queries at Jerome's address, which have only been preserved attached to the relevant response from Jerome. See *The Letters of Jerome*, chapter 2 "A Pope and His Scholar".

[6] Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy,* 38.

[7] Jerome gives a list of ladies who belong to the 'Aventine circle' in *Ep.* 45.7, but Andrew Cain is critical for the inclusion of Asella and Lea in Jerome's network, see his chapter "Claiming Marcella," in which he argues that Jerome also tries to claim Asella and Lea, but he might not have been able to exercise much influence on them, see Cain, *Letters*¸ 73-6.

with this if these models survive and receive the credit like those of Livy then Jerome has established his much desired authority.

First, we have to turn to the literary evidence from Jerome. There are seven letters in Jerome's epistolary corpus which are part of the correspondence between him and Pammachius, and only one of these seven letters is from Pammachius to Jerome. This single letter is however not a single-authored letter, but one he has written with, or is co-signed by Oceanus. Furthermore, Jerome has dedicated some commentaries to Pammachius, and Jerome's treatise *Against John of Jerusalem* has also been addressed to him. In the introduction to this work I have already expanded on the function of letter-writing in late antiquity and in Roman senatorial circles in particular. The correspondence in the 'Jerome-Pammachius corpus' can now be analysed using the methodology and techniques observed, with particular focus on conventions, rhetoric, and salutations. Whereas the first two elements will be analysed below, I think that it would be more than appropriate to begin with the salutations.

Letter 48 starts with an anecdotal defence rather than with a conventional greeting.[8] Likewise, *Letter* 49 lacks a formal salutation and has a remarkably offensive opening: "Your own silence is my reason for not having written hitherto. For I feared that, if I were to write to you without first hearing from you, you would consider me not so much a conscientious as a troublesome correspondent."[9] Both letters lament the long silence between Pammachius and Jerome, and the lack of a formal greeting in both might indicate that the letters became part of a *liber* in the later manuscript tradition where scribes have, for convenience (or argument's) sake, left out the salutations. The next letter, 57, starts with an anecdote of the Apostle Paul and King Agrippa; this opening serves again as supporting defence for the author.[10] *Letter* 66, the 'consolation' for Pammachius opens in classic fashion of a consolation, which in the classical tradition requires specific rules of epistolary convention with which Jerome complies.[11] Its lyrical lament is discussed below. That means that of the first four letters, none follow the epistolary rules for greetings, *Letter* 83 (the fifth) is the first to do so, as it opens 'Pammachius and Oceanus to the presbyter Jerome, health',[12] which is according to the conventional tri-partite salutation used: senders (*'Pammachius et Oceanus*'), addressee '*inscriptio*' (*'Hieronymo* presbytero'), and greeting '*salutatio*' ('*salutem*'). It conforms to

[8] *Ep.* 48.1. Note that in PL and NPNF these letters are inverted; I have adopted the Hilberg and Labourt numbering (resp. CSEL and Budé) as this makes more sense: the short letter precedes the actual defence.
[9] *Ep.*49.1. The formulation will be discussed below.
[10] *Ep.*57.1.
[11] Ebbeler, "Tradition, Innovation, and Epistolary Mores," 275, 281.
[12] *Ep.* 83.1.

what is expected of epistolary courtesy and epistolary friendship, but it seems limited to just those three essential elements and reveals no further signs which might evidence a closer friendship or *amicitiae*. The salutation sounds rather business-like. *Letter* 84, Jerome's response to Pammachius and Oceanus, opens as follows: "Jerome to the brothers Pammachius and Oceanus, health [or: Jerome to the brothers Pammachius and Oceanus, greetings]."[13] Like Pammachius and Oceanus, Jerome uses the standard *salutatio* formula, and does not invoke a potential existence of a more 'special' relationship either. Finally, *Letter* 97 opens without a *salutatio* but with a lyrical *entrée*: "Once more with the return of spring I enrich you with the wares of the east and send the treasures of Alexandria to Rome."[14]

An overview of the correspondence can be found in the table below:

<u>Letters</u>
Ep. 48 – short accompanying letter to the apology (393/4 CE)
Ep. 49 – apology for Jerome's polemical treatise *Against Jovinian* (393/4 CE)
Ep. 57 – correct method of translation (395 CE)
Ep. 66 – consolation on death of Pammachius' wife, instructive/transformative (397 CE)
Ep. 83 – letter from Pammachius and Oceanus to Jerome (398 CE or 399/400)
Ep. 84 – Jerome's response, on Origen's *peri archon* (399 CE or 400)
Ep. 97 – to Pammachius and Marcella, accompanying letter to Jerome's translation of Theophilus of Alexandria's *Paschal Letter* (402 CE)
<u>Treatise addressed to Pammachius:</u>
Jerome's *Against John of Jerusalem* (398/99 CE)
<u>Dedications:</u>
Comm. in Obadja (397 CE)
Comm. in Hosea (402-406 CE)
Comm. in Joel (402- 406 CE)
Comm. in Amos (402- 406 CE)
Comm. in Danielem (dedicated to Pammachius and Marcella) (407 CE)

[13] *Ep.* 84.1.
[14] *Ep.* 97.1.

As one can see the dating of the letters to Pammachius is from 393 CE onwards. This raises several questions. Why are there no earlier ones, and maybe even more strikingly, why is there no eulogy for Pammachius? Pammachius was, after all, Jerome's friend – at least this is what Jerome claims – and they had been fellow students. Not only is there a surprising lack of correspondence to 'his dear friend' from Jerome's own hand, as we will see below the letter from Pammachius and Oceanus to Jerome sounds very reserved and distant. The following analyses should help us to portray a clearer picture of these peculiar relationships.

Unfortunately and perhaps also revealing is the fact that few letters have been preserved of people who wrote to Jerome. Those that have been preserved like the ones by Damasus, Theophilus, Innocent, Augustine, Epiphanius, and Pammachius, the latter co-authored by Oceanus, are all rather short (with the exception of Augustine's) and are either technical, relating to Jerome as the interpreter of Scripture (Damasus, Augustine), or being critical of him as translator and promotor of Origen (Pammachius/Oceanus, Augustine, Theophilus, Epiphanius). In all cases the letters deal with doctrine, not with ascetic ideals or aristocratic identities.[15] Yet, as there are relatively few letters to Jerome preserved, this observation on content might not be significant, although especially with Pammachius the difference of tone between Jerome's letters to Pammachius and the one preserved by Pammachius/Oceanus is noticeable, and could presumably tell us more about the relation between Pammachius and Jerome, and point out the differences how Jerome would like us to believe their relationship existed or took shape, and what would have been more likely to be the case...or at least how to question it when taking into account Pammachius's address to Jerome.

Pammachius

This invites us to investigate who Pammachius was, and how we should situate him in Rome, among the Roman *nobilitas*, and more specifically how he fits within Jerome's 'inner Roman circle.[16]

Pammachius was a Roman senatorial aristocrat, descendant of the *gens Furia*,[17] and he had been a fellow student of Jerome at the school of the famous grammarian Donatus in

[15] Although some of the controversies referred to in the correspondence centre round ascetic ideals, namely the Jovinian controversy, they do not deal with ascetic ideals in relation to aristocratic identity.
[16] For their biographical details, see *PLRE,* Jerome *Ep.* 108 on Paula, *Ep.* 127 on Marcella, *Ep.* 77 on Fabiola, *Ep.* 66 for details on Pammachius, and *Ep.* 54 on Furia.
[17] *Ep.* 66.6: "Who is the glory of the Furian stock and whose grandfathers and great grandfathers have been consuls"; see also 66.7: 'Before he began to serve Christ with his whole heart, Pammachius was a well known person in the senate. Still there were many other senators who wore the badges of proconsular rank." This shows

Rome. Pammachius was related to Marcella, another one of Jerome's patron-students, who was his cousin.[18] Through his marriage to Paulina Pammachius was related to Paula, his mother-in-law, a Roman noble woman from the *gens Aemillia*.[19] These were all archetypical Roman patrician families, so they all belonged to the highest echelons of Roman senatorial aristocracy, the proper *nobilitas* or *illustres*.[20] Jerome portrays Pammachius as the 'first among Christian senators',[21] the first monk among his class, the 'most Christian of nobles, and most noble of Christians'[22]; and '*christianus perfectus'*.[23] Since an epitaph or eulogy on Pammachius is lacking, we must derive biographical information from the correspondence that does survive. Out of the Pammachius-Jerome *corpus* of letters, *Epistle* 66, a consolation on the death of Pammachius's beloved Paulina, offers us most biographical information about its addressee. Although it claims to be a consolation this identification is not very convincing: Paulina had died two years before Jerome took to the pen, it rather reads as a praise of Pammachius and a celebration of his 'regained' liberties now that he is not locked up in marriage anymore. Jerome does not come across in the letter as too excited about Paulina, who, after all and in contrast to her sisters Blesilla and Eustochium, never dismissed matrimony.[24] This is also reason for Jerome to value Pammachius much higher than his late wife, who never progressed to the 'second grade' of heavenly awards but had lingered at the third level. Marriage, in Jerome's eyes, is the least of three 'options' in accordance with Matthew's parable of the one-hundred-, sixty-, and thirty-fold fruits. Hence Eustochium, the holy virgin, can claim the one-hundred fold award, her mother Paula, a chaste widow, and her widowed sister Blesilla the sixty-fold award, whilst Paulina had not decided to take the veil

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that Pammachius was of proconsular rank. See also Jerome's comments that Pammachius was "a patrician by his parentage and marriage," 66.4.

[18] See below.

[19] As such also related to the Gracchi, Scipios, and Agammemnon, as Jerome mentions in his epitaph on Paula which glorifies her pedigree, see *Ep.* 108.34.

[20] With little literary evidence that is not from Jerome's hand, it is not an easy, and perhaps a presumptuous task, to try to reconstruct the historical Pammachius. Luckily, there exist other written records which mention Pammachius, namely in letters from Augustine and Paulinus of Nola, and there is some archaeological evidence related to the historical Pammachius – at least to his 'charitable activities' – which might help in our reconstruction of the relation between Pammachius and Jerome in particular, and how this then relates to Jerome's transformative teaching and his model of the ideal Christian in general, see below.

[21] *Ep.* 66.11.

[22] *Ep.* 57.12.

[23] Pammachius is frequently referred to as one 'already perfect;' there are numerous references of praise how Pammachius is the best, the most learned, the most noble, the mightiest, and the leader. However, in the penultimate chapter of *Letter* 66 Jerome seems to feel the urge to put all this praise into perspective, and to relativise Pammachius's greatness by pointing to the superiority of his mother-in-law Paula and sister-in-law Eustochium: the summum of humiliation for a patrician like Pammachius to be surpassed by women, as we can read in 66.13: '*et cum omnia quae dixi, feceris, ab Eustochio tua Paulaque uinceris, si non opere at certe sexu.'* Jerome explicitly refers to 'the weakness of their sex' to emphasise the embarrassment for Pammachius.

[24] This gives reason for Jerome to argue that Paulina "has preferred to keep to the safe track of a lower path rather than treading on air to lose herself in the clouds," *Ep.* 66.3.

but to lead an 'ordinary' married life in the city of Rome, *ergo* she would only be awarded the thirty-fold fruits. Pammachius, now a widower and 'converted' to an ascetic form of Christianity, has climbed up to the second step. In his familial narrative Jerome allows a usurpation of marriage into the greater familial unity, which he calls the holy bond that exists between Paulina, Pammachius, Paula, and Eustochium; the already deceased Blesilla is mentioned only as an aside.[25] It is interesting that Jerome seems to completely obliviate the benjamin of the family, Paula's son Toxotius. The four that are accredited by Jerome all share the cardinal virtues, each excels in one of them,[26] and although genetically related (or as in-law in the case of Pammachius) it is truly their bond through their vocation and their dedication to the Christian ascetic life – and thus in and through the Holy Spirit – which makes them a team; moreover a team of which the reins are being held by Jesus.[27] Jerome does not only use Christian or scriptural metaphors for his illustration, he also ensures to incorporate the classical tradition by adopting Plato's charioteer metaphor.[28] What we observe here is how indeed the family bond is now mainly defined by its Christian character, but Jerome ensures a continued embeddedness in Roman tradition by for example drawing on metaphors taken from classical literature and by not dismissing but, contrarily, promoting the nobility of the family. The patriarchal understanding of family is maintained although the reader gets the impression that its hierarchical structure is somewhat toppled, when Jerome mentions how the original team (the women) is blessed with a male addition, namely Pammachius who became a 'member' through his marriage to Paulina, "to match the

[25] *Ep.* 66, for Blesilla see *Letter* 39. Blesilla is added to the, what Jerome comes to call 'four-horse team' (see below), and says that she was 'the first one of you all to go meet the Lord'. Instead of five, there are now two and three: the deceased Blesilla and Paulina form one subgroup; Pammachius, sided by Paula and Eustochium, the second subgroup who 'will fly upward to Christ more easily,' see *Ep.* 66.2. Jerome 'also' mentions Blesilla and her untimely death in the concluding chapter of the letter, see 66.15.

[26] *Ep.* 66.2. Compare *Ep.* 52 to Nepotian, where Nepotian is told he should embody all four of these cardinal virtues, and Jerome connects them with jewellery metaphors: *Ep.* 52.13: "Have prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude. Let these be the four quarters of your horizon, let them be a four-horse team to bear you, Christ's charioteer, at full speed to your goal. No necklace can be more precious than these; no gems can form a brighter galaxy. By them you are decorated, you are girt about, you are protected on every side. They are your defence as well as your glory; for every gem is turned into a shield."

[27] *Ep.* 66.2. Although Jerome refers to Habakkuk, and the Biblical reference seems to reflect *Hab.* 3:8, the passage also appears almost identically in *John* 3:17. A parallel reference is also found in Augustine, *De civitate dei* XVIII, 32.

[28] In the same section Jerome continues that although the colours of the horses are different – which would refer to their respective virtues and heavenly rewards or merits – they all bear one yoke and they agree in their will, obeying the one driver, see *Ep.* 66.2: '*Discolores equi sed uoluntate concordes, unum aurigae iugum trahunt, [non expectantes flagelli uerbera, sed ad uocis hortamenta feruentes].'* This is clearly an adaptation of Plato's charioteer metaphor drawn from the *Phaedrus*, where the human soul is represented as consisting of three parts: the charioteer is the intellect, which drives a chariot pulled by two horses: the horse of noble breed symbolises the rational and moral character of the soul, the other stands for the irrational passions. If the charioteer manages to coordinate the horses they will lead him towards enlightenment; see Plato, *Phaedrus* 246ab. Philo and subsequent authors have already widely made use of it; Jerome sets forth this tradition. Jerome has replaced the 'intellect' with Jesus, and instead of the path leading to enlightenment it now leads to salvation.

women's virtues by those of a man."[29] While the latter segment clearly reveals a patriarchal perspective, in what follows Jerome downplays the importance of the introduction of a man into the team when he stipulates that it is not the marriage that sanctifies, but rather the consequences of this marriage, namely, Pammachius becoming a relative of Paula's 'holy family' which is directed by Jesus, leading the entire team to a life of ascetic perfection.[30] As such, marriage is not portrayed as a unique bond between two spouses but rather as act which enables a much stronger bond in the spirit, which in turn leads on to a path of dedicated ascetic life, perfection of Christian asceticism by diminishing both the person of Paulina and the marital bond between her and Pammachius.

The couple had remained childless, despite efforts to produce offspring, and Jerome remarks how Paulina had been put under pressure by Pammachius and her mother-in-law[31] to deliver what was required by Roman traditional standards: a male heir to their dynasty.[32] Jerome tells us how several miscarriages had lead the couple to believe that it would be possible to conceive, and thus they had not forsaken conjugal copulation for a vow of continence.[33] Jerome is keen to assert that Paulina only reluctantly consented to this. Even more so, he claims that her sole wish had been to produce 'virgins to Christ';[34] an argument which contrasts with his earlier assumption that they had been eager to provide a male heir to the family. The apparent gender inversion is also interesting: Paulina desired to bring forth 'virgins to Christ' rather than a male heir to Pammachius's aristocratic family: an important alteration in Jerome's portrait of noble ascetic Christian identity.[35] The emphasis on this 'divine dedication' reads as an attempt to erase any possible suspicion that Paulina's submission to her husband would reveal any reflection of pleasure in or desire for marital unity.[36] The 'good authority' on which Jerome bases his arguments could well have been Paula. The childless marriage in combination with an emphasis on marital intercourse in the sole pursuit of producing ascetic devotees of Christ seems to incite Jerome to proclaim that he should speak of Pammachius as 'brother' of Paulina, rather than 'husband', for "the language

[29] *Ep.* 66.2. Interesting to note is that the Latin *comes* could translate as simple 'companion', but also as count or Earl: it carries a (possible) noble connotation which seems not unimportant in this context.
[30] *Ep.* 66.2.
[31] *Ep.* 66.3.
[32] *Ep.* 66.3. Interestingly, the 'traditional Roman standards' which particularly applied to the aristocracy are backed up by a quote from the Hebrew Bible, with a reference to *Gen.* 35:16.
[33] *Ep.* 66.3.
[34] *Ep.* 66.3.
[35] However, 'virgins to Christ' might just as well have been male and might rather have to be read as gender neutral here, although the reference commonly understood when one reads 'virgins to Christ' is to consecrated virgin women.
[36] Likewise, Jerome's calling their bed 'undefiled' serves to emphasise the holy end and to eradicate the pleasure of the passion so often highlighted in Roman culture, see 66.3: '*Paulina castum matrimonii cubile conseruat.'*

of marriage is inadequate to describe the holy bonds of the Spirit."[37] Although their efforts remained fruitless in marriage, fruit was to be borne eventually when Paulina died: dying, she produced 'the heir she had longed for', namely Pammachius turning monk.[38] Jerome connects Pammachius's transformation or 'rebirth' after Paulina's death to the narrative of Phineas's wife in the Hebrew Bible.[39] Flattering although the wording of this segment may be for its addressee, it seems to instrumentalise Paulina, giving her only posthumously credit for bringing forth a stream of monks who are not even born from her but from the Church.[40] Paulina's transformative role exists herein that she has functioned as the essential sacrifical lamb for the greater good, which is Pammachius's option for the ascetic life.

These passages offer material which supports an alteration of Roman aristocratic values, models of identity, and social constructions; whereas male offspring were of key importance, Jerome not only undermines the framework of the traditional system of heritage through his anti-sexual stance, he also turns the hierarchy of male and female offspring upside down: the virgins of Christ become more important than a male heir. Yet at the same time he seems to add another hierarchical structure to a system in which females did not have the potential of progress, except to move into widowhood. Like in Roman society women – and men – once entered into marriage had no chance of progression beyond 'chaste widowhood'. Now, there is the position of virgins which crowns the hierarchy, which Michele Salzman has called the 'hierarchy of piety.'[41] It recalls a parallel with the Roman social ladder: social progression was possible for lower classes but only up to a certain level. Social mobility, as we will see below and in subsequent chapters, was possible and popular particularly among provincial men,[42] of which Jerome himself is a fine example: they could rise along administrative ranks and even make it to the Senate, but they would never become part of the 'true' nobility, the patricians, who remained a class apart within the Roman senatorial aristocracy for the sole basis for membership of this nobility was nomination (recognition) by peers.[43] Jerome and his peers wished to belong to the true *nobilitas*, and not to be considered marginal provincial aristocrats: having a patron of the likes of Pammachius, who is not only a patron but one whom you could portray as a 'friend', would give evidence of a relationship

[37] *Ep.* 66.2.
[38] *Ep.* 66.3, and see quote below from 66.4.
[39] The Biblical narrative referred to is 1 *Sam.* 4:19-22. See also 66.4: "the same thing has come to pass in our own day, for since Paulina fell asleep the Church has posthumously borne the monk Pammachius, a patrician by his parentage and marriage, rich in alms, lofty in lowliness [...] He and others like him are the offspring which Paulina desired to have in her life time and which she has given us in her death."
[40] *Ep.* 66.4 quoted above.
[41] Salzman, *Competing Claims to Nobilitas*, 362.
[42] See also Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 99-101.
[43] See also Salzman, "Elite Realities and Mentalités," 352.

which transcends the pure business-like relationship of patronage, and as such give evidence of being 'peers' with the true *nobilitas* of the Roman senatorial aristocracy. To be 'peers' with them means according to the 'rules' that define the *clarissimate* (and within this the *nobilitas*) being equal.

Nobilitas

When we categorise these aristocrats as *nobilitas*, what does this imply? The criteria or expectations for 'secular' *nobilitas* according to Salzman were that "[...] a Roman senatorial noble was thought to possess certain superior personal qualities; traditionally, the well-born were considered to possess a high level of cultural attainment, outstanding virtue, conspicuous civic and political commitment, and proud comportment."[44] It is interesting to see that these are almost exactly the criteria Jerome's model of the noble *Christianus perfectus* requires or proposes, but then seemingly translated in Christian terms: virtue, charitable works, holy arrogance, being most noble in or with Christ, being learned, educated.[45] However, whereas Salzman claims that "the traditional Roman senatorial bases and definition – family pedigree combined with public office – [were] but subordinated to Christian piety,"[46] I would for Jerome turn the argument upside down and state that for him, Christian piety is modelled according to the definition of *nobilitas*. Although he often speaks of humility, and certainly also models or remodels some notions of the definition of *nobilitas* according to Christian rhetoric, in principle the core of his re-definitions is at least as much a redefinition of what Christian aspirations are to those of the old *nobilitas*-definition as it is (and only in some instances) a subordination of *nobilitas* to Christian piety.[47] Therefore, a more precise definition is required to scrutinise in which areas he subjugates the one to the other, in which he merges them, and in which he adds new elements and neglects other old ones, so that we get a nuanced picture of how this entire process works. This would show that in Jerome, the 'redefinition' of *nobilitas* is certainly less polemical than what Salzman implies. Here, we crash into the problems that come with the 'conversion' model of late antiquity. Rather than seeing "good birth and the highest form of Christian virtue in

[44] Salzman, "Competing Claims to Nobilitas," 360.
[45] See for example *Epp.* 22, 52, 130.
[46] Salzman, "Competing Claims," 362.
[47] Although this might seem to be illustrated in Jerome's idealised ascetic models such as *Life of Paul the First Hermit*, there is a difference between Jerome's literary creations and his historical correspondents, and it is first and foremost the latter group that is the focus of this study rather than Jerome, though Jerome is the vehicle through whom we must access our target group.

opposition,"[48] we have to rather see them as complementary. And rather than seeing the Christian claim to *nobilitas* as universally applicable,[49] this does not seem a definition Jerome would adhere to.[50] He presupposed nobility. Jerome does not aim at lower classes; he does not stress the notion of 'all are one in Christ'. Those who follow Jerome's model, and are able to abide by it, are the educated senatorial aristocracy. There is no attempt on Jerome's behalf to 'reach out'.[51] Although it is sometimes admitted that the appropriation also leads to an alteration of the Christian claims and views,[52] this would imply that an 'old conservative notion' like *nobilitas* was adopted because Jerome wanted to convert noble people.[53] Instead, Jerome portrays himself as being part of, or at least aiming at such nobility for himself and his peers. Jerome's reference to his efforts to erect a hospice near his monastery could be interpreted as one such attempt to be seen as belonging to the same class as those who provide facilities, namely the traditional senatorial aristocracy, as I have already indicated above and which I further discuss below. The impression I get from this passage is that Jerome is eager to show that he, *too* – that is, like Pammachius – is building a hospice, and that he has simultaneously ordered the construction of a monastery of which the building is in progress. He boasts about its popularity, as "the number of monks who flock here are from all quarters of the world is so overwhelming" that he cannot give up on his construction works even though he currently seems to lack financial resources to continue the works. He further emphasises his own social status by writing Pammachius how he has sent his brother to sell his parents' property and some villas, but rather than showing Pammachius that this would suffice to finance the building works it reads as an implicit plea for Pammachius to finance Jerome's campaigns.[54] Against all the rhetoric of a new religion, Jerome and many others were extremely conservative nobles. This becomes even clearer in the argument Jerome sets forth in chapter 7 of *Letter* 66, which contains possibly one of the most remarkable pieces of evidence for Jerome's elitism:

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[48] Salzman, "Competing Claims," 363.
[49] *Ibid.*, 363.
[50] Rather to the contrary: his model of Christian *nobilitas* restored the old Roman exclusivist notion of *nobilitas*, as an antidote against the opening-up of senatorial rank to civil and military officers, as becomes apparent in *Ep.* 66.7, quoted below and in the introduction.
[51] This is an aspect which might be contrasted with those serving 'the institution' more directly, e.g. bishops; to some extent, Salzman seems to stress the universality of Christian *nobilitas*. See also the subsequent chapter where I analyse Jerome's correspondence with 'peripheral aristocracy' and where I show how he seemingly distinguishes forms of address according to his correspondents' pedigrees.
[52] Salzman, particularly "The Aristocrats Influence on Christianity," 200ff, in *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*.
[53] Salzman applies this to the institution: Christian leaders and spokesmen.
[54] *Ep.* 66.14.

> "The most distinguished privilege loses its prestige when lavished on a crowd, and dignities themselves become less dignified in the eyes of good men when held by persons who have no dignity. [...] An office which was once handed down from patrician to patrician, which only men of noble birth could hold [...] – this great office is now obtained by merely belonging to the army; and the shining robe of victory now envelops men who a little while ago were country boors."[55]

This is such a clear critique of post-Constantine measures[56] which had made senatorial rank achievable for provincial people, for whom social mobility was now possible through military service or service in the imperial administration (a career path which had, by the way, initially been a choice of Jerome's as well). Jerome attempts to offer the offended, original (that is, by birth) aristocrats an alternative. In contrast to the impoverished *clarissimate*, Jerome's life of ascetic perfection has not replaced the former hierarchy by accepting country boors, rendering persons who have no dignity into people of esteem or removing social status and nobility of birth. Instead, in a time when the senatorial rank has lost its dignity, its honour, and its respectability because it has been made available (or rather: obtainable) to the 'large crowd', Jerome's Christian *nobilitas* elevates and maintains the traditional Roman *nobilitas* as a glorified, dignified, and respectable rank. This rhymes with Jerome's comment that the honour of a consular rank lasts but for a year, whereas of course an ascetic Christian holy life is honoured and rewarded both in this lifetime and in the world to come. Similarly, whereas the consular rank is now granted even to those who do not seem to merit it, the ascetic life has its strict requirements with a certain degree of active commitment presupposed, and above all a conscious conversion. Jerome, even when referring to scriptural passages which emphasise the gift-character, adds that virginity is 'not as a positive duty,'[57] but it is a donation that is given to the one who 'is able to receive it' (*Matt.* 19:12).[58]

Those noble aristocrats who are able to receive such gifts could function as the perfect examples for those who wish to be accepted into their ranks. In line with the claim made in the introduction, namely that Jerome is the Livy of the Christians, an example which could support this claim is exactly the figure of Pammachius, who, belonging to the 'true *nobilitas'* of Jerome's inner Roman circle of aristocrats, is described by Jerome as one already perfect, as we can read in Jerome's opening sentences of his eulogy on Fabiola, addressed to Oceanus:

[55] *Ep.* 66.7.
[56] See Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 31-9.
[57] *Ep.* 66.8.
[58] *Ep.* 66.8.

> "About two years have elapsed since I sent a brief letter to my dear Pammachius on the sudden passing of his Paulina, for I blushed to say more to so learned a man or to repeat to him his own thoughts, lest I should seem, not so much to be comforting a friend, as in foolish ostentation to be instructing one already perfect."[59]

Now, if these aristocrats of the likes of Pammachius are already perfect, how can we speak of a transformative character of Jerome's letters, and how can we speak of Jerome redefining their addressees' aristocratic identity? I will now scrutinise the ideas of Roman *nobilitas* and the supposed transformation of this *nobilitas* into Jerome's model of the ideal Christian, touching upon the Roman tradition of patronage, epistolography, and rhetoric, to see if this could give us more insight into these peculiar partnerships, and if we can speak of 'transformation' at all.

The analysis of Jerome's correspondence with Pammachius and the 'inner' Roman circle should reveal how Jerome's model of the ideal Christian could have been accepted by these Roman aristocrats, despite its apparent requirement of radical rupture with the past. It seems to me that this is because Jerome is creating a 'status group'[60] of Christian elite, where only those are eligible to be part of if they wish to become perfect: a superior *Christianus perfectus*, rising or dwelling high above the 'mediocre flock' even if he still provides services to the 'less fortunate'. For whilst Jerome's rhetoric attempts to imply that Pammachius has 'lowered himself to dwell among them,'it seems obvious that Pammachius's helping of the poor rather has to do with his duties as a patrician (or *vir illustris*) than as a leap down the social ladder, as we can read:

> "Such ['the wretched'] is the bodyguard which accompanies Pammachius wherever he walks; in the persons of such he ministers to Christ Himself; and their squalor serves to whiten his soul. Thus he speeds on his way to heaven, beneficent as a giver of games to the poor, and kind as a provider of shows for the needy."[61]

Here we can read how Pammachius is providing services – good deeds – to the poor: not only the Christian poor, but Jerome leaves the 'poor' undetermined. As such we may insist that this refers to the Roman populace, and the patrons of the city – senators, patrician families – were

[59] *Ep.* 77.1.
[60] Although it could also be read as if Jerome is simply leaving an already existing 'status group' completely intact rather than creating a new one.
[61] *Ep.* 66.5. See also the discussion below on providing facilities as part of the role of patrons/senatorial aristocracy.

expected to see to their needs, for example by providing 'bread and games.'[62] So other than taking Jerome's word that Pammachius had 'lowered himself' to imply that his senatorial friend had 'stepped down' in rank, when read against the rest of the letter there are no such indications of such decline of social status – another indicator for this being the language used, which can also be observed from the other letters – but rather that Pammachius was providing services to the poor and needy, as was expected of a man of his position.

> "Surely it is no small thing for a man of birth, eloquence, and wealth to avoid the company of the powerful in the streets, to mingle with the crowd, to cleave to the poor, to associate on equal terms with the untaught, to cease to be a leader and to become one of the people. The more he humbles himself, the more he is exalted. A pearl will shine in the midst of squalor and a gem of the first water will sparkle in the mire."[63]

Jerome highlights Pammachius's non-traditional attitude towards people below his own social class: the populace on the streets, the crowd, and the poor. It could read as an example *par excellence* that a transformation of identity is required, initiated, and performed by conversion to an ascetic form of Christianity. In this segment, ascetic conduct and worldly commitments are not presented as mutually exclusive, although it is narrated that confrontation is sought with members of one's own class and a discontinuation of social segregation is presented by immersing oneself into classes conventionally categorised as 'lower' or 'the lowest' classes of society. However, Jerome's illustration is a glorification and idealisation of Pammachius; an observation which is supported by Jerome's claim that Pammachius has ceased to be a leader. On the other hand, as we have seen above, Jerome recalls Pammachius's appearance in the Senate dressed as a monk: this very account contradicts Jerome's claims that Pammachius has ceased to be a leader, for he is apparently still a senator.

Nevertheless, when we consider the words 'the more he humbles himself, the more he is exalted,'Jerome appears to imply a preservation of the hierarchic structuring of the world order: a transcending movement that reassures his patron-student that his 'new' lifestyle lifts him (far) above the traditionally so deeply-feared association with the populace. As such Jerome is safeguarding his patron-student's social superiority. Although in the idealised literary *Überlieferung* 'conversion'is presented as discontinuous with the past, Jerome's (literary) creation of a superior *Christianus perfectus* keeps his aristocratic patrons floating

[62] Interestingly this is not only or primarily the task of the emperor but rather of the *clarissimate*, particularly after the Emperor had decided to move the imperial court out of Rome.
[63] *Ep.* 66.6-7.

where they floated before: high above all ordinary people. This means I will take Salzman's conclusions a step further, and argue that Jerome is not merely reflecting a rhetoric of Christian *nobilitas,* but that he accommodates the Roman nobility's 'status group' to remain distinct from (and defined against) the broad Christian flock. As such, the noble Christian is not only superior to 'ordinary' Christians of lower classes, but also to his peers of the senatorial aristocracy: both those who still adhere to the 'old religion' as well as those who have adopted Christianity (*in nomine*) but have not 'converted' to the ascetic form. This corresponds to the competitive character of the *clarissimate,*and forms a central element in Jerome's model of ideal ascetic conduct.[64] There is an almost direct reference to this competitive spirit in *Letter* 66, where Jerome sets out to describe the worldly decoration that come with membership of the Senate and its different rankings, arguing that Pammachius dwelt in the upper strata but at the same time he was superseded by others (of even higher rank).[65] In contrast, his pursuit of perfection of ascetic Christian life will ensure he is the best, the mightiest, the most perfect: the supreme.[66]

Futhermore, Jerome does not simply pick elements of the 'secular' *nobilitas* and subordinates them to a Christian *nobilitas* (Salzman's 'hierarchy of piety', as referred to above, subordinates core values such as family and pedigree which constitute the very bases of *nobilitas*), Jerome rather adopts all aspects of *nobilitas* and 'translates' them in Christian terms, as such offering a *continuum* which on paper seems like a radical rupture, but in

[64] As such it deserves more attention than it is granted by Salzman.

[65] *Ep.* 66.7: 'Before he began to serve Christ with his whole heart, Pammachius was a well known person in the senate. Still there were many other senators who wore the badges of proconsular rank. The whole world is filled with similar decorations. He was in the first rank it is true, but there were others in it besides him. Whilst he took precedence of some, others took precedence of him.' Note that Jerome here claims that Pammachius had ceased office when he opted for the ascetic life, whereas elsewhere he praises his patron's appearance in senate dressed as a monk: Jerome's eagerness to praise Pammachius seemingly leads to inconsistency.

[66] See for example the contrast Jerome paints between the temporary 'laurels lost in the crowd' and the 'honour [that] lasts only for a year' versus 'the saints shall receive a crown which shall never pass,' the promises of honour 'made to the saints are fulfilled even in this present life', and 'today all the churches of Christ are talking of Pammachius. The whole world admires as a poor man whom heretofore it ignored as rich.' So Pammachius has already received the eternal crown of glory, and is admired by the whole world: surpassing the temporary honour bestowed upon a senator, but clearly reflecting the *memoria dignus.* Compare also Curran, *Pagan City,* 267, who gives the example of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus and his wife, (also) Paulina, and their initiation (*taurobolium*, i.e. into the cult of Magna Mater): "His earthly honours, which were impressive, were considered by him to be 'transient and trivial' (CL VI 1779: '*quae tu caduca ac parva semper autumans divum sacerdos infulis celsus clues*?'). Paulina viewed her own initiations as a deliverance from the 'lot of death' (ILS 1259: '*sors mortis'*). Because of her religious experiences, people proclaimed her 'holy and blessed' (ILS 1259: '*te propter omnis me beatam, me piam celebrant*'). She expected to join him after her death in 'a shining white palace' [a sentiment which Jerome dismissed with a contemptuous remark that she was likely to meet him not as a resplendent heavenly official but naked, in the darkness of hell.' Cf. Jerome *Ep*.23.3.]." Compare Sextus Petronius Probus, in similar terms (almost literally) but then Christian.

practice it was not.[67] Although Jerome copies Tertullian's adagium of *fiunt, non nascuntur christiani*,[68] the actual transformation of identity – even to Jerome's radical ascetic model – seems to have been more of a transition in the form of appropriation from secular *nobilitas* to Christian *nobilitas*, where his students, although in Jerome's epistles encouraged and instructed to abandon the world and seek seclusion from it, were in a position to continue the practices related to their social standing (patronage, self-(re)presentation, intellectual activities, perfection of virtue, charitable works).

This observation shows that Jerome does not simply pick elements of the Roman *nobilitas* and subordinates them to a Christian *nobilitas*, Jerome rather adopts two of the key aspects of Roman *nobilitas*, namely its superiority and segregation, without much translation of them into Christian terms. Likewise the importance granted to wisdom, study, and knowledge of Scriptures are very elements of an elite environment and not something to be associated with the unlearned or illiterate masses. Hence, we might argue, Pammachius only 'associates' with the lower classes in as much as he provides services for them; in as much as he uses his wealth to assist the poor and needy through almsgiving and the building of facilities such as hospices.[69] In this sense, Jerome maintains the basic notion of the traditional aristocratic ideal. Pammachius remains a patrician not only by his parentage and marriage, but now rich in Christian alms and 'lofty in lowliness'. The aristocratic ideal of being the mightiest and noblest has not changed: it is still about being 'great among the great, a leader

[67] E.g. in *Letter* 66 to Pammachius Jerome recognises the duty to produce offspring for inheritance reasons, and he does not radically despise it, but rather endorses that after having fulfilled that duty, spouses should ideally opt for a further life of marital continence (chastity after the task has been completed...).
[68] Tertullian, *Apol.* 18.4.
[69] Pammachius used his wealth to the aid of the needy as whas expected from an aristocrat of his standing: as we have seen in the introduction, part and parcel of patronage was that senators paid for public facilities, and in return they received respect and glorification, see also Salzman who attests the numerous inscriptions that testify how rich 'converts' donated to building churches and all sorts of facilities for the poor. For the phenomenon of patronage crossing the (artificial?) boundaries between religions, see "Jerome and his Jewish Network in Rome, 382-85"(in progress), where the current author shows how patronage was not only exercised by those adhering to 'traditional' Roman religion (of 'polytheistic' rites) and by those who adopted Christianity, but also by Jews. By building a hospice for strangers in Portus, Pammachius was doing exactly that. This means that, although it seems a graceful and praiseworthy act as Jerome shows, Pammachius did not factually have to 'lower' his standing but was rather enhancing it. See *Ep.* 66.11: *'Audio te xenodochim in portu fecisse Romano [et uirgam de arbore Abraham in Ausonio plantasse litore].'* The strangers who visited the hospice were fed, a feature Jerome also hints at when he compares Pammachius to Abraham who in his kind hospitality fed the strangers who visited him (see below). A parallel can be found in Paulinus of Nola who recounts the numerous loaves of bread that he had to provide for the people who kept coming to his hospice at Nola. On the other hand, in his letter to Nepotian Jerome seems to speak dismissively about great building projects for new churches, as he criticises the exquisite ornamentations that are often added: *Ep.* 52.10: "Many build churches nowadays; their walls and pillars of glowing marble, their ceilings glittering with gold, their altars studded with jewels. Yet to the choice of Christ's ministers no heed is paid. […] But now our Lord by His poverty has consecrated the poverty of His house. Let us, therefore, think of His cross and count riches to be but dirt. Why do we admire what Christ calls "the mammon of unrighteousness"?" For a discussion on Jerome's use of *Luke* 6:9 'mammon of unrighteousness,' see chapter 4 'Peripheral Aristocrats.'

among leaders,' the 'commander in chief of all;' yet, what has changed has to do with personal self-renunciation in terms of shame to do with sexual abstinence and a dismissal of esteem.

What then, if *fiunt, non nascuntur christiani*, is the actual transformation of identity? Is it only Jerome's radical ascetic model which even radicalises the gap between the ordinary people and their super heroes? When Jerome in his epistles instructs his students to abandon the world and seek seclusion from it, he does not deny them their old positions and lets them continue the practices related to their social standing.[70] To what extent can we speak of a complete conversion or total transformation if figures like Pammachius could still attend to their duties in the Senate? Yes, Pammachius seems to have appeared in public in sackcloth, but a monk's duties as Jerome has elaborated in other letters (see final chapter in particular) are to focus on the spiritual and to cut loose from all that binds one to worldly affairs. One can only think of Jerome's letter to Julian (see chapter four), where Jerome argues that he does "not wish [Julian] to be a monk among men of the world [or] a man of the world among monks."[71] This is remarkable particularly because Jerome is presenting Pammachius (and Paulinus of Nola) as examples in this context, whereas it is clear that Pammachius had not completely forsaken his worldly commitments. Is Jerome turning a blind eye to his patron's persistence in keeping his Senate seat? He definitely seems to praise Pammachius's act of rebellion and states that "so far from blushing when he meets the eyes of his companions, he actually derides those who deride him."[72] Pammachius's course of action testifies of a man who is not scared by public judgment, but someone who chooses to be most daring as Christian aristocratic example prepared to confront his peers when he meets their eyes, and mock their disapproving sneers. This is the picture Jerome paints. However, this might show a transformation or adaptation of the historical figure into an idealised literary figure. Namely, as we will see below, in the other letters of the exchange between Jerome and Pammachius we get a picture of a Pammachius who is very concerned about his reputation and the possible damage that could be incurred if clients attached to his name get into disrepute.

And yet, as Peter Brown has pointed out in *Through the Eye of a Needle*, there are in fact indications of radical change in comportment by those senatorial aristocrats who opted for radical asceticism – such as Paulinus of Nola – and he illustrates the dismay expressed by

[70] Compare Jerome's letter to Furia, 54.12, where Jerome encourages Furia to continue the practice of feeding the needy, but he adds that she should now pay particular attention to the Christian poor.
[71] *Ep.* 118.6.
[72] *Ep.* 66.6.

their peers for e.g. bodily neglect.[73] Jerome also alludes to this when he recalls how Pammachius had appeared in the Senate in a monk's sackcloth instead of the senatorial purple.[74]At the same time, however, this is evidence that Pammachius kept his public office, and he certainly never abandoned Rome. If one could speak of radical rupture, only the neglect of bodily hygiene – held in high esteem by the Roman aristocrats – might be regarded as one aspect that would support this claim,[75] but it only increases the distance between an ascetic *nobilitas* and a Roman *nobilitas* – was it also meant to be an approximation between the Christian noble and the flock?

A *lackmustest* could be the role of patronage.[76] Whereas Andrew Cain has mostly looked at patronage from Jerome's perspective and has emphasised Jerome's attempts to paint a favourable picture of himself so as to convince his audience of his authority and expertise; Rebenich has offered a slightly more nuanced view. I am more inclined to follow Rebenich because we deal with a multitude of actors and therefore have to approach the problem from the different perspectives of the agents involved. With little literary evidence that is not from Jerome's hand, this is not an easy, and perhaps a presumptuous task, but one that has to be looked into nonetheless. Luckily, there exist other written records which mention Pammachius, namely in letters from Augustine and Paulinus of Nola,[77] and there is some archaeological evidence related to the historical Pammachius, which might help in our reconstruction of Pammachius, and the relation between Pammachius and Jerome in particular, and how this then relates to Jerome's transformative teaching and his model of the ideal Christian.

In order to achieve the much desired honorary title of'nobility', or at least 'aristocracy' agency, networking, and PR were required. These came mostly in the form of patronage. Pammachius was not the only man of high standing with whom Jerome established

[73] That is for example not visiting the public baths, a refusal to wear fine garments.
[74] *Ep.* 66.6.
[75] However, Curran has argued that ascetic ideas were not alien to the senatorial aristocracy, see Curran, *Pagan City*, 265: "Invididual senators are known to have participated in cults which had certain ascetical features." Curran refers to *Carmen contra Paganos*, *Carmen ad Senatorem ex Christiana religione ad idolorum servitutem conversum* (Croke and Harries, *Conflict*, docs 50 and 51); Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 7, 8 on Plotinus as an example of "pagan" asceticism and worldly/material renunciation; Plotinus founded a school at Rome which was popular among senators (and possibly their wives). This shows that, contra Brown and contra the rhetoric of Paulinus of Nola, renunciation was not always met with disrespect.
[76] Already Cain looked into this topic mostly taking Jerome's perspective, and so did Rebenich who sees a multitude of actors and different perspectives involved. See also Salzman on "wealth and patronage" in *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 205-9.
[77] Paulinus of Nola for example mentions Pammachius' hosting of a banquet in St Peter's basilica in Rome, in honour of the anniversary of his wife's death, see Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 13.11(.15). John Curran suggests this bears evidence of the association of Christian aristocrats with the great churches of Rome, Curran, *Pagan City*, 291.

– or rather forged, or feigned – a close or personal relationship. Jerome also maintained relations with other influential people such as Damasus,[78] Dexter, Florentinus, Evagrius of Antioch,[79] Nebridius and other people of the Theodosian court at Constantinople. One does well to remember that patronage is not, as Jerome in his letters would make it appear, a kind of 'friendship', but should rather be seen as a business relation.[80] Regardless, patronage came with certain rules of conduct of which some very much resemble what we in our modern days would regard as expressions of friendship in the watered down sense of Facebook.[81] Here we have to take into account the function of letter-writing in these circles: conventions, rhetoric of flattery (*captatio*), forms of *salutatio*, etc. Literary exchange – and epistolography in particular – could maintain, but also establish, create, and build relationships; and, to follow Thomas Hunt, communities could be built on literary correspondence.[82] As we have observed in the introduction, epistolary exchange served 'to create virtual presence in case of physical absence'. This aspect of epistolography became particularly important for Jerome after he had left Rome, and was eager to not lose hold of the reins of the precious circle of patron-students which he had built and secured in those three years in the capital. This observation invites us to look at the other relations Jerome had managed to secure when he was in Rome.

Marcella

The final letter in the "Pammachius-Jerome corpus" is *Letter* 97 which has been addressed to both Pammachius and Marcella. This allows the bridge to the second aristocrat who, belonging to Jerome's "inner Roman circle" demands a moment in the spotlights. 'A moment' only because of the excellent contributions of Sylvia Letsch-Brunner[83] and Andrew Cain[84] on the person of Marcella, and the latter in particular for the questionable nature of the *Liber ad Marcellam* and Jerome's dubious claims about this prominent aristocratic lady.

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[78] Damasus falls into a different category as bishop of Rome, see discussion 'denominator' in the introduction.
[79] Like Damasus, Evagrius is member of the clergy. See Stefan Rebenich's comprehensive account of Evagrius in *Hieronymus*, 52-75.
[80] In other words, it is important to see the distinction between 'peerage' (= 'friendship' among equals within same 'class') and 'patronage' (= patron-client relation).
[81] Friendship in the Facebook sense is teleologically oriented friendship (business friendship, if you like), or no-friendship at all, something like the one you can sense between Jerome and Pammachius. Does Jerome really think he is seen as a friend by Pammachius? Does he really care about Pammachius? Even if we deploy a non-romantic friendship idea and base it on late antique social friendship: it is a media-friendship, one of letters in Jerome which would be one of Facebook today.
[82] See also the introduction 'Embodied in Roman Society,' the section on literature and literacy. Thomas Hunt has presented this argument in a paper at the Patristics Seminar, Durham University, 2014, but as far as I am aware it has not been published.
[83] See S. Letsch Brunner, *Marcella. Discipula et Magistra. Auf den Spuren einer römischen Christin des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin – New York : De Gruyter, 1998).
[84] Cain, *Letters*, chapter 3 'Claiming Marcella'.

That Pammachius as a member of the Senate does neither completely disassociate himself from his class, nor fully ceases to be a leader, makes one think of Jerome's other and most-cherished of patron-students: Marcella. Marcella belonged to the illustrious *gens Marcella* and was a cousin of Pammachius. The family owned a palace on the Aventine where Marcella lived with her mother Albina. This leading Roman lady vowed to the ascetic life but probably to Jerome's dismay never really abandoned the comfort of her Roman residence and its society.[85] Although she set up an ascetic community in her mother's palace, she never gave up her wealth, and her study group or community consisted (unsurprisingly) only of women of similar social standing.[86] Her position as patron meant that Jerome was most likely only one of many of her clients, although he would have loved to have been able to prove otherwise. Jerome's doctrinal instructions to Marcella, *Letters* 41 and 42, might indeed be read as attempts from his side to prevent Marcella from consulting competing clients who might try to sell her intriguing doctrines, *in casu* the Novatians and the Montanists. Marcella's apparent interest in doctrines that stimulated and inspired her intellectually shows that institutional orthodoxy was not, and did not have to be, her prime concern. This reveals a level of freedom for aristocrats to consult whoever tickled their fancy rather than to conform to what the institutionalised 'Church' at Rome would label orthodox. A fine point of comparison here would be the *gens Anicia* whom are known to have patronised Pelagius. It has been suggested that Marcella, too, consulted Pelagius.[87]

Both Marcella and Pammachius took an active role in the Origenist debate. We learn of Marcella's role in the proceedings from Jerome's consolatory letter to Principia. Jerome records her having been the one who took the first steps to get the Origenists condemned: she had provided the witnesses, the numbers, and she had challenged the heretics themselves.[88] She also seems to have had a decisive influence on Bishop Anastasius of Rome (398-402) in the condemnation of Origen's writings.[89] It is quite remarkable that in this case a lay person –

[85] As Curran, *Pagan City*, 312, has shown, the number of extreme ascetics who would actually withdraw from Rome was negligible: Melania the Elder, Paula and Eustochium, Melania the Younger and her husband Pinianus. He adds that "a significant number of noble ascetics renounced only the social round of Roman Christianity…retiring within their Roman palaces or to villas in the *suburbium*." However, Curran does not specify the 'significant' number, and he illustrates his claim by the example of Marcella and her circle. Yet, Marcella does not seem to have abandoned 'the social round of Roman Christianity,' since the correspondence referred to in the current chapter indicates that she kept an active profile by consulting various religious clients, by publicising and taking responsibility for the circulation of literature, and by actively advocating in doctrinal debates. Another one of Curran's examples is Paulinus of Nola, but I would argue he does not fit the category since he had not been living in Rome but in Gaul before he retired to Spain and then to Nola, Italy.
[86] For a list, see *Ep.* 45.7.
[87] Letsch Brunner, *Marcella*, 217-223.
[88] *Ep.* 127,10.
[89] *Ep.* 95,2 might contain a reference to Marcella as his source of information.

a lay woman even – had to inform the bishop of Rome about the teachings of Origen, of whose teachings he had not yet heard.[90] However, we might have to take Jerome's honourable tributes with a pinch of salt.

It seems that Jerome uses his epistolary correspondence to instruct those whom he thinks would still defend his case at Rome. There is Pammachius and Oceanus' 'query' in *Letter* 83, and in his reply Jerome offers arguments which could be read as to serve not only his own personal defence, but as arguments Pammachius and Oceanus could use in their debates with the supporters of Origen/Rufinus. As such, there is an element of 'instruction' in this letter. For example, Jerome advises his addressees to study his commentaries on *Ecclesiastes* and on Paul's *Epistle to the Ephesians*, where they can discern Jerome's views on Origen.[91] He then continues to present his readers with the arguments of his opponents. He teaches them how they can recognise Origenist doctrinal arguments, and how to respond to them. Jerome shows how Pammachius and Oceanus ought to conduct such inquiries and how they should formulate their questions in doctrinal debates. What is particularly interesting is that Jerome also urges his addressees to read Origen, so that they know his errors directly from the source,[92] and he again stresses that not everything by Origen is heretical: just because some of his writings are erroneous does not imply all his writings need to be put aside; the same holds for Lactantius, Apollinaris, Porphyry, Didymus, and many more.[93] Jerome continues to provide instructions as to how they can find out whether a certain work has been tampered with,[94] and he names Eusebius and Didymus as the most reliable sources to find the 'original material': they did not try to amend Origen's errors, but they tried to explain them.[95] These instructive addresses to Pammachius and Oceanus must have passed through Marcella's hands, too. However, as we have seen in the quote above, Marcella did not refrain from 'attacking the heretics themselves' which would comply with the picture Jerome paints of her elsewhere, namely that she intellectually challenged him and would sometimes be ahead of him.[96] Nonetheless, it is this instructive aspect of the correspondence – at least the

[90] A possible indication of Anastasius not having been familiar with Origen's teachings may be found in *Ep.* 95,3 : "[...] *qui calorem fidei gestans et amorem circa deum habens quaedam capitula blasphemiae obtulit, quae nos non solum horruimus et iudicauimus, uerum etiam, si qua alia sunt ab Origene exposita, cum suo auctore pariter a nobis scias esse damnata*." It must be stressed that here he is referring to Eusebius as his informant, not Marcella.
[91] *Ep.* 84,2.
[92] *Ep.* 84,7.
[93] See e.g. Jerome's comment on Lactantius, *Ep*. 84,7.
[94] *Ep.* 84,10.
[95] *Ep.* 84, 10.
[96] For example *Ep*. 29.1, where Jerome sighs how "after posing a most challenging question yesterday, you now have asked me to write back immediately with my opinion." (transl. Andrew Cain, *Letters*, 80.)

inherent intention to instruct – that allows for a qualification of the addressees as patron-students. Likewise, the doctrinal letters are as much an instruction as they are an attempt to dissuade competing clients. The numerous epistles that deal with answers to exegetical questions addressed to Jerome also support the qualification of 'patron-students': study or the learning aspect is key.

As stated above, in the 'Pammachius-Jerome corpus' we find one letter which has been addressed to both Pammachius and Marcella. *Letter 97* is written around 402 CE to complement a translation of Theophilus's paschal letter (402) which Jerome sends along, this time with the Greek original for fear of (yet another) accusation of fallacies in translation. The letter was sent in spring;[97] and Jerome seems to enjoy the reopened possibility to send and receive correspondence, and probably first and foremost to reconnect with Rome.[98] The letter, particularly its second chapter, is mostly a rant at Jerome's adversaries: those who support Origen/Rufinus. At the start of chapter three Jerome turns to his addressees, Pammachius and Marcella:

> "But you are lights of the Christian Senate: accept therefore from me the letter which I append [*Ep*. 98 = translation of the letter]. This year I send it both in Greek and Latin that the heretics may not again lyingly assert that I have made many changes and additions to the original."[99]

Jerome praises Marcella and Pammachius as 'lights of the Senate.'[100] It is an acknowledgment of their senatorial rank, not just of Pammachius's office. As such it confirms what we have argued above, namely that neither of them had 'lowered' their social standing but rather they kept their worldly positions. 'Lights of the Senate' however might also read as an allusion to Luke's 'light to lighten the Gentiles' (*Lk* 2:32). As 'lights' Marcella and Pammachius should

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[97] *Ep.* 97.1: 'Once more with the return of spring I enrich you with the wares of the east and send the treasures of Alexandria to Rome.'

[98] What Jerome seems to allude to is the lack of postal service in winter months due to the *mare clausum*, see Zeev Rubin, "The Mediterranean and the dilemma of the Roman Empire in late Antiquity." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 1.1 (1986), 13-62, see also James Beresford, *The Ancient Sailing Season* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 2-4. See also Andrew Cain, *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 15 "soon after the navigation season had re-opened in late April or early May of 393," and n.66: "between early November and April the Mediterranean Sea was *mare clausum* in that all far-offshore travel that was not absolutely necessary often was suspended due to volatile weather conditions." See also L Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* 2nd ed. (Baltimore, 1995) 270-3; J. Rouge "La navigation hivernale sous l'empire romain," *REA* 54 (1952) 316-325; E. de Saint-Denis, "Mareclausum", in *REL* 25 (1947) 196-209.

[99] *Ep.* 97.3.

[100] Interestingly, Jerome uses the adjective "Christian" to describe the Senate. This could either be an allusion to the number of Christians now member of the Senate possibly outnumbering non-Christian senators, or it could hint at Pammachius' and Marcella's leading position in the Christian community of Rome. In either case, it could well be designated as a piece of Jerome's rhetoric or polemic, but it deserves to be looked into in further research.

enlighten the people of Rome with Jerome's insights and arguments in the debate on Origen, and in this case in particular with his translation of the letter of Theophilus, whose paschal message might now be heard in Rome thanks to Jerome's translation and, of course, Marcella and Pammachius's publicising (and propagandistic) activities. When Jerome emphasises his hard labour translating Theophilus's letter, he does so in a much more flowery fashion than the offensive, argumentative defence of other translations of his that had been criticised (see below). He leaves it to their 'judgement to determine' if he has succeeded in keeping the charm, the 'smooth flow of the writer's eloquence,' and the 'tone of his remarks.'[101] The last segment of the letter that deserves our attention is Jerome's remarks to his addressees that "if the polemic against Origen should seem to you to be inadequate, you are to remember that Origenism was fully treated in last year's letter; and that this which I have just translated, as it aims at brevity, was not bound to dwell farther upon the subject."[102] It appears as if Jerome fears to be criticised not to have been critical enough of Origen, and as such it recalls Pammachius and Oceanus's letter in which they had 'threatened' Jerome that if he would fail to sufficiently deny the charges and 'confute [his] assailant,' people would charge Jerome with Origenism.[103]

Oceanus

In line with Pammachius and Marcella, although maybe more of a 'side-line', one needs to scrutinise Jerome's relation with Oceanus. A shadowy figure when compared to the radiantly shining prominence of Pammachius and Marcella, Oceanus should nevertheless not be neglected. He was a Roman noble man[104] sometimes thought to have been related to the Julian family;[105] it is more plausible that he must have been a member of the Fabian family, which would explain and could be supported by his connection to the circle of Fabiola. Evidence for this can be found in *Letter* 77, which is Jerome's eulogy on Fabiola and which he has addressed to Oceanus. However, Rebenich has suggested that Oceanus was married to

[101] *Ep.* 97.3: "I have laboured hard, I must confess, to preserve the charm of the diction by a like elegance in my version: and keeping within fixed lines and never allowing myself to deviate from these I have done my best to maintain the smooth flow of the writer's eloquence and to render his remarks in the tone in which they are made. Whether I have succeeded in these two objects or not I must leave to your judgement to determine."
[102] *Ep.* 97.3.
[103] See *Ep.* 83.1 and its discussion above.
[104] His noble status could also be derived from Augustine, *ep.* 180 to Oceanus, where the *salutatio* reads: "To Oceanus, his rightly most dear lord and honourable brother among the members of Christ, Augustine sends greetings." (transl. R. J. Teske).
[105] "Oceanus," in H. Wace, *Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature* (London: Murray, 1911).

Fabiola,[106] which would mean he married into the Fabian family, and as such could still have belonged to the Julian family himself. If this would be true, it means he would also be related to Paula, whose husband Toxotius was a descendant of the *gens Iulia*.

There is a reference in one of the letters by Jerome which could be interpreted as an indication that Oceanus had been ordained a priest, although this is not confirmed and presumably refers more to Jerome's way of speaking of a teacher in paternal language rather than that he refers to ordained status.[107] It would be remarkable if Oceanus had been a priest, because one rarely meets clergy that come from the ancient Roman patrician families. Most of the clergy, priests and bishops alike, have come from provincial families that belonged to their respective local aristocracy often from new or marginal elites.[108] Oceanus is portrayed in Jerome's correspondence as an expert on orthodox matters, and Jerome refers queries to him which had originally been addressed to Jerome himself.[109] However, Oceanus also consults Jerome, particularly when he seeks support in an inquiry about a Spanish bishop, Cartesius, who had allegedly entered a second marriage. *Letter* 69 is Jerome's response to Oceanus, but unfortunately, yet not surprisingly, Oceanus's original query has not been preserved.

From what we have seen above, Oceanus joined Pammachius and Marcella in the 'anti-Origenist' camp in Rome. That Oceanus took an active part in the debate can be derived from *Letter* 62 where Jerome advises Tranquillinius to direct his queries to the expert Oceanus who, so Jerome, had successfully participated in the proceedings which eventually led to the condemnation of Origenism in Rome. In this context, Jerome praises Oceanus as "that saintly man, my Oceanus," and "one so learned as Oceanus."[110]

Together with Pammachius Oceanus had sent a letter to Jerome demanding him to refute Rufinus's translation of Origen's *Peri archōn*. Since we cannot determine what Oceanus's (to be honest, neither Pammachius's) individual contribution to this letter was, we may derive from this that we probably have to regard Oceanus's relation to Jerome in a similar fashion as Pammachius's: business-like, with Jerome as the subordinate subject.

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[106] Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 202, mentions "der *vir eruditus* Oceanus und seine Ehefrau Fabiola, die 395 Hieronymus in Bethlehem besuchten." Not only does this suggest Oceanus was Fabiola's husband, but also that he personally met Jerome in Bethlehem when he travelled to the Holy Land with his wife. See also *PLRE* I 323 (Fabiola) and 636 (Oceanus).

[107] *Ep*. 126.1 to Anapsychia and Marcellinus might have some indications to Oceanus's clerical status: "Your reverend father Oceanus."

[108] This has been shown by Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 132-4.

[109] See *Epp.* 62, 126.

[110] *Ep.* 62.2.

Furthermore, Oceanus seems to have taken over Pammachius's role as distributor or publisher of Jerome's works (in Rome) after Pammachius's death in 410 CE.[111]

It was not only the Origenist debate which would attract Oceanus's attention. About a decade later Oceanus expressed interest in some of the questions posed in the Pelagian debate. Apparently, he had gained such levels of expertise that Jerome directed Marcellinus and Anapsychia to consult Oceanus on the matter, since he considered him an expert who would be capable of instructing them.[112] This is a fascinating segment, for although Marcellinus and Anapsychia currently reside in the diocese of Augustine of Hippo,[113] as mentioned by Jerome, in the final chapter of the letter he reveals that his correspondents wish to be introduced to Oceanus: Oceanus seems thus to be preferred over Augustine. Although one might propose that Marcellinus' office would necessitate relocation to Rome, this is not mentioned by Jerome. Hence, the wish to be introduced to Oceanus might be explained in the context of status: if Marcellinus was indeed of high official rank, he might have wished or preferred to establish a connection with a member of the patrician house of the *gens Iulia*.

Significant others of 'inner Roman circle'

One possible person liable for comparison with Pammachius would be Damasus. However, as he was the bishop of Rome it is difficult to disentangle him from his connection to the institution. Our aim is, as stipulated in the introduction, to look at individuals of the Roman senatorial aristocracy in order to determine appropriation of Christian ascetic aspects into

[111] Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 202. It is worth mentioning that the fall of Rome had hit Jerome particularly bad, not just because of the damage done to his beloved city, but the invasion had caused the death of his most important patron-students: Pammachius and Marcella. Besides the personal blow, it must have also had significant repercussions for Jerome's financial situation, as well as for the distribution and circulation of his works in Rome, for which he previously seems to have chiefly relied on Pammachius and Marcella. Jerome refers to Pammachius' death in his *Commentary on Ezechiel* 1.1, and to Marcella's death as a result of injuries incurred in the attack in *Ep.* 127.13.

[112] *Ep.* 126.3: "Our reverend brother Oceanus to whom you desire an introduction is a great and good man and so learned in the law of the Lord that no words of mine are needed to make him able and willing to instruct you both and to explain to you in conformity with the rules which govern our common studies, my opinion and his on all questions arising out of the scriptures. In conclusion, my truly holy lord and lady, may Christ our God by his almightypower have you in his safekeeping and cause you to live long and happily." Note here the closing salutation of the letter.

[113] Cain, *Letters*, 191 identifies them as 'Africans.' That would classify them as peripherals, unless they were only temporarily stationed in Africa, for example in proconsular office. Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 202 n. 347, identifies them as "Verwandte des Oceanus," but he does not substantiate this claim, and I cannot make up from Jerome's letter that they are Oceanus's relatives: it would not make sense if they were relatives, that they should ask Jerome to be introduced to Oceanus. Marcellinus's entry in PLRE can be found in *PLRE* I, "Fl. Marcellinvs 10, 711-12, the title "*spectabilis*" would confirm his senatorial status and possibly proconsular office, but does not mention any relation to Oceanus. Yet why do they seek this contact via Jerome if their own bishop shows himself to also be acquiainted with Oceanus (*Ep.* 180, see above)? Plausibly, they would have estimated Augustine's relation with Oceanus to have been but rudimentary (or as of that time, i.e. 412 CE, still unexisting (date of *Ep.* 180 is c. 416)) and superficial, whereas Jerome was obviously much better connected.

their traditional Roman noble lives. Once a correspondent is identified as a member of the clergy and particularly one higher up the institutional hierarchy, boundaries between institutional and individual interests or agendas become blurred. Nevertheless, there exists correspondence between Damasus and Jerome that would lend itself for a comparison with the Pammachius-Jerome corpus, and parallels can certainly be drawn when analysing literary mechanisms and rhetorical techniques. Although Damasus did commission works and he did order Jerome to answer (scriptural) queries, the exact nature of the business-relation between the bishop and his 'secretary' remains opaque, yet possibly a topic for subsequent research.[114]

Besides our main characters Pammachius, his cousin Marcella, and their friend – and probably distant relative of a certain degree – Oceanus, there are a few others who could be counted as belonging to Jerome's 'inner' Roman circle. However, not enough correspondence has been preserved or transmitted to allow for an analysis and substantial comparison in the style of the Pammachius-Jerome exhortation above. Therefore, although Jerome is believed to have maintained relations with figures such as Dexter and Florentinus, the sheer lack of evidence forces us to skip over them. Patrons who might otherwise be worthy to mention are not based in Rome, for example Evagrius of Antioch, Nebridius, and [several?] other members of the Theodosian court at Constantinople:[115] the new Rome, Jerome would no doubt agree, is not, and could never equal the eternal city. Likewise, the *nouveau riche* at Constantinople could not match the true nobility of Rome's patrician families. Modelled after the traditional Roman patricians, Jerome's *nobilitas* could challenge the *nouveau riche* to climb up to such level of perfection, but Jerome's language in his correspondence with them – so we shall see in subsequent chapters – reveals that true perfection comes with genuine, that is Roman, nobility, and that is reserved for his Pammachius, his Marcella, his Oceanus, and of course his Paula (and her relatives).

Jerome's 'inner circle' at Rome seems to have been relatively small and considering the extant correspondence it seemed to have consisted mostly of women. If we look at his correspondence with men we could categorise most of them as belonging to the 'peripheral aristocracy', whom we will meet in the next chapter. It is good to investigate what this could tell us about upward social mobility, 'conversion' to or appropriation of Christianities, boundaries, and the attitude of the *nobilitas* towards figures such as Jerome. As mentioned in

[114] Although, see Andrew Cain, *Letters*, for an extensive attempt to reconstruct the relation between Damasus and Jerome based on their epistolary exchange, "A Pope and His Scholar," in *Letters*, 43-67.
[115] For an excellent account of Jerome's years in Constantinople and his relations at the Theodosian court, see Stefan Rebenich, *Hieronymus*,115-139. See also Id., "Asceticism, Orthodoxy, and Patronage," in *StudPatr* 33 (1997), 358-77.

the introduction, Jerome's relations with Roman ladies have been questioned numerous times in past and present scholarship. Andrew Cain has argued that the manuscript tradition leads us to conclude that Jerome attempted to put his mark on Marcella's study group by publishing eulogies and *vitae* on women such as Asella and Lea, showing how they had taken up his model of ideal Christian ascetic life. However, as Cain indicated, it seems that these ladies had converted to an ascetic life style long before Jerome entered their lives.[116] Due to the dubious and questionable nature of the relation between Jerome and these alleged female 'patron-students', the manuscript tradition which shows that these letters have from an early date on been circulated together, and Jerome's efforts to transform the female subjects into idealised literary figures - as Cain as convincingly argued -leads one to wonder if these letters have ever been sent as actual epistolary correspondence between Jerome and the addressees. It seems that these letters do not allow us to pierce through Jerome's literary recreations to get a picture of the historical individuals, let alone to determine the level of appropriation of a form of ascetic Christianity to their Roman noble lives.

That said, what would a thesis on Jerome be if it would not mention his closest companion Paula? Again, it is Andrew Cain who has made a major contribution to research into the relation between Jerome and Paula with his recent publication '*Jerome's* Epitaphium Paulae: *Hagiography, Pilgrimage, and the Cult of Saint Paula*'. Like Pammachius and Marcella, Paula was a descendant of an archetypical Roman patrician house. She belonged to the *gens Aemillia*, who claimed their roots back to the Gracchi, Scipios, and Agamemnon; and she had married into the Julian family via her husband Toxotius.[117] However, the case of Paula and Jerome is altogether different because of the nature of their close companionship.[118] After the death of her husband Paula had devoted herself to the ascetic life as it had been advocated by Jerome, this much to the dismay of her family.[119] Nonetheless, as we can read in *Letter* 66, she had conformed to the Roman rules of inheritance and divided her inheritance among her offspring.[120] Jerome's retelling of this event might refer to complaints from

[116] Cain, *Letters*, particularly 74, 78.
[117] See *Ep.* 108.34.
[118] Jerome's affection for Paula is also revealed in his commission of a tomb and two epitaphs, of which at least one really praises her noble pedigree in compliance with Roman aristocratic convention (108.34).
[119] The dismay worsened when Paula's daughter Blesilla opted for extreme asceticism, too, and died shortly after. However, in *Ep.* 39.1 Jerome's description of the splendour of Blesilla's funeral indicates that her mother's partition from aristocratic life must have been partial, and there must have still been enough funds to provide such an aristocratic funeral. Likewise, Paula's travels and her support of Jerome are an indication of continued possession of (at least some) wealth.
[120] *Ep.* 66.2. See also the discussion on inheritance in chapter 'Young aristocrats: patricians' in the context of the letter to Furia. See also *Ep.* 52.6 to Nepotian, where Jerome commends that children should receive the inheritance from their parents, an argument which might have been given in the context of his comments on the (short-lived) prohibition for priests to inherit, see chapter 'Young aristocrats: peripherals'.

Paula's family and friends that she was wasting the family's wealth on this provincial pusher,[121] indicating that she was but spending what was legally hers, and that her offspring had already received what was their due. What segregates her even more from Jerome's other Roman nobles is her decision to leave Rome and subsequently follow Jerome to Bethlehem, that provincial village in the eastern outskirts of the Roman Empire.[122]

[121] Curran, *Pagan City*, 276-7 hints at a possible dispute between Paula and her "pagan" brother-in-law Hymetius and his wife Praetextata which concerned Paula's children, the family line, and inheritance. However, if we follow Curran, 279, and Yarborough's suggestion that Paula might have objected to Blesilla's conversion, we might contend that her views did not alter too much from the conventional aristocratic customs her in-laws sought to defend. As Curran explains, Eustochium was the consecrated daughter, so the responsibility of continuation of the family line and its property was Blesilla's. Curiously, these scholars follow Jerome in that they equally ignore Toxotius. Furthermore, Curran claims that Paulina "was living continently," but as such he insinuates this was deliberate. It may have become obvious from the above analysis that based on Jerome's narrative, this was not the case: the efforts to produce an heir had, contrary to the couple's wishes, remained fruitless.

[122] The only other aristocrat who seems to have abandoned Rome without relocating to one of their own countryside estates seems to have been Melania the Elder, who, in striking resemblance to Jerome and Paula, joined Rufinus in Jerusalem (which of course is another metropolis, not as remote a location as Bethlehem). Melania did not dispose of all her wealth either, as has been elaborately pointed out by Curran, *Pagan City*, 272-4.

Chapter 3. A closer look at the Jerome-Pammachius correspondence

After having discussed Roman and Christian *nobilitas*, the Roman circle of Jerome, patronage, and the situation of the letters, it is time to condense all this down to the relation between Pammachius and Jerome. When we go back to the sources and read them with a profound awareness of Jerome's mastery of rhetoric, could we answer who influenced whom? Did Jerome have any influence at all on the aristocratic 'conversion' to a form of ascetic Christianity or rather did the aristocrats influence Jerome's position and ideas; or is the reality much more nuanced? Let us start with Pammachius's apparent influence on Jerome. In past scholarship, Pammachius is presented as someone who seems to have had his 'fair share' in the definite rupture of the friendship between Jerome and Rufinus by holding back a personal letter from Jerome to Rufinus whilst publicising the vigilant *Contra Rufinum*.[123] Allegedly,[124] he had refrained from delivering Jerome's *Letter* 81 to its intended addressee: Rufinus. We should question the motives Pammachius could have had by repressing the letter of reconciliation. Would it have damaged his reputation if the two friends-of-old were reconciled? What would he win by repressing and what would he lose by delivering the letter? Aristocrats of Pammachius's calibre were very calculating and would seek to further enhance their reputation by assessing situations based on what personal merit it would gain them. It is extraordinary how the letter, if delivered, could have damaged or weakened Pammachius's reputation. Therefore we should not jump to conclusions that Pammachius had deliberately refrained from forwarding the letter to Rufinus, although it is impossible at this time to give evidence of the contrary. Of course, one then has to ask why Jerome did not send it to Rufinus directly. It might simply be for convenience sake since Rufinus, if we follow Jerome, had returned to Rome, as we can read in the opening of the letter: "That you have lingered some time at Rome your own language shows. Yet I feel sure that a yearning to see your spiritual parents would have drawn you to your native country, had not grief for your mother deterred you lest a sorrow scarce bearable away might have proved unbearable at home."[125] Rather than returning directly to Aquileia, Rufinus seems to have been staying around Rome, which

[123] See Jerome's lament, *Apol.* 1.12, 3.38.
[124] W. H. Fremantle in the introduction to the translation of said letter (NPNF), calls Pammachius 'treacherous' and as such implies that it was a deliberate act of Pammachius to make reconciliation between Jerome and Rufinus impossible. The translator – revealing nineteenth-century romanticism – portrays himself as defender of poor Jerome.
[125] *Ep.* 81.1.

Jerome must have somehow figured out, and then sent the letter, together with the apology, to Rome. He might have used Pammachius as standard delivery address for his correspondence to Rome (and possibly even the west) which would comply with what we address below, namely that Pammachius was not only financing Jerome's publications but was responsible for the distribution of his written works, including (Roman) correspondence. As such, we can say that he clearly directs Jerome, and if we were to accept Jerome's complaints – and later scholars' taking of Jerome's word for granted – that his attempt for reconciliation with Rufinus had been barred, Pammachius apparently not only directs his client in what he should and should not write (see below), but also with whom he should or should not communicate. We can also sense this from Jerome's apologetic attitude when he addresses Pammachius, such as in *Letter* 49[126] where he writes "[...] now that I have been **challenged by your most delightful letter**, a letter which **calls upon me** to defend my views by an appeal to first principles, **I receive my old fellow-learner, companion, and friend with open arms**, as the saying goes; and I look forward to having in you a champion of my poor writings."[127] First, if it were such a 'delightful' letter as Jerome claims it to have been, the reader should ask why this letter has not been preserved. The letter could have been used as evidence for Jerome's excellent relations with the Roman high society, so if we take Andrew Cain's portrait of Jerome, he would have surely exploited such a chance of self-promotion. However, maybe we ought to put question marks to the letter's acclaimed 'delightfulness'. If we look at the only letter by Pammachius's hand that has been preserved,[128] we get an entirely different sentiment: cold and distant rather than amicable, and if we look at *Letter* 66 Jerome's effortless attempt to consolidate Pammachius does not sound very convincing and has been sent rather late; so much so that I would not be as inclined as Cain to categorise the epistle as 'consolidating'.[129] Qualifying Pammachius's letter as 'delightful' could just be rhetoric, and may even reveal a hint of satire.[130] It is rhetorical typology such as what follows the letter qualification, as Jerome describes his addressee as 'my old fellow-learner,' 'companion,' and 'friend:' all seem to stress the legitimacy of Jerome's correspondence. Moreover, we observe how Jerome turns the tables: whereas it seems to have been Pammachius demanding Jerome

[126] *Ep.* 49 is written around 393/394 and forms Jerome's apology to Pammachius on the concern the latter had raised over Jerome's *Contra Iovinianum*, and the concern this treatise had raised in Rome, particularly amongst his closest friends/allies, who had then responded by attempting to withhold the works from being disseminated in Rome.
[127] *Ep.* 49.1.
[128] *Ep.* 83, see below.
[129] Cain, *Letters*, 211-2.
[130] For Jerome's use of satire see David Wiesen, *St Jerome as a Satirist*. If the particular letter had even a gist of *Letter* 83 it could very well be a subtle satirical remark by Jerome, although if we consider Jennifer Ebbeler's argument, it may well comply with conventional rhetoric (see introduction).

to defend himself in Rome, Jerome skilfully portrays Pammachius as his 'champion' and envisages his addressee to defend him in Rome. This can also be deduced from what Jerome writes in the letter attached to the defence, *Letter* 48, where he remarks how he has dedicated the defence to Pammachius "feeling sure that when [he has] read it [Pammachius] will satisfy the doubts of others on my behalf."[131]

Subsequently, Jerome elicits the impression that he is, in this letter, instructing Pammachius so that the Roman senator can act as Jerome's advocate in Rome.[132] Again, if we look at *Letter* 83 it does not seem in the least that Pammachius wanted to become Jerome's voice, rather to the contrary. *Letter* 83, as we will see below, is a clear order to how Jerome has to act, and it makes the incontrovertible statement that the patron commands whilst the client obeys. But Jerome is clearly determined to have Pammachius fight his case against Jovinian and his allies in Rome, and even attempts to provoke his addressee by adopting military typology and by pretending that he is accusing Pammachius of cowardice, as he stressed how he "would not have you engage in an encounter in which you will have nothing to do but to protect yourself, your right hand remaining motionless while your left manages your shield."[133] Nay, Jerome offers ample ammunition so that his advocate, or rather soldier, does not have to shy away from confrontation, as Jerome adds how Pammachius "must either strike or fall. I cannot account you a victor unless I see your opponent put the sword."[134] By adapting this militaristic typology and putting it before chapter thirteen where he seems to directly quote Pammachius, he implies that he himself sets the precedent in applying such typology; then follows the evidence that he himself and his addressee speak the same language when he cites Pammachius:

> "I stand in the thick of fray, my life in constant danger: you who profess to teach me are a zealous teacher. 'Do not,' you say, 'attack unexpectedly or wound by a side-thrust. Strike straight at your opponent. You should be ashamed to resort to feints instead of force.' As if it were not the perfection of fighting to menace one part and to strike another. Read, I beg you, Demosthenes or Cicero [...]."[135]

[131] *Ep.* 48.2. A parallel can be found in *Letter* 57, where Jerome states: "I send this letter to inform you – and through you others who think me worthy of their regard – of the true order of the facts," *Ep.* 57.1.
[132] See e.g. "[...] if I [...] can instruct my advocate in all those points on which I am assailed.' *Ep.* 49.1.
[133] *Ep.* 49.12.
[134] *Ep.* 49.12.
[135] *Ep.* 49.13.

Pammachius is a '*studiosus magister*'[136] who 'professes to teach Jerome'.[137] Rather than teaching, however, it sounds like Pammachius has condemned Jerome's behaviour as iniquitous, and he appears to have reprimanded his client. Of course we can expect the learned Pammachius[138] to be familiar with his classics, yet he is superfluously advised by Jerome to read Demosthenes and Cicero (again):[139] we may interpret the label 'zealous teacher' as honorary; and Jerome's advice to Pammachius to read Demosthenes and Cicero not only reveals Jerome's continued use of these classical authors,[140] it also indicates his reluctance to part from them[141] and neither does he expect his correspondents to cast away

[136] There is another reference to Pammachius and books in *Letter* 66, where Jerome tells him to 'let the City of Books be near' (66.11: *'ut iuxta sit ciuitas litterarum*'), which is a reference to Joshua 15:15, the narrative of Caleb's portion in the story of the allotment of Judah, where Caleb travels to Debir, the first city of books (known as Kiriath Sepher before). Similar (scriptural) references are found in Origenes (transl. Rufinus), *In Iesu Naue homiliae* XXVI, *homiliae* 19,4 and20,3 (CPL 0198); Augustine, *Quaestionum in heptateuchum libri septem* (CPL 0270), lib. 7, *Quaest. Iudicum, q.* 3. Particularly the reference in Origen shows a parallel with Jerome's passage, as Origen preaches: '*Sed et si te tradideris legi Dei et in ipsa 'meditaberis die ac nocte' et 'non recedet liber legis de manu tua,' sicut dicitur ad Iesum, et si memor sis praecepti Salvatoris, in quo dicit scrutamini Scripturas, si ergo talibus te studiis mancipaueris et eruditionem legis diuinae uel legendo uel audiendo obtinueris, tuae portionis effecitur 'ciuitas litterarum',* (*hom.* 19.4). The statement to continuously study the Scriptures and always keep them at hand returns frequently in Jerome, in particular in the letters to Nepotian, Demetrias, and Rusticus, as we will encounter in the next chapters. Debir could in this passage be interpreted as a metaphor for Rome? This would be an interesting take, particularly because its reference evokes the atmosphere of a metropolis bristling with wealth, culture, and literature. Although this prodding is not unprecedented as we also observe Jerome urging Paulinus of Nola to stay in Rome/Italy rather than come to Jerusalem/the Holy Land, see *Letter* 58, particularly 58.4. What it reveals most though is Jerome's apparent but in a way unacknowledged, secret longing for the city with its weighty classical heritage; the world which had so fiercely chased him out about a decade earlier; a world he claims to profoundly renounce but once parted from it, he feels the pain of being removed from the civilised Latin world at so great a distance, see for examples his revealing remarks in the opening of *Letter* 97 to Pammachius and Marcella, and his mourning for the fall of Rome in his Marcella's epitaph (*Ep.* 127). A parallel can already be found when he spent time in Syria, among 'uncultured local hermits,' as we read him complain in *Letter* 14 to Heliodorus, and *Letter* 7 to Chromatius, Jovinus, and Eusebius.

[137] Another reference to Pammachius's 'teaching' is to be found in 66.9 where Jerome praises Pammachius for his affection for divine learning which he regards as an essential prerequisite before one could teach: '*Sentio te diuinis ardere doctrinis, nec temeritate quorundam docere quod nescias, sed ante discere quod docturus es.'*

[138] Parallels where Pammachius is referred to as 'learned' can be found in *Ep*. 66 where Jerome class him 'such a learned man' (*Ep.* 66.1), and *Ep*. 57, where he refers to Pammachius as someone with 'learned ears' (*Ep.* 57.1).

[139] *Ep.* 49.13.

[140] Similarly, in *Ep.* 48.2: [...] as you have read yourself in Horace, 'words once uttered cannot be recalled'."

[141] This reluctance is also apparent when one reads the opening lines of *Letter* 66 to Pammachius, where Jerome is seen to quote both Seneca (*Consolatio ad Helviam*) and Virgil (*Aeneid* IV, 366-367): 'After two years of inopportune silence my condolence now comes rather late; yet even so I am afraid that my present speech may be even more inopportune. I fear lest in touching the sore spot in your heart I may by words inflame afresh a wound which time and reflection have availed to cure. For who can have ears so dull or hearts so flinty as to hear the name of your Paulina without weeping? Even though reared on the milk of Hyrcanian tigresses they must still shed tears. Who can with dry eyes see thus untimely cut down and withered an opening rose, an undeveloped bud, which was not yet formed itself into a cup nor spread forth the proud display of its crimson petals? In her a most priceless pearl is broken. In her a vivid emerald is shattered. Sickness alone shows us the blessedness of health. We realise better what we have had when we cease to have it.' '*Ita et ego*' draws the attention to the author, as it gives a self-identity descriptor of Jerome, which carries an apologetic tone: he is the 'late comforter'. The very lyrical lament, the poetic tone of the opening paragraph of the 'consolation', even without extracting the citations of Virgil and Seneca, is evidence that Jerome has not renounced his own classical heritage.

their classical heritage and rich libraries:[142] a stark contrast with the often-referred to – and in my eyes over-emphasised – dream narrative in *Letter* 22 to Eustochium.[143] Although in *Letter* 66 Pammachius is also advised, at first sight, to distance himself from worldly wisdom, Jerome does not argue for a complete rejection of pagan knowledge or classical literature. Rather, he implies a transformation is necessary: knowledge, wisdom, or literature has to be stripped of its worldly characteristics,[144] so that the kernel can be (re)used for the Christian cause. Jerome also seems to warn Pammachius not to love worldly wisdom for the 'wrong reasons', that is, purely because of its beauty; rather, he should only love it as an instrument that can be used to attain greater knowledge of scriptures, to progress on the path of ascetic perfection, and, as such, to grow closer to the ultimate wisdom which is Christ. Jerome justifies his argument with a reference to *Song of Songs*, "his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." Here the resemblance with the instrumentalised function of worldly wisdom is particularly apt: it is granted a 'supporting' role. In other words, the study of scriptures can not only benefit from insights of worldly knowledge, it is even built upon, stustained, and supported by it. This passage is further evidence of an apparent transition in (or deradicalisation of) Jerome's thinking from the radical break with classical literature as advocated in the letter to Eustochium,[145] to eventually the argument defended in his letter to Demetrias, where he holds that Scripture cannot be studied or taught if one has not been trained in classical education.[146]

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[142] We learn from Jerome that Cicero is Pammachius's favourite, see *Ep*. 49.1: "for both your favourite, Cicero, and before him – in his one short treatise – Antonius, write to this effect."Here Jerome compares his own defence to writings of the aforementioned authors.

[143] Yet it should be acknowledged that Jerome does try to pretend to have parted from Cicero, as we can read in *Letter* 48 to Pammachius: "Once more, you must not in my small writings look for any such eloquence as that which for Christ's sake you disregard in Cicero" – although both in *Letter* 66 and in *Letter* 49 we find references to Cicero which imply or presuppose Pammachius's appreciation for the Latin author; moreover it speaks of Pammachius's disregard, not Jerome's, and it presupposes Pammachius's alleged expectations of finding such eloquence in Jerome's works – and with veined humbleness he adds "a version made for the use of the Church, even though it may possess a literary charm, ought to disguise and avoid it as far as possible; in order that it may not speak to the idle schools and few disciples of the philosophers, but may address itself rather to the entire human race." (*Ep.* 48.4) His extensive quoting of Cicero in *Ep.* 57 blatantly contradicts this alleged 'disregard, for Christ's sake', as does his un-watered down praise of other classic writers such as Horace. Jerome remains known to heavily rely on the great orator in much, if not most, of his letters and other writings.

[144] *Ep.* 66.8. Jerome uses the Abishag-narrative, which also occurs in his letter to Nepotian (*Ep.* 52; see final chapter): "but if you love a captive woman, that is, worldly wisdom, and if no beauty but hers attracts you, make her bald and cut off her alluring hair, that is to say, the graces of style, and pare away her dead nails. Wash her with the nitre of which the prophet speaks, and then take your ease with her and say "her left hand is under my head, and her right hand doth embrace me." Then shall the captive bring to you many children; from a Moabitess she shall become an Israelite woman. Christ is that sanctification without which no man shall see the face of God."

[145] *Ep.* 22.30.

[146] *Ep.* 130, see below.

Jerome must have been aware of Pammachius's library, yet he does not attempt to convince him to purchase copies of the works of great theological authors. Rather, he seems to direct Pammachius to 'make use of the Church libraries' to consult the works he referred to.[147] Elsewhere, he refers to individuals whom he has sent copies of his works:[148] he seems to have sent them directly to the persons mentioned, which would be an indication that not all written post went through Pammachius's hands. Nevertheless, Pammachius appears to be the only named individual responsible for the actual publication or distribution of Jerome's works at a larger scale or to a wider audience.[149] Furthermore, Pammachius seems to also have involved himself in some personal publicising activities, reference to which is to be found in *Letter* 66, where Jerome alludes to an event where Pammachius had received some negative comments either on his writings, or his dedication to study, or both. Jerome, namely, (quoting Fabian) emphasises that only those who master the skills themselves can criticise others.[150] He describes it as a 'cruel lot' if men of letters to have to be subjected to, and rely on the judgement of the public. It is obvious that he addresses Pammachius but he is certainly also hinting at himself: as such he categorises himself alongside Pammachius which strengthens the alleged bond. Jerome's use of 'we' (*nostra*) supports and emphasises this sentiment.[151] On several occasions before the composition of this letter Jerome had been severely judged by public opinion (not to mention his expulsion from Rome) and Pammachius had demanded Jerome to defend himself (to which *Letters* 48, 49, and 57 are Jerome's responses). To quote Jerome's concluding remarks on the matter: "I have touched in this passing to make you content, if possible, with the ear of the learned. Disregard the remarks which uneducated persons make concerning your ability; but day by day imbibe the marrow of the prophets, that you may know the mystery of Christ and share this mystery with the patriarchs."[152] Not only does this passage serve to connect Jerome and Pammachius closer together, it also reassures

[147] See for example *Ep.* 48.3: "Consult the commentaries of the above-named writers and take advantage of the Church libraries." Authors referred to are: 'Origen, Dionysius, Pierius, Eusebius of Caesarea, Didymus, Apollinaris', see *Ep.* 48.3.
[148] For example the translation of the Book of Job, of which Marcella owns a copy (*Ep.* 48.4) and 'some commentaries upon the twelve prophets I have sent to the reverend father Domnio, also the four books of Kings.'
[149] However, Jerome also seems to have expected from Marcella to have had his works copied and distributed, as well as Jerome's Roman patron – but priest, and therefore not included, see introduction – Domnio. See Cain, *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy*, 15, n. 65, in relation to the presumed circulation of the letter to Nepotian: "In accordance with the ancient conventions of 'publication', Jerome would have sent his writing to Marcella and other literary patrons of his at Rome, and they would be charged with having additional copies made and then distributed. We know from a remark Jerome makes in a letter to his Roman friend Desiderius which he wrote within a few years of leaving Rome that Marcella and another Roman patron, Domnio, stocked their personal libraries with copies of his complete works (*Ep.* 47.3.1)."
[150] *Ep.* 66.9.
[151] *Ep.* 66.9.
[152] *Ep.* 66.9.

my proposition that Jerome's model of the ideal Christian, the Christian *nobilitas*, is designed – solely – for aristocratic converts to asceticism, rather than a universally applicable model. As such it carries an exclusivity which still serves to segregate the 'socialites' from the masses.

To continue on this track of education, libraries, and learning: in another letter we find Jerome defending himself against accusations seemingly made by, amongst others, Pammachius: 'What men like you call fidelity in transcription, the learned term pestilent minuteness [Greek term used κακοζηλίαν]. Such were my teachers about twenty years ago; and even then I was the victim of a similar error to that which is now imputed to me, though indeed I never imagined that *you* would charge me with it."[153] It reads as if Jerome here now opposes Pammachius *et alii* to the 'learned', whereas in the opening he had praised Pammachius's 'learned ears'.[154] The 'learned' in this passage refer to the great Latin authors which Jerome – and with him, Pammachius – had studied at school, and the almost casual chain of references to support his own case flow from his pen in a fashion which could be intended to subtly hint to their shared education.[155] The incident referred to is the accusation of an error he had made whilst preparing his translation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicle*, back in the 380s in Constantinople.[156] There might be an implicit reference here to Gregory of Nazianzen, Jerome's teacher at Constantinople. Jerome had criticised him on another occasion which also deals with the issue of terminology and translation, as we can read in Jerome's letter to Nepotian.[157] It is remarkable though that it sounds as if he expects Pammachius to remember, or that he is somehow aware of the incident. As we have already seen in the aforementioned case of the amicable letter to Rufinus allegedly withheld by Pammachius, Pammachius seems to dictate Jerome with regards to whom he should interact with, and with whom contact is best to be broken off.[158] *Letter* 83 seems to confirm this proposition. Here,

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[153] *Ep.* 57.5.
[154] See *Ep*. 57.1 (quoted above).
[155] Another one of such references could possibly be found in *Letter* 66 where Jerome lauds Pammachius's style of writing, and connects it to their 'shared education' at Rome. However one could wonder if this comment might reveal more of an attempt to emphasise Jerome's authority and as a legitimation of his writing to Pammachius, than some praise of the addressee, see *Ep*. 66.9.
[156] *Ep.* 57.5, where Jerome explains he was in the process of translating Eusebius's *Chronicle* into Latin, and he quotes observations he had made with regard to the method of translation in his preface of the manuscript.
[157] *Ep.* 52.8: "My teacher, Gregory of Nazianzen, when I once asked him to explain Luke's phrase [sabbaton deuteroproton], that is 'the second-first Sabbath,' playfully evaded my request saying: 'I will tell you about it in church, and there, when all the people applaud me, you will be forced against your will to know what you do not know at all. For, if you alone remain silent, everyone will put you down for a fool.' There is nothing so easy as by sheer volubility to deceive a common crowd or an uneducated congregation: such most admire what they fail to understand."
[158] Although Jerome happily emphasises his status as former classmate of Pammachius, if true, Rufinus must have been his fellow student, too.

Pammachius and Oceanus observe how "the writer in the preface to his work has, with much subtlety but without mentioning your holiness's name, implied that he has done no more than complete a work which you had yourself promised, thus indirectly suggesting that you agree with him."[159] The authors clearly play on Jerome's sensitivity for his reputation, and his 'reactionary' nature, particularly when it is added that if Jerome were not to remove the suspicions, "people will say that you admit to their truth."[160] Their insinuation serves as an impetus to ensure Jerome will comply with their request, however it might also read as an attempt to ascertain the breach between Jerome and Rufinus, which would allow for a parallel to be drawn between this letter and the one that hints at Pammachius's withholding of Jerome's letter of reconciliation to Rufinus; but as anticipated above, the question then has to be asked: what benefit could lie behind such action-reaction pattern?

That said, Pammachius also appears very much a diplomat, in that he never reveals the identity of those he criticises.[161] We could read this in the passage quoted above, as well as in the following: "A reverend brother has brought to us sheets containing a certain person's translation into Latin of a treatise by Origen – entitled *peri archōn*."[162] Not only the author remains unnamed, Pammachius and Oceanus are careful not to reveal the identity of the 'reverend brother', either. This however, might also be related to the way the manuscript had been obtained: Rufinus complains that a draft version of his translation had been stolen from his desk.[163] It seems a widespread custom throughout antiquity, and particularly popular amongst the actors in the so-called 'Origenist controversy'. Already in *Letter* 57 we read of Jerome's long lament with regard to his stolen draft translation of the letter of Epiphanius, and he elaborates what should happen to those who commit such crimes, particularly when they subsequently distribute such private correspondence.[164]

Corresponding to Pammachius's critical assessment of Jerome's works and his diplomatic approaches are his apparent censorship activities: he seems to have put an effort to 'filter' Jerome for the Roman audience, particularly with regard to Jerome's *Against Jovinian,*

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[159] *Ep.* 83.1: '*Sane subtiliter in praefatione* ***operis sui*** *mentionem, tacito nomine, tuae sanctitatis expressit, quod a te promissum opus ipse conpleret, illud oblique agens, etiam te simili ratione sentire.*'

[160] *Ep.* 83.1: '*Purga ergo suspiciones hominum, et conuince criminantem, ne si dissimulaueris, consensisse uidearis.'* Note the use of the imperative, which is used throughout the short letter when directly summoning Jerome to action.

[161] This is a practice found more often in late antique epistolography (and other writings): common, conventional.

[162] *Ep.* 83.1: *'Sanctus aliquis ex fratribus schidas ad nos* ***cuiusdam*** *detulit, quae Origenis nomine uolumen, quod [peri archōn] scribitur, in Latinum sermonem conuersum tenerent.*'

[163] Rufinus, *Apology;*see also J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome,* 235.

[164] *Ep.* 57.2-4. Clearly, Jerome blames an ally of Rufinus, who took the stolen copy to Jerusalem, where it was distributed so as to put Jerome in a bad light: Melania is known to have financed Rufinus's publications, and as such both of them might have taken care of the distribution of the stolen letter.

alluded to by Jerome in *Letter* 48, where he states "I quite recognise the kindness and forethought which have induced you to withdraw from circulation some copies of my work against Jovinian,"[165] and similarly in *Letter* 49 we read Jerome's subtle lament as he remarks "the remaining points which are censured in my treatise are, I take it, of less importance, or else resolve themselves into this. I have, therefore, refrained from answering them, both that I may not exceed the limit at my disposal, and that I may not seem to distrust your intelligence, knowing as I do that you are ready to be my champion even before I ask you."[166] The implicit accustion made by Jerome that Pammachius has censured his work ought to be linked with Pammachius's role as Jerome's publisher (facilitator, financier, and distributor of Jerome's writings). In his role as publisher, we might expect Pammachius to indeed first review the works received before distributing them. This practice seems also implied in Jerome's comments in *Letter* 48, where he appears to ask for feedback: "If you read the book of the sixteen prophets which I have rendered into Latin from the Hebrew" – this indicates that he has sent his translation to Pammachius, or at least Pammachius has access to the manuscript[167] – "and if, when you have done so, you express satisfaction with my labours" – this seems to read as a request for the work to be reviewed by Pammachius, to which Jerome attaches a binding outcome, as he adds "the news will encourage me to take out of my desk some other works now shut up in it."[168] Namely, a positive outcome of Pammachius's review would probably have meant that the latter would finance Jerome's labours, and the likelihood for him to fund further translations would be greater.[169] Likewise, Jerome seems to back up his argument by referring to other copies of translations and commentaries he has sent out, and which Pammachius ought to use as point of comparison to decide upon the quality of the translation of the 'Book of the Sixteen Prophets'. He advises Pammachius (maybe superfluously) to compare a copy from his translation of *Job* to its Greek and (older) Latin

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[165] *Ep.* 48.2: *'De opusculis meis contra Iouinianum quod et prudenter et amanter* ***feceris exemplaria subtrahendo****, optime noui.'*

[166] *Ep.* 49.20: *'cetera, quae in libro nostro* ***reprehensa*** *sunt, uel leuiora puto uel ad eundem sensum pertinentia; unde ad ea respondere nolui, ne et libelli excedere magnitudinem et* ***tuo uiderer ingenio diffidere****, quem* ***patronum causae meae*** *ante habui, quam rogarem.'*

[167] It seems to me for it to be more likely that Pammachius actually owns a copy of this translation, since otherwise Jerome would have stipulated where Pammachius could acquire one, as he does a bit further on, where he states, with regard to his translation of the Book of Job, that Pammachius "will be able to borrow a copy of it from [his] cousin, the saintly Marcella." *Ep.* 48.4.

[168] *Ep.* 48.4.

[169] Compare the closing of *Ep.* 57, where Jerome writes: 'If it may be so, and if my enemies allow it, I hope to write for you, not philippics like those of Demosthenes or Tully, but commentaries upon the scriptures,' see 57.13. The rather satirical 'if my enemies allow it' of course could be read as a sneering reference to those agitating Pammachius, who subsequently requires his client to defend himself, as we have also seen in *Letters* 48 and 49. A positive reception of Jerome's defence would, at least so Jerome wishes, favourably please and satisfy Pammachius, which would then (ideally) result in the patrons' request for more works from Jerome, this time commentaries rather than provocative - or maybe rather 'provoked' – defences.

versions,[170] and Jerome's commentaries on the *Twelve Prophets* from which Pammachius should understand the difficulties of understanding the Scriptures, where due to bad translations misinterpretations are prone to be made which would be impossible in the Hebrew original.[171] It seems that Pammachius had to rely on Jerome's expertise since it does not appear that he was able to read Hebrew, otherwise Jerome would have suggested him to read the Hebrew original. Jerome's plea for his case and his attempts to guide Pammachius to positively review his works reveals his dependence on Pammachius as distributor:[172] the authoritative voice of his patron and his alleged principal role in the decision-making process for Jerome's works to be circulated. Pammachius's verdict was valid, if not the final decisive tone, and as such Jerome must win his patron's confidence with regard to the quality of his written work. This becomes even more apparent in *Letter* 57, which deals extensively with the 'correct' method of translation.[173] Here too, Jerome offers Pammachius his translation of the opening of Epiphanius's letter alongside the Greek original, "that from one count in the indictment you may form an opinion of all."[174] The purpose is, again, to 'enable' Pammachius to defend his client in Rome, confirmed by Jerome's words in the closing chapter of the letter, where he stresses Pammachius that he leaves "everything to your discretion. You can read the letter of Epiphanius both in Greek and in Latin; and, if you do so, you will see at once the value of my accusers' lamentations and insulting complaints."[175] Yet, Jerome does not seem too keen if Pammachius were to publish on the matter himself. Look for example at chapters two and three of *Letter* 48, wherein Jerome respectively asks Pammachius to explain 1 *Cor* 7 – if he would not wish to defend Jerome using his clients arguments as presented to him in the defence which is *Letter* 49 – and then adds that he is not implying that he prompts Pammachius to publish his own thoughts on the matter. "I do not speak thus that I may provoke you to write on the subject yourself, [...] but that you may compel my tormentors to

[170] *Ep.* 48.3: '[...] Read it in both Greek and in Latin, and compare the old version with my rendering. You will clearly see that the difference between them is that between truth and falsehood.'
[171] *Ep.* 48.3: '[...] If you care to read these you will learn for yourself how difficult it is to understand the Holy Scriptures, and particularly the prophets; and how through the fault of the translators passages which for the Jews flow clearly on for us abound with mistakes.'
[172] Seemingly Pammachius has not been Jerome's only publisher, as we can read from Jerome's allusions in *Letter* 48.2, where he adds: "[...] In this province, also, the books have already been circulated." Above, we have already referred to works being sent to different addresses, but there seems to be no indication that Marcella and Domnio respectively were also responsible for the distribution of the copies they received.
[173] Composed in 395 CE, this letter is Jerome's defence for his alleged tampering with the translation of Epiphanius's letter to Bishop John of Jerusalem.
[174] *Ep.* 57.12: '[...] to show you, most Christian of nobles, and most noble of Christians, what is the kind of falsification which is censured in my translation, I will set before you the opening words of the letter in the Greek original and as rendered by me, that from one count in the indictment you may form an opinion of all.' What follows is a detailed elaboration of his translation.
[175] *Ep.* 57.13.

do so."[176] Hereby Jerome hints at Pammachius's influential position and *ergo* his ability to prompt Jerome's antagonist to compose or come up with a response to Jerome's apology. Jerome inserts between the two clauses a praise of Pammachius that acknowledges his patron-student's potential, which serves to 'tranquilise' Pammachius's potential provocation when he is told by Jerome not to publish on the matter himself: "although I know your zeal in the study of the sacred writings to be greater than my own."[177]

As we have seen above, Jerome claims Pammachius as his voluntary 'champion' who is ready to defend his client even if not prompted by him. Again, if we draw a comparison with *Letter* 83, Pammachius seems rather unimpressed with Jerome's presuppositions. Wherever Jerome quotes Pammachius in his own letters, we also get a different sense of the patron's ideas with regard to whose task it is to take on the defence: Jerome is called to defend himself, nowhere can we find a reference where Pammachius is quoted to have said, or even might have alluded to a suggestion, that he would defend Jerome against his antagonists in Rome. As Jerome's patron, and more particularly as *known to be* Jerome's patron, Pammachius's own reputation is at stake if his client gets into disrepute. Patronage, seen as a form of elite self-representation, enhances not only one's reputation but also one's social visibility: careful and strategic management of *clientèle* is required so as to acquire the best-possible results out of the investement, that is: highest reputation and great respect from 'the peerage'. If a client gets into a *débâcle* that could damage the patron's reputation, the patron has to act, and this is what Pammachius does when he summons Jerome to defend himself, when he criticises Jerome for faul play, and instructs him to enter the debate with well-sourced, strong arguments. Likewise, Pammachius demands of his client to explain himself with regard to questionable translations received, and he orders Jerome to 'confute and overthrow' statements in Rufinus's translation of Origen's *Peri archōn* and to reveal the interpolations present in the work.[178] Here again, however, implicitly Pammachius's reputation is at stake for Jerome is referred to in the work they are complaining about.

When we take into consideration Jerome's dependence of Pammachius, it is all the more intruiging why there is no eulogy, why there is only one letter by Pammachius's hand that has been preserved, and why Jerome did not attempt to be more hospitable to his friend

[176] *Ep.* 48.2-3.
[177] *Ep.* 48.3.
[178] *Ep.* 83.1: '[...] we desire you to make evident the interpolations which [Origen's] defender has introduced;' and 'you will also conute and overthrow all statements in the sheets [...] that are ignorantly made or contradict the Catholic faith.'

after the latter had lost his wife. Unless, indeed, their relationship was mostly a matter of business and amicable language was but rhetoric.

The picture we get from Pammachius through this correspondence with Jerome is that he seems to have a prominent concern for (Nicene) orthodoxy.[179] We can read this for example from his own utterances in *Letter* 83 where he confesses, in relation to Rufinus's translation of Origen's *Peri archōn*, that "these contain many things which disturb our poor wits and which appear to us to be uncatholic."[180] Further evidence that attests Pammachius's interest in orthodoxy is not only to be found in Jerome but also in Augustine, as we can read in the prescript of the latter's letter of gratitude to Pammachius: *A. Pammachio, cl. viro senatori, peramanter gratulatur quod suos Numidiae colonos Donatistas suis adhortationibus ad catholicam Ecclesiam adduxerit simul orans ut hanc epistolam amicis legendam praebeat.*[181] This attitude reveals Pammachius's loyalty to the expectations that come with the role of patron in the classical (Roman) definition, and which seems to have remained powerful even within a Christian context.[182]

Jerome does not quite appear to portray Pammachius as his 'pet project' as he does with his female protagonists, but at the same time one gets the impression that Jerome is trying to use Pammachius as a vehicle for his teaching and his model of the ideal Christian ascetic to a wider Roman audience, which we have seen above in the opening of *Letter* 77 where Jerome illustrates his dear friend as a perfect, learned man, as well as various references to Pammachius's state of perfection in other letters, such as in *Letter* 66 where

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[179] See Pammachius's involvement in both the Jovinian and mainly the Origenist controversy (*Letters* 48 and 49 testify of Pammachius's interest in the debate (or *débâcle*, depending on your perspective) of the Jovinian 'controversy'. With regard to the Origenist controversy, a first indication of Pammachius's interference is Jerome's response, that is *Letter* 57, subsequently there are the *Letters* 83, 84, and 97. In his requests addressed to Jerome, of which only *Letter* 83 survives, Pammachius seemed to have been speaking on behalf of a number of people, and Jerome mentions in a letter to Paulinus of Nola that not only Pammachius voiced his concerns about a prospective translation of the *Peri archōn*, but 'almost the entire Roman brotherhood' had voiced these concerns, cf. *Ep.* 85,3: "*Et quidem quamuis mei amantissimi et egregii uiri Pammachii, tamen unius uoluntatem in tempus aliud distulissem, nisi omnis paene fraternitas de Vrbe eadem postulasset, adserens multos periclitari et peruersis dogmatibus adquiescere*." Labourt adds, in a complementary note to the letter, that Jerome's words seem to indicate the existence of a certain collective of ascetics in Rome: "Ces mots semblent indiquer un certain lien religieux entre les ascètes de Rome, pour se soutenir contre la réprobation d'une grande partie de l'aristocratie, même chrétienne, et la neutralitié plutôt malveillante du clergé. Mais il ne saurait être question d'un « congrégation », au sens moderne du mot. A Rome, la vie cénobitique n'apparaît guère avant le milieu du v^e^ siècle. Par « fraternité romaine », il faut donc entendre Marcella, Pammachius, Océanus et leur cercle d'amis." See p. 169, *P. 140,l,6* (Budé, vol. 4).

[180] *Ep.* 83.1: '*Et quoniam in his multa sunt, quae tenuitatem ingenii nostri permouent,* ***quae minus catholice dicta existimamus*** *[...]*.' 'Catholic' to be understood as conform orthodox – that is, Nicene – faith, see Rebenich, "Asceticism, Orthodoxy, and Patronage," 375.

[181] See Augustine's letter to Pammachius (*Ep.* 58) where he expresses his gratitude for Pammachius's decisive role in trying to steer a North-African community away from their Donatist tendencies/sympathies – this is in an area where Pammachius owns land.

[182] Other evidence also indicates that Jerome still expects this to be so, see below on Furia.

Jerome claims Pammachius to be 'leader of the patrician order', and he flatters his addressee by accrediting him being the 'first to set the example of turning monk'[183]; or in *Letter* 97 where he calls him – and Marcella – 'lights of the senate';[184] and elsewhere in *Letter* 66 we observe how Jerome becomes possesive 'my Pammachius', who, although "now many wise and powerful and noble are not Christians only but even monks," is *par excellence* "the wisest, the mightiest, and the noblest: great among the great, a leader among leaders, he is the commander in chief of all monks."[185] As we will see in a subsequent chapter, wisdom and knowledge are key characteristics in Jerome's paradigm of the ideal Christian,[186] and they are the ultimate goal on the path toward perfection of ascetic Christian life; as such, one could argue that wisdom and knowledge are the culmination or completion of this transformative process.[187] And even better : Pammachius has "reached the highest point", he has "made [his] way from the root to the top of the tree", and here too, Jerome stresses how Pammachius is "the first of monks" (among his rank)[188] but this time he adds "in the first city of the

[183] Although the praise has to be seen in the context of the entire section which calls for humility, see *Ep.* 66.13: *'Quod **patricii generis primus** inter primos monachus esse coepisti, non tibi sit tumoris sed humilitatis occasio, scienti filium Dei factum filium hominis. Quantumcumque te deieceris, humilior Christo non eris.'* The 'transformation' is not a change of social status – Jerome does not speak of Pammachius as leader in the past tense – but a change or transformation of personal attitude, a self which no longer derives from the patrician's position, but from the new basis, the self-abased Son of God. This also reveals a theological notion of Jerome, as this Christ does not give up the divine standing, but instead alters the moral self by becoming the Son of man.

[184] *Ep.* 97.3: *'Uos, Christiani **senatus lumina**, accipite et Graecam et Latinam etiam hoc anno epistulam [...].'*

[185] *Ep.* 66.4: '*Tunc rari sapientes, potentes, nobiles christiani, nunc multi monachi sapientes, potentes, nobiles. Quibus cunctis **Pammachius meus sapientior, potentior, nobilior**: magnus in magnis, primus in primis, [archistrategos] monachorum'*. Jerome introduces his *laudatio* (*glorificatio*) with a reference to 1 *Cor* 1:26, quoted by Jerome: *'uidete, fratres, uocationem uestram, quia non multi sapientes iuxta carnem, non multi potentes, non multi nobiles.'* (see your calling, brothers, how that not many wise men, not many noble are called)

[186] *Ep.* 66.9 centres round this wisdom-knowledge concept.

[187] See also the links that Jerome draws with philosophy and his elaboration of the four cardinal virtues which we have come across in the third chapter of *Letter* 66, see above, and in particular: 'I speak of you as wise, for who can be wiser than one who, despising the folly of the world, has followed Christ "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 *Cor* 1:24)?' – 66.3: *'Quid enim eo sapientius qui contempta mundi stultitia Christum secutus est Dei uirtutem et Dei sapientiam?'* A parallel reference to this transformative process is found in what Jerome writes in relation to Eustochium, directly after his glorification of Pammachius: *'[...] quid Eustochio fortius, quae nobilitatis portas et adrogantiam generis consularis uirginali proposito fregerit, et in urbe prima primum genus subiugauerit pudicitiae.'* Note the second parallel, namely that here, as below, Rome is mentioned as the first city, for a literal translation renders 'the first family in (of) the first city.'

[188] That Pammachius is the 'first' does not go unprecedented; his sister-in-law receives similar, if not even higher praise, when Jerome calls Eustochium 'the first of Roman ladies [who] has brought under the yoke the first of Roman families,' see *Ep.* 66.3 quoted above. Although Jerome would often stipulate the uniqueness or primordinance of Pammachius, Pammachius was not the only one among his rank to dedicate himself to the ascetic life. A parallel can be found in Paulinus of Nola, who mentions the Roman senatorial aristocrat Turcius Apronianus, who is, as Salzman states, 'a self-proclaimed ascetic, and this earned him a higher status' (see Salzman, "Competing Claims," 367, ref. to Paulinus, *Carm.* 21.202ff. (CSEL 30:164ff.). On Apronianus, see *PLRE* I.87, and Dennis E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters and Poems* (Berkeley, 1999), 20.) Another parallel is Paulinus of Nola himself, and it is in his writings that we find evidence for a certain 'radical rupture' with secular aristocratic life as Salzman shows that "Paulinus's renunciation of a secular career and adoption of an ascetic Christian lifestyle rocked the senate; pagan and Christian aristocrats expressed dismay at his choice," see Salzman, "Competing claims," 369. Furthermore, there is Pammachius's co-author of *Letter* 83, Oceanus, who is a Roman noble man.

world,"[189] which is interesting because he simultaneously grants primacy to Pammachius *and* to Rome, that is: Rome has primacy over Jerusalem. In this passage, Jerome grants Pammachius a legacy that goes back to the absolute beginning of monotheistic faith by comparing his patron-student to Abraham, transforming Pammachius into or equating him the 'example (be)for(e) all examples.' Pammachius, so Jerome, has 'reached the highest point. [He has] made [his] way from the root to the top of the tree,' and exactly because he is the first monk in Rome, the first city, Pammachius would 'do right therefore to follow the first of the patriarchs.' Jerome paints Abraham as rich and hospitable, expecting the reader to make the imaginative bridge between Abraham and Pammachius.[190]

The fact that Jerome uses Pammachius in such way corresponds with the expectations which come with Pammachius's role as patron, and by acting as Jerome's 'agent' and distributor (and sometimes censor) of the latter's literary production Pammachius is conforming to this role. Again, this is within expectations of what defines *nobilitas* in senatorial aristocracy; the same goes for *nobilitas* in Jerome's Christian elitarian model, and in line with this the role of patrons.

The language in the epistolary correspondence is further evidence of the patron-client relation between Pammachius and Jerome. Jerome's apparent 'friendly', 'amicable' language is that of a client, appropriate to a subordinate subject. Jerome clearly venerates his addressee, for example in *Letter* 48, where he muses how he has heard that "the hopes of the entire city are centred in you, and that bishop [pontifex] and people are agreed in wishing for your exaltation. To be a bishop [sacerdos] is much, to deserve to be one is more."[191] Here, Jerome cleverly at once exalts Pammachius and criticises the Roman episcopate. Pammachius, rather than the current occupier of the Roman see, should or could be the bishop, since he is the one who truly merits this honour, whereas the current bishop apparently lacks the qualities to deserve this position. It shows that much importance is given to *captatio*, for which a parallel can be found in the Damasus-Jerome correspondence.[192] The application of the technique of *captatio* is a purely rhetorical technique meant to make the addressee "more amenable to the request."[193] Although the allusion is given as if the correspondents are well-acquainted, this is

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[189] *Ep.* 66.11: *'[...]**statim summum tenes**; de radice peruenis ad cacumen; **primus inter monachos** in **prima urbe** (primum sequeris patriarcham) [...].'*

[190] *Ep.* 66.11: *'Euge, noster, initia transgrederis [see above], primum sequeris patriarcham. [...] Diues erat Abraham auro, argento, pecore, possessione, uestibus [...] et tamen postquam crebro hospitalitatis officio, dum homines non refutat, suscipere meruit Deum. [...].'*

[191] *Ep.* 48.4: *'Audio **totius in te urbis studia concitata**, audio pontificis et populi uoluntatem pari mente congruere. Minus est tenere sacerdotium quam **mereri**.'*

[192] See Cain, *Letters*, 58.

[193] Cain, *Letters*, 58.

not necessarily so. Rather, the technique aims to evoke the desired (re)action that fulfils the needs of the author, and as such it is a strategic management tool. The little correspondence between Pammachius and Jerome might be another indicator of the (more) business-like relationship.[194] A man of Pammachius's standing would most likely have had many clients whom he would have had to manage, administer favours to, consult, and Jerome was just one of them. That Jerome sometimes seems to feign a closer friendship might be because of the competitiveness required in search for patronage with other clients competing for Pammachius's attention and favours.[195] The opening of *Letter* 48 illustrates Jerome's favourable understanding of his 'bond' with Pammachius:

> "Christian modesty sometimes requires us to be silent even to our friends, and to nurse our humility in peace, where the renewal of an old friendship would expose us to the charge of self-seeking. Thus, when you have kept silence I have kept silence too, and have not cared to remonstrate with you, lest I should be thought more anxious to conciliate a person of influence than to cultivate a friend. But, now that it has become a duty to reply to your letter, I will endeavour always to be beforehand with you, and not so much to answer your queries as to write independently of them. Thus, if I have shown my modesty hitherto by silence, I will henceforth show it still more by coming forward to speak."[196]

What we see here is a fine example of Jerome turning tables in his favour: he has not kept contact with Pammachius, there has been no correspondence to maintain their friendship, yet, he now uses 'Christian modesty' as an excuse for this lack of what would otherwise be deemed proper Roman conduct.[197] It must be stressed that indeed, this *Letter* 48 is the first one in the collection of epistles from Jerome that is addressed to Pammachius. The subsequent letter has a similar opening, where Jerome immediately takes to the offensive: "Your own silence is my reason for not having written hitherto."[198] Again, this sounds as a pre-emptive attempt to neutralise potential counterarguments that could blame Jerome for lack of

[194] The Pammachius-Jerome *corpus* exists of only seven letters, which have all been written post-393; this means that none of them have been written during Jerome's stay in Rome. Of these seven letters only one is by Pammachius (not even single-authored but co-authored by Oceanus), see the table above.
[195] Cain's strong emphasis on Jerome's attempts to manipulate his autobiography so as to claim authority and thus secure his credentials as a spiritual mentor for the Roman aristocrats almost over-emphasises Jerome's self-interest rather than seeing the bigger picture of competition for patronage, as well as identifying this not just as an attempted authority claim but also as 'branding' and 'marketing'.
[196] *Ep.* 48.1.
[197] See above for the etiquette of letter-writing, where we have seen that contacts should be maintained, although condemnations of the correspondent having remained silent are also elements of conventional rhetoric.
[198] *Ep.* 49.1.

courteous conduct; or, if we invert Jerome's offensive opening and read it rather as a defence, Pammachius could have complained not having heard from Jerome for so long. The lack of letters, so Jerome explains in *Letter* 48, is because he did not wish to arouse suspicion that he was seeking to boast about his connections with rich Roman noble men such as Pammachius. A 'renewal' of their 'old friendship' would not have been received as a valid excuse by his critics. In 49, Jerome's apology is that he feared he could have been perceived as a bother to Pammachius.[199] However, Jerome does not leave to chance to blame Pammachius for a lack of manners: Pammachius has 'kept silence', that is to say, Pammachius has not made any effort to write to his friend, Jerome. Jerome's self-justification for not writing Pammachius is that since Pammachius is a person of much higher social rank than Jerome, it should not have been Jerome's responsibility to maintain contact. However, now that Pammachius has broken the silence and explicitly requests a reply from Jerome, he has authorised Jerome to write him. In order to not sound too subordinate however, Jerome hastens to stress that he will 'write independently' of Pammachius's queries. A parallel is to be found in *Letter* 57 where Jerome calls Pammachius one of his 'dearest friends', whom he is 'satisfied to have instructed': at once he signifies the personal bond – Pammachius is not just a 'dear friend', but he uses the superlative 'dearest' to emphasise the importance of the friendship – and his role as teacher of Pammachius.[200]

The friendship as Jerome perceives it originates in Pammachius's and Jerome's having been fellow students in the school of Donatus at Rome. Jerome's references to their shared education could be read as his attempt to distinguish himself from other clients. Pammachius in his role as patron has no need to emphasise such 'precedent' or shared background.

Conclusion

Pammachius and Marcella seem to have been Jerome's most cherished patron-students based in Rome, with Oceanus as a 'third wheel'. As traditional patrons they consult their client, and where and when they deem necessary, that is, if their reputation seems to be at stake, prompt him to adjust or defend his position. On the other hand they seem open to his 'instructions' and read – as well as circulate – his scholarly outputs. More importantly though, even if Pammachius and Marcella opted for an ascetic life, they did not leave Rome, they did not abandon society, and they did not seem to have relinquished their wealth.

[199] *Ep.* 49.1.
[200] *Ep.* 57.13: '[...] I am satisfied to have instructed one of my dearest friends and am content simply to stay quiet in my cell and to wait for the Day of Judgment.'

The inconsistency perceived in Jerome's illustration of Pammachius might reveal a possible distinction between the historical Pammachius and his literary recreation. What I have tried to do is by close-text analysis distil elements which could guide us to the historical Pammachius beyond the elaborate glorifications with rich ornamentation that most probably represent his literary recreation. Jerome's defences written on Pammachius's prompting have proven most useful in this pursuit, as they show Pammachius's continued office and his principal position in society, his very Roman senatorial concern for his reputation, and his activities as a patron (diplomacy, consulting clients, administering and receiving favours, publishing, munificence: providing services and facilities). The competitiveness of the senatorial order is adopted in, or adopts the strife for perfection of the ascetic life and the glory and honour that are bestowed upon them that achieve this. Furthermore, since learning and the sharing of literature was a favourite pastime (*otium*) for the nobility, so too is it granted central prominence in Jerome's paradigm of ideal ascetic Christian life. As for his *nobilitas*, we recall the quote from *Letter* 66.7: "The most distinguished privilege loses its prestige when lavished on a crowd, and dignities themselves become less dignified in the eyes of good men when held by persons who have no dignity." It shows that Jerome's concept of *nobilitas* is presented as an antidote to the opening-up of senatorial rank to 'peripheral' people who have risen to the *clarissimate* through military service or the imperial administration. A massive increase of the number of senators was the result. And masses annihilate exclusivity. To preserve this exclusivity there is offered Jerome's model of the ascetic Christian nobility: (nearly) all the traditional Roman elements that distinguish nobility from the rest, topped up or made even better by a divine crown of glory that mimics *memoria dignus*.

Chapter 4. The 'Peripheral' Aristocracy

Jerome's network of aristocrats was not limited to those residing in the *Urbs*. When we look at Jerome's epistolary corpus, there is a fair number of letters that has been addressed to provincial aristocrats. As I have elaborated in the introduction, they are categorised as 'peripheral.' In this chapter I will offer an analysis and assessment of the letters to three provincial aristocratic men: Lucinus from Spain (*Ep.* 71), Julian from Dalmatia (*Ep.* 118), and Rusticus from Gaul (*Ep.* 122). I will also relate back to the curious case of Anapsychia and Marcellinus[201] (*Ep.* 126) who wished to be put in contact with the Roman nobleman Oceanus, and seem to have sought to achieve this via Jerome, as touched upon in the first Pammachius-chapter. The analysis of the letters will focus on vocabulary, attitude, use of metaphors, and forms of address which enables the comparison with Jerome's correspondence with Roman patricians encountered in the previous chapters. The 'singularity' of the letters also allow for a slightly more detailed analysis. In what follows I will elucidate if the addressees in this chapter could be categorised as 'patron-students.' It is significant that none of the addressees are listed in *PLRE*.

As Salzman has indicated the *clarissimate* had been extended to provincial aristocrats who were granted certain privileges that would enable them to remain in their provincial dwellings rather than having to take up residence in Rome and take part, or at least be present, at meetings of the Senate – obligations which were previously presupposed upon entering in or advancing to the order of the *clarissimate*.[202] The geographical location of the peripheral addressees is dispersed at a significant distance from Rome. I would propose they were not personally acquainted with the Roman patricians, yet they became part of a literary 'social' network in which Jerome's scholarly productions were circulated, or, alternatively, they had already been part of a literary network that had recently introduced Jerome's writings in their exchange. This hypothesis is connected to a third identifier of the peripherals, namely the 'importance' or significance of such aristocrats to Jerome: are they only 'peripheral' to his Roman circle, or are they also side-lined by Jerome? Who takes on the role of facilitator? The

[201] Had they indeed been related to Oceanus, this might have been mentioned in Marcellinus' PLRE-entry, yet there is no such reference (see PLRE I, "Fl. Marcellinvs 10," 711-12),. Moreover, his name does not appear in Salzman's Appendix 4 "High Office Holders," 258-64.. Yet the PLRE-entry suggests that Marcellinus had been sent to Africa as *tribunus et notarius*: he therefore deserves further study to determine if he was "provincial/peripheral" or "Roman."

[202] Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy,* 32-33, 35.

use of language and vocabulary seems to reveal a 'lesser effort' from the author's side. It is obvious, and Jerome also stipulates this himself, that Jerome did not personally know the addressees of these letters. It is possible that Jerome would have been put in contact with these provincial aristocrats through his Roman connections.[203] His Roman patrons owned estates in the provinces which would have likely put them in contact with the local elites, and customary to the *clarissimate*, there could have been exchange of thoughts, and maybe literature, in business relations.[204] Furthermore, the provincial aristocrats would have been all too willing to be accepted by their Roman 'superiors', and expressing interest in Roman concerns and that what was 'fashionable' to the *nobilitas* would have been favourably received by their metropolitan 'peers' or rather: models if not 'idols'. This would therefore be the most obvious manner as to how Jerome was put in contact with these peripheral aristocrats, namely through his Roman patrons who might have suggested his name as spiritual counsellor or mentor and teacher of Scriptures to their provincial connections. These provincial aristocrats would then have contacted Jerome by sending couriers – who would have often not only carried their commissioner's epistles but also some warming gifts – to Bethlehem, anticipating a (prompt) response from the revered 'monk-scholar.'[205] In addition, the nature of correspondence with peripheral aristocrats is essentially different from the epistolary exchange with his Roman patron-students. Whereas there is abundant evidence that letters were exchanged on a more or less 'regular' basis with his Roman circle, the letters incorporated in this chapter are the only letters (extant) to the individuals discussed.

If what I have argued in the previous chapters is correct, namely that Jerome himself very much sought to be acknowledged as or admitted to the rank of *nobilitas*, and that he appropriates or redefines being Christian to being noble,[206] we should now inquire if it would be at all plausible to argue that this might be one of the underlying reasons behind the difference in attitude when Jerome is writing to 'peripheral' elites or to 'Roman aristocrats'. Highlighting this difference of approach would shift Andrew Cain's argument of Jerome being

[203] Their perceived lower social rank in the eyes of the *illustres* does not necessarily exclude contact with the Roman *clarissimate*, but geographical remoteness from Rome would often have prevented new senators from embarking on the journey and the *locus* where they would have been introduced would most likely not have been Rome.

[204] It follows that I am assuming that, since the Roman aristocrats held properties in the provinces, they would also have done business with local elites. They would have employed businessmen for the daily management of their provincial estates, but there are indications that the aristocrats themselves also interfered in their business, see for example Symmachus, *Ep.* 1.10, *Ep.* 7.2, mentioned in Salzman, *The Making of*, 52.

[205] Megan Hale Williams classifies Jerome as 'monk-scholar,' see *The Monk and the Book*.

[206] Upside-down rhetoric: not nobles turning Christian, but the ideal Christian being noble both by nature (blood) and by comportment (as ascetic Christian). Jerome's paradigm of the ideal Christian is the Roman paradigm of *nobilitas*. It follows that the question in this chapter must be: can a non-noble Christian become an ideal Christian according to Jerome's model?

primarily interested in acquiring authority to a particular interest in 'belonging' as I have already tried to show in the 'Pammachius' chapters. Furthermore it would shift the paradigm from an 'institutional' to an 'individual' perspective,[207] as it would emphasise how Jerome's Christian *nobilitas* is not open to all aristocrats (or worse: all Christians) at random but that it is very selective. It demonstrates the diversity in a spectrum of definitions of this notion of Christian *nobilitas* as we find it among individual authors; as such I depart from Salzman, who, I believe, appears to regard it from an institutional lens and seems to present a 'general' or 'generalised' notion of 'Christian *nobilitas.*' This will lead me to conclude that Jerome's understanding of Christian *nobilitas* is still very much supporting the old, Roman traditional definition, rather than that he contributes something innovative.[208] The differences in vocabulary, approach, use of stylistic ornaments, and application of rhetorical techniques in the letters to peripheral aristocrats as compared to epistles addressed to Jerome's Roman circle, whilst belonging to the same genre, could be seen as evidence that would support this argument. It will become increasingly clear in the comparisons of the letters to Lucinus, Julian, and Rusticus, that as we progress through time and space Jerome considers himself of a socially higher status and in a more authoritative position than his addressees.

Lucinus the Spaniard

Lucinus was a Spanish aristocrat, who had together with his wife Theodora recently converted to an ascetic form of Christianity. The letter which Jerome now addresses to Lucinus is a response to Lucinus's request for expert advice from Jerome, and it can be dated around 398 CE. The epistle carries the title '*Ad Lvcinvm Baeticvm*', which situates the addressee in Baetica, southern Spain.

In the opening lines Jerome acknowledges that he and Lucinus are not acquainted in any way and that he is writing to a complete stranger.[209] Although the language seems to invoke the impression that this practice was rather unique, it might be interpreted as one of Jerome's rhetorical techniques. Combining our hypothesis with Cain's emphasis on Jerome's creation of an 'authority seal' for himself, we may argue that this letter could be regarded as

[207] That is to say Jerome's interest in membership of or belonging to the *nobilitas* and his creating of a new *nobilitas* which complies with the old tradition now that the old understanding has been negated by imperial legislation. This could be read as an individual reaction to institutional measures, to accommodate a group which feels 'marginalised' (*sic*) by these imperial alterations of the *clarissimate.*

[208] Salzman also acknowledges that although Jerome's rhetoric tries to advocate radical change, in essence it offered more of a continuity with Roman tradition, *The Making of*, 207.

[209] *Ep.* 71.1.

evidence for Jerome's growing authority in the West: people from the same social circles might have heard of his reputation as a spiritual mentor from their Roman 'peers' with whom they corresponded. This might have been the incentive for Lucinus to write to Jerome's Bethlehem address, and express his desire to visit the holy places and to meet the 'man behind the letters'. Either this happened on Lucinus's own initiative, or he was prompted by peer pressure.[210] In case of the latter we could speak of a connection or relation in the second degree. Unlike Andrew Cain, I would not (solely) explain Jerome's letter as a search of recognition of authority on behalf of the author, but rather I would equally argue the other way around. The weak ties between Lucinus and Jerome serve Lucinus at least as much as they serve Jerome: Lucinus can gain respect and acceptance from peers or potential peers among Roman senatorial aristocrats (*in casu* Pammachius et al.) both for his support of Jerome as client and his pursuit of knowledge;[211] on the other hand Jerome broadens his network, his correspondence with Lucinus confirms his authority as a mentor (which, in turn, could lead to more potential patrons seeking to liaise with him), and he finds support for his scholarly pursuits and projects in the form of patronage (although maybe a watered-down form[212]). As we learn from Michele Salzman, many of these provincial senatorial aristocrats were not well integrated with the older aristocratic families of Rome and Italy;[213] to elaborate and to exhibit common intellectual interests and clients might be a method to bridge this gap and serve as an integration technique to gain acceptance and respect within that sought-after circle. The Roman courtesy common to this exchange is equally apparent in the conclusion of the letter, where Jerome expresses his gratitude for the gifts received, and he states that in return he sends Lucinus and his wife – whom he now calls 'sister', *cfr. infra* – some small gifts as a token of friendship, alongside the copy of a manuscript 'containing Isaiah's ten most

[210] It does not seem to be the case that Jerome initiated the contact. Contrastingly, Jerome's letter to Marcellinus and Anapsychia alludes to a more frequent and mutual letter exchange: he does not address them as 'strangers,' and his complaints about a long silence hint at the existence of more correspondence, and possibly at an initiation letter by Jerome which had been left unanswered, see *Ep.* 126.1: "I … no longer regret the effrontery which led me, in spite of your silence to ply you both with so many missives. I hoped, indeed, by so doing to gain a reply and to learn of your welfare not indirectly from others but directly from yourselves." These lines reveal classical tropes of epistolary convention: a complaint of silence, prodding, complaints about faulty postal or messenger services, as well as hints that complain about messengers or travelling friends who orally conveyed news rather than that Jerome received a written letter, which was considered to be much more personal.

[211] As we have seen wealth is not the only prerequisite that constitutes status: it requires the full picture of culture, education, friendship, manners and behaviour, patronage, supported by one's wealth. If by contacting Jerome Lucinus could show that he was investing in this culture of knowledge, this would be a step in the right direction towards acceptance by the Roman aristocracy as peer: it would gain him respect and enhance his reputation. Ultimately, nomination by peers was the only valid variable.

[212] It is difficult to speculate about the nature of Lucinus's potential to become Jerome's patron, since he died shortly after they had established contact.

[213] Salzman *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 40.

obscure visions which I have lately elucidated with a critical commentary.'[214] Although Jerome had never met Lucinus as we read in both the opening and closing address, he does call him a friend, or rather, he refers to himself as a friend of Lucinus: he expresses his wish that Lucinus may soon visit him in Bethlehem, and finishes the letter stating that he prays 'that distance may not sever those united in affection and that I may find my Lucinus present in absence through an interchange of letters.'[215] This recreating of presence through literary correspondence in case of physical absence is also picked up by Cain who understands this as a method or tactics of Jerome to indicate to third parties and competitors in particular that although Jerome cannot provide spiritual guidance in person, he is very well capable of looking after his patron-students and their spiritual wellbeing by means of epistolary exchange, which creates a 'presence in absence'. Cain has elaborately proven the presence of this feature in Jerome's correspondence with Roman women.[216] I would extend this to the 'periphery' of provincial aristocrats seeking spiritual guidance where we observe how Jerome uses similar styles, rhetoric, and tactics (e.g. claiming the addressee by use of possessive pronouns, emphasis on a bond of 'friendship'), although the reader is given the impression that there is less at stake than in Jerome's letters to Roman ('urban') aristocrats.

This can for example be derived from a use of rather generic language and tailoring, which is a first indication towards a confirmation of our hypothesis, namely that its generic character might reveal a 'lesser interest' from Jerome's side not because a lack of 'personal friendship' or acquaintance, but because of the lower social status of the addressee. There is clearly a difference in tone depending on the personal relation between author and addressee. However, Jerome does employ possessive and 'amicable' terminology when speaking about Lucinus, such as '*Lucini mei*'.[217] That said this is a rather conventional way of addressing people in letters. Likewise, it might be regarded as the common attitude of clients claiming their patrons. As such it might also be proffered that this is part of Jerome's tactic of showing the wider audience that Lucinus now belongs to his cohort of 'patron-students:' a signal to his competitors that Lucinus and his household are already being served.[218]

The *captatio* is obvious in the opening chapter of the letter to Lucinus:

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[214] *Ep.* 71.7.
[215] *Ep.* 71.7.
[216] Cain, *Letters*, 92.
[217] *Ep.* 71.1, about the centurion Cornelius who prefigured the faith of 'my dear Lucinus'.
[218] Again, compare Cain, *Letters*, 92, for Marcella and her circle of aristocratic ascetic women already being looked after by Jerome.

> "[...] the Apostle, fisher of men, has cast forth his net, has landed you like a magnificent gilt-bream. You have left behind you the bitter waves, the salt tides, the mountain-fissures; you have despised Leviathan who reigns over the waters. Your aim is to seek the wilderness with Jesus and sing the prophet's song: 'my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary' (Ps. 63:1-2), or, as he sings in another place: 'lo, then would I wander far off and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest' (Ps. 55: 7,8). Since you have left Sodom and are hastening to the mountains, I beseech you with a father's affection not to look behind you. Your hands have grasped the handle of the plough, the hem of the Saviour's garment, and His locks wet with the dew of night: do not let them go, nor return home from the field. Do not like Lot set your heart on the plain or upon the pleasant gardens; for these are watered not, as the holy land, from heaven but by Jordan's muddy stream made salt by contact with the Dead Sea."[219]

The segment shows clear allusions to transformation and movement: conversion to the ascetic way is a dynamic progression with a transformative character described by Jerome in nautical and natural imagery of Lucinus having 'left behind the bitter waves, the salt tides, the mountain-fissures' and moving towards the 'wilderness with Jesus'. We find another allusion to this metaphor of movement in chapter four where Jerome tells Lucinus that he 'can see for [himself] why I mention these things; without expressly saying it I am inviting you to take up your abode at the holy places'.[220] Here we could speak of '*ordnung durch bewegung*' since 'order' is created by moving away from the 'old' towards the 'new,' from what ties Lucinus to the mundane towards the holy, literally each step is a progression towards perfection ('order'). The holy places are represented as the place to be in order to fulfil the requirements of ascetic life so as to become the perfect Christian. This can be put in contrast with what we read in Paulinus where Jerome tries to downplay the importance given to the holy places, and urges Paulinus to stay in Italy instead. We encounter a similar narrative strategy in the letter to 'naughty' Rusticus, where movement to the holy places is seen as 'spiritual cleansing' (see below).

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[219] *Ep.* 71.1.
[220] *Ep.* 71.4.

To return to the first lines, however, it ought to be stipulated that they also show the praise common to Jerome's rhetoric when writing to noble men (and women); however he is not speaking about jewellery or gems as he does in most of his letters to women and to Pammachius. In this letter he invokes a vivid imagery of nautical themes and other geographic *topoi* which are derived chiefly from the Psalms.

Lucinus is described as the 'magnificent gilt-bream' among the multitude of common fish caught by Christianity or caught in the nets of Christian faith. In other words, people from all layers of society get drawn to Christianity, but more importantly, this distinction is preserved beyond the 'cleansing water' of baptism.[221]

Despite this superiority however, there is still a chance that Lucinus may slip through the Christian net, as Jerome asserts in the opening verse of the second chapter, 'many begin but few persevere to the end'.[222] Jerome's direction that Lucinus should not look behind him seems to be related to this assertion, for 'looking back' might carry with it a temptation to return. From a different perspective, 'looking back' would also disrupt the progressive, upward motion simply because the movement of facing away from the direction of travel implies a slowing down of the pace. Metaphorically speaking, Jerome's description could refer to a staggering in the process of advancement in the perfection of ascetic Christian life. The language Jerome employs to urge Lucinus not to look back and to not be tempted by the pleasures of our temporal lodgings shows his masterful eloquence. His depiction is almost erotic, at least sensual, when he narrates how Lucinus has 'grasped the hem of the Saviour's garment, and His locks wet with the dew of night: do not let them go.'[223]

Furthermore we observe how Jerome seems to imply to address Lucinus as 'son' as he uses 'family language' when he comments that he is giving advice 'with a father's affection'.[224] As such, Jerome is making a hierarchical or authoritative statement and portrays Lucinus as 'subordinate'. It is remarkable because this particular way of address is otherwise only found in his correspondence to the younger aristocrats 'in training' (particularly women): it does not occur in his correspondence with Pammachius or other senior members of the 'Roman circle'.

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[221] That is to say, baptism does not wash away social status. This is in sharp contrast to Augustine and his monastic rule where he argues that social rank is left behind upon entering the monastery, *Regula* I, 4-8 (PL 32).
[222] *Ep.* 71.2.
[223] *Ep.* 71.1.
[224] *Ep.* 71.1.

In the second chapter we see a similar metaphor presented as in the letter to Julian, namely that of athletes and competition.[225] The difference however between a race of athletes and a race of ascetics is that the 'master of "ascetic" games' does 'not give palm to one and disgrace another,' whereby Jerome is implying that yes, only some will be fit to receive the crown or prize, but that does not mean others will be shamed for not winning. It shows how this master's 'wish is that all his athletes may alike win garlands'.[226] This latter comment however reads as if Jerome were to say that everyone might be able to achieve perfection. It seems to contradict with the general tone of his correspondence with the Roman patricians on the one, and the peripheral aristocrats on the other hand. Often we find Jerome in his letters to the first group insinuate that his correspondents, his patron-students, have already achieved perfection. The emphasis in his correspondence with peripheral aristocrats seems to be on a not-yet, the progress towards: the making of perfection. Normally this does not bear a hint of Jerome's conviction that they will ever achieve said perfection (rather, it is often the opposite that is implied). This particular segment, therefore, might be considered as almost unusual for Jerome.

We also observe frequent analogies to the incompatibility of country and faith or belief, which might be interpreted as Jerome's indirect attempts – that is, in addition to his more explicit calls later on in the letter – to convince Lucinus to leave Spain and come to Bethlehem. The analogies are all from the Hebrew Bible: Abraham, Lot, David. Of David, Jerome states that in *Psalm* 39:12, David proclaims he is 'a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were'. Jerome adds how David is 'called "a Hebrew", in Greek περατής, a passer-over, for not content with present excellence but forgetting those things which are behind he reaches forth to that which is before'.[227] Like Abraham, Lucinus should come to the Promised Land; like David, he should solely sojourn with the Lord and leave behind all that attaches him to the temporal realm. Movement is used as a metaphor for transformation through transposition; moving away from the old whilst moving toward the new, as well as this movement being progressive, a symbolism of the journey towards perfection (materialised in the Promised Land).

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[225] In *Letter* 66 to Pammachius we also encounter athletic imagery, see *Ep.* 66.13: '*sed nolunt uinci ab his labore corporum quas ipsae superant uirtute animi. Haec dico, non quo de ardore mentis tuae quicquam dubitem, sed quo currentem inpellam, et acriter dimicanti feruorem feruore augeam.*' In the letter to Julian he speaks of 'athletes and backers'. It is obvious that Jerome regards the pursuit of excellence in holy life as a competition in an athletic race, something which requires a competitive spirit. Jerome's role in this is essential, though seemingly in significantly different degrees. Where for Pammachius he just adds 'warmth to your warmth', for Lucinus he seems to portray himself as fellow athlete, and for Julian he is a 'backer'.

[226] *Ep.* 71.2.

[227] *Ep.* 71.2.

This transformative process becomes also apparent in Jerome's anthropology of gender, as we learn in the third chapter when Jerome recalls Lucinus's wife. He alludes to their recent vow of marital continence by stressing that they were once partners in the flesh, but now they are partners in the spirit.[228] The marriage is thus de-sexualised. Jerome takes it even further by making a transgender statement out of this,[229] saying of Theodora that she was 'once a woman but now a man; once an inferior but now an equal'.[230] This transformation is remarkable but not unique. It reveals underlying anthropological ideas of what defines gender and hierarchical structures according to gender.[231] Now that Theodora has been 'transgendered' she 'hastens towards the same heavenly kingdom under the same yoke as [Lucinus].'[232] It is obvious that 'under the same yoke' refers to their adoption of ascetic Christianity, but the phrase does get a slightly different feeling when read in conjunction with the previous part where Jerome stresses Theodora's 'transformation' from female to male: it is only now that she and Lucinus bear the 'same yoke' and progress to the 'same heavenly kingdom'. Although the segment is short, it quite aptly summarises Jerome's views on gender; it reveals his underlying theological anthropology and as such its relation to the salvation of mankind (truly: *man*kind).

Jerome continues to present the commonplace argument that wealth ought to be disposed of in the correct manner should one wish to follow the path of ascetic perfection. Initially, this reads as a break with Roman senatorial tradition;a closer look reveals an intriguing rhetoric. Rather than putting the emphasis on Jesus and his parables, Jerome stands out with his heavy reliance on the Hebrew Bible, particularly in this letter: Joseph (*Gen.*), Elijah (2*Kings*), Elisha (1*Kings*), Ecclesiastes, Proverbs (with a few exceptions of course).[233]

> "Now the laying aside of money is for those who are beginners in the way, not for those who are made perfect. Heathens like Antisthenes and Crates the Theban have done as much before now. But to offer one's self to God, this is the mark of Christians and apostles. These like the widow out of their penury cast their two mites into the treasury, and giving all that they have to the Lord are counted worthy

[228] *Ep.* 71.3.
[229] The vow of continence and the dedication to the ascetic life initiate the transposition of gender.
[230] *Ep.* 71.3. What is implied, too, is that in order to become equal to a man the only solution for a woman is to become a man, which is achieved through the ascetic life.
[231] See for example Karen Torjesen, "Martyrs, Ascetics, and Gnostics. Gender-crossing in Early Christianity," in S. P. Ramet (ed.), *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2002), 79-91, 89*;* Virginia Burrus, "Word and Flesh. The Bodies and Sexuality of Ascetic Women in Christian Antiquity," in *JFSR* 10/1 (1994), 27-51.
[232] *Ep.* 71.3.
[233] *Ep.* 71.3.

> to hear his words: "ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"."[234]

What first grabs the eye is how Jerome argues that the 'laying aside of money' is not characteristic for a Christian but that it is rooted firmly in classical tradition: Antisthenes and Crates the Theban have done this long before any Christian.[235] Note also how Jerome is talking about the 'laying aside of money' and not of a total renunciation of riches. Considered that almsgiving is not uniquely Christian, it is not so much the disposal of wealth that will pave the path to perfection, but rather it is the self-giving act of the ascetic Christian to God that is distinctive.[236] This is the greatest sacrifice, not the giving of alms or total renunciation of material possessions. Jerome's perspective could be explained in various manners. The first could be that Jerome might have realised the impossibility of such a request for Roman senatorial aristocrats with ascetic aspirations: it was rather impossible for the wealthy landowners to simply dispose of all their estates and all that came with it.[237] However, maybe a more plausible explanation was Jerome's own concern and self-interest: if his students were to stick to their wealth, they could 'dispose of it in the right manner', namely by frequently sending financial aid to Bethlehem to support Jerome's scholarly activities and his monastic projects.[238] Another explanation could be in line with what Salzman has argued, namely that Jerome tries to accommodate the aristocrats. By stating that it is not disposal of riches that will make one perfect but rather self-sacrifice unto God, Jerome's addressee or audience might have been more likely to persevere in or convert to the ascetic way of life. That said I believe a combination sounds most plausible. Of course Jerome was trying to attract patrons to subsidise his scholarly activities as well as his hunger for books that could expand his incessantly-growing library. Likewise, it is exactly this method of accommodation or appropriation that would be able to tempt potential aristocratic patron-students. Jerome further develops these ideas in the subsequent chapter, where he argues that:

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[234] *Ep.* 71.3.

[235] These two classical examples indicate the shared cultural background of the author and his addressees, and can be interpreted as epistolary convention.

[236] *Ep.* 71.4: "Then, as you know, believers sold their possessions and brought the prices of them and laid them down at the apostles' feet: a symbolic act designed to show that man must trample on covetousness. But the Lord yearns for believers' souls more than for their riches."

[237] As Curran, *Pagan City*, 313 suggests, if there was a liquidation of wealth, it was done gradually. He gives the example of Melania the Elder, but one could also think of Paula whom, according to Jerome, had given her children what was their due (distributed their rightful inheritance to them), see *Ep.* 108.6. The behaviour of the aristocrats, as mentioned in the introduction, reveals that there was no such phenomenon as total renunciation: their travels and patronage are clear indicators of continued wealth and income (from landed properties).

[238] For Jerome's scholarly activities and cost of this endeavour see M. H. Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 262 (summarised).

> "Your abundance has supported the want of many that some day their riches may abound to supply your want; you have made yourself "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (*Lk.* 16:9). Such conduct deserves praise and merits to be compared with the virtue of apostolic times."[239]

The phrase 'friends of the mammon of unrighteousness' from Luke's gospel (*Lk.* 16:9) appears frequently in Jerome's letters to aristocrats: to Nepotian (*Ep.* 52.10), to Furia (*Ep.* 54.12), to Oceanus (eulogy on Fabiola, *Ep.* 77/8.11), to Salvina (*Ep.* 79.4), to Eustochium (eulogy on Paula, *Ep.* 108.16), to Julian (*Ep.* 118.4), to Ageruchia (*Ep.* 123.6), and to Demetrias (*Ep.* 130.7).[240] The exegetical explanation implies that wealth or money – signified by the use of the word 'mammon' – was unrightly or unjustly accumulated, but it can be transformed into something good, i.e. it can be justified, if spent on giving to the poor, to charity. It seems therefore that a 'transformation' replaces the usually advocated 'renunciation'. Jerome already indicated before quoting Luke that Lucinus had used 'his abundance' for the poor and needy. Since he stresses that 'such conduct deserves praise' this could be interpreted as another argument to not completely dispose of all wealth. Rather, since these 'merits' are 'to be compared with the virtue of apostolic times' it appears Jerome puts it on a par with total renunciation of worldly possessions, if not above it. Again, one does well to remember that it was in accordance with common expectation that aristocrats would use their endowments to alleviate the poor and needy within their local communities. Such acts of generosity and compassion gained the aristocrat honour and respect: values held in highest esteem in Roman tradition, and as such copied by Christian authors. In order to distinguish, almsgiving becomes subordinated to the dedication of the soul to God.

Our second suggestion for Jerome's possible motives not to argue in favour of absolute renunciation of material possessions could be seen as supported in light of the illustration given in the opening lines of chapter five. Here, Jerome describes his own state of poverty in a multi-faceted way: his works are 'poor', his health is 'poor', and he lets it shine through that his financial resources are limited.[241] He talks about the works that he is sending Lucinus, and about the rumours that have been spreading that he had supposedly translated works of Josephus, Papias, and Polycarp – rumours which he denies. However, he directs Lucinus to his translation of the Hebrew Bible which he claims to have given to Lucinus's

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[239] *Ep.*71.4.
[240] See also *Matt.* 6:24; see also *Ep.* 22.31 to Eustochium, where Jerome comments upon *Matt* 6:24 ([...] ye cannot serve God and Mammon') "Riches, that is, for in the heathen tongue of the Syrians riches are called mammon."
[241] *Ep.* 71.5.

scribes to copy, with the exception of the first eight books. He assumes that Lucinus already has a copy of a translation Jerome made earlier, based on the Septuagint, a translation which he 'diligently revised for the use of students.'[242] One may assume that [as of now] Lucinus is also to be considered one of these students; an observation that is confirmed by Jerome's answers to various questions Lucinus had posed with regard to religious observance.[243] Here we find some interesting insinuations that put writings by other Christian authors into perspective, particularly when Jerome concludes his discourse stating that 'in such matters each province may follow its own inclinations and the traditions which have been handed down should be regarded as apostolic laws.'[244] Jerome seemingly makes the allusion that there exists no 'uniform' tradition, which is further emphasised by his use of the plural 'traditions'. He acknowledges a plurality of customs that may vary locally, and he does not seem to regard this as a negative feature. This is a most intriguing segment in light of our aim to picture religious reality on the ground. It speaks in favour of a methodology focussed on the individual agent and his web of relations in a multicultural and multi-religious (complex) society.

Julian from Dalmatia

The second letter to be scrutinised here is the one sent to a male Christian aristocrat named Julian from Dalmatia around the year 406 CE. There are no further sources that could reveal more about the identity of this unknown provincial other than this one letter from Jerome. In general scholars categorise this letter as a consolation. However, it is clear that its consolatory character is secondary to Jerome's other motives for writing the letter: as we have already seen with Pammachius, it is really about the possibilities for an ascetic discourse that

[242] *Ep.* 71.5. Interesting is what he subsequently asserts: "The new testament I have restored to the authoritative form of the Greek original. For as the true text of the old testament can only be tested by a reference to the Hebrew, so the true text of the new requires for its decision an appeal to the Greek." see also *Ep.* 27. Jerome clearly makes a distinction between the languages that constitute and 'authorise' the two testaments: whereas Hebrew is the to-go-for language when working on the Hebrew Bible/Jewish Scriptures, Greek should be the primary choice when working with the Christian texts. As such, Jerome defends his own approach and methodology for going back to the Hebrew when translating the Jewish Scriptures, and in a similar manner he asserts that his methodology of using the Greek for the Christian addendum is the only justified approach. Moreover, this could not only be regarded as Jerome's advocacy for his exegetical methodology, but an attempt to pass on this methodology to his students so that they adopt and employ it in their study of the scriptures. To learn this methodology would mean one had to learn Hebrew, which would be another distinguishing skill for an already elitist circle.
[243] *Ep.* 71.6.
[244] *Ep.* 71.6.

have opened up now Julian is widowed and 'absolved' [*sic*] from the care for children.[245] The difference with the letter to Pammachius in light of their respective stages in the 'conversion' process is that Julian seems to have not yet decided to fully commit himself to the ascetic life and take up the habit of a monk. As such, we could consider Julian to be a step behind Lucinus, who had, together with his wife, already vowed to commit himself to the ascetic life. It is unknown whether Jerome personally knew Julian, but we may assume from the above that he did not. It was not uncommon for him or any of his contemporaries to write to 'complete' strangers. Jerome's epistolary exchange with these aristocrats is part of a complex web of networks where prestige, expectations, and upwardly social mobility were central concerns. Jerome and his addressees have to be seen in this wider framework where we must not forget the role of 'stakeholders', that is to say Jerome's provincial contacts for their part desire to be respected and acknowledged by their Roman 'peers' and as such the provincials would willingly follow their superiors' advice and try to follow in their footsteps by contracting the same spiritual mentors: aspects such as the creation of identity and authority to win respect from peers are part and parcel of this complex web of relations. To claim Jerome alone is to be regarded as the interested party overestimates Jerome's role and underestimates the importance of social relations and interaction in Roman aristocratic society; social relations which were, at least in this aristocratic milieu, essentially built on exchange of letters, books, and knowledge in a shared (status) culture. Furthermore, such letters were rarely ever meant to be private correspondence: their instructive and transformative message was intended to circulate amongst like-minded people, and to attract people (of similar social status) to join the communities (be it convents, monasteries, or more informal study groups), and to ask for their financial support.

We know from Jerome that Julian had recently lost his wife Faustina, shortly after the couple had lost two of their three daughters.[246] The only surviving daughter seems to have married a man noble by birth, not by character.[247] Even more ill tidings had affected Julian, since the barbarian [*sic*] invasions had left his property destroyed, he had lost his livestock, and Jerome claims that even Julian's slaves had either been made prisoner or had been slain.

[245] Julian had also lost two young daughters. His only surviving child is married out, so we can assume she does not have to be regarded as still under the care of her father.
[246] *Ep.* 118.2.
[247] Noble by character is an important feature in Jerome's understanding of *nobilitas*, very much taking up on the traditional Roman identity markers for *nobilitas*. For a broader discussion I refer back to the introduction, see also the chapters on Pammachius, and the chapter on 'young aristocrats' where one can clearly see the pillars on which Jerome's Christian *nobilitas* is built and how closely they correspond to the old Roman understanding of *nobilitas*. In light of the devaluation of the *clarissimate*, it becomes increasingly clear how Jerome portrays or offers his model of *nobilitas* as a substitute so that the true nobility can, once again, rise and shine above the mediocre herd.

Nevertheless, as we can observe later in this letter, Julian seems to have lost but a small portion of his assets. Yet, in the opening of the letter, Jerome speaks of an accumulation of trials and conflicts. Interestingly however, Jerome adds that "such is the conflict waged by the old enemy against Julian, a raw recruit to Christ's standards."[248] There are two concepts that require some further explanation. The first is 'old enemy', by which the devil is meant. 'Old' seems to be a reference, here pointing to *Luke* 4:6-8 where the devil is portrayed as having power to grant realms and glory. The second is 'raw recruit': by calling Julian a 'raw recruit' he is implying that Julian, perhaps only a recent convert or maybe someone who has not even been baptised yet, a catechumen, had not chosen the ascetic way, but was still holding on to family, estates, and his traditional aristocratic standing, set in contrast 'to Christ's standards.' Yet, his standing was threatened by that dark power which in the eyes of Romans was bad luck or fate, identified by Christians as the work of the 'devil', who offers and withdraws wealth. Whereas in the letter to Lucinus we observed how Jerome employed a more reserved attitude towards the requirement of total renunciation of worldly or material possessions, in the letter to Julian patrimony is contrasted with Christ's standards. This invites speculations as to why Jerome would require Julian to renounce all his wealth, whereas in other letters his tone is less radical. Although it seems that this is a case of substitution of traditional aristocratic standards with Christian noble standards, it may well serve Jerome's rhetoric which builds up to the argument that Julian is lacking (ascetic) perfection. Jerome downplays Julian's losses: they have not been that great after all; the trials which Julian has faced and is still facing are not to be interpreted too dramatically; and Jerome stipulates how they are but children's play in the eyes of Christ, the 'Supreme Warrior': another reference to the temptations of Christ, where the devil called him the commander of angels (*Luke* 4:10). By contrast to Julian, the Bible's poor Job – who had also been a wealthy landowner and a father – was in a much worse situation than Julian,[249] and despite everything Job still falls on his knees and praises the Lord. Julian, in contrast, had been allowed to bury his wife and children in style, that means with a proper funeral. The funeral seemed to have been in concordance with aristocratic expectations: "you have been allowed to perform the obsequies of your dear ones; and those obsequies have been attended by many respectful kinsmen and comforting friends.[250]

[248] *Ep.* 118.2.
[249] E.g. "Yet it far is harder to put up with a wife whom you dislike than it is to mourn for one whom you dearly love," *Ep.* 118.3.
[250] *Ep.* 118.2.

This shows that, in contrast with Job, Julian had not lost all his wealth, and Jerome claims he only lost a small portion of it.[251] Instead of interpreting this as a sign of relief, Jerome elaborates on the implicit threat which was already part of his parallel with Job. That Julian had not lost all his wealth, Jerome argues, is that he had "not yet attained to such perfection that the devil has to marshal all his forces against"[252] him. In other words, had Julian achieved complete perfection the devil would have struck harder, driven him entirely out of his depths and made him stand as poor as Job. Instead, Julian's current position shows that he had a long way to go to attain perfection and move into the reach of the devil. One could argue that what Jerome is saying here, is basically that Julian is weak in his faith to fall for the devil's cheap tricks, which, after all, are but a child's play. Without literally or explicitly accusing Julian of being weak and imperfect, Jerome's rhetoric certainly points in that direction. Whilst Job had lost his wife, he was left with a wicked wife whom – as the devil had wished – would teach him to blaspheme God, whereas Julian had only lost a loved wife. Job did not blaspheme God. Whilst Job had lost his children, whom he could not rescue from underneath the ruins of his house, Julian had the privilege of giving his children and wife a funeral which was attended by dignitaries and friends. Job still worshipped and blessed the name of the Lord. Job lost all his wealth at once, and new calamities unfolded, whereas Julian had only lost part of his wealth. Job did not fret. But Julian "had not yet attained such perfection."[253] What one can observe in this rhetorical style is the continuous confirmation that Job kept his faith and his trust in the Lord, whereas Jerome remains silent about his judgement of Julian's reaction, and the reader is tempted to perceive this as a 'screaming' silence: did Julian not stand strong in his faith? To call a nobleman weak and imperfect is quite a statement, since the entire system of social status rested upon confirmation, recognition, respect, and honour. This is an utterly different approach from the glorification which we observed in the letter to Pammachius,[254] and the language sounds much more judgemental than in the letter to Lucinus.

Nevertheless, there are segments that correspond to Jerome's letter to Lucinus. For example there is the priority of the inner self over external aspects.[255] Here Jerome is clearly

[251] *Ep.* 118.2: "The greater part of your substance has been left to you, and your trials have not been greater than you could bear."
[252] *Ep.* 118.2.
[253] *Ep.* 118.3.
[254] With exception of the penultimate chapter, see *Ep.* 66 and its analysis.
[255] *Ep.* 118.3:"[The devil] knows the difference between things external and internal. He knows that even the philosophers of the world call the former ἀδιαφορα, that is indifferent, and the perfection of virtue does not consist in losing or disdaining them. It is the latter, those that are internal and objects of preference, the loss of which inevitably causes chagrin. Wherefore [the devil] boldly contradicts what God has said and declares that

arguing that Julian can hardly claim to have suffered many losses, since his losses were but external. What really matters is internal sacrifice, the giving up all that one has. In making this differentiation, Jerome is pushing the Stoic definition of indifference. While the Stoics did not apply this definition to differentiate between external and internal (a more Platonic division), they wanted to discriminate between what is ethically relevant and irrelevant, be it external or internal things. With Jerome calling the Stoics 'philosophers of the world', he places them, however, already in the worldly realm and equates external with indifferent and internal with relevant, a Platonic distortion of their doctrine. This, however, serves Jerome to disqualify the noble standing of Julian in precisely this world of wealth, glory and recognition, to point to the only relevant realm of the inner self. The parallel with the address to Lucinus is clear: Jerome argues that it is not material wealth that matters, but self-sacrifice. Such internalised view, however, would also counteract Jerome's pursuit of making Julian giving up or sharing his wealth and financially supporting the Christian case, hence, he needs to make the link back from the relevant inner self to man's external possessions and insinuate that Julian should actually be ready to give up also what Jerome before had deemed to be indifferent. He adds:

> "For if the devil had smitten that on which sensation and mental judgment depend, the guilt arising from a misuse of these faculties I would have lain at the door not of him who committed the sin but of him who had overthrown the balance of his mind."[256]

Jerome's attack on Julian becomes harsher, pointing out that 'sensation' and 'mental judgment' were misused and only rectified by the terrible events that have occurred in Julian's recent life. However, we ought to scrutinise these two segments in more detail and look at what binds them together. If we highlight in the first passage the verse where Jerome states that the devil 'knows that external things are (according to the philosophers of the world) indifferent' and 'that the perfection of virtue does not consist in losing or disdaining them,' with the phrase that precedes the second part, where Jerome states that the 'holy man's flesh is placed at the devil's disposal, but his vital powers are withheld,'[257] we see that what he is actually saying is that the devil does not attack the mind, or internal faculties, but only external ones, which include the flesh or body. The devil seems to know that external things

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Job deserves no praise at all; since he has yielded up no part of himself but only what is outside himself, since he has given for his own skin the skins of his children, and since he has but laid down his purse to secure the health of his body. From this your sagacity may perceive that your trials have so far only reached the point at which you give hide for hide, skin for skin, and are ready to give all that you have for your life."

[256] *Ep.* 118.3.

[257] *Ep.* 118.3.

do not matter and therefore concludes that Job is not that perfect as God may think, since he had only lost external things. Job, or any holy man who suffers trials put to him by the devil, will remain alive and keep his vital powers of mind, 'that on which sensation and mental judgement depend.' Julian's trials have been nowhere near as severe as Job's: he has not been considered that perfect in faith and virtue for, in that would have been the case, the devil would have deemed harsher trials necessary to bend or break Julian. Minor external trials seem to have been considered enough to bend Julian's mind, although this might not be as easily perceived from outward appearance. Jerome acknowledges that "others may praise you if they will, and celebrate your victories over the devil,"[258] illustrating how Julian after forty days of mourning attended a dedication of martyr's bones, dressed in white robes. The townspeople could have interpreted this as a way of Julian signifying that the death of his wife and daughters had not been an actual death, but that they had embarked on a subsequent journey. Jerome however, seems to imply he is not fooled by such minor acts of public worship, and retorts:

> "But I shall not deceive you with flattering words or take the ground from under your feet with slippery praises. Rather will I say what it is good for you to hear: 'My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation', and 'when thou shalt have done all those things which are commanded thee, say, I am an unprofitable servant; I have done that which was my duty to do'. Say to God: 'the children that thou hast taken from me were Thine own gift. The hand-maiden that Thou hast taken to Thyself Thou also didst lend to me for a season to be my solace. I am not aggrieved that Thou hast taken her back, but thankful rather that Thou hast previously given her to me'."[259]

As we have intimated above, Jerome interweaves Job, Christ's temptations, and Julian. First, Jerome underpins his criticism by stating that praise and flattering words would result not in honouring the nobleman, as conventionally expected, but be no more than temptation. In contrast, to acknowledge being a slave is the duty of a Christian. Interestingly, Jerome does not come back to the material loss, but reverts to Julian's children and wife. Here we observe what was taught to be adapted as general praxis: for Christians to rejoice when faced with death of relatives or friends, rather than to mourn excessively at expensive funerals as was the

[258] *Ep.* 118.4.
[259] *Ep.* 118.4.

style of the Roman nobility. Julian, so it seems, did have a proper funeral organised and he did mourn, as we could read 'for forty days'.

Jerome's rhetoric wants the reader to believe that dedication to the Christian calling is to seriously embark on the path of the ascetic life, to become the ideal Christian. Although these seem to be a much harder challenge than the 'external' accidents that affect a person, such as loss of relatives or loss of property, the latter are nevertheless not simply indifferent to the role-model author and teacher. To him, relatives, although a God-given gift, are a temporary grace, and property is contingent, something that only exists in this mortal world, whereas the soul is to be taken beyond this mortal world to either eternal condemnation, or to be bestowed with heavenly rewards depending on virtues in mortal life. The virtues, however, refer back to will and decisions, how to conduct life in this mortal world, and how to deal with those external gifts, with property, assets, and wealth.

This link to the external world is the reason why Jerome then refers to another allegory: that of the rich man who wishes to follow Jesus but who could not remove himself from his wealth. This scriptural passage is a much-used allegory in the debate on wealth and the perfection of authentic Christian life in late antiquity.[260] Jerome bids Julian to take account of this parable:

> "Obey the Master's injunction 'follow me,' and take the Lord of the world for your possession: that you may be able to sing with the prophet, 'The Lord is my portion,' and like a true Levite may possess no earthly inheritance. I cannot but advise you thus if you wish to be perfect, if you desire to attain the pinnacle of the apostles' glory, if you wish to take up your cross and to follow Christ."[261]

From this segment it appears that the only possession one is allowed to have is the Lord. Julian is not allowed to possess earthly inheritance, yet Jerome leaves it in the middle what Julian ought to do with his inheritance, thus he implicitly allows him to give it to his daughter.[262] We can interpret Jerome's silence as such based on his words of praise to Paula, whom he credits for having distributed her inheritance among her offspring.[263] So although one is advised to dispose of personal wealth, these requirements do not extend to one's

[260] See comment above.
[261] *Ep.* 118.4.
[262] Although, see below for Jerome's advice what Julian ought to do with the inheritance of his deceased daughters.
[263] See the first chapter; see also Salzman, *The Making of*, 207, who discusses Augustine and Ambrose's views on inheritance, which should first go to family rather than to the church.

family. It exposes certain individual aspects of dedication to the ascetic life, yet it does not seem to completely discard all worldly responsibility.

Jerome makes it appear as if Julian does not yet have high expectations or intentions – which might have been Julian's concerns brought to Jerome by his messenger Ausonius. So we observe Jerome argue in reference to his decree for Julian to abandon the 'cloak of the world:'[264]

> "Such conduct, you will object, is for him who would emulate the apostles, for the man who aspires to be perfect. But why should not you aspire to be perfect? Why should not you who hold a foremost place in the world hold a foremost place also in Christ's household?"[265]

What is distinctively different from Jerome's correspondence with his Roman patrician correspondents, is that clearly Jerome does not yet consider his current addressee as a man who is perfect, not even as one who aspires to be perfect. In the previous two chapters we have seen how Jerome seems very much convinced that his addressees had already reached a state of perfection. However, he provides Julian with a challenge to achieve the same status – the same level of perfection and thus the same nobility – as his Roman superiors and role models. He already indicates that he belongs to the same senatorial rank, and makes use of the competitiveness that characterises this rank to convince his addressee to accept the challenge. Note how Jerome inserts the adverb 'also': an indication that a foremost place in the world does not necessarily exclude holding a foremost place in Christ's household. This is remarkable, because in the previous segment Jerome has argued it necessary to leave behind all that attaches one to the world. Contrarily, this verse seems to imply the two positions are compatible and do not exclude one another. However, what Jerome might allude to is that Julian's noble birth does not make him unfit for ascetic progression, rather on the contrary, and here we can relate back to his argument of one 'being made nobler still.' In other words, the foremost place in the world, which is conditional, is transformed into a foremost place in Christ's household by virtue of progression in perfection of ascetic conduct.

In order not to leave Julian totally unconvinced, Jerome rhetorically asks his addressee whether his marital status is holding him back from his aspiration to perfection of Christian life. The argument he puts forth seems to come a bit out of the blue, as he stresses:

> "Peter was married too, but when he forsook his ship and his nets he forsook his wife also. The Lord who wills that all men shall be saved

[264] As has been done even by Elijah, see *Ep.* 118.4.
[265] *Ep.* 118.4.

> and prefers the repentance of a sinner to his death has, in His almighty providence, removed from you this excuse."[266]

It is fascinating to observe how Jerome seemingly entangles himself in an argument that may very easily be perceived as not only extremely rude, but even open to heretical interpretation, particularly because 1 *Cor*. 9:5 would seem to refute Jerome's claim that Peter left his wife. Marriage is portrayed as a sin for which Julian could have done penance, but he cannot hold up this 'excuse' any more for the Lord has been so gracious for him by taking away the cause of this sin, namely Julian's wife. Moreover, it appears as if Jerome advocates divorce by his reference to Peter. He claims that Peter 'forsook his wife' like he did his ship and his nets. Besides degrading Peter's spouse to a mere possession, the verb used does not even seem to imply that death was the cause of Peter's separation from his wife. He does not even refer or allude to the possibility of living a life of marital continence.[267] If we look at Jerome's predecessors, we see witnesses elaborating on Peter's marital status as early as Clement of Alexandria in *Stromata*, and Eusebius mentions this in his *Ecclesiastical History*.[268] However, their narrative bears witness of Peter's wife *accompanying* Peter even as far as Rome, and that she was martyred shortly before Peter himself was martyred. A divorce seems incompatible with a later event where we observe Peter and the apostles visit Peter's mother-in-law (*Mt.* 8:14, *Lk.* 4:38): common sense would argue that would have been much less plausible had he divorced his wife. So although the concept of 'Peter left his wife' is not completely uncommon since it appears elsewhere as a polemical device,[269] Jerome's interpretation of the verse does sound rather radical and marginal.[270] In Jerome's circle of aristocratic patron-students we see how Fabiola had divorced her husband, and then decided to remarry. The marriage did not last long for her new husband suddenly died, after which Fabiola did public

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[266] *Ep.* 118.4.

[267] This is present in the letter to Lucinus, and referred to in the consolation to Theodora. See also the below letter to Rusticus. However, Jerome's motives in his letter to Julian are presumably aimed at winning him for monastic or ascetic life in a 'second degree of chastity' (as widower), and to not encourage him to remarry. Since Julian's wife has died, it is of not much benefit to speak of the possibility of marital continence.

[268] Clement, *Stromata* III; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.3.2.

[269] Jerome himself uses it in a polemical context, see for example *Lib.* I *Adv. Iovinianum,* and his reference to *Mt* 19:29.

[270] According to Roman law divorce was allowed in certain circumstances. Compare Jerome's eulogy on Fabiola where he 'cleanses' her reputation from the accusation that she had remarried whilst her ex-husband was still alive. Rather than taking one letter to an individual and try to systemise and generalise it to an approach or rule for a collective, Jerome here teaches us not to generalise and assess each case individually. See also *Letter* 69 which is a reply to Oceanus's request to Jerome for his support in a case against a Spanish bishop, whom Oceanus had accussed of committing the sin of a second marriage. Jerome argues that the bishops' first marriage had taken place before he was baptised a Christian: since baptism washes away all sins, even the sin of marriage had been washed away: therefore his engagement in marriage now could not be considered a second marriage.

penance and opted for a chaste widowhood and ascetic life style.[271] Regardless, marriage is perceived as sin which might lead Julian to think he is *a priori* disqualified from the ascetic life. Marriage, or at least the female partner in this marriage, is also regarded as pulling down the other half, as such preventing them from aspiring to be perfect. Luckily for Julian's wife however, Jerome sees her beneficial influence now she is dead: Julian's 'wife can no longer draw [him] earthwards, but [he] can follow her as she draws [him] heavenwards.'[272]

In a like manner Jerome addresses the benefits of Julian's deceased daughters: their inheritance should now be used by Julian in order to ransom his own soul. This reflects the aspect of 'individuality' referred to above. Jerome's rhetorical style is obvious when he claims to know Julian's daughters' wishes, namely that they would have expected their father to give their inheritance to the poor and needy, and not to their sister. However, it is clear that they would not have held to this opinion when they were still alive, for they 'would have wasted the money' on precious jewellery and silks.[273] Furthermore, one does well to remember that the girls were only six and eight-years-old respectively: virgins, yes, but Jerome's exaggeration that they are now 'joined with their spouse', i.e. Christ, might not be the consolation Julian was looking for. Although we did observe a downplaying (or transformation into the collective of the family) of Paulina's importance for Pammachius, the approach to Julian is far less considerate of the addressee's feelings, and could be explained by the distance between author and addressee, as well as Jerome's perception of Julian's status as lower opposed to patricians like Pammachius: it appears that he feels less need to accommodate peripheral aristocrats than he would towards patricians. Jerome bids Julian to look at his role models Pammachius and Paulinus of Nola: "noble by birth, in Christ made nobler still."[274] Furthermore, Jerome explains they were 'once' rich and well in repute.[275] Jerome applies the past tense here: naturally this is pure rhetoric since we have established neither Pammachius nor Paulinus were obscure or poor. Both patricians are granted the status of nobles in Christ, which, Jerome argues, is even higher than temporal nobility. Pammachius and Paulinus however were still rich, even if only for the mere fact that such vast amounts of

[271] *Ep.* 77.4. This act of public penance is an interesting event, if historical. Curran, *Pagan City*, 293 states this was a dramatic case of unusual actions and that she as a true ascetic set aside her former life during public renunciation at the Lateran. However this passage (77.4) also shows how unlikely it was for a patrician to attend public services at churches, and to stand among the populace. Yet there is a striking resemblance with Ambrose's narrative of Theodosius' act of public penance. The 'events' occurred roughly around the same time, although the exact chronology cannot be determined. It might reveal a literary 'trend' in the aristocratic ascetic discourse rather than accurate reports of historical events.
[272] *Ep.* 118.4.
[273] *Ep.* 118.4.
[274] *Ep.* 118.5.
[275] *Ep.* 118.5.

wealth cannot be simply sold.[276] As for the notion 'well in repute': Jerome is being quite contradictory when we recall his claim that these two noble men were "more famous than ever."[277] As stated above, providing services to local communities, particularly for the poor and needy, gained them much respect, praise, and honour. In return for their investment in local communities they receive respect from the local people, which was paid by means of erecting statues or commemorative inscriptions in honour of the local benefactor. Ascetic aristocratic practice of providing facilities for the poor and needy can therefore be seen as a continuation of a common practice, and in return they were regarded as living saints, praised in the ecclesial communities and maybe 'even throughout the universal church' as Jerome claims. Yet, Jerome appears to show himself determined to oppose the model of Roman *nobilitas* to that of Christian *nobilitas*. Julian must make a choice, as Jerome proclaims "I do not wish you to be a monk among men of the world and a man of the world among monks."[278] By contrast, Pammachius kept his office as a senator. So it would seem that the demands and standards are apparently set higher for a peripheral aristocrat such as Julian to achieve the same level of perfection. Jerome asserts that he "shall require every sacrifice of [Julian] for I hear that your mind is devoted to the service of God."[279] He warns Julian that "it is impossible for a man to enjoy both the good things of the present and those of the future."[280]

We find another athletics metaphor applied to emphasise both the competitiveness of the ascetic pursuit and the need of a personal trainer – Jerome obviously regards himself as the best match for that role. In a self-humbling fashion he urges Julian that he should not look at his correspondent to be his role model, but rather aim to achieve the ideal of a 'true servant of Christ.'[281] As his 'weaker backer,' it is Jerome's task to push the athlete Julian to his limits so that he can achieve his goal of perfection.[282] It might also recall a parallel with Roman aristocratic patronage of private instructors and house doctors.

There is certainly a strong rhetorical ending to the letter, which is to be expected from Jerome and it does also emphasise the status of the addressee: the reader is expected to be familiar with all the small nuances and implicit references which signify a sound background in classical education, a privilege for those who dwell in the upper strata of society. A

[276] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 208ff on Paulinus, where he suggests that Paulinus still benefitted from the management of his estates, income which he used to build elaborate shrines and churches (see for example Paulinus, *Song on Felix' Church*), and to invest in both the local Christian community as well as in facilities for pilgrims.
[277] *Ep.* 118.5.
[278] *Ep.* 118.6.
[279] *Ep.* 118.6.
[280] *Ep.* 118.6.
[281] *Ep.* 118.7.
[282] *Ep.* 118.7.

common typology found in classical literature is that the addressee ought to "[f]ind in a woman your leader in this high enterprise."[283] The woman Jerome has in mind is the holy Vera,[284] although the quotation he provides comes from Virgil's Dido. Similar as the ending of the letter to Pammachius, Jerome concludes the letter to Julian by stressing the importance to follow a female example. In the case of Pammachius these were Paula and Eustochium, who were still so much holier and nobler than himself. Julian has to look at holy Vera and accept her as a leading example, a leader even, on his path toward ascetic perfection. It is remarkable that despite Jerome's often misogynist language – particularly his addressing of evil and temptation in the world in feminine vocabulary – he often turns to women as examples for aristocratic men. This could be mere rhetoric to trample their pride; they live after all in a patriarchal society where women are regarded as the weaker sex: it could be regarded as rhetoric of humiliation to argue that a nobleman ought to follow a female example. Moreover, if women are to be taken as example these examples often refer to dead women: Julian's wife can now pull him heavenwards, whereas whilst still alive she would have pulled him in the opposite direction; a similar voice is heard with regard to Pammachius's deceased wife Paulina. Paula and Eustochium are Jerome's pet projects, so it is obvious he could legitimate their exemplary status. Little is known about 'holy Vera', but she seems to have been a martyr: as such, a dead woman.

Rusticus 'the naughty'

The third letter to a 'peripheral' aristocrat is Jerome's *Letter* 122 to Rusticus. Whereas the tone in the letter to Julian was already harsher and more patronising than Jerome's letter to Lucinus, Jerome reaches another 'low' in his address to Rusticus. Therefore, and in order to distinguish him from young Rusticus whom we will encounter in the next chapter, I have chosen to nickname this Gallic aristocrat 'Rusticus the naughty'. Rusticus had been living a life of continence with his wife Artemia for some time before they broke their vow. It seems

[283] *Ep.* 118.7.

[284] The only reference I could find for Holy Vera was that she was a young Christian martyr of the second century, fom Italy, and martyred along with her two sisters. However the names of the women do rouse certain suspicion this might not have actually happened but is rather a rhetorical tale; the daughters are named after the three virtues from 1 *Cor* 13 (faith, hope, and love), and the mother is called 'Sophia' (wisdom). They are Eastern saints, that is to say they are considered saints by the Eastern orthodox rite. Interesting is that she was a 'child' when martyred – some (probably unreliable) internet sources say she must have been around twelve years old. Maybe a more reliable source Ekkart Sauser, "Fides, Spes und Charitas: heilige Märtyrerinnen," *BBKL* 17, col. 381.

that both were willing to repent, although his wife had been more determined in this respect: she had left for the East to do penance. Jerome seems to have met her in Bethlehem, and presumably on her orders writes to Rusticus, who has stayed behind in Gaul, to convince him to follow in his wife's footsteps. Similarly to Lucinus and Julian, Rusticus was unacquainted with Jerome. Another common denominator is their geographical location in the periphery, although Rusticus lives in Gaul. The letter is composed around the same time as the letter to Julian, around 408 CE.

Rusticus is presumably a member of the provincial aristocracy in Gaul, which particularly invites a comparison with the letter to Lucinus from Spain due to the aristocratic networks extant between Spain and Gaul. Furthermore, Rusticus and his wife were acquainted with Hedibia, who is also from Gaul, and to whom Jerome has addressed *Letter* 120.[285] Evidence for their relation is found in the opening verse of *Ep.* 122:

> "I am induced to write to you, a stranger to a stranger, by the entreaties of that holy servant of Christ Hedibia and of my daughter in the faith Artemia, once your wife but now no longer your wife but your sister and fellow-servant."[286]

We have come across the rhetoric about marital continence before: in the letter to Lucinus, Julian, and to Pammachius particular, a similar language is employed illustrating spouses as relating to each other as siblings. The reference for Pammachius was interesting as Jerome feigned the impression that Pammachius and Paulina had made a vow of continence, although other evidence in the same letter contradicted this claim. In the letters to Lucinus and Theodora there is no evidence to the contrary, and Julian and his wife seem to have made the vow after they had raised three daughters. Jerome's opening verses seem to suggest that Artemia had contacted him in order to seek his assistance in her attempts to convince her husband to do penance for the broken vow. Jerome claims Artemia has travelled to the Holy Land where she "has sought your [salvation] also, in former days at home and now in the holy places."[287]

With a plethora of scriptural examples from the Hebrew Bible, John's gospel, and the Pauline letters Jerome is trying to show how sin has affected Biblical figures – either by committing sin or suffering for the sin of others –, the divine wrath a sinner would call upon

[285] *Ep.* 120 *Ad Hedybiam* is Jerome's response to Hedibia's twelve mostly exegetical questions. The first question deals with identity and moral instruction, questions two until nine deal with Gospel difficulties, questions ten to twelve with Pauline difficulties. See also Andrew Cain, "Defending Hedibia and Detecting Eusebius: Jerome's Correspondence with Two Gallic Women (*Epp.* 120-1)," *MP* 24 (2003), 15-34, for the letter to Hedibia.
[286] *Ep.* 122.1.
[287] *Ep.* 122.1.

himself, and he describes the path of penitence towards redemption. Jerome stresses how "we do not realise the miseries of sickness till returning health reveals them to us." In other words, he is probably alluding to Rusticus's current inability to see the gravity of his sin and the urgent need for him to do penance for it, in order to 'recover' and be cured. Jerome argues that "sins serve as a foil to the blessedness of virtue; and light shines more brightly when it is relieved against darkness." As such, he tries to show Rusticus that because of his sin, his subsequent perfection of virtue(s) will be even more worthy and more glorified: Rusticus' virtues will shine more brightly, hence all the more reason for the Gallic aristocrat to embark on his penitential pilgrimage. Jerome adds a quote from Ezekiel:

> "Repent," he cries, "and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord."[288]

The entire first chapter of the letter forms a chain of Biblical examples in order to make it very clear to Rusticus that he really ought to do penance, even though he might think that there is no possible way of salvation for the 'gravity of his sin'. At least, that seems to be Jerome's interpretation; it might well be that Rusticus did not quite think it so bad and was still more attached to his Roman cultural upbringing than his wife.

> "These words show us that the mind must not through disbelief in the promised blessings give way to despair, and that the soul once marked out for perdition must not refuse to apply remedies on the ground that its wounds are past curing. Ezekiel describes God as swearing, that if we refuse to believe His promise in regard to our salvation we may at least believe His oath."[289]

The 'soul marked out for perdition' refers to Rusticus's baptised state, and Jerome points to the obligation his addressee therefore has in order to seek for remedies to wash away sins committed after baptism. The promise of salvation stands regardless of sin committed, however the only cure to heal Rusticus' wounds is penance. Rusticus is a baptised Christian and is therefore lucky, for, as Jerome argues, there is no hope for Jews or Gentiles. On the other hand, it signifies the severity of Rusticus's case: had he still been a Gentile (assuming he was not Jewish) it would, in a way, not have been such a major concern because he was doomed anyway, now that he is a Christian, all efforts must be made in order to save him:

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[288] *Ep.* 122.1.
[289] *Ep.* 122.1.

> "The Jew and the Gentile therefore are not to be bemoaned, for they have never been in the Church and have died once for all [...]; weep rather for those who by reason of their crimes and sins go away from the Church, and who suffering condemnation for their faults shall no more return to it."[290]

The imagery of flowing tears continues in chapter two and three – where Jerome in passing gives a hint of his knowledge of his trilingual skills.[291] Here we can follow Andrew Cain's line of argument that Jerome is trying to profile himself as an authority. However, I think it must not be underestimated that this has more to do with Jerome's attempt to emphasise his own social status above his addressees who belong to the peripheral aristocracy, and as a result he patronises them; rather than that he is painstakingly trying to seek recognition for his authority. If the latter were the case, Jerome would have put more effort in the letter. Nevertheless, the text appears very much as just one chain of quotes without much effort from the author to comment in detail or have some input of his own; it lacks the rhetorical *finesse* he broadcasts in his letters to Pammachius and young Rusticus, and even those to Julian and Lucinus.[292] In defence of Jerome, however, one plausible explanation might be the topic which is very much focused to convince Rusticus to repent rather than convince him to transform his way of living and his identity.

There is an awful lot of repetition yet Jerome manages to constantly invoke new examples from Scripture, which are an indication to the reader that actually all those exemplary men and women from Scripture faced similar challenges in their lives: some had the courage to admit and overcome them; others persevered in their wickedness and were lost, doomed. This section reveals Jerome's ideas on a theology of sin, penance, and grace, in which we hear the slumber of a resonance of a debate on free will, perfection, and freedom from sin which was current at Rome, a debate which cannot be seen as cut off from the competition for Roman patrician patrons. Jerome admits how there is always a possibility to repent and regenerate through penance and subsequent reception of grace in the form of the

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[290] *Ep.* 122.1.
[291] *Ep.* 122.2: 'In place of the last clause the true Hebrew text (which is not preserved in the Greek and Latin versions) gives the following [...].'
[292] The following segment seems, although half of it consists of Biblical quotes, still somewhere near an effort to exhibit some eloquence: "Think how great that weeping must be which deserves to be compared to a flood of waters. Whosoever so weeps and says with the prophet Jeremiah 'let not the apple of mine eye cease' shall straightway find the words fulfilled of him: 'mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other;' so that, if righteousness and truth terrify him, mercy and peace may encourage him to seek salvation," *Ep.* 122.3.

remission of the sins committed, even if one has already been baptised.[293] The end of chapter three focuses on 'freedom from sin' or rather the lack of any such freedom. This stands in contrast to what Jerome argues in *Letter* 125 to young Rusticus of Narbonne,[294] where Jerome even uses the phrase *sine ruga sine macula*.[295]

The letter only turns interesting for the wider picture of 'aristocratic accommodation' in chapter four of the letter. Jerome justifies his approach set out in the first three chapters:

> "Roaming thus through the fairest fields of scripture I have culled its loveliest flowers to weave for your brows a garland of penitence; for my aim is that, flying on the wings of dove, you may find rest and make your peace with the Father of mercy."[296]

Jerome claims that his sequence of Scriptural citations, the loveliest flowers, had the special purpose to serve as a guidance that could help Rusticus on his way through penitence to redemption. To emphasise this possible favourable outcome, Jerome turns to a glorification of Rusticus's wife Artemia, and starts with a reference to their vow of continence:

> "Your former wife, who is now your sister and fellow-servant, has told me that, acting on the apostolic precept, you and she lived in abstinence by consent that you might give yourselves to prayer [...]"[297]

Following the Apostle Paul, Artemia and Rusticus had decided to live a chaste life and dedicate themselves to an ascetic life of prayer. Whereas W. H. Fremantle has translated this segment with a rather vague 'living apart', Jerome is more explicit: a more literal translation would read that they, in mutual consent, abstained from the 'labours' of wedlock. In other words they had decided not to copulate anymore. They probably still lived under the same roof, although they might have had separate bedrooms. However, it was not uncommon for spouses to have separate bedrooms.[298] Important is Jerome's report that it was a decision by mutual 'consent'; therefore it was not imposed by the one on the other.[299] We observe how a transformation has taken place: Rusticus and Artemia are no longer husband and wife, they

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[293] *Ep*. 122.3: "The Lord judges every man according as he finds him. It is not the past that He looks upon but the present. Bygone sins there may be, but renewal and conversion remove them. 'A just man,' we read 'falleth seven times and riseth up again.' If he falls, how is he just? And if he is just, how does he fall? The answer is that a sinner does not lose the name of just if he always repents of his sins and rises again. If a sinner repents, his sins are forgiven him not only till seven times but till seventy times seven."

[294] See chapter 'Young Aristocrats: Peripherals.'

[295] See *Ep*. 122.3 for Jerome's arguments that there is even sin in heaven, and that Abraham and his sons were not free from sin either.

[296] *Ep*. 122.4.

[297] *Ep*. 122.4. I have changed NPNF's 'lived apart' for 'lived in abstinence' as it better reflects Jerome's *ex consensu abstinueritis uos ab opere nuptiarum.*

[298] See e.g. S. Ellis, "Shedding Light on Late Roman Housing," in *LAA* 3/2 (2006) 283-302.

[299] Compare Augustine, *Ep.* 262 to Ecdicia, where he argues that mutual consent is a prerequisite for marital continence.

are now brother and sister. However, when Jerome moves to describe how they broke their vow, he seems to insinuate that the initiative for the initial vow had been Artemia's, and she is also the one who is (most) willing to repent:

> "[...] after a time your feet sank beneath you as if resting on water and indeed – to speak plainly – gave way altogether. For her part she heard the Lord saying to her as to Moses: 'as for thee stand thou here by me;' (*Ex.* 33) and with the psalmist she said of Him: 'He hath set my feet upon a rock.' (*Ps.* 54) But your house – she went on – having no sure foundation of faith fell before a whirlwind of the devil. Hers however still stands in the Lord, and does not refuse its shelter to you; you can still be joined in spirit to her to whom you were once joined in body. For, as the apostle says, 'he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit' (1 *Cor.* 6) with him."[300]

Jerome makes it clear that it was not Artemia who was to blame, for her feet stood stable on a rock as she trusted in the Lord. Rusticus did not have enough faith and succumbed to the temptations which Jerome ascribes to the devil. This seems to imply that Rusticus had initiated the transgression, and subsequently he failed to respond to his malicious acts in the correct manner, something his 'former wife' Artemia successfully achieved. Nevertheless his acts have not excluded Rusticus from Artemia's 'house of faith', as she stands willing to receive him as a brother in spirit. From a unity of spirit there is however no way back to a unity of body.

Rusticus transgression might not only have to do with his failure to keep to the vow of continence, but might also reflect a deeper longing to remain part of his local aristocratic society. Jerome hints at the Gallic context: the threat foreign armies are imposing on the Empire, coming from northern outskirts they had arrived in Gaul in 406. Tensions in Gaul had risen as the Vandals made their way through Gaul:

> "Moreover, when the fury of the barbarians and the risk of captivity separated you again, you promised with a solemn oath that, if she made her way to the holy places, you would follow her either immediately or later, and that you would try to save your soul now that by your carelessness you had seemed to lose it. Perform, now, the vow which you then made in the presence of God. Human life is uncertain."[301]

[300] *Ep.* 122.4.
[301] *Ep.* 122.4.

This segment seems to contradict most of the above: from here the reader could infer that not transgression had given incentive to Artemia to set out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but rather that barbaric invasions had prompted her to flee the country. Further references are made with allusion to Rusticus's position with regard to worldly affairs, when Jerome ponders how Rusticus perhaps desires "to save the remnants of [his] property and to see the last of [his] friends and fellow-citizens and of their cities and villas."[302] Jerome clearly aims to make Rusticus believe that the world that he knows is about to collapse, and that therefore he better chooses his loyalties well: his faith, rather than worldly possessions, (non-Christian) friends, and citizens of his local community whom he served in his role within the local aristocracy: these are all built on temporal relations and honour. Therefore, "amid the horrors of captivity, in the presence of exulting foes, and in the shipwreck of the province, at least hold fast to the plank of penitence; and remember your fellow-servant who daily sighs for your salvation and never despairs of it."[303] Rusticus is begged to listen to his former wife and follow her example. The emphasis in the earlier passage ties in with this: the oath promised by Rusticus which he now has to fulfil. Jerome hints at Rusticus' double failure: breaking the vow and reluctant to keep the promise, it is important for Rusticus to act swiftly before he dies, for 'human life is uncertain'. Rusticus is commanded to follow the example of Artemia, which recalls Jerome's conclusion of the letter to Julian:

> "Therefore, lest you may be snatched away before you have fulfilled your promise, imitate her whose teacher you ought to have been. For shame! The weaker vessel overcomes the world, and yet the stronger is overcome by it! A woman led in the high enterprise; and yet you will not follow when her salvation leads you to the threshold of the faith!"[304]

This is particularly strong language and quite offensive. Rusticus should have been his wife's teacher but because he refuses to do penance she is now his superior, and therefore she is regarded his teacher-by-example. Jerome presents a dichotomy of faith vs. world: in faith the weaker sex could triumph, albeit maybe only if the stronger-by-nature fails. Only then a woman can 'lead in the high enterprise' and should be followed on the way to salvation. We find this clause in the letter to Julian as well.

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[302] *Ep.* 122.4.
[303] *Ep.* 122.4.
[304] *Ep.* 122.4.

Jerome continues his pseudo-praise of Artemia – which is in fact an implicit, sometimes explicit, attack on Rusticus who is made to feel even worse because a woman has surpassed him; a humiliation referred to before:

> "While you are wandering about your own country (though, indeed, you no longer have a country; that which you once had, you have lost) she is interceding for you in the venerable spots which witnessed the nativity, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, and in the first of which He uttered His infant cry. She draws you to her by her prayers that you may be saved, if not by your own exertions, at any rate by her faith."[305]

From this section one can derive Artemia is indeed in Bethlehem, and that she has visited Jerusalem, too. She has cut off her ties to worldly affairs, and although we might argue based on earlier passages that she went into exile, Jerome seems to argue that she has found her new country: her residence of faith. She is even presented as interlocutor or mediator praying to save her former husband's soul, as Jerome narrates how, like the paralysed man who was brought to Jesus (*Mk.* 2:1-12), "you too – absent in the body but present through her faith – your fellow-servant offers to her Lord and Saviour; and with the Canaanite woman she says of you: 'my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil' (*Mt.* 15)."[306] Jerome argues how "souls are of no sex; therefore I may fairly call your soul the daughter of hers."[307] Again this is a technique which subordinates Rusticus to Artemia, and in this style Jerome continues to denigrate his addressee:

> "For as a mother coaxes her unweaned child which is as yet unable to take solid food; so does she call you to the milk suitable for babes and offer to you the sustenance that a nursing mother gives. Thus shall you be able to say with the prophet: 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments' (*Ps.* 118)."[308]

It is remarkable that the quote from *Psalm* 118 is where the letter abruptly ends. The final section therefore tramples Rusticus's pride as an ultimate attempt to convince him to travel to Bethlehem and to repent. His faith is, according to Jerome, so weak that he is "yet unable to take solid food." This milk-metaphor is based on Paul who writes in 1 *Cor.* 3:2: "I gave you milk to drink, not meat, for you were not able as yet. But neither indeed are you now able; for

[305] *Ep.* 122.4.
[306] *Ep.* 122.4.
[307] *Ep.* 122.4.
[308] *Ep.* 122.4.

you are yet carnal."[309] With this reference, Jerome emphasises how both he and Artemia think that Rusticus has not yet grown strong enough in his faith, and that therefore he can only take light, digestible portions. Rusticus is infantile in his faith: one last strong and patronising condemnation of the addressee.

Conclusion

It is clear that one can observe an increasing patronising tone as we progress through the reading of the three letters. They have been worked through chronologically so indeed there might be a hint of Jerome's authority claim in here. As Jerome's confidence in his authority on exegetical and spiritual matters grows, so does his tone towards advice-seeking aristocrats grow more patronising and less accommodating. However, that would be jumping to conclusions as will become apparent in the next chapter. Although Jerome's confidence in his own authority certainly would have played a role, I believe the 'marginality' of the peripheral aristocrats addressed in this chapter should not be underestimated either. Lucinus, the Spanish aristocrat, might well have had contacts with Paulinus of Nola, and Jerome's style reveals that his assets would not have been inconsiderable. Julian, the aristocrat from a province which had a marginal and obscure reputation in the first place, is regarded as more 'peripheral' and this is reflected in Jerome's tone. Jerome himself originates from Dalmatia and his references to his native province are often not overly positive. The letter to Rusticus, composed ten years after the letter to Lucinus, is most condemnatory and most patronising of all three. Although he, like Lucinus and Julian, had made a vow of marital continence he has failed. Lucinus was on his way to achieve perfection, Julian was insecure as to whether he would be able to achieve it and was therefore not sure if he should try, but Rusticus was a failure. He lost the competition, and what is worse is his seeming unwillingness to compete again and to restore his honour and respect. References to a figure like Pammachius, as we found in the letter to Julian, are not made to Rusticus: he has fallen too low and has to look up to a woman, his former wife, as his leader. In her lies the hope for his transformation.

Further differences that allow for a distinction between 'Roman patrician aristocrats' and 'peripheral aristocrats' are the lack of use of jewellery metaphors, and if used they are used in a different fashion. There are however similarities such as in the forms of address where Jerome applies a language of possession: a technique for clients to claim patrons. In Lucinus

[309] Citation from Douay-Rheims Bible. It is often used in medieval mystical writings, for example William of St Thierry on *Song of Songs*.

and Julian we find similar elements as in the letters to patricians: Jerome's advocacy for charitable acts or almsgiving emphasises the honour and respect gained by such acts of generosity which shows great embeddedness in Roman tradition and one can hardly claim there is any aspect of conversion in this respect. Maybe the only 'conversion' that did happen was the aristocrats' renunciation of the elaborate and extravagant dress code appropriate to their class. In Jerome's address to Julian, however, we have observed that Julian seemingly did not yet adopt this aspect of ascetic life; similarly, in the letter to Lucinus any references to such 'transformation' are lacking. Likewise, Rusticus seems unable to let go of his worldly relations and public appearances. And Artemia's journey east seems to have been triggered by barbarian threats rather than a feeling of guilt. With regard to clothing we have seen references in Jerome's correspondence with the Roman circle, and the instructions for appropriate ascetic appearance can also be found in the letters to young aristocrats to be discussed in the next chapters. By and large, this seems to have been the only true transformation that took place, if we may take Jerome's words for granted that his patron-students did indeed renounce the comfort of costly clothing. However, I do believe one has to approach such apologetic sources with caution.

The singularity of letters supports an argument for the strong ties-weak ties theory, whereby the connection serves the addressees primarily, whilst of course Jerome's own financial dependence or acquisition of new resources should not be underestimated either. Yet, as has so often been the case, scholars have emphasised only Jerome's benefit and his eagerness to gain recognition for his authority on exegetical and ascetic matters. Hereby one has overlooked the interest of the addressees, and how they could have benefitted from such a relation – probably because of the lack of evidence outside of Jerome's correspondence with them. I hope to have been able to awaken a new approach by looking at the addressees' side of the story.

Chapter 5. Young aristocrats: patricians

Now that we have analysed Jerome's correspondence with Roman patricians and peripheral aristocrats, and have established that we could reasonably argue no radical conversion or total transformation took place, we should subsequently scrutinise Jerome's correspondence with young aristocrats. If we cannot speak of true transformation with regard to established aristocrats – but only of some degree of appropriation – maybe the case is different when it concerns addressees not yet fully established in (professional) Roman society. Yet, the letters in these chapters are not only age-capped but they also have a 'minimum' limit, that is to say the addressees have reached the age of adolescence and have already completed a certain level of education. According to Roman legislation they are of marital age although still perceived as young even by Roman standards; to put a number on it we could say between the ages of twelve and twenty. This implies the addressees are not *tabula rasa* but have been brought up within Roman high society to become *socialites* themselves: they are familiar with their classical heritage and social expectations appropriate to their status. In this respect the formative character of the correspondence could be described as transformative, however mostly and only to the extent addressed in the preceding chapters, namely as an offer to become part of the Christian *nobilitas*, or to redefine, reinstate, the(ir) true *nobilitas* now in a Christianised context yet no less Roman. The analysis of letters to young aristocrats allows us to look beyond the rhetoric of patron-client language and behaviourism, to maybe arrive at an idea of genuine instruction and transformation if this existed. The role of instruction might be better assessed here since it is not, or at least is less, obscured by business courtesy. Of course, Jerome would not have excluded the potential of these wealthy youngsters to one day invest in his case. I will illustrate this by segments from the letters that could confirm that Jerome's education did indeed aim to transform and redefine identity, and that in these letters to young aristocrats (this counts for the young 'peripherals' as well) it comes closer to serving that goal than in his correspondence with senior aristocrats. By their very nature they are better able to achieve perfection, for they have not been blemished by marriage (with the exception of Furia).[310] Furthermore, I will discuss examples that relate to the moral or ascetic

[310] It has already been shown that for Jerome married life is a less worthy option, compare for example the often-referenced metaphor from *Mt.* 13:8 of the one-hundred-, sixty-, and thirty-fold fruits, which can also (even!) be found in the ascetically-spoken more 'moderate' Augustine, see Augustine, *De bono coniugali* 22, 27 (CSEL 41), and Id., *De sancta uirginitate* 46 (CSEL 41). See also Jerome's controversy with Jovinian: Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* I. 3, PL 23 coll. 223; and a comprehensive secondary source can be found in David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinian Controversy*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford, 2007).

'transformation' – which could be regarded as the most 'relevant' element when looking into the reconstruction of identity; I will explore which parts of the letters contain instructions how to read and study the Scriptures – which indicate the centrality of the word, not unlike the way literature took a prominent place in Roman culture and upbringing –, and I will show some examples that indicate Jerome's giving of instructions on doctrine and advice how to go about defending or safeguarding orthodox doctrine: a role ascetic aristocrats could take up due to their already highly respected social standing, which they seemingly almost automatically assumed.

The current chapter offers an analysis and discussion of the letters to Demetrias and Furia, who belong to patrician dynasties of the *gens Anicia* and *gens Furia*.[311] In the next chapter I will look at the letters to Nepotian and young Rusticus. Demetrias has decided to become a consecrated virgin; Furia seems to have opted for 'chaste widowhood'. What are the characteristic metaphors and language used, and to what extent can we speak of 'transformation of identity'? I will describe the transformative process toward perfection of ascetic life, wherein a prominent role is granted to wisdom and knowledge. As with all of Jerome's letters, we must bear in mind that these too were meant to be published and circulated. The praises of their pedigrees serve to denote Jerome's sensitivity to status.

To begin, Demetrias and Furia seem to have been 'related' through marriage, not by blood: Furia had married a son of Sextus Petronius Probus. Anicia Faltonia Proba was married to him,[312] so he was Demetrias' grandfather. If Furia had married one of his three sons (see below) we could possibly identify the son by elimination. Olybrius was married to Juliana: the parents of Demetrias. This means that Furia could have been married to either Probus or Probinus. Probinus and Olybrius both had been consul in 395, and according to Jerome

[311] I will only cross-reference the letter to Iulia Eustochium, another lady of patrician descent, maternally belonging to the *gens Aemillia*, paternally to the *gens Iulia*. The reason not to incorporate an analysis of Jerome's majestic *Exhortatio ad Eustochium de uirginitate seruanda* is not only its sheer length but moreover the numerous excellent studies that have been published on this treatise in recent years, of which we should mention Neil Adkin, *Jerome on Virginity. A Commentary on the Libellus de virginitate servanda (Letter 22)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and Yves-Marie Duval (posth.) (Patrick Laurence) *Jérôme, L'Epître 22 à Eustochium' (De uirginitate seruanda), texte, traduction et commentaire*, éditions de l'Abbaye de Bellefontaine (2008).

[312] The illustrious character of the Anician dynasty is complemented by the aunt of Sextus Petronius Probus, Faltonia Betitia Proba, who composed the famous *De Laudibus Christi*, one of her *centones*, for which see Elizabeth Clark, "Faltonia Betitia Proba and her Vergilian Poem: The Christian Matron as Artist," in E. A. Clark (ed.) *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Studies in Women and Religion, 20), (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1986), 124-52. Curran, *Pagan City*¸ 284 stipulates that Proba's *cento* bears witness of the appropriation of Christianity into aristocratic social life, as it expresses the "desire for social stability founded upon the virtues of respect for parents and kin, the sanctity of the home and marital chastity."

Furia's husband had died before 395. In that case her husband must have been Probus.[313] Furthermore, the letter to Demetrias dates from around 414, so there exists a difference of twenty years between the two letters. Demetrias is probably born around 400 CE, whilst Furia must have at least been between ages 15-20 around 394/5, which means that she could have been Demetrias' mother. Therefore her marriage seems most likely to have been to one of Demetrias's uncles, and not to one of her cousins.[314]

From patrician to ascetic patrician: what transformation?

When Jerome is invited to instruct young Demetrias how to become a perfect ascetic virgin,[315] he is very much aware of the origins of the request: the illustrious *gens Anicia,* one of the oldest, wealthiest, and most famous of Roman patrician families. This is immediately clear from the opening lines of the letter: "I am going to write to Demetrias a virgin of Christ and a lady whose birth and riches make her second to none in the Roman world."[316] Furthermore, "her grandmother and her mother are both women of mark, and they have alike authority to command, faith to seek and perseverance to obtain that which they require."[317] As such, Jerome sets the tone of his address, and makes it very clear whom he is dealing with. In chapter three he embarks on an unmistaken *laudatio* of her pedigree, which is 'topped up' by

[313] *PLRE* says that Furia's husband's name is unknown, but if you combine the information from Jerome's *Letters* 54, 123 (to Ageruchia, in which he mentions Furia's marriage to a son of Sex. Petronius Probus), and 130, one could possibly identify the husband. In that case, however, one must wonder why Jerome is so silent about her husband – *Letter* 54 lacks any panegyric – despite him being *gens Anicia,* which he praises so profoundly in his letter to Demetrias.

[314] The reference to Furia as daughter-in-law to 'Probus sometimes consul' must refer to Sex. Petronius Probus and not to one of Olybrius' brothers, since Olybrius and Probinus held the consulate in 395. The letter to Furia dates from that time, and by that time she was a widow. It is therefore rather unlikely that she was the daughter-in-law to one of Demetrias' uncles, although not impossible considered common considerable age differences between aristocratic couples, yet my argument above sounds a little more likely.

[315] Throughout the letter Jerome repeatedly refers to the task which he is summoned to fulfil by her grandmother and mother. Further research on the two noble ladies seeking out the best of advisers known in the Roman Empire that they may offer assistance to instruct young Demetrias, is found in Patrick Laurence, "Proba, Juliana et Démétrias: le christianisme des femmes de la gens Anicia dans la première moitié du V siècle," in *REA* 48/I (2002), 131-163; Andrew Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity," in *Church History* 69 (2000) 719-748, Hagith Sivan, "Anician Women, the Cento of Proba, and Aristocratic Conversion in the Fourth Century," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 47/2 (1993), 147-57; M. Testard, "Demetrias, une disciple de saint Jérôme et la solicitudo animi,"in *BSNAF* (1999) 238-256; Peter Brown, "Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment," in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 183-207; Christine Steiniger, *Die ideale christliche Frau: Virgo-vidua-nupte. Eine studie zum Bild der ideale christlichen Frau bei Hieronymus und Pelagius,* PhD. Diss. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München,(St Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1997); Peter Brown, "The Patrons of Pelagius: the Roman Aristocracy between East and West,"in *Religion and Society,* 208-226; Walter Dunphy, "Saint Jerome and the *Gens Anicia* (Ep. 130 to Demetrias)," in *StudPatr* 18/4 (1990) 139-145; Marie Gonsette, « Les directeurs spirituels de Démétriade. Episode de la lutte anti-Pélagienne, » in *NRT* 9 (1933), 783-801; J. McWilliam, "Letters to Demetrias: A Sidebar in the Pelagian Controversy. <*Helena, amicae mea*>," in *TJT* 16/1 (2000), Toronto, 131-139.

[316] *Ep.* 130.1.

[317] *Ep.* 130.1.

Demetrias' vow, not made redundant: Olybrius is "happier still in his offspring, for the distinguished name of his great grandmother Demetrias has become yet more distinguished now that his daughter Demetrias has vowed herself to perpetual chastity."[318]

Jerome speaks of the "distinguished names of the Probi and of the Olybrii, and that illustrious Anician house, the representatives of which have seldom or never been unworthy of the consulship."[319] In other words, the Anician family are able, even in these days of swiftly turning and overturning powers in a destabilising empire, to stand as a beacon of senatorial pride which roots they claim go back for centuries. Jerome praises Demetrias' virtuous father Olybrius, consul and senator, "whose untimely loss Rome has had to mourn."[320] When Jerome writes how "he was happy in his death," he does not explain this for Christian reasons, rather, the reason he gives is much more mundane: "for it saved him from seeing the ruin of his country."[321] Similar praise is due for Proba, Demetrias's grandmother:

> "Who would believe it? That Proba, who of all persons of high rank and birth in the Roman world bears the most illustrious name, whose holy life and universal charity have won for her esteem even among the barbarians, who has made nothing of the regular consulships enjoyed by her three sons, Probinus, Olybrius, and Probus, - that Proba, I say, now that Rome has been taken and its contents burned or carried off, is said to be selling what property she has and to be making for herself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that these may receive her into everlasting habitations!"[322]

Again, Proba's family is referred to as 'most illustrious' in the Roman world, so illustrious that, according to Jerome, they have won esteem even among the barbarians. This comment however might also hint at the accusations of collaboration made against the *Anicii*,[323] but as Curran has shown these accusations were unsubstantiated and rather the Anician house proved a stronghold against the extreme demands of Alaric and his army, whereas the other senators tried to buy themselves (and the city) out.[324] It is interesting to observe how Jerome

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[318] *Ep.* 130.3.
[319] *Ep.* 130.3.
[320] *Ep.* 130.3, and "he was made consul while still a boy, but the goodness of his character made him more illustrious as a senator."
[321] *Ep.* 130.3.
[322] *Ep.* 130.7. Furia is also supposed to be "making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness" (*Luke* 16:9), see *Ep.* 54.12. See also the discussion in the chapter on 'Peripheral Aristocrats.'
[323] Curran, *Pagan City*, 308-10. Curran argues that "the allegation that she had conspired against Rome with Alaric in 410 is malicious." For more on the Senate's role during Alaric's sieges of the city, see a summary in Curran 304-311.
[324] Curran refers to a passage from Zosimus, *NH* 6.7.4 which reports that "only the family of the Anicii was grieved by what everyone else thought beneficial: they were discontented with the universal prosperity because

seems to connect Proba's incentive to sell property with the fall of Rome, but it is again Curran who contextualises Jerome's reference to this seemingly abrupt and extreme act, stating that during "the sack of the city Proba's community was entered and a number of her virgins were abducted."[325] However, Curran omits from his citation the section in which Jerome claims Proba had 'won esteem even among the barbarians,' and it is only by omitting this crucial passage that Curran, who also only bases his argument on Jerome 130.7, is able to conclude that "the hostility of the regime of Attalus was directed against the Anicii."[326] It is likely that Proba abandoned her Roman properties when the household (or what was left of it) fled the city, but it might be less plausible that she sold everything: rather, they seem to have escaped to their estates in northern Africa with the intention to return to Rome once peace had been restored. This seems indeed to have been the case: as we will see later in the analysis Jerome seems to hint that the addressee and her family are in Rome. There are yet more rumours about the family's arrival in Africa: they seem to have encountered the animosity of the count of Africa, Heraclian.[327] Rather than the decision to sell property for alleged 'good Christian cause' or motives, Jerome argues Proba "made friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,"[328] she might have been blackmailed by the count, which seems the allusion being made a bit further on: "[t]hey may allege that the count who could have taken all would not have been satisfied with a part; and that she could not have questioned his claim since in spite of her rank she was but a slave in his despotic hands."[329] Although, following Curran, this might hint at Attalus' hostility towards Proba back in Rome rather than Heraclian's in Africa, the possible reference to a bad reception in Africa could be supported by the following segment:

> "Proba who had seen from the sea the smoke of her native city and had committed her own safety and that of those dear to her to a fragile boat, found the shores of Africa even more cruel than those which she had left. For one [Heraclian] lay in wait for her of whom it would be hard to say whether he was more covetous or heartless, one who cared for nothing but wine and money, one who under pretence of serving

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they controlled virtually all the city's wealth," in the context of the rest of the Senate agreeing to Alaric's demands and siding with him against Honorius, see Curran, *Pagan City*, 308.

[325] Curran, *Pagan City*, 310.

[326] *Ibid.*, 310.

[327] Heraclian was count of Africa, which means he was the military commander of the North African diocese, see Stewart Irvin Oost, "The Revolt of Heraclian," in *CP* 61/4 (1966), 236-242, at 236.

[328] See discussion in chapter 'Peripheral Aristocracy,' under "Lucinus the Spaniard."

[329] *Ep.* 130.7.

> the mildest of emperors [=Honorius] stood forth as the most savage of all despots."[330]

Whether it was Rome or Africa, what probably matters most for Jerome is that his epistolary eloquence is noted. With many references to classical literature Jerome expresses his sympathy for the sufferings of the Anician family at the hands of the promoted military commander.[331] However, Jerome's classical ornamentation and possibly slightly exaggerated rhetoric might be questioned for it is only in his letter where we find an account of the apparent savage management of Heraclian. As Stewart Irwin Oost puts it "Jerome, like his beloved Cicero, could rather easily be carried away by the force of his own rhetoric, and the silence of other contemporaries, notably Augustine, on the subject of these peccadilloes inspires some doubt of the literal veracity of Jerome's impassioned account."[332] Nevertheless, Jerome seems to apply such strong rhetoric to accommodate the addressees, and it serves to contrast and thus emphasise the glory of the Anician house. Above all, what can be deducted from this is that pedigree did very much matter, and especially the one of the *gens Anicia*.

That the Anician family are now consulting Jerome where before, when he was working in Rome, he was not able to 'trophy' them, is an important fact to bear in mind.[333] It might to some extent explain his almost crawling flattery dripping with exaggeration. Notwithstanding the obvious rhetoric there are hints in those glorifications which inform us about the social standing of the addressee,[334] and which could indicate Jerome's levels of appropriation when corresponding with patricians old and young. So indeed, Demetrias from the *gens Anicia* is 'second to none' for their illustrious family knew many consuls, proconsuls, and prefects, and owned estates in Italy and North Africa. The Anicians' wealth and fame were vast enough for Jerome to quite aptly proclaim their noble stature: they owned most of Rome.[335] As such, they ranked higher than Paula's family, and although Furia was of noble descent too, there was none in Jerome's Roman circle quite like the *Anicii*. Jerome records that Furia, born out of the marriage of Titiana and Furius, belonged to the *gens Furia*

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[330] *Ep.* 130.7.
[331] Heraclian was made consul, see "The Revolt of Heraclian," 236. See also Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (vol 3), 149.
[332] Stewart Irwin Oost, "The Revolt of Heraclian," 237.
[333] In *Ep.* 130.7 Jerome gives evidence of his former unacquaintedness with the family: "hitherto I have said nothing about her. I have never either in the lifetime of her husband or since his decease praised her for the antiquity of her family or for the extent of her wealth and power, subjects which others might perhaps have improved in mercenary speeches."
[334] One could say 'addressees', plural, because the first half of the letter is almost chiefly directed at Demetrias' mother and grandmother.
[335] See Zosimus' quote above.

who claimed to be descendants of the famous Furius Camillus (400 BCE),[336] otherwise known as the 'second founder of Rome'.[337] This is a highly questionable claim but fits the trend to link back one's pedigree to Republican times. Besides Furia's apparent relation to Demetrias, she was also related to Paula's family:[338] her brother Furius (d. 381 CE) had married Blesilla, Paula's daughter (d. 384 CE). Although Jerome praises Furia's pedigree, he does not do so to the same extent as he praises the Anician dynasty. There is only one section in the letter where he obviously speaks words of praise about Furia's mother:

> "Take rather for model – I cannot repeat it too often – your saintly mother, whose ardent love for Christ comes into my mind whenever I remember her, and with it the pallor caused by fasting, the alms she gave to the poor, the respect she showed to God's servants, the humility of her heart and dress, and the constant restraint she put upon her tongue."[339]

Yet this praise is not part of a stand-alone *laudatio,* but rather it appears in a context where Furia is instructed how to behave as a chaste widow. Furthermore, even though Jerome portrays Titiana as a model, he does not speak of her as *exemplum,* but he uses the imperative *imitare*: the activity and initiative lies therefore with Furia rather than that it puts the focus on Titiana whose role is passive and subsidiary instead of at the centre of attention one would expect a model to be in a *laudatio.* She seemingly does embody all aspects of ascetic perfection, save the remarkable absence of knowledge. The segment also needs to be judged in its context of the preceding passage in which Jerome criticises Furia's father's love as not 'according to knowledge;'[340] it also offers a contrast with the section before in which Jerome attacks women and monks.[341] On the other hand, if we return to the opening of the letter, Titiana's merit is recognised when Jerome states that "she has succeeded in winning afresh in her only daughter that which she herself when living possessed."[342] However, it is through her prayers when she is already dead that her 'wishes have been granted:' there is no active role for her as a living person.

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[336] *Ep.* 54.1.
[337] Plutarch, *Life of Camillus*.
[338] See for example *Ep.* 54.2: 'I say nothing of Paula and Eustochium, the fairest flowers of your stock.' This might be read as an indication of their relatedness.
[339] *Ep.* 54.6.
[340] *Ep.* 54.6. Note Jerome's possessive vocabulary: he *allows* that Furia's father loves her, yet he denies that it is according to knowledge that he loves her. Knowledge here refers to knowledge of faith, of the Scriptures, but according to Jerome her father lacks such wisdom. As such, he simultaneously criticises her father's Christianity.
[341] For Jerome's critique on monks, see 'Young aristocrats: peripherals,' where the segment from *Ep.* 54 is quoted.
[342] *Ep.* 54.1.

Jerome's sensitivity for the highest level of Roman nobility is reflected in his incessant praises, and this is a point where one can establish that his language to patricians genuinely does differ from language used in correspondence with peripherals, as we shall encounter below. Yet these gradations seem also apparent in his address to different 'ranks' within the patrician class, although it may well be that it reveals some resentment Jerome feels towards Furia's father, as he states how he speaks "of him with all respect," yet he subjugates his rank to his faith: "not because he is a patrician and of consular rank, but because he is a Christian."[343] Although he praises Olybrius in similar fashion, the segment in the letter to Furia appears more as an aside than a *laudatio.* Evidence which would support this suspicion of Jerome's 'resentment' can be found in what follows: "let him fulfil his Christian obligations and rejoice that he has begotten a daughter for Christ and not for the world." Furthermore, "nay, rather let him grieve that you have lost your virginity in vain, and have failed to reap any of the fruits of marriage."[344] Apart from the latter as further evidence Furia apparently did not have children – and as such Fremantle and Wright were not correct – it criticises the father's unwillingness to see the glory that is brought to his house by Furia's option for the ascetic life. Her father is further criticised in the description Jerome gives of him:

> "His hair is grey, his knees shake, his teeth are falling out, his forehead is disfigured by wrinkles, death stands near at his door, and the pyre is being marked out for him close by. Whether we like it or not, we are old men now. Let him provide for himself the provision he needs for his long journey. Let him take with him that which otherwise he must reluctantly leave behind; nay, let him send before him to heaven what, if he does not take care, will be appropriated by earth."[345]

Jerome seems to feel no restraint to describe the degenerating mortal body of the father to young Furia. It could possibly be read metaphorically as the decay and demise of the old but valued Roman tradition and society in favour of the new Christian era that is to replace it. Jerome notes that Furia's father should help his daughter and learn from her, "like he once learned from his wife."[346] Jerome is probably alluding to his adoption of the Christian faith, and the need for him to master Christian virtues. Death will soon claim him, but there is still

[343] *Ep.* 54.6.
[344] *Ep.* 54.6.
[345] *Ep.* 54.14.
[346] *Ep.* 54.14. It reveals that it were probably the women who brought Christianity to the Furian house, and the father gave in.

hope for his properties if he were to donate them to the Church: properties are equally temporal and subject to decay, therefore it is better to spend them and donate to the good Christian cause rather than to lose them indefinitely. The gracious act of donation will result in rewards in the afterlife. Furia's father's behaviour stands in stark contrast to what Jerome claims how Olybrius would welcome Demetrias' consecration as a virgin, although he had died before his daughter made that decision and thus it is merely Jerome's idealised speculation.[347]

There thus seems to be a difference in approach, attitude, and language when Jerome writes to these young ladies and includes references to their parents and family. Likewise, there appears to be a difference in approach to the respective ladies. Whereas Furia's decision not to remarry is praised, she is not glorified to the same extent as Demetrias. True, it was on her own initiative that she wrote to Jerome, whereas Demetrias is written for on behalf of her mother and grandmother: this alone would give Jerome ample reason to make an effort to praise the Anician house, where on the other hand Furia acts individually and her decision does not seem to be connected to parental influence, save from the apparent good example her mother and some ancestors might have given (yet this reads more as an *a posteriori* modelling rather than them having played an active part in Furia's eventual choice).[348] The glorifications of Demetrias surpass the mild-sounding praises of Furia, and if we analyse the text carefully, one even observes remarkable theological statements which serve to exalt the young virgin:

> "How high an esteem I entertain for this virgin, nay more what a miracle of virtue I think her, [you may judge by the fact that being occupied in the explanation of Ezekiel's description of the temple – the hardest piece in the whole range of scripture – and finding myself in that part of the sacred edifice wherein is the Holy of Holies and the altar of incense,] I have chosen by way of a brief rest to pass from that altar to this, that upon it I might consecrate to eternal chastity a living offering acceptable to God and free from all stain."[349]

Besides calling Demetrias a 'miracle of virtue' even though she had only recently been consecrated a virgin,[350] he adds that she might be a 'living offering […] free from all stain.' The latter statement is most peculiar since Jerome is hereby presenting an argument in favour

[347] See *Ep.* 130.3 quoted above.
[348] For Furia's initiative, see the opening of the letter, *Ep.* 54.1.
[349] *Ep.* 130.2: See also the parallel in Jerome's letter to Rusticus, *Ep.* 125.18, 20.
[350] Which Jerome admits in the subsequent line. The bishop in question was Augustine of Hippo, since the family had fled Rome after Alaric's army had conquered the city, and they had retreated to their estate in North Africa.

of the possibility to be completely perfect and free from sin: a statement which sounds favourable to one of the ideas advocated by Pelagius, a competing spiritual mentor who was also asked to address young Demetrias, and whose services had been hired before by the *Anicii*.[351] The pertinent question is whether Jerome makes such a statement because he is aware of the stance the *Anicii* take in the debate and thus wishes to accommodate them, or if he is simply lost in a trance of glorification.

When he describes Demetrias' consecration by Augustine, his wording is equally remarkable and the description does not seem to match the poverty and poor physical appearance that are normally associated with the ascetic life:

> "She stood as a queen at [Augustine's] right hand, her clothing of wrought gold and her raiment of needlework. Such was the coat of many colours, that is, formed of many different virtues, which Joseph wore; and similar ones were of old the ordinary dress of king's daughters."[352]

Jerome freely borrows from the Psalms to describe Demetrias' almost divine appearance (*Ps.* 45:9, 13, 14). Here is not a hint of renunciation of worldly ornamentation or dress traceable. Of course, this will change when Jerome opens his rhetorical discourse on the ideals of ascetic life, but to present an observation as the above in such favourable wording could possibly hint at a dichotomy between the theoretical ideal and its practical manifestation. A parallel can be found in the letter to Furia, who is instructed to wear Joseph's coat. This dichotomy comes to the fore in the following passage too:

> "Her strength of mind almost passes belief. Though she had silks and jewels freely at her disposal, and though she was surrounded by crowds of eunuchs and serving-women, a bustling household of flattering and attentive domestics, and though the daintiest feasts that the abundance of a large house could supply were daily set before her; she preferred to all these severe fasting, rough clothing, and frugal living."[353]

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[351] Pelagius advocates the theoretical possibility to be free from sin, but admits that this has to be considered in the theoretical realm and he has not met anyone in real life who meets these standards, but that is no reason to exclude the possibility altogether. Pelagius is unfortunately often misinterpreted here, mainly due to a malicious (or half-hearted) reading by Augustine. For a fine reflection on the presence of these ideas in Jerome and Augustine, see Stuart Squires dissertation, *Reassessing Pelagianism: Augustine, Cassian, and Jerome on the Possibility of a Sinless Life*, Ph.D diss. Catholic University of America, 2013. See also his "Jerome on Sinlessness: a Via Media between Augustine and Pelagius," in *The Heytrop Journal* (2013).

[352] *Ep.* 130.2.

[353] *Ep.* 130.4.

Jerome's comments on Demetrias' clothing here contradict his earlier description at her consecration, although she might have dressed up for the occasion. The comment on servants however deserves attention.[354] It recalls parallels with the letter to Eustochium who is advised to choose her servants well.[355] Similarly, Furia should be careful when it comes to the selection of domestic servants: they could have malicious intentions and a deceitful nature.[356] Furthermore, we observe how Jerome nuances the otherwise often-advocated ideal of total renunciation of wealth when he connects it with widowhood in his letter to Furia: "let virtue take what was meant for extravagance: no woman who means to scorn marriage need fear poverty."[357] Money which would have otherwise been wasted on excessive luxuries should be used for almsgiving. However, Jerome asserts that Furia, or any widow, should not give away all that she has, but she should distribute it wisely so that she does 'not need to fear poverty.' She can keep hold of as much as is necessary to protect her from being forced into a second marriage: she can keep what is needed in order to be self-sufficient; anything left can be spent on care for the poor. On the other hand, as we learn a bit further on, one should not be overly concerned with one's property. Jerome refers to young virgins and their concern for their properties, including servants, who "say in their lustful moments: 'my little estate is being scattered, my footman has spoken insultingly to me, my maid pays no attention to my orders. Who will appear for me in public? Who will be responsible for my land-tax? Who will educate my little children and bring up my house-slaves?' Shame on them!"[358] First, this passage is overflowing with poor rhetoric, because Jerome contradicts himself: speaking of virgins, he refers to their little children, something that is rendered physically impossible, although some argue there has existed one exception to this rule. That notwithstanding, Jerome clearly points to the excuses they seek to validate a second marriage. Ultimately, these material concerns are really but a cover-up for their desire for sensual pleasure. In contrast, so Jerome argues, if a widow (or virgin) is wealthy enough, surely there is no need for them to enter into marriage: "if you are not spurred by lust, surely it is the height of madness to prostitute yourself like a harlot merely to increase your wealth, and for a paltry and passing gain to pollute that precious chastity which might endure forever."[359] Jerome attacks the well-known aristocratic motives for marriages as always seeking economic and political

[354] Compare the reference to maidservants in 130.13.
[355] *Ep.* 22.29.
[356] *Ep.* 54.6; 54.5.
[357] *Ep.* 54.14.
[358] *Ep.* 54.15.
[359] *Ep.* 54.15.

benefits.[360] This is further stipulated in Jerome's rhetorical laments that the second husband is only after his new wife's wealth.[361]

Another element irrevocably present in the text is competition, and parallels are to be found in the letters to the other young aristocrats as well as to their more senior relatives. In this letter to Demetrias however, Jerome emphasises his own contribution that will lead to victory in the ascetic race. With metaphors from the military, the races, and athletics he arrives to the conclusion that although "the grandmother and the mother have planted, it is I that water and the Lord that gives the increase (1 *Cor.* 3:6)."[362] Competition is combined with winning respect and being glorified, as we can deduce from the following segment:

> "My words are too weak. Every church in Africa danced for joy. The news reached not only the cities, towns, and villages but even the scattered huts. Every island between Africa and Italy was full of it, the glad tidings ran far and wide, disliked by none. Then Italy put off her mourning and the ruined walls of Rome resumed in part their golden splendour; for they believed the full conversion of their foster child to be a sign of God's favour towards them."[363]

Jerome does not blush to accredit Demetrias with single-handedly comforting Italy's mourning for the loss of Rome by her decision to become a consecrated virgin. Her 'conversion' adorned the ruined walls of Rome with golden splendour of old. As such he makes her into a patroness of the city, by virtue of her vocation, and draws a comparison to Marcellus who would fall into her shadow. Demetrias' fame has not only spread in Rome but spread throughout the churches in Africa and to the coasts of the East. In contrast, had she been married, "but one province would have known of you; while as a Christian virgin you are known to the whole world."[364] The absolute and continuous glorification of Demetrias[365]

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[360] This explains the young age at which noble girls were betrothed. Apart from first marriages at a very young age, it was also the chief reason to enter into a second marriage, and sometimes even for a divorce if another potential marriage bond would pop up which would bring more prosperity to families involved. For parallels, see Curran, *Pagan City*, 269 who refers to Albina's efforts to arrange a second marriage for Marcella. He claims Albina had attempted to disinherit her daughters, although this is based on a problematic reading of Jerome. It would have been unlikely if not impossible for Albina to have disinherited her offspring (see introduction), although the concern with regard to dowries was understandable because, as Curran, 270-1 suggests, "even part of the property, dowry, or *donation* from a wealthy senatorial marriage would have been considerable and Marcella came from a consular family." Furia boasts similar pedigree, so we might expect a similarly sized dowry. However, she would only receive the independent executive rights once her father would die, for if a marriage ended either by death of, or divorce from the husband, a daughter would go back to her family and remain subject to the authority of the *pater familias*.

[361] *Ep.* 54.15.

[362] *Ep.* 130.2.

[363] *Ep.* 130.6.

[364] *Ep.* 130.6.

is much stronger than in letters to senior aristocrats. It seems rather unique, since the letter to Furia appears to lack such incessant *laudatio*, and the letters to 'peripherals' Nepotian and young Rusticus hardly receive any glorification on their pedigree at all. Jerome's address to Eustochium, but particularly his references to her in other letters, comes closest to the praise Demetrias receives.

Despite the apparent continuation of social standing, on the other hand a transformation did take place which did not conform with Roman aristocratic customs. Namely, Demetrias chose to call off her wedding. On this aspect the situation for young aristocrats is different from the one for their seniors: as we have seen in the previous chapters, letters are addressed to aristocrats who had a family and/or had been married. They had conformed to Roman expectations to build a family and continue their aristocratic lineage. Even young Furia had agreed to what was expected of her. Furia had contemplated the idea of a second marriage, but eventually decided not to and would instead devote herself to a chaste life, taking "care of her young children and aged father."[366] If Wright and Fremantle are correct, what reconciles Furia's choice with Roman standards is that she had provided the family with offspring; thus it was acceptable and deemed respectable for her to refrain from a second marriage and live as a chaste widow. Jerome indicates how many of her ancestors had chosen this option.[367] However, if *PLRE* is correct, and we follow the second part of Jerome's exhortation in chapter four, Furia would end the bloodline of the *gens Furia*; her brother

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[365] See for example *Ep*. 130.6. Chapter 6 is also full of classical quotations (Cicero, Virgil etc.) as is most of the rest of the letter.

[366] See footnote in Wright (Loeb), 228, n. 1. See also the introduction to the translation of the letter to Furia in NPNF. *PLRE* on the other hand claims that Furia had remained childless, basing itself on *Ep.* 54.4.6. Yet again from Jerome we learn that presumably Furia might have had children, as in the opening of chapter four we read: "What troubles matrimony involves you have learned in the marriage state itself; you have been surfeited with quails' flesh even to loathing; your mouth has been filled with the gall of bitterness; you have expelled the indigestible and unwholesome food; you have relieved a heaving stomach. Why will you again swallow what has disagreed with you?" The 'gall of bitterness' could refer to morning sickness in pregnancy, and 'relieved a heaving stomach' to childbirth. However, in the subsequent verses he seems to argue to the contrary, words which we could interpret as Furia being childless: "Do you fear extinction for the line of Camillus if you do not present your father with some little fellow to crawl upon his breast and slobber his neck? As if all who marry have children!" (this is probably the segment on which *PLRE's* argument is based).

[367] *Ep*. 54.1: "It is a high privilege of your family that from the time of Camillus few or none of your house are described as contracting second marriages. […] you would not be so much deserving of praise if you persist in widowhood, as you would be worthy of execration if you, a Christian, failed to keep a custom which heathen women observed for so many generations." Similarly, according to Jerome Furia's mother Titiana lived a life of continence in marriage, as he records how Furia now desires "to be after marriage what [her] mother Titiana of saintly memory was for many a year in marriage," *Ep.* 54.1. There is a parallel to be found in Jerome's *Contra Helvidium*, particularly chapters 20-22, where he sets out on the disadvantages of marriage, with all the obligations it entails (PL 23.213). As Curran, *Pagan City*, 294, also stipulates, Jerome illustrates the married life of an "elite bride. She was found in her house surrounded by the burdens of domestic administration. These included seeing to slaves, cooks, and weavers. Her children would receive an education which she would want to oversee. Her husband would want to entertain his friends at home and she would be forced not only to provide for them but also, perhaps, to put up with the indignity of having half-naked dancing girls in the house."

Furius had not given the family its desired offspring either.[368] As such we could speak of a transformation taking place which goes against Roman standards. If in this case Christ is made the heir of Furia's great riches, it would grant the family great respect but at the same time it meant the Furian house would lose a substantial part of its assets, an aspect which would damage rather than enhance reputation, for the entire institution of marriage in aristocratic circles was designed to increase wealth through connecting the most prosperous pedigrees. It remains to be seen how severely Furia's vow to chastity, if she were childless, would have affected the family's heritage. Furia's father was still alive and as such Furia would have been subject to *patria potestas*, and in addition Furia is a female child: if she had children, they would be heirs primarily to her husband's family, and enjoy no such priority among the heirs of their maternal family.[369] Jerome nevertheless seems to discard this, as he retorts:

> "To whom are you going to leave your great wealth? To Christ who cannot die. Whom shall you make your heir? The same who is already your Lord. Your father will look sad, but Christ will rejoice; your family will grieve, but the angels will give you their congratulations. Your father may do what he likes with his own estates: you are not his to whom you have been born, but His to whom you have been born again, and who has ransomed you at a great price, even with His own blood."[370]

Jerome seems to allude to the concept of *patria potestas* when he acknowledges that Furia's father 'may do what he likes with his own estates.' It could also hint at the (theoretical) possibility of Furia being disinherited. The new hereditary rights Jerome proposes read as an undermining of the stability and survival of Roman aristocratic society as it implies that properties should be given to the Church. Furthermore, there appears to be a parallel with Paula who had been heavily criticised by her family for wasting her wealth to Christian pursuits, in particularly funding Jerome's campaigns.[371] The section also emphasises the emancipated aspect of women not being their family's or father's property anymore, and therefore free to make their own choices. This notwithstanding, Jerome's rhetoric would not hold against Roman legislation. Therefore, Jerome's elaborate speculations about Furia's

[368] His marriage to Blesilla had also been left childless, see Jerome's eulogy on Blesilla, *Ep.* 39. Property would normally have passed on to him and, after his death, his children, but Furius had died ten years earlier. The question thus remains if Furia would therefore have inherited all of her father's property.
[369] Judith Evan Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002), 316 n. 1 and 2.
[370] *Ep.* 54.4.
[371] This is alluded to in the eulogy on Blesilla, *Ep.* 39 to Paula, and in the epitaph on Paula, *Ep.* 108.

inheritance can mostly be dismissed as rhetoric, and possibly personal interest in Furia's financial support.

The case appears a little different for Demetrias, Rusticus, Nepotian, and with them Eustochium: they are remarkable in their refusal of their aristocratic 'obligations'. Demetrias' marriage had already been arranged, and she seems to have pulled out last minute, which is endorsed by Jerome who writes "when her wedding day was now close at hand and when a marriage chamber was being got ready for the bride and bridegroom, […] [Demetrias] is said to have nerved herself."[372] However, it is more likely the betrothal was called off rather than the actual wedding.[373] Nonetheless, Jerome sets out to imagine the nightly monologue Demetrias must have had with herself. Freedom, courage, and confidence are prerequisites to enable Demetrias to decide for a chaste life. "If men's examples leave you unmoved," Jerome argues, "at least gather courage and confidence from the blessed martyr Agnes who vanquished the temptations of both youth and of a despot and by her martyrdom hallowed the very name of chastity."[374] This example allows for a comparison with Demetrias's life for she too had allegedly 'suffered at the hands of a despot.' Not only had she recently had to escape Rome, Jerome attests "you have seen yourself a prisoner and your chastity not in your own power. You have shuddered at the fierce looks of your enemies; you have seen with secret agony the virgins of God ravished." These illustrations seem to hint that Demetrias, along with other female members of the household (and maybe other Roman women) had been threatened by rape at the hands of the barbarians.[375] However, the demise and destruction of Rome, and the Anicians' subsequent forced exile, are an extra incentive to opt for the ascetic life now that the world that they had known had been led to ruin. As Jerome laments, "your city, once the capital of the world, is now the grave of the Roman people," and further, "will you on the shores of Libya, yourself an exile, accept an exile for a husband?"[376] Jerome seems to realise the radical implications that come with Demetrias' choice as he writes "the preservation of your chastity involves a martyrdom of its own."[377] This radical choice comes

[372] *Ep.* 130.5.
[373] The highest Roman nobility would marry out their daughters at a very young age so as to secure the best match from an economic and political perspective. Noble girls were thus likely to be betrothed to (much older) noble men from the age of 12 or 14. The betrothal however secured the match, but the actual marriage would often not take place until the girl was old enough to have children and have reasonable chance to survive, see Elaine Fantham, *Julia August, the Emperor's Daughter: Women in the Ancient World* (Routledge, 2006), see also Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford, 1991).
[374] *Ep.* 130.5.
[375] Curran mentions how Proba's circle had been attacked, see above.
[376] *Ep.* 130.5.
[377] *Ep.* 130.5.

to life in the transformation of attire and jewellery, the commonplace metaphor employed by Jerome:

> "[…] she cast away from her as so many hindrances all her ornaments and worldly attire. Her precious necklaces, costly pearls, and glowing gems she put back in their cases. Then dressing herself in a coarse tunic and throwing over herself a still coarser cloak she came in at an unlooked for moment, threw herself down suddenly at her grandmother's knees, and with tears and sobs showed her what she really was."[378]

Notice how Jerome does not claim Demetrias has cast away her jewellery nor sold it, she seems to have merely 'put [them] back in their cases'. This is a less radical statement than if she would have sold them or simply would have thrown them away. Demetrias' decision and apparent transformation also met, so Jerome, with mixed feelings from her mother and grandmother, who, although "completely overcome for joy," "were a prey to many conflicting emotions."[379] Yet, "now a virgin was to make a noble house nobler still by her virginity."[380] Here we encounter again Jerome's 'more-noble-still' claim which we have met in relation to Pammachius; a claim which presupposes nobility. By her decision, Jerome claims Demetrias's mother and grandmother thought "she had found […] a way to benefit her family and to lessen the calamity of the ruin of Rome."[381] It is a remarkable statement that Demetrias' vocation could 'lessen the calamity of the ruin of Rome.' Furthermore,

> "the example set by their patroness and lady was followed by a host of both clients and servants. Virginity was warmly espoused in every house and although those who made profession of it were as regards the flesh of lower rank than Demetrias they sought one reward with her, the reward of chastity."[382]

This suggests that conversion of the *pater* or *mater familias* often meant the entire housekeeping staff would have converted too. Hence, this could also have been the case in the Furian household. Jerome speaks of Titiana as if she had been a Christian, and he also hints that Furia's father might have been Christian 'to some extent.'[383] In contrast, however, in the letter to Furia we do not observe this 'add-on' aspect of asceticism as something which

[378] *Ep.* 130.5.
[379] *Ep.* 130.5.
[380] *Ep.* 130.6.
[381] *Ep.* 130.6.
[382] *Ep.* 130.6.
[383] *Ep.* 54.6, where the ascetic description which includes a comment on her 'ardent love for Christ' identifies Titiana as Christian (quoted above); in the same section Furia's father is identified as Christian (quoted above).

complements and increases nobility and the nobility of the family, but rather Jerome seems to point more to the implications of a shifting emphasis from family tradition to religious affiliation. For example, he does not deny Furia should honour her father, but he subjugates this duty to the religious respect she has to pay to God.[384] Jerome implies that family relations are made inferior to the relation with a Christian's 'true Father' and 'true family'. He even radicalises this apparent requirement by quoting *Psalm* 44:12, when he asserts that "great is the reward for forgetting a parent: 'the king shall desire thy beauty'."[385] The ideal for Furia, Jerome argues, would be to consider herself a daughter of God instead, for "what can be fairer than a soul which is called daughter of God and seeks no outward adorning? She believes in Christ and enriched by this ambition she goes to her Spouse, having her Lord for Bridegroom."[386] This illustrates how Jerome regards deification as the ultimate aim of ideal ascetic conduct, for it is aimed at union with God, described in nuptial language. That God has given Furia Christ as bridegroom, a bridegroom who is eternal, who cannot die, is offered in contrast to Furia's father who failed in this respect, as Jerome retorts: "where now is the husband whom he gave you? Even if he had been loveable and good, death would have ended everything and this decease would have broken the fleshly bond. Seize the opportunity, I beg, and make a virtue of necessity."[387] In the context of Roman marital tradition this is an interesting turn as it implies that not the woman is betrothed to the man, but vice versa. Although it should not be neglected that a marriage bond in patrician circles was primarily aimed at economic and political benefit for both parties rather than romance, the wife would still join her husband's household and was given a dowry, which implies she was given in marriage, and not the husband. It shows to which extents Jerome is willing to stretch for narratives to serve his rhetorical goals, rather than that it would reflect transformed reality.

What is most important though is how Demetrias is portrayed as 'example.' If a patroness would dedicate her life to Christ then it was assumed that her personal servants would so, too. Evidence which would support this can be found in Jerome's eulogy on Paula, where he attests of the servants that had accompanied Paula and Eustochium to Bethlehem and who now live with them in their monastery, albeit in separate wings.[388] Both the last

[384] *Ep.* 54.3.
[385] *Ep.* 54.3. We find a parallel in Jerome's letter to Salvina, *Ep.* 79, where he speaks of 'forgetting' in the context of Salvina's deceased husband. In the letter to Furia it is presented in the context of a parental relation, which presumably has graver implications, again because of the stress on honour and respect for ancestors according to the Roman tradition.
[386] *Ep.* 54.3.
[387] *Ep.* 54.6.
[388] *Ep.* 108.20 where Jerome mentions how the members of Paula's monastery in Bethlehem were divided in quarters classified according to social status. It reveals how the traditional high social distinction continues to be

observation and the above segment indicate that social rank did not disappear with such conversion: 'in the flesh' Demetrias was still their superior and this was not surpassed, yet spiritually they aimed for the 'same reward.'

Appearance

After Jerome has concluded the glorification of her pedigree, he once again turns to the addressee herself, stating that "in what remains of my letter I shall direct all my words to Demetrias herself, whose holiness ennobles her as much as her rank."[389] Jerome puts pedigree and vocation (holiness) on a par: he does not subjugate one to the other, as is often argued.[390] It neatly bridges the first seven chapters of the letter to Demetrias (which take up almost half of the entire letter), which are an undeniable glorification of the pedigree, status, wealth, and nobility of the Anician family. The other 'half' of the letter is more 'personally' directed to Demetrias and deals with ascetic instruction, although with constant status awareness. The beginning and end of this section of the letter are the same. In 130.7 Jerome writes "love to occupy your mind with the reading of scripture."[391] Likewise, his concluding words in chapter twenty sound as follows:

> "Love the Holy Scriptures, and wisdom will love you. Love wisdom, and it will keep you safe. Honour wisdom, and it will embrace you round about. Let the jewels on your breast and in your ears be the gems of wisdom. Let your tongue know no theme but Christ, let no sound pass your lips that is not holy, and let your words always reproduce that sweetness of which your grandmother and your mother set you the example. Imitate them, for they are models of virtue."[392]

This passage reflects on scriptures, wisdom, examples, and imitation: building blocks in the construction of a new identity. Although Jerome starts with an emphasis on the Holy Scriptures, he stresses wisdom four times in the initial sequence. He combines wisdom with love, safety, and beauty, even expressed in physical language such as jewels on her breast and in her ears, equating those with gems of wisdom, written in a letter to a fourteen-year-old

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preserved. The continued use and employment of maidservants as referred to earlier also testifies of this, and put together we get a better picture of the alleged 'transformed reality' of Christian ascetic life: ascetic elements might have been appropriated into aristocratic life, but it was still very much Roman aristocratic status life.

[389] *Ep.* 130.7.

[390] Salzman, for example, argues pedigree becomes subjugated to piety, yet nobility is still presupposed, see discussion in the chapters on Pammachius.

[391] *Ep.* 130.7.

[392] *Ep.* 130.20.

lady.[393] To the physical sense, he adds tongue, sound, lips, and words, all related to learning and tradition (in the persons of her grandmother and mother).[394] Also noticeable is that he portrays both the bodily physics, teaching, and learning as areas which are potential dangers, but with wisdom applied providing safety. Instead of removing adornment or silencing Demetrias, he points to a transformed understanding of her worldly status. A similar 'transformation' or transition is found in Jerome's address to Furia, where he tells her:

> "Change your love of necklaces and jewels and silk dresses to a desire for scriptural knowledge. Enter the land of promise that flows with milk and honey. Eat weathen flour and oil, dress like Joseph in coats of many colours, let your ears, like Jerusalem's (*Ezek.* 16:12), be pierced by the word of God, so that the precious grains of new corn may hang from them."[395]

Scriptural knowledge and 'wisdom' (Demetrias) are the metaphorical jewels in which physical jewels such as necklaces and earrings are to be transformed. The word of God will pierce the ear: a pierced ear which would normally be adorned with beautiful hanging earrings, will now hold 'precious grains of new corn,' which is a metaphor for the seeds of faith which are harvested through study and knowledge of Scripture. However, the reference to Joseph is remarkable, for as we have read elsewhere, Furia must forgo her silk dresses, yet now Jerome advises her to wear 'coats of many colours.' This reads as a contrast with the coarse tunic Jerome usually expects his students to wear, although Demetrias' outfit at her consecration had also been exquisite. Joseph's coat, namely, signifies a special relationship

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[393] It recalls parallels with the metaphorical use of jewellery in Jerome's letters to the senior aristocrats of his Roman circle. Parallels also appear in the letters to Eustochium and Furia.

[394] There is a similar physical description of Eustochium, 'the eloquence of her holy lips', in the letter to Furia, a passage which I discuss below, and in the same letter Jerome gives the example of the Biblical Deborah, whom he describes as "steeped with the fragrance of the Holy Spirit, and with prophetic lips she gathered the secret juices of the nectar", see *Ep.* 54.17. Again this shows how Jerome's language is highly physical and even erotic. However, in case of Deborah and probably also Eustochium as Patricia Cox Miller has already argued, Jerome can permit himself such erotic language for it implies no imminent threat to him: these are figurative, literal bodies and as such they are safe for they only exist on paper, see Cox Miller, "The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome's Letter to Eustochium," in *JECS* 1/1 (1993), 21-45. On the other hand, again in Furia, Jerome gives the example of Marcella, very much a living example: "But why should I go back to ancient times and quote instances of female virtue from books? Before your own eyes in Rome, where you are living now, you have many women whom you might well choose for your model. I will not take them individually lest I should seem to flatter: you may be content with one, the saintly Marcella, who while she maintains the glory of her family has given us an example of the Gospel life," *Ep.* 54.18. Yet Jerome does not give an elaborate erotic description of Marcella like he does for Deborah or Eustochium. Although one might argue that Eustochium is also still a living example, yet according to Cox Miller she has been textualised into this ideal virgin. One could interpret Jerome's description of Demetrias in a similar way. Another parallel is the transformation of Marcella and other prominent ladies from historical figures into a iconic symbols, see Cain, *Letters*, 98, n. 122.

[395] *Ep.* 54.11. Parallel in Demetrias 130.20 as quoted above.

and it had caused or increased envy among his brothers.[396] The Hebrew word, כְּתֹנֶת פַּסִּים, with which Jerome must have been familiar,[397] could identify the coat as colourful, made of precious materials such as silk or fine wool, and moreover: it seems to signify nobility.[398] Therefore, it only emphasises Furia's noble descent, and the relation she now has with God through the study of Scripture only emphasises this more. Jerome's vivid representation of this status indicates his thorough understanding and knowledge of it, and at the same time it expresses his great deal of interest into this matter.

What is at stake here is the notion of 'transformed understanding of worldly status': this seems to imply a redefinition of identity transposed from its embedding in Roman, classical, or pagan society to Christian community. The question now is how did this transformation take place, and what impact did Jerome's instructions have on this transformative process: what model did he offer in order to assist this transition? Therefore, in what follows we need to focus on if and how Jerome contributed to a reconstruction of identity by means of instruction through the medium of epistolary correspondence. Jerome's instruction served to transform his students into authentic Christians who not only could express informed opinion on issues in the field of exegesis, moral virtue, asceticism, and even doctrine, but also maintain their personal profile, only in a transformed way, where wisdom is key. As such, they were trained to become authentic ascetic Christians who could speak with 'authority' and even contribute to doctrinal debates. Jerome's instructive letters show how he employs rhetorical skill and methods to make his students adopt a seemingly new identity: from a Roman aristocracy they are persuaded into a model of the ideal Christian aristocrat. As such Jerome served to assist them in their quest to redefine their identity so that it would comply both with their social status and with their newly adopted faith, a transition from noteworthy nobles to authoritative ascetics.

Jerome illustrates the animated process of transformation of identity in the letter to Demetrias by first summing up the worldly habits of an aristocat of Demetrias' standing, to subsequently stipulate how Demetrias' vow to virginity implies a decline of all what she was used to, a renouncing of the world she was familiar with:

> "When you were in the world you loved the things of the world. You rubbed your cheeks with rouge and used whitelead to improve your

[396] *Gen.* 37:3.
[397] See also his letter to Fabiola on the priestly vestments, *Ep.* 64.
[398] It is a royal garment, compare 2 *Sam* 13:18 where it is used to describe David's daughter Tamar's dress. For a discussion on its possible translations, see Aryah Kaplan, *The Living Torah*, (1981), commentary on Gen. 37:3. http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?ACTION=displaypage&BOOK=1&CHAPTER=37#C740(accessed: 28.01.2016)

> complexion. You dressed your hair and built up a tower on your head with tresses not your own. I shall say nothing of your costly earrings, your glistening pearls from the depths of the Red Sea, your bright green emeralds, your flashing onyxes, your liquid sapphires,—tones which turn the heads of matrons, and make them eager to possess the like. For you have relinquished the world and besides your baptismal vow have taken a new one; you have entered into a compact with your adversary and have said: 'I renounce thee, O devil, and thy world and thy pomp and thy works'."[399]

When reading or listening to this text, one is given a realistic picture of the aristocratic Demetrias in all her outfits, her beauty, her make-up and her hairstyle, although we must bear in mind that Jerome had never met her. His imagination not only reveals his familiarity with this world of aristocrats, his statement that 'when you were in the world you loved the things of the world,' seems to also refer to himself, which can be substantiated when we take a step back in time and look at the letter to Eustochium. There he confesses, again to a fourteen-year-old lady, how he still dreams of girls dancing around him.[400] Not unrelated is his comment in a letter to Pammachius, where he writes how he "extol[s] virginity to the skies, not because I myself possess it, but because, not possessing it, I admire it all the more. Surely it is a modest and ingenuous confession to praise in others that which you lack yourself."[401] Likewise he honestly confesses his loss of virginity in the letters to our young ladies. These passages bear witness of Jerome's own embeddedness in the world of Roman aristocratic frivolities. This is similarly attested in his letter to Furia, where he exhibits his knowledge of cosmetics in his illustration of Mary Magdalen, of whom he says she "wore no waving head-dress, no cracking shoes, nor did she darken her eyes with antimony: the more squalid she was, the more lovely she seemed."[402] Mary's salvation triggered the transformation of her female appearance, and the beauty ideal is no longer that of a youthful, healthy looking woman whose features are emphasised by the use of cosmetics, but Jerome's ascetic ideal of beauty is that of a face pale, grim, neglected and scarred by fasting regimes, yet natural. Jerome's language remains physical as he adds:

> "What have rouge and white lead to do on a Christian woman's face? The one simulates the natural red of cheeks and lips, the other the

[399] *Ep.* 130.7.
[400] *Ep.* 22.7.
[401] *Ep.* 49.20. This is said in the context of the Jovinian controversy, see the analysis of the Pammachius-Jerome correspondence in chapter 3 above.
[402] *Ep.* 54.7. Antimony sulphide ('stibio,'Sb) is a chemical element found in nature ('stibnite', a gray metalloid) which was already used by the Egyptians as a cosmetic.

> whiteness of the face and neck. They are fires to inflame young men, stimulants of lustful desire, plain evidence of an unchaste mind. How can a woman weep for her sins when tears lay her skin bare and make furrows on her face? Such adorning is not of the Lord, it is the mask of Antichrist. With what confidence can a woman lift to heaven features which her Creator cannot recognise?"[403]

Other than Jerome's argument that make-up serves, as addressed elsewhere in this chapter, to hide one's true face, and that as such God cannot recognise the woman behind the mask ('of the Antichrist'), his illustrations again reveal his acquaintance with the language of make-up and what it stands for, and he dismisses the use of make-up as girlish practice and youthful vanity, not appropriate for a widow.[404] It is evident that Jerome emphasises its sexual implications, and the reader cannot help but think that Jerome, too, might have burned with lustful desire after the deep red lips of young girls and the exposure of their delicate white necks. Moreover, rouge (blush and lipstick) emulates the post-orgasmic look, which is what makes it so seductive, and it is seductive in that it makes men think of sex. And here we return to women who are to blame for the feelings they evoke in men. Jerome's language becomes even more erotic when he ponders how a widow "still remembers the pleasures of the past, she knows the delights that she has lost," but he urges that "she must quench the fire of the devil's arrows with the cold streams of fast and vigil."[405] Cold streams of water and fasting or dietary adjustments served to temper libido, especially in youths.[406] However, as we read in the letter to Rusticus, extreme fasting would have the opposite effect, and similarly he recommends Furia to stick by a "meagre diet which leaves the appetite always unsatisfied, [which] is to be preferred over fasts three days long."[407] Again, this is connected to the threat of sensual pleasure. Jerome gives Furia some detailed advice how she could temper the fire in her young body: she should only drink water to extinguish the fire, until she has "passed the years of early womanhood;" "avoid all heating dishes," because "the heat of the body must be

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[403] *Ep.* 54.7. Note how Jerome here employs '*inpudicae'*: shameful sexual behaviour, which was heavily frowned upon by the Romans; for a more elaborate discussion of *pudicita* and *inpudicitia* 'Young aristocrats: peripherals'. A parallel attack on women's use of make-up can for example be found in Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum* (CSEL 70).

[404] *Ep.* 54.7.

[405] *Ep.* 54.7. Fremantle translates *sagittae* as 'shafts', but I prefer 'arrows' as the Latin *sagittae,* since Jerome's source seems to have been *Ephesians* 6:16 which mentions the 'fiery arrows (or darts) of the evil one'.

[406] A clear parallel is found in the letter to Rusticus, where Jerome commends squalid garb, to avoid hot baths and rather commit to 'chilling fasts' to temper the heat of the body, see *Ep*. 125.7 (next chapter).

[407] *Ep.* 125.7, see next chapter. In this segment Jerome argues that fasts should be moderate for if you weaken yourself by extreme fasting you would need more food to recuperate, which leads to indigestion and this is, so Jerome, the 'parent of lust'. See also on the dangers of indigestion, *Ep.* 54.10: 'there is nothing which so much heats the body and inflames the passions as undigested food and breathing broken by hiccoughs.'

tempered with cold food."[408] Rather than resolving to eat meat and vegetables, or extreme fasting, Jerome's young correspondents ought to eat herbs, and eat vegetables but sparingly. The reader does get a sense that these dietary rules are temporary, as Jerome asserts that with age the fire grows less, and it will be easier to focus on the soul. It explains why these guidelines for nutrition are (nearly) absent in his correspondence with senior aristocrats. Yet, does this imply a transformation? Is Jerome advocating a radically different methodology that goes against Roman aristocratic tradition? The answer is already partially given by Jerome himself, who refers to Galen:

> "Physicians and others who have written on the nature of the human body, and particularly Galen in his books entitled *On matters of health*, say that the bodies of boys and of young men and of full grown men and women glow with an interior heat and consequently that for persons of these ages all food is injurious which tends to promote this heat: while on the other hand it is highly conductive to health in eating and in drinking to take things cold and cooling. Contrariwise they tell us that warm food and old wine are good for the old who suffer from humours and from chilliness."[409]

Jerome's arguments that heat and fire must be tempered are therefore not anything distinctively ascetic or Christian, but something that had already been promoted by classical authors. Likewise, excess and extravagance was not appreciated, and moderation was recommended and praised be it in sexual activities, food, dress, luxury. The ideals Jerome holds high for his model of perfect Christian asceticism are not unlike the ideals held high by Roman aristocrats.

For these and other reasons, Jerome seems to stress to Demetrias that he will not elaborately describe her jewellery and adornments – although in a way he does – because she has been strong enough to part from her worldly possessions: she has relinquished the world and all that attaches her to it.[410] Jerome himself might have experienced greater difficulties in this transformative process, which could explain his admiration for Demetrias and his use of encouraging words.[411] However, what is particularly interesting to note here is that he seems

[408] *Ep.* 54.8.
[409] *Ep.* 54.9.
[410] Yet as we have seen, she still seems to have kept domestic and personal servants, neither did she renounce her wealth, for she is known to have later become a respected benefactor(ess) for the church, as we learn from the letter addressed to her by Pope Leo the Great, *Ep. ad Dem.* (PL 55, 161-80).
[411] Although this is also one of many examples of his rich rhetorical style. We observe a similar rhetoric in Pelagius' letter to Demetrias, see Pelagius, *Epistola ad Demetriadem* 24.4 (PL 30, 15-49), where we observe Pelagius' analogical way of speaking about a transformative understanding of jewellery: '*Optima ornamenta sunt aurium, uerba Dei. […] Omnia prorsus membra decorentur operibus sanctitatis: totaque uirginalis animi*

to start off speaking in very admirable terms, non-judgemental, almost praising, reflecting his own perception of Demetrias, but then his language transforms and adopts an almost chauvinistic tone as he talks in negative terms about her beauty being not 'envied' by men but envied by women: he does not blame men for turning their heads when they see a young lady of the likes of Demetrias pass, but women. As such he is putting the blame on the devil but in feminine terms: women are envying and this is the threat – whereas in the first sentences the only threat seems to be for him, but he does not acknowledge this. This seems particularly evident from the earlier comparison with the passage from the letter to Eustochium cited above, and his extensive dealing with the dangers desire encompasses for youngsters.

Avoidance

This invites us to look at and interpret those passages where Jerome advises Demetrias and Furia what and whom they should avoid if they wish to succeed in their pursuit of perfection. There are parallels to the above segment where Jerome speaks of the 'devilish' influences women can entail, which are to be found in the letter to Eustochium.[412] An almost identical warning is found in Demetrias, where Jerome quotes from 1 *Cor.* 15:33:[413]

> "Avoid the company of married women who are devoted to their husbands and to the world, that your mind may not become unsettled by hearing what a husband says to his wife, or a wife to her husband. Such conversations are filled with deadly venom. To express his condemnation of them the apostle has taken a verse of a profane writer and has pressed it into the service of the church. It may be literally rendered at the expense of the metre: 'evil communications corrupt good manners'. No, you should choose for your companion reliable women, particularly widows and virgins, persons of approved conversation, of few words, and of a holy modesty."[414]

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pulchritudo, gemmati monilis instar, uario uirtute, fulgore resplendeat.' Pelagius describes that there is a much better way of adorning oneself than with worldly valuables: the Word of God is the best ornament for the ears, Demetrias should best consider the works of holiness as jewellery, and the soul as a beautiful necklace.

[412] One of many examples is *Ep.* 22.16: "And not only must you avoid intercourse with those who are puffed up by their husbands' honours, who are hedged in with troops of eunuchs, and who wear robes inwrought with threads of gold. You must also shun those who are widows from necessity and not from choice."

[413] Similar warning backed up with 1 *Cor* 15:33 is to be found in the letter to Nepotian, see below.

[414] *Ep.* 130.18. Jerome has referenced the same verse of 1 *Cor*. 15:33 in his letter to Eustochium, in relation to his advice for her to avoid women (certain virgins and widows) who may exercise bad influence on her see *Ep.* 22.29. Note also the reoccurence of Jerome's describing them as '*pestes*' ('*pestem*' in *Ep.* 52.5). Instead of those bad women, Jerome's correspondents are advised to seek the company of holy virgins and widows, see above, and to Furia *Ep.* 54.13.

Jerome insinuates that married women would entrust Demetrias with private details of bedroom activities, and expresses his fears that this may lead her astray. Yet the language brings to life exactly those fantasies which Jerome does not want to trouble Demetrias' young mind, but which seem very present in his imagination. To Furia, on the other hand, he writes that she should "avoid the company of young men,"[415] although he subsequently ensures that he attacks women too, as he adds: "drive from your dwelling all women who live by playing and singing, the devil's choir whose songs are as deadly as those of the sirens."[416] Considering Furia's social status however, she would not have been expected to engage with actors (whom are implied here) in the first place, for they were deemed of significantly lower status. It is remarkable that Jerome only mentions female actors, and does not emphasise the potential danger of male actors.

Jerome utters a similar critique, again to Demetrias, where he loathes the virgins whose intentions he deems not genuine:

> "Shun lascivious girls, who deck their heads and wear their hair in fringes, who use cosmetics to improve their skins and wear tight sleeves, dresses without a crease, and dainty buskins; and by pretending to be virgins more easily sell themselves into destruction."[417]

Again, this probably tells us more about Jerome's fantasies than Demetrias's challenges, although at the same time it might also hint at 'religious reality on the ground' in that alleged ascetic transformation might not have so radically disrupted aristocratic appearance as some apologetic authors would like us to believe. A parallel segment is to be found in the letter to Furia, where Jerome addresses all these negative qualities in feminine terms with reference to outward appearance:

> "You may see such ladies with painted faces, their eyes like those of vipers and their teeth rubbed with pumice stone, who when they are picking on Christians actually foam at the mouth with mad rage."[418]

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[415] *Ep.* 54.13. In the same chapter, Jerome states that "if you are obliged to talk with men, do not refuse to have other people present. Let your conversations be so sure of itself that the entry of a third person will neither make you start nor blush."
[416] *Ep.* 54.13.
[417] *Ep.* 130.18.
[418] *Ep.* 54.5.The determiner 'such' refers to the the matrons, servants, nurses, foster-mothers, 'and other drunken creatures of their kind' mentioned earlier on in the same section of the letter. In the chapter Jerome also vituperatively warns against the false intentions of domestic servants, who are but interested in their own wages rather than their master's (or mistress') income: '*quidquid non tulerint, sibi ablatum putant, nec considerant, de quanto, sed quantum accipiant.'*

Jerome laments the make-up they use, which is parallel to the comments on make-up in the letter to Demetrias, and further on in the letter to Furia.[419] 'Painted faces' might also refer to Jerome's interpretation that they hide their true face, which is again alluded to when he refers to the 'harlot of the Gospel,' who with her own tears washed her face, and Jerome states that she was even baptised by this very act: as such, her own tears cleansed her from her sins.[420] Vituperatively the women are depicted as vipers and even an allusion to rabies is made as they 'foam at the mouth with mad rage' when they see and criticise Christians. The 'pumice stone' referred to is the ancient equivalent of modern-day toothpaste: combined with the make-up, it illustrates that these ladies cared for their appearance and looked after themselves which conforms with Roman hygienic customs. Yet Jerome applies it as signifiers that they used these attributes to hide their true nature behind artificial layers.

Returning to Demetrias, Jerome complains about virgins who do not abide by the guidelines he would set for the ascetic life:

> "Again not a few virgins choose sequestered dwellings where they will not be under the eyes of others, in order that they may live more freely than they otherwise could do. They take baths, do what they please, and try as much as they can to escape notice."[421]

Jerome's own contradictory views are again apparent in this passage where he condemns those who shy away from public spaces and public manifestation but chose to seek seclusion in private quarters, whereas in the letter to Eustochium he condemned those who seek recognition by appearing in public, and where he encourages seclusion from the public eye.[422] With vivid imagery Jerome pictures how some virgins apparently seem to have failed the transformation from a worldly life to an ascetic Christian life. Jerome's pedagogical approach is clear: he is giving both examples of perfection to follow, as well as examples of bad attitude which should be avoided at all cost. His persuasive rhetoric and imagery certainly help to serve that goal. His words to Furia on widows are no less damning, as he retorts that she should "not constantly claim a widows' liberty and appear in the streets with a host of eunuchs walking before [her] chair."[423] The 'host of eunuchs' seems to refer to the servants who would accompany a young aristocrat and particularly ladies when they ventured out on

[419] Make-up disguises the face and makes it irrecognisable to God, see *Ep.* 54.6.
[420] *Ep.* 54.7.
[421] *Ep.* 130.19. For a comparison of Jerome and Pliny on this chapter of *Letter* 130, see Andrew Cain, « *Liber manet :* Pliny, *Ep.* 9.27.2 and Jerome, *Ep.* 130.19.5,' in *CQ*, NS 58 (2008), 708-10.
[422] *Ep.* 22.17.
[423] *Ep.* 54.13.

the streets of Rome. It also indicates that a young lady of the likes of Furia would not just walk, but would be carried around in a chair, by said servants. Jerome adds how "it is a very bad habit for weak young persons of the frailer sex to abuse their freedom from restraint, and to think that they are allowed to do anything they please."[424] What we learn from this is that, according to Jerome, wedlock restrained a woman in such way that she could not go out and about as she pleased, but might have been subjected to her husband's permission. Now that she has been widowed, this boundary has evaporated yet Jerome warns her to not exploit this (regained) liberty, particularly not because of her young age, and more importantly, her belonging to the 'weaker sex'. Nevertheless, the restraints should not be reinstalled, as we learn from Jerome's advice against a second marriage, most graphically illustrated in the comparison of second marriage as "a dog returning to his own vomit."[425] In chapters fourteen and fifteen Jerome focuses on the Roman motivations to enter a second marriage.

Transformation through study of the Scriptures

In order to familiarise oneself with this newly adopted life style, and to not fall into pitfalls like those 'bad virgins' described above, emphasis is put on Scripture: it should be the central pillar in the ascetic life and is the ultimate source to find examples of moral perfection which the student should follow.[426] Furthermore both past and present examples of Christian virtue include renowned teachers and the fathers of the Church: the study of Scripture itself and without the guidance of an expert will not suffice. Jerome advises Furia therefore to contact Exuperius, for she has "in the saintly Exuperius a man of tried years and faith, who can give you constant support with his advice."[427] This model of hiring a teacher or mentor of elderly age and respectable reputation is a piece of advice also present in the letters to Rusticus and Nepotian. It is based on '*paiderastia'*, an Athenian practice where a young man is individually educated or trained in wisdom and virtue by an older role model, although

[424] *Ep.* 54.13.
[425] *Ep.* 54.4.
[426] After Jerome urges Demetrias to 'love to occupy [her] mind with the reading of scripture', he gives multiple references to passages from Song of Songs (3:1), the Psalms, and Jeremiah, see *Ep.* 130.7: *'[...] ut animum tuum sacrae lectionis amore occupes* [...] *sed semper loquaris: "In noctibus quaesiui quem dilexit anima mea. Vbi pascis, ubi cubas in meridie?" "Et, adhaesit post te anima mea, me suscepit dextera tua". Illudque Ieremiae : "Non laboraui sequens te ; neque enim est dolor in Iacob, nec labor in Israhel".'* In addition he instructs her in 130.15 how she should arrange and allocate time for the study of scripture: '*[…]statue quot horis sanctam scripturam ediscere debeas; quanto tempore legere, non ad laborem, sed ad delectationem et instructionem animae*.' We find similar evidence in the letter to Nepotian, see for example *Ep.* 52.7: *'Divinas scripturas saepius lege, immo numquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio depontaur.'* But Jerome does seem to impose some form of humility upon Nepotian when he says in 52.5: *'Nec David sanctior nec Salomone potes esse sapientior.'*
[427] *Ep.* 54.11.

Jerome presumably would have envisaged it without the presupposed romantic relationship.[428] Jerome apparently regards this practice also a good method for young ladies: for them, too, their mentor must be an elderly man and not a woman. To Demetrias, he expresses is disregard for women who think themselves teachers:

> "It is a good thing therefore to defer to one's betters, to obey those set over one, to learn not only from the Scriptures but from the example of others how one ought to order one's life, and not to follow that worst of teachers, one's own self-confidence. Of women who are thus presumptuous the apostle says that they 'are carried about with every wind of doctrine, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth'."[429]

The way Jerome portrays women leaves little to one's imagination. Whereas he first lauded the aristocratic standing he is now taking it to bits, and remarkably enough, it is women he criticises, not men. The language used by Jerome and his reference to Paul are very clear and negative. The passage conveys that self-confidence should not be associated with women for presumptuous women are unable to study Scriptures, at least by themselves, that they are unable to attain to the truth, although Jerome seems to imply that he knows of examples who think differently, and that therefore they are liable to accept any teaching that tickles their fancy according to popular taste rather than what is 'held to be' orthodox. In line with Roman tradition Jerome emphasises the need of a teacher and the importance of the *exemplum*-model, but the way he transmits this message downplays the female student.

Both the letter to Demetrias and the one to Furia are overflowing with examples of Biblical role-models. It is worth mentioning Anna, illustrated in the letter to Furia, whom he presents as the perfect example for young widows: she spent her widowhood in the temple, praying and fasting day and night.[430] As such she earned spiritual grace and is called the daughter of the face of God, and in blessedness and wealth is reckoned with her ancestors.[431] Another noteworthy example is taken from the book of Judith:

> "We read in the book of Judith, if we may accept that record, of a widow spent with fasting and unkempt in mourners' dress, who was not so much grieving for her dead husband but in squalor awaiting the advent of the Bridegroom. I see her hand armed with a sword and

[428] Plato, *Symposium.*
[429] *Ep.* 130.17.
[430] This passage bears some resemblance with the cult or rituals at the temple of Pudicitia in Rome, where respectable patrician women – including chaste widows – would meet and perform rites.
[431] *Ep.* 54.16.

> stained with blood, I recognise the head of Holofernes carried in triumph from the midst of the enemy. A woman conquers men, chastity beheads lust, and then suddenly changing her dress she returns again to her victorious squalor, a squalor finer than all the pomp in this world."[432]

Jerome refers to the narrative in which Judith, a young widow, eventually beheads Holofernes, Nebuchadnezzar's general.[433] For Jerome, Holofernes represents the epitome of lust, and the 'sudden change of dress' refers to Judith's tactics in replacing her widow's mourner's dress with the linen gown to seduce Holofernes; Jerome envisages her as covered in dirt, which might refer to Jewish customs of mourning, which is temporarily replaced by a clean face anointed with perfume, so that 'chastity may conquer lust' in the victory over Holofernes, who succumbs to his desires which cost him his life.

The endless thread of examples shows two things, already mentioned before: 1) Jerome's close affinity with Roman tradition as being built upon 'examples' and the Greek *paideia* model, and 2) his presupposition that his students are familiar with these models – from their classical education, their Roman upbringing. So we can observe in the letters how Jerome adapts this model for his Christian instructions and thus aims for his students to adapt and follow the Biblical and Christian examples of moral perfection, and as such to become examples of authentic Christian life and ascetic perfection themselves. The notion of perfection is essential in Jerome's and Pelagius' ascetic teaching,[434] but not very well received by those who could not or did not want to opt for radical ascetic life, who could witness their case defended by Augustine and Jovinian.[435] Yet one might have to distinguish between young and more senior addressees: it might be that those letters to young aristocrats sound more idealised exactly because they are addressed to youngsters, and as such it might be either considered a pedagogical technique, or the authors deemed higher ideals appropriate for the still "less-spoiled."

With his ascetic instruction strongly built upon the pillars of Latin rhetoric and full of references to classical literature, one could argue that Jerome offers a Christian 'equivalent' to

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[432] *Ep.* 54.16.

[433] *Judith* 13:6-9, as well as the retelling in 16:6-9 which emphasises Judith's *physique*: "For their hero did not fall at the young men's hands, it was not the sons of Titans struck him down, no proud giants made that attack, but Judith, the daughter of Merari, who disarmed him with the beauty of her face. She laid aside her widow's dress to raise up those who were oppressed in Israel; she anointed her face with perfume, bound her hair under a turban, put on a linen gown to seduce him. Her sandal ravished his eye, her beauty took his soul prisoner and the scimitar cut through his neck!"

[434] For the use of *exemplum* and *perfectio* in Pelagius, see for example *Ep. Dem.* 10.1 (PL 30).

[435] See Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity*. For Augustine, see for example *De bono coniugali*, CSEL 46.

Roman classical education, although it does not fully replace it: he still presupposes his students to have completed their classical education:

> "Moreover if persons untrained in secular learning read the works of able church writers, they only acquire from them a wordy fluency and not, as they might do, a fuller knowledge of the scriptures."[436]

Jerome continues that, "as the old saying goes, if they do not know how to speak they cannot keep silent."[437] People ignorant of Roman education teach the Scriptures without understanding them, yet, they convince others and give themselves the airs of scholars; they make themselves master of the ignorant before having been disciples of the learned.[438] This passage is important to the argument because it stresses the importance of secular learning to benefit from greater understanding of Scriptures[439] or even that such knowledge constitutes or enables a more profound understanding and creates the ability to instruct others. Jerome, therefore, adds that it is "good to obey the elders, to be subjected to those who are perfect, and according to the rules of Scripture, to learn from others one's conduct of life; but do not follow tutors who teach their own presumptions."[440] Scripture ranges even above those who instruct and help the student to discern the quality of instructions and to differentiate between what is true and what is a tutor's presumption. Yet the language of submission applied in this letter, and in parallels found in correspondence with other young women, seems absent in his letters to young men.[441]

It is vital that in order to adopt this new identity and to perfect this Christian ascetic life one needs to study the tradition of the elders, follow the tutors, but above all, get a deep insight into Scriptures. The core of knowledge and wisdom is the learning of Scriptures. Exegesis and knowledge of Scripture, therefore, form the basis of perfection. Jerome does not only want the student to read and know Scriptures, he wants them to 'integrate' Scriptures into daily life – a central aspect in Jerome's pedagogy. He repetitively stresses in his letters that Scripture ought to be read and studied continuously, multiple times a day; as quoted

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[436] *Ep.* 130.17. Maybe this passage could serve as an indication where Jerome's model can be distinguished from the 'eastern model' as advocated by Basil and Gregory, namely that of scriptural *paideia* as can be found in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of St. Macrina*, transl. W. K. Lowther Clarke, Early Church Classics (London: 1916).
[437] *Ep.* 130.17.
[438] *Ibid.* This translation is my own.
[439] For this see also Peter Gemeinhardt, *Das lateinische Christentum und die antike pagane Bildung S*tudien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, 41 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Raffaela Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Susanna Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the vision of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)*;*W. Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
[440] *Ep.* 130.17.
[441] See subsequent chapter.

before he urges Demetrias to "[l]ove to occupy your mind with the reading of Scripture."[442] Likewise:

> "You should determine how much time you will bind yourself to give to the learning and reading of Scripture, aiming to please and instruct the soul rather than to lay a burden upon it."[443]

In his letter to Furia we find similar advice:

> "When you eat your meals, reflect that you must immediately afterwards pray and read. Have a fixed number of lines from the Holy Scriptures, and show them up as your task to your Lord; and do not lie down to rest until you have filled your heart's basket with this precious yarn."[444]

The study of Scripture thus takes the central point in Furia's day: even meals have to be consumed with subsequent study in mind, and she cannot go to sleep until she has made sufficient progress in her study. The discipline to commit herself to this task comes from outside, from an external source, namely the Lord: because she presents the fruit of her studies (or her studies, her reading of Scripture) to God, Jerome expects she will keep herself to this 'fixed number of lines' and not give up before she has completed the task. But more importantly, we learn that the study of Scripture is not sufficient, and Jerome tells Furia that "after the Holy Scriptures, read the treatises that have been written by learned men, provided, of course, that they are persons of known faith."[445]

It is evident that emphasis is put on growing knowledge and wisdom:[446] it is ardent study, frequent prayer, and putting what one has learned into practice that will transform one into the model of the 'ideal Christian,' of a holy life. Intellectual education seemingly floats into moral education and -behaviour. These are inseparably connected and the one does not go without the other.[447] In the letter to Demetrias Jerome elaborates the necessity of a pristine reputation for a virgin, which he combines with a perfection of ascetic conduct whilst not refraining from social duties:

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[442] *Ep.* 130.7. Parallel in Nepotian, see next chapter.
[443] *Ep.* 130.15.
[444] *Ep.* 54.11.
[445] *Ep.* 54.11.
[446] See *Ep.* 52.3-4, where Jerome introduces the theme in 52.3 with a passage from *Proverbs* 4:5.
[447] This is even stronger in Pelagius's letter to Demetrias, who argues that intellectual education, i.e. instruction in Scripture and doctrine, is a prerequisite for social engagement: first study, only after that one can dedicate oneself to charitable works, see Pelagius, *Ep. Dem* 22.1: "*Tibi vero, maxime dum in proposito maturescat animus, ab omnibus occupationibus recedendum est, et omne studium omnisque cura in ornandis moribus exhibenda. Quibus ita vacare debes, et totam occupare mentem, ut non divitem te sentias esse, nec dominam. Nobilitatis ad hoc tantum memineris, ut cum claritate generis, morum sanctitate contendas: et cum nobilitate corporis, animi virtute nobilor proficias: magisque illa nobilitate glorieris, quae filios Dei et cohaeredes Christi facit.*"

> "It is [your duty] to clothe Christ in the poor, to visit Him in the sick, to feed Him in the hungry, to shelter Him in the homeless, particularly such as are of the household of faith, to support communities of virgins, to take care of God's servants, of those who are poor in spirit, who serve the same Lord as you day and night, who while they are on earth live the angelic life and speak only of the praises of God. Having food and clothing they rejoice and count themselves rich."[448]

Furia, too, is advised to commit herself to charitable works and alms-giving; and she should provide food for the needy. What is remarkable here, though, is that Jerome asserts that she should "give to everyone that asks of you, but especially unto them who are of the household of faith."[449] This implies that charitable works are not restricted to an ecclesial community, or to Christians, but they are meant to serve the whole of society. This indiscriminate aspect would imply there is not much difference between her charitable acts out of 'Christian' motives and the charitable acts she was already supposed to perform as a Roman aristocrat. The praise and respect that she will no doubt gain from it will emphasise her status and as such she retains her position in Roman society. The only 'transformation' would be a transformation of mind, as the motor behind the action is Christian motivation.

We see that all this learning and following of worthy examples should make the students into examples worthy to be followed by others. They should aim to become examples themselves, and their social engagement should be an incentive for others who desire to set on the same path:

> "By observing such rules as these you will save yourself and others, you will set a good example as a mistress, and you will place to your credit the chastity of many."[450]

As such Demetrias *et al.* become *exempla*, very much like what would have been desired from them as when they would grow up to become worthy Roman aristocratic citizens. Jerome's addressees are advised to become leaders: leading examples who ought to attract followers. This is most evidently illustrated in the passage where Jerome describes Eustochium to Furia:

> "Oh, if you could see your sister, and be allowed to listen to the eloquence of her holy lips, and behold the mighty spirit that dwells within her small body! Oh, if you could hear the whole contents of the Old and New Testament come bubbling from her heart! Fasting is her

[448] *Ep.* 130.14.
[449] *Ep.* 54.12.
[450] *Ep.* 130.15.

> sport, prayer her favourite pastime. Like Miriam after the drowning of Pharaoh, she takes up her timbrel and leads the virgin choir: 'Let us sing to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He hath thrown into the sea' (*Ex.* 15:21). She teaches her companions to be music-girls for Christ, and trains them as lute-players for the Saviour. Thus she passes her days and nights, and with oil ready in her lamp awaits the coming of the Bridegroom. Take pattern then by your kinswoman. Let Rome have what Bethlehem, a smaller place than Rome, already possesses."[451]

Apart from Jerome obviously being enchanted by Eustochium, this segment combines knowledge and ascetic perfection with leadership and the ability to teach: Furia's eloquent sister-in-law teaches her companions in Bethlehem, and Furia should take her as example to follow and equally become an advocate of asceticism through teaching, so taking on a teaching or leadership role in Rome. It seems to contradict Jerome's dismissal of female teachers in his letter to Demetrias. Furia is instructed to actively recruit virgins, and she should weave these various types of virtuous women (widows, virgins) together, creating bonds, and Jerome uses the analogy of a flowery garland, where he portrays widows as violets, virgins as lilies, and martyrs as roses. From them, Furia should make "garlands […] for Christ in place of the crown of thorns in which He bore the sins of the world."[452]

What we learn from these segments in the letters to Demetrias and Furia is that these three young ladies are granted leadership responsibility: by exhibiting their qualities many will follow their example. At the same time it again elaborates how the change has not been overly radical: they are still expected to remain a mistress, in other words, to have servants/slaves who see to them.[453] These observations on leadership roles allow the transition to investigate how Jerome envisioned his 'tutees' to engage in doctrinal matters.

Doctrinal and public engagement

[451] *Ep.* 54.13.
[452] *Ep.* 54.14. The same analogy appears in young Rusticus, *Ep.* 125.2: "[…] purity of the lily [i.e. virgin], the modest blush of the rose [i.e. martyrs, the royal purple of the violet [i.e. widows]," although, because of the use of the adjectives, it reads more as if here the widows ('modest blush') are roses and the martyrs violets (royal, which could signify heavenly reward and triumph).
[453] Eustochium's 'companions' are most likely her servants, see above.

A right assessment of doctrine is part of the critical awareness addressed above.[454] Jerome puts an emphasis not only on education in Scripture and training in virtues and moral conduct, but does so in order to foster a critical thinking in students to differentiate between worse and better teaching. Although he does not offer detailed instruction in doctrine, he often refers to the importance of adhering to orthodox doctrine, and knowledge of that doctrine is essential to achieve this. As such, his students are expected to also study the doctrinal works of respected authors, and illuminate their communities and the wider public with such knowledge. This knowledge will also protect them from possible 'harm' inflicted by 'heterodox' opinions that were often heard across the empire and in the churches.

The relevance of knowledge of doctrine or the study of theological treatises for the reconstruction of identity may not seem obvious at first sight. However, in light of debates and authority it does seem to show that it has in fact a lot to do with the student's identities: the aristocrats' positions in society almost 'automatically' gave them an authoritative position. One only needs to think of members of the *clarissimate*: they were used to being listened to, which is particularly the case for members of patrician families. It is therefore less of a surprise to see how exactly these aristocrats will speak up or attempt to weigh in on doctrinal debates and try to steer the decision making processes of the bishops. Although not explicitly addressed in the letters that are discussed here, Jerome does allude to one such debate or controversy in his letter to Demetrias. Perhaps in misinterpreting the Pelagian debate as a revival of the Origenist controversy, Jerome tries to warn Demetrias against the pitfalls of these doctrines that are (still) being preached at Rome:

> "While you were still quite small, bishop Anastasius of holy and blessed memory ruled the Roman church. In his days a terrible storm of heresy came from the East and strove first to corrupt and then to undermine that simple faith which an apostle has praised [...] Now I have reason to fear – in fact a report has reached me to this effect – that the poisonous germs of this heresy still live and sprout in the minds of some to this day. I think, therefore, that I ought to warn you, in all kindness and affection, to hold fast the faith of the saintly Innocent, the spiritual son of Anastasius and his successor in the apostolic see; and not to receive any foreign doctrine, however wise and discerning you may take yourself to be."[455]

[454] On critical discernment, compare also the discussion in the next chapter 'Young aristocrats: peripherals', paragraph 'doctrinal and public engagement'.
[455] *Ep.* 130.16.

Wisdom and discernment are not criticised by Jerome, on the contrary, they are the condition on which his instructions are based when he sets out to summarise what the controversy was about, explains the question of the origin of souls, their presumed pre-existence, etc. Two important insights might be derived from the above: the first is that again, fault is not being put to those who spread 'foreign' doctrines, but to the female recipients of it, with again an allusion to overt self-confidence being made. The second observation is that the 'foreign doctrine' might hint at Demetrias' family's hiring of the services of Pelagius, and presumably word had reached Jerome that the British monk, too, had been approached by the Anician ladies with a request to send a recommendation to young Demetrias.

Jerome stresses that his aim is to instruct Demetrias, and suggests that if she wants to commit herself to further reading into this matter that she should but request him to send her the treatises that he has written on the subject:

> "I have defeated their wiles and counterworked their efforts to undermine the truth in a treatise which by God's help I have written; and if you desire to have this, I shall send it to you promptly and with pleasure. I say, if you desire to have it, for as the proverb says, wares proffered unasked are little esteemed, and a plentiful supply brings down prices, which are always highest where scarcity prevails."[456]

Jerome encourages Demetrias to busy herself with the study of doctrine, ideally with the use of Jerome's own writings. What is furthermore implied is that she should not only purchase copies for herself, but that it would be best she would place a significant order (which would bring down the price): rather than it fulfilling Demetrias' desire, it would fulfil Jerome's desire of having his writings published and distributed (again). As such, Demetrias could potentially fill the void that must have occurred now that Jerome's principal publishers had died and thus his ties with Rome had weakened.[457] Jerome writes to Furia along the same lines:

> "About two years ago I know that I published a treatise against Jovinian, in which I refuted by the authority of the Scriptures the objections based on the apostle's concession of second marriages. It is unnecessary to repeat my arguments afresh, for you can borrow them from that book."[458]

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[456] *Ep.* 130.16. Jerome could be hinting at his 'original' rendering of Origen's *Peri archōn,* which he had sent to Avitus with an accompanying letter (124).
[457] See chapters two and three, 'Pammachius and the Roman circle'.
[458] *Ep.* 54.18.

Furia is advised to study Jerome's book and obtain a copy, and his failure to suggest that she should ask him for it might imply it is still in circulation in Rome, or he expects that she knows she could borrow a copy from, for example, Pammachius.

Drawing the parallel back to Demetrias, whereas above Jerome still seemed to belittle her by writing that she ought not to think of herself as too smart and savvy, here Jerome expresses his trust in Demetrias's capabilities to recognise and defy any heretical doctrines that might catch her ear: "[…] I am sure that if you hear it you will not accept it. For you have teachers under God whose faith is a rule of sound doctrine."[459] These 'teachers under God whose faith is a rule of sound doctrine' allude, obviously, to none other than the author of the letter himself. In sum, when it comes to doctrine and the defence of doctrine in the public sphere, we should follow along the lines of Andrew Cain's argument that in this case Jerome is searching for advocates who can spread and sell his ideas, in the form of his treatises, in Rome. They should exploit their leadership position in Roman society, as it is assumed of them they take up such leading role by virtue of their rank, to publicise Jerome's scholarly output. Even if they are as young as Furia and Demetrias.

Conclusion

The two letters to the young patrician ladies of the finest Roman pedigrees bear a great number of similarities, yet there are some important differences, too. Despite their family-bond as in-laws, Jerome shows himself aware of the higher standing the *gens Anicia* enjoy. Demetrias' ancestors deserve much more praise than Furia's. As indicated, this might have to do with Demetrias' mother and grandmother writing on her behalf, whereas Furia seems to have written on her own initiative. Furthermore, Furia is of a lesser status than Demetrias, for Demetrias has become a consecrated virgin and will in Christian terms therefore also occupy the highest rank and harvest the highest rewards, whereas Furia is a widow who has now opted for chastity, yet did for some time consider a second marriage. In other words, Demetrias surpasses Furia in pedigree and ascetic perfection. The analysis has shown how

[459] *Ep.* 130.16: *'[...] quam certus sum, quod si audieris non recipias. Habes enim apud Deum magistras, quarum fides norma doctrinae est.'* NPNF translates *magistras* as 'preceptresses', I would prefer 'teachers', a balance between 'preceptresses' and the French *´maîtresses*': Jerome is presumably referring to Demetrias' mother and grandmother, who teach and guide her as examples of adherents to orthodox doctrine. However, one must pay attention to the subsequent sentence in which Jerome makes clear that these capabilities of understanding are being, or have been granted by God and are not of one's own merit: *'[...]Dabit enim tibi Deus in omnibus intellectum.'* '[...] for God will give you understanding in all things.' (2 *Tim* 2:7) Again this resonates the Pelagian debate.

pedigree, wealth, education, competition, and reputation are nowhere distinctly different from their traditional Roman upbringing.

If one could speak of transformation, it lies in ending the family bloodline, and possibly an alteration of outward appearance: hygiene was important and dirt would imply one had to work to make a living. Yet in Roman tradition modesty was expected and respected in dress as well: extravagant luxury in ornaments and dress were frowned upon as they could appear as lack of self-control, excessive behaviour, and pretention. Similarly, it was not uncommon for Roman aristocratic widows to live chaste lives if they had already provided offspring, and girls were supposed to remain virgin until marriage. For Demetrias there is a transformation on this important aspect as she will never get married. With regard to Furia, I leave it open if she had children or not. There are indications that she did, in which case for her, there would be no significant transformation. Nevertheless, there are also ample indications which might point to the contrary, and support the argument that she did not have children: only in the latter case one can speak of transformation of identity, for she would forsake her task to continue the bloodline, particularly now that her brother had died without leaving any offspring.

Chapter 6. Young aristocrats: 'peripherals'

The letters analysed in this chapter are addressed to Nepotian and Rusticus. I have categorised them as 'peripherals' since young Rusticus comes from a provincial, presumably aristocratic family in Gaul,[460] whereas Nepotian, related to Jerome's friend Heliodorus, serves under the latter's episcopate at Altinum. We may derive from this that Nepotian presumably came from northern Italy.[461] Geographically, Altinum would not allow for a categorisation as 'provincial,' yet as I have explained in the introduction my concept of 'peripheral' is not only geographically determined. Based on what we know of Nepotian from Jerome, namely that he wishes to pursue an ecclesiastical career after having given up his military career, we may assume he could be labelled 'peripheral': he saw progression possible through the military, and possibly now via an ecclesial path.[462] In Jerome's consolation to Heliodorus we find references which may allude to Nepotian's position as a Roman officer at the court.[463] Aristocrats of patrician houses, by nature of their status, would most likely not opt for a military career, and it has been regarded as a means of upward social mobility by the 'up and coming' "new men," as Salzman classifies them.[464] That notwithstanding, one must be aware that any firm evidence is lacking that could prove Nepotian's and Rusticus' aristocratic rank, although it is quite certain they came from well-off provincial families.[465] On the other hand, the very lack of any mention of public service other than Nepotian's military career might indicate that their families ranked above middle and lower class, which are traditionally the two layers of society most affected by imperially imposed public service. It is nonetheless important to incorporate the analyses of these two letters in this work, for they are, even if not aristocrats, peripherals who seem to have expressed a wish for social climbing. Furthermore they are young men at the start of their lives as Roman citizens: this allows for a contrasting comparison to the more senior, established peripherals addressed in chapter four, and a

[460] Jerome identifies him as a young monk from Gaul, *Ep.* 125.6, quoted below.
[461] Cain thinks Nepotian was born in Altinum, see Andrew Cain, *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy* (Leiden, 2013), 2.
[462] To join the clergy meant that one became exempt from fulfilling compulsory public service, at least of a personal character, see *C.Th.* 16.2.24 (377; Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian II).
[463] *Ep.* 60.9. Nepotian was still in the service of the court. Jerome refers to a Roman officer's uniform. It implies Nepotian was in imperial service, which was a popular route to senatorial class for well-off provincials, see Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 123-128. It would make classifying him as an 'aristocrat' questionable, yet his initial desires for social mobility make him a fine example to project and analyse Jerome's own longing for belonging.
[464] See Salzman, *The Making of*, 128-132 on promotion through military careers.
[465] Andrew Cain thinks "Nepotian was born into a privileged family in [Altinum]," *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy*, 2.

comparison with their youthful patrician counterparts from chapter five. Above all, it might help us to better understand Jerome himself, as he once could have been classified in this category. For the current category social mobility, transformation,[466] and connectivity[467] are key.

Now we can advance to apply a similar analysis as used in the preceding chapter whereby the structure outline will be the same so that the connection is clear, and allows for easy comparison. I shall try to highlight differences in language as well as different emphasises Jerome might put on the various aspects involved in the formative process of ascetic aristocratic identity.

From 'aristocrat' to 'monk-priest': what transformation?

Nepotian had made the transition from serving the court to serving the church.[468] By the time of Jerome's letter (c. 394 CE) he had already been ordained and served as a priest in Heliodorus' diocese. Although Nepotian would have preferred a monastic life, as Jerome claims, he felt obliged to serve the ecclesial community.[469] Similarly, Nepotian had allegedly complained that he was still too young for the priesthood.[470] We learn from Jerome that young Rusticus equally has a monastic vocation, but either he has expressed his wishes to become ordained in future, or Jerome expect that he will be drawn into clerical ranks at a later stage: this could also be interpreted as a reference to his youth; he seems to have been too young, and it is likely he is younger than Nepotian at the respective times of composition of the letters.[471] What were the consequences of such career change? If we may follow Salzman, a clerical career path was the next way for provincial aristocrats to advance on the social ladder, or could even speed up the process.[472] Augustine is one of many fine examples, as is Heliodorus. Both Nepotian and Rusticus (particularly if Rusticus can be identified as the later

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[466] Including identity formation and belonging, which is partially implied in 'connectivity' too.

[467] In this context, connectivity should be understood as weak-ties networking connections, relations/relationship-building, belonging and becoming part of, or adopting a collective identity.

[468] "After receiving a classical education and formal training in rhetoric, Nepotian entered the civil service, a typical career path for a male of his social standing," Cain, *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy*, 3. See also *Ibid.*, 1.1 *saeculi militia*, 61-2. In his commentary, Cain elaborates how *militia* refers to the imperial administration (*milita officialis*), not the real army. See also Rebenich, *Hieronymus*, 254, who pictures Nepotian as a bureaucratic functionary like Heliodorus had been before his conversion to an ecclesiastical career. Cain adds that "Nepotian's *militia saeculi* is contrasted with his *militia Christi* as a monastic clergyman" in 52.5.3, cf 62. Ironically, it is the contrast that reveals the intrinsic similarity, almost as a transition without transformation.

[469] *Ep.* 60.9. The obligation might not have been in the least part due to some prodding by his uncle.

[470] *Ep.* 60.10.

[471] The age restriction for the priesthood at that time was thirty, cf Andrew Cain, 3, note 18, who gives the example of the Council of Neocaesarea (can. 4) of 315 which lists thirty as the minimum age for ordination.

[472] Salzman, *The Making of*, 132-134.

bishop of Narbonne, *cfr. infra*) are set to make (social) progress in this manner. Although it was now the Church offering the promotion, or rather the Emperor through the Church, the concept remains the same and as such there is little 'transformation.' Better would be to speak of 'transition.'

Before their adoption of ascetic Christianity, both young men had progressed through their classical education and had started to immerse themselves in Roman society: Rusticus had completed further studies in Rome and was presumably to become a rhetorician, and Nepotian had advanced into a 'military' career at the imperial court. Jerome praises them for their classical learning. He points at Rusticus' fine educational record and promising future (*cfr. infra*). The best reference to be found in relation to Nepotian's knowledge is made posthumously, and confessed to Heliodorus:

> "Such was the ingenuous modesty which adorned his youth that he would frankly confess from what sources his several arguments came; and in this way, while disclaiming a reputation for learning, he came to be held most learned. This he would say is the opinion of Tertullian, that of Cyprian; this of Lactantius, that of Hilary; to this effect speaks Minucius Felix, thus Victorinus, after this manner Arnobius. Myself too he would sometimes quote, for he loved me because of my intimacy with his uncle."[473]

We observe here how great an importance Jerome grants to knowledge, as we have already seen in the previous chapters. Here too, it is once again clear that he regards classical and Christian literature compatible: Nepotian knows his Christian authors and their works, but moreover, these are all fine examples of apologists well trained in rhetoric, particularly Minucius Felix and Marius Victorinus. In his address to Nepotian himself Jerome states he should not solely be quoting from 'profane literature,' but this shows he does not dismiss it altogether, and the argument is further toned down by the classical citations that appear throughout the letter.[474] Jerome's pedagogy not only implies the *exemplum* tradition so famous for Roman education, it also shows how he adapts a Christian version of the *paideia* model where knowledge of Scripture took a central place in the formation of the Christian person. With great eloquence Jerome illustrates wisdom (and gaining wisdom) both in

[473] *Ep.* 60.10.
[474] *Ep.* 52.2:'*Quod ne de gentili tantum litteratura proferre uideamur, diuinorum uoluminum sacramenta cognosce*.' Alternatively, Fremantle translates: "But that I may not seem to quote only profane literature, listen to the mystical teaching of the sacred writings." The latter has a more passive connotation as it uses the verb 'to listen,' whereas Wright's translation uses the active, initiating 'to know.' The context and the Latin *cognoscere* lean itself better for Wright's interpretation.

classical writings as well as in Scripture, thereby not failing to defend his excellent knowledge of both literary traditions.[475] Known and clearly criticised for being educated in pagan wisdom, even in his defence, Jerome does not reject pagan literature, but points to the complementary character of the mysteries of the divine books. We remember the earlier comment where in his letter to Demetrias Jerome explicitly presented classical education as a prerequisite for the study of Scripture and theology. It not only emphasises the necessity of intellectual training, it simultaneously denounces those who claim that Christians ought to steer clear of classical education and classical authors. Even more remarkably, Jerome contradicts his earlier claims which he made for example in his letter to Eustochium that Christianity is not compatible with the classics, and that he and with him Christians in general should therefore refrain from reading and quoting them.[476] Knowledge of Scripture, following that of pagan literature, is core to and constitutes being Christian. Such informed wisdom is essential for ascetics in their striving to perfection of their virtuous Christian lives. Identifying with the examples presented to them by Scripture and Christian role-models culminates in following teachers, not slavishly, but with critical discernment.

That wisdom is not only a pursuit of the classics is shown by Jerome's references to wisdom in the Hebrew Bible. In his letter to Nepotian he recalls the metaphor of David and Abishag, the young girl who is the only one who can warm the king.[477] "Abishag symbolises the profound wisdom of old age,"[478] which is attested both in Biblical as well as classical tradition.[479] Jerome argues that young men cannot attain wisdom – although they are able to acquire knowledge – but that it is only found in old men.[480] The passage reveals the central importance of wisdom not only for Christian asceticism but as a red thread throughout Biblical and classical tradition.

That quality education is presumed and praised is equally apparent in Jerome's address to Rusticus. This Gallic young man presumably came from a quite well-off family

[475] See the numerous references to both traditions in the letters to Nepotian, Demetrias, Rusticus, and in fact all throughout Jerome's epistolary corpus. For Jerome's argument that the traditions are compatible, see his letter to Magnus, *Ep.* 70.
[476] This is the often-referenced 'dream vision,' see *Ep.* 22.30.
[477] *Ep.* 52.2, see also 1 *Kings* 1:3.
[478] Marco Conti and Gialuca Pilara (eds.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Old Testament V. 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 2. See also Jerome, *Ep.* 52.3: Almost all bodily excellences alter with age, and while wisdom alone increases all things else decay. See also Andrew Cain, *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy*, 6, for Jerome's portrayal of "Abishag as the *scientia Scripturarum* that he has embraced in his own old age."
[479] See *Ep.*52.3 for a plethora of classical examples.
[480] Which, in essence, would show that this is really a method to convince Nepotian of Jerome's authority and credibility: Jerome is the old, gray man in whom the fire of youth has relinquished, and therefore he almost embodies wisdom. As such he is the most perfectly fit mentor, see also *Ep.* 52.4, quoted below.

considered he was able to pursue further studies at Rome and train to become an orator, an education for which, according to Jerome, his mother spared no penny:

> "After you had studied in the flourishing academies of Gaul she sent you to Rome, sparing no expense and consoling herself for her son's absence with bright hopes for his future."[481]

Rusticus' learning had been nurtured at renowned schools in Gaul and subsequently perfected at Rome; the 'bright hopes for his future' refer to the promising career Rusticus was destined for: rhetorician, orator, as suggested above, or maybe as lawyer.[482] Jerome implicitly praises Rusticus for his eloquence and zeal for learning as he records how Rusticus' mother "hoped to see the exuberance and glitter of your Gallic eloquence toned down by Roman sobriety, for she saw that you required the rein more than the spur."[483] In this section Jerome sets out how Rusticus' mother, whom he claims is a religious woman, a chaste widow – at least this could be a possible interpretation of Jerome's description of her as long time widow and her being religious – who had taught her son herself before he was sent off to, presumably, grammar school in Gaul.[484] Some have identified Jerome's addressee with Rusticus who was to become the bishop of Narbonne.[485] As with Nepotian, Demetrias, and Furia, there is no evidence that Jerome had ever personally met Rusticus, hence, it seems that Rusticus – or a third party – must have contacted Jerome, presumably based on the latter's (growing) reputation and authority as a teacher and expert on the ascetic life.[486] As such, this would support the weak-

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[481] *Ep*. 125.6, quoted below.

[482] Here we should draw a parallel not only to Jerome himself, but also to Augustine: both socially mobile provincials who pursued further studies at Rome and Carthage respectively in order to advance on the social ladder by acquiring prestigious jobs either in Rome or at the imperial court (see introduction).

[483] *Ep.* 125.6, quoted below.

[484] *Ep*. 125.6: "*Audio religiosam habere te matrem, multorum annorum uiduam, quae aluit, quae erudiuit infantem et post studia Galliarum, quae uel florentissima sunt, misit Romam non parcens sumptibus et absentiam filii spe sustinens futurorum, ut ubertatem Gallici nitoremque sermonis grauitas Romana condiret nec calcaribus in te sed frenis uteretur […].*"

[485] See H.-I. Marrou, "Le dossier épigraphique de l'évêque Rusticus de Narbonne," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 3-4 (1970), 331– 349. See also Leo the Great's letter to (a.o.) Rusticus, *Ep.* 40 (PL 54) (see above for his letter to Demetrias). This shows the close ties that still existed between aristocrats and ecclesial elites, partially if not completely facilitated by (monumental) patronage. Demetrias donated the church of St Stephen, and Dennis Trout elaborates Rusticus' impressive euergetic activities, see Dennis Trout, "*Inscribing* Identity: Latin Epigraphic Habit," in *Companion*, ed. P. Rousseau, 170-186, at 181-2. These records could help us determine how 'aristocratic' Rusticus was: he must have had an abundant financial resource in order to be able to afford the execution of such a monumental agenda. See also the footnote to the letter in Wright, *Select Letters* (Loeb, 262), 396, n.1, where the translator comments that Rusticus of Narbonne, following Jerome's advice, had entered a monastery. However, he was later ordained and would become the Bishop of Narbonne in 430. It offers another point for comparison to Heliodorus, Nepotian's uncle who as monk, returned to ecclesiastical office to become bishop of Altinum. See also Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[486] Compare Cain, *Letters*, who argues that by 393 CE Jerome himself at least considered himself as such an authority, and Williams, *The Monk and the Book* for Jerome's being established as an authority of asceticism and exegesis.

ties networking argument where both parties benefit through the new connection established: Jerome, because this strengthens his ties with Gaul, and Rusticus because 1) he has now established contact with an authoritative figure who has relations across the Empire but most importantly among high society in Rome, and 2) Rusticus' name will become known to this group and others of similar rank and interest through the publication and circulation of the letter. Nepotian, on the other hand, knew of Jerome through his uncle Heliodorus, who had been Jerome's friend of old. As such, Nepotian is a weak tie through a strong tie, but with similar benefits as for Rusticus in that his name will circulate via the distribution of Jerome's letter. However, through his strong tie with Heliodorus Nepotian must have already had access to circles outside Altinum.[487] Jerome also makes the allusion that there had been more letters, at least from Nepotian's hand: in his consolation he admits that he had ignored the letters, until Nepotian brought in Heliodorus' weight which he hoped would trigger a response.[488] Jerome's initial unresponsiveness could possibly be explained by the not-so-noble standing of Nepotian: as we have seen in the preceding chapter, he showed much eagerness to promptly respond to the requests from the patrician ladies. The letter to Rusticus does not tell us anything about the number of letters Rusticus had sent Jerome before he received a response. If we may derive from this silence that it was but a single letter, it allows us to deduct from this, when arguing along the same lines, that Rusticus might have been of social higher importance than Nepotian, something which could be underlined by their respective (potential) careers, or, alternatively, that Rusticus had the support of someone with stronger connections to Jerome. The latter explanation is unlikely, for Jerome would have probably commended this relation in the letter.[489]

What equally does not change is striving for perfection, and of course Jerome's emphasis on its importance. Rather than following the Roman *exempla*, perfection is now

[487] Unfortunately, there is no evidence of this.

[488] Which it did, and the result was *Letter* 52. Applied to Jerome and his network, I interpret the difference between strong ties and weak ties based on the existence of multiple letters in the correspondence. It appears however that although Nepotian might have sent multiple letters, they remained unanswered (which does not conform to epigraphic etiquette at all, particularly not if it would have concerned elite correspondence, see introduction). As such, no stronger tie was established. The fact that Jerome responded after Heliodorus' prompting indicates that the existence of strong ties in the network could be regarded as essential to establish the weak tie connections. *Ep.* 52.1 indicates that Nepotian had sent several letters: "Again and again you ask me, my dear Nepotian, in your letters from over the sea, to draw for you a few rules of life, showing how one who has renounced the service of the world to become a monk or a clergyman may keep the straight path of Christ, and not be drawn aside into the haunts of vice;" similarly in *Ep.* 60.11 Jerome records of multiple letters received from Nepotian. For Jerome's confession of his ignorance, see *Ep.* 60.11: "And when I silently ignored his request and made my petitioner blush by blushing to reply, he put forward his uncle to enforce his suit, knowing that as the boon was for another he would more readily ask it, and that as I held his episcopal office in respect he would more easily obtain it."

[489] Likewise, it could well have been that Rusticus had established such connections during his studies in Rome, yet again we find neither allusion nor evidence of this in the letter.

pursued by following Biblical and Christian role-models, as was also evident in the letters to Demetrias and Furia. In chapter four of the letter to Nepotian Jerome refers to Cyprian who has stipulated the importance of weighty words over eloquence; thereby insinuating that his own words are the former rather than the latter. When Jerome indicates that a student like Nepotian ought to have an example, namely someone who could guide him on his way to perfection, it is obvious that he is alluding to himself.[490] What is noteworthy here is again the use of the combination of *example* and *perfection*, which is repeated in the following passage:

> "You have already learned and are still daily learning all that is holy and that you have the rule of his life as an example of virtue set before you [...] he can train you in a monk's duties and I will teach you to be a perfect clergyman."[491]

Jerome's latter comment is peculiar for one would expect Heliodorus, a bishop, to be better suited to teach the aspects of ordained ministry, whereas Jerome, although officially a priest, thought his office incompatible with his monastic life, and had opted for the latter.[492] In the letter to Rusticus it is Jerome's expertise on the monastic life that is pushed forward. However, Jerome might have considered himself more qualified to instruct Nepotian on the perfection of a clergyman with regard to their embeddedness in (and daily confrontation with) society.[493] This is elaborated when Jerome bids Nepotian to avoid socialising with leading figures in town.[494] Yet, contrastingly, perfection of clerical life facilitates such contacts:

> "[A] worldly judge will defer more to a clergyman who is self-denying than to one who is rich; he will pay more regard to your holiness than to your wealth."[495]

In other words, Nepotian's expertise will be respected and welcomed by other leaders, and as such could become part of the city's leadership structure. Rather than achieving such status through an administrative or legal career, it is now attained through clerical office. Again, there is a 'transformation' insofar as regards nature of office, but the outcome remains the

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[490] *Ep.* 52.4.
[491] *Ep.* 52.4.
[492] Evidence for the incompatibility comes to the fore in the conflict with John, bishop of Jerusalem,: Jerome laments how John had prohibited local clergy from providing services to his monastery, and argues that they now could not celebrate Eucharist or have funerals, although he and Vincentius were ordained ministers, see Kelly, *Jerome*, 198–202.
[493] Of course, a bishop would have expertise on this level too, yet that might be exactly what Jerome fears: in his role as bishop, Heliodorus could, holding top position of the hierarchical rank, instil 'inappropriate' attitudes in relation to society.
[494] *Ep.* 52.11, see below.
[495] *Ep.* 52.11.

same: one becomes a leader.[496] Such social mobility is also alluded to in the next section, which has already been commented upon in the introduction with regards to Jerome as the first person: there is more reason to believe that it is metaphorically intended:

> "I who was born in a poor man's house, in a country cottage, and who could scarcely get of common millet and household bread enough to fill an empty stomach, am now come to disdain the finest wheat flour and honey. I know the several kinds of fish by name. I can tell unerringly on what coast a mussel has been picked. I can distinguish by the flavour the province from which a bird comes. Dainty dishes delight me because their ingredients are scarce and I end by finding pleasure in their ruinous cost."[497]

This paragraph narrates of the first person who comes from a low social rank, but has through his clerical career come to learn the taste of riches. Although the 'I-subject' could also be interpreted as the future Nepotian, it is best to not identify the subject with either Nepotian or Jerome, but rather to see it in the context of Jerome's criticism of clergy who come from socially lower classes and are more likely to succumb to the world of wealth formerly unknown and out of reach to them. Moreover, it again emphasises the (increased) possibility of social climbing through ecclesial career paths. However, such behaviour, although reminiscent of upward social mobility, discards the requirements of ascetic perfection and as such the culprit loses respect and standing. In other words, it entails a defeat in the competition for perfection.

That this journey to perfection is not an easy competition, although its goal is 'lofty,' it is easy to fail, as Jerome entrusts Rusticus, particularly when one is young:

> "I say all this, my son Rusticus, because in the forefront of this treatise I would teach the greatness of your undertaking and the loftiness of your goal. You must know that only by treading underfoot the allurements of youth and early manhood can you climb to the heights of perfect maturity. The path you tread is slippery, and the glory of success is less than the disgrace of failure."[498]

Based on the above references we can assume that Rusticus was still a teenager, and the 'fire of desire' that Jerome usually associates with this age need to be extinguished by 'treading [it]

[496] The difference also lies herein that one should not try to become a leader, but that rather by one's exemplary life style one naturally or automatically becomes one. Jerome condemns efforts and ambition for promotion: "A clergyman who engages in business, and who rises from poverty to wealth, and from obscurity to a high position, avoid as you would the plague," *Ep.* 52.5.
[497] *Ep.* 52.6.
[498] *Ep.* 125.1. 'Climbing to the heights of perfection' is a metaphor also found in the letter to Demetrias, *Ep.* 130.

underfoot,' for only then Rusticus will be able to grow into 'perfect maturity.' Perfect maturity is the state where such lusts and carnal desires have been transformed to a higher spiritual order and do no longer torment a person's mind and body. The segment shows strong dependence on neo-platonic asceticism. Yet, whereas in the letters to patrician ladies Jerome emphasises their virtue and sounds assured of their ability to succeed and achieve the desired state of perfection, Jerome sounds more cautious when he addresses Rusticus, as we read his warning "the path you tread is slippery, and the glory of success is less than the disgrace of failure." This is another way of seeing the ascetic life as a competition, where not victory but failure is stressed in order to achieve the desired effect. Yet, despite this imminent threat Jerome acknowledges in poetically illustrated language how "by God's favour," Rusticus has "already put [his] hand to the plough, and [has] already climbed up to the house-top and the terrace like the apostle Peter." Therefore, he asserts, this treatise is only meant as his "wish to take [Rusticus] by the hand and convey to [him] certain knowledge." Again, the argument seems to be about knowledge and the educational character of the journey to perfection when Jerome compares himself, applying nautical imagery,[499] with "an experienced sailor who has been in many a shipwreck," seeking "to instruct an unskilled steersman." The danger particularly lures in the "pirates who would rob [him] of chastity." The Latin reference to pirates reads "*in quo litore pudicitiae pirata sit*."[500] It is a little obscure because whilst '*pirata*' is masculine, one would presume Jerome must have had female perpetrators in mind: pirates who steal *pudicitia*, 'pirates of purity,' or rather 'pirate of purity' because the singular is used: a pirate who would steal purity from a young man would, in Jerome's mind, have been a woman. Jerome's use of *pudicitiae* (from *pudicitia*) is interesting because it is not a distinctively Christian concept: we are faced with another case of appropriation. *Pudicitia* was a common concept which originates in Roman sexual ethics, and both men and women were expected to conform to it. If they did not they were accused of being *impudicitia*, which

[499] Nautical themes in Jerome's correspondence: see abundant presence of such in the letter to Heliodorus, *Ep.* 14. The nautical imagery is continued throughout this chapter and chapter three, where it is combined with other voyage-related illustrations, with particular emphasis on the voyage through the Red Sea towards Abisama (which takes six months to reach), and the subsequent journey to India (which takes about a year), see *Ep.* 125.3. About India, Jerome writes: "This land is the home of the carbuncle and the emerald, and those gleaming pearls which our great ladies so ardently desire. There are also in it mountains of gold which men cannot approach because of the dragons and griffins and other huge monsters, set there to show us what sort of guardians avarice employs.". This metaphor of merchants who embark on a voyage full of dangers in order to obtain temporal goods is linked up with the ascetic journey on which servants of Christ need to embark, *Ep.* 125.4: "[…] what should not Christ's merchants do who sells all he has to buy the pearl of great price, and with his whole substance buys a field that he may find therein a treasure which neither thief can dig up nor robber carry away?" Notice the use of jewellery-metaphors again.

[500] *Ep.* 125.2. See also Suzanne Dixon, "From Ceremonial to Sexualities: A Survey of Scholarship on Roman Marriage," in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 245-261, at 248.

means as much as 'sexually shameless.' The concept is well covered by famous Roman authors such as Livy, Cicero, and Tacitus. In Livy it is intrinsically connected to the patrician class.[501] Mostly it was seen in reference to a quality women should possess (although men were not exempt), and regarded as the feminine equivalent to the male quality of 'courage' (see Livy 10:23). It makes it all the more fascinating that Jerome is deploying it here in an instruction to a young man. This is not the only time he uses it, as we can find it in his letter to Furia where he describes both Furia and her ancestor Cornelia as '*pudicitiae exemplar*' and '*pudicitiae nomine conseruare'*;[502] furthermore we find it in the letter to Pammachius, where Eustochium is granted the quality.[503] It is also ascribed to Demetrias[504] and to Paula[505].[506] What is immediately obvious is that these references all occur in relation to women: Rusticus is the odd one out. There is one occurrence in the *Vita Malchi* but here it is connected to clerical status: Jerome speaks of *pudicitia sacerdotalis*.[507] In the letter to Rusticus, on the

[501] Originally, there were two chapels or shrines of Pudicitia in Rome: there was the original one for patrician class only which was situated at the "Forum Boarium against the round temple of Hercules", then one was constructed for the plebeian class by Verginia, daughter of the patrician Aulus Verginius, who was excluded from the original chapel's rites for having married "outside the patriciate" (*in casu* with a plebeian consul, L. Volumnius). The plebeian altar/shrine fell into disuse however due to desecration. See Livy, *History of Rome/Ab urbe condita libri*, 10:23. It also occurs five times in Cicero, *Orationes in Verrem.*

[502] *Ep.* 54.1 '*pudicitiae nomine conseruare*; *Ep.* 54.4: '*pudicitia ... exemplar'*. See also 54.15 where Furia is told not to waste her purity: *"aut si certe libido non stimulat, quae tanta insania est in morem scortorum prostituere castitatem, ut augeantur diuitiae et propter rem uilem atque perituram pudicitia, quae et pretiosa et aeterna est, polluatur."*

[503] *Ep.* 66.3: *'[...] quid Eustochio fortius, quae nobilitatis portas et adrogantiam generis consularis uirginali proposito fregerit, et in urbe prima primum genus subiugauerit pudicitiae?'* We also find it in the letter to Eustochium herself, see *Ep.* 22.11: *quodsi uolueris respondere te nobili stripe generatam, semper in deliciis, semper in plumis, non posse a uino et esculentioribus cibis abstinere nec his legibus uiuere districtius, respondebo: 'uiue ergo lege tua, quae dei non potes.' non quo deus, uniuersitatis creator et dominus, intestinorum nostrorum rugitu et inanitate uentris pulmonum que delectetur ardore, sed quo aliter pudicitia tuta esse non possit.'* Here Jerome argues that a rigorous life style is the only way to preserve *pudicitia*. Note also Jerome's emphasis on status and how he presents it as a potential hindrance to ascetic perfection: the rhetoric of the younger Jerome, which appears to have changed through the ages. To now use Jerome against himself: with age, he has grown wiser? (*cfr. supra*)

[504] It occurs four times in the letter to Demetrias: 130.4, 5, 11, 13, but only in 130.5 it refers to Demetrias herself, namely to her chastity which "involves a martyrdom of its own:" "*habet et seruata pudicitia martyrium suum*."

[505] *Ep.* 108. 4: *his, inquam, orta maioribus et fecunditate ac pudicitia probata primum uiro, dein propinquis et totius urbis testimonio*. See also Andrew Cain's discussion of the topic in *Jerome's Epitaph on Paula*, 155.

[506] A database search (LLT-A) for *'pudicitia*' in Jerome's works gives 50 hits: it can be found numerous times in his exegetical commentaries, as well as in *Aduersus Iouinianum*, once in book 3 of *Adversos libri Rufini,* four times in *Dialogi contra Pelagianos,* but in his epistolary correspondence it is limited to the letters mentioned above, and *Letter* 21.3 in reference to Tertullian who writes about it; in *Letter* 64.3 to Fabiola where it is ascribed to Tamar, in 64.21 in relation to virgins; in *Letter* 72.2 to Vitalis with regard to Solomon and Ahaz' parenthood, twice in *Letter* 78 to Fabiola again in the context of the Hebrew Bible. In *Letter* 107.6 in context of the instruction to the child Paula: "*at e contrario de muliere scribitur, quoad salua fiet per filiorum generationem, si permanserit in fide et caritate et sanctificatione cum pudicitia*." Only in 107.13 is it used in relation to the addressee (through her mother Laeta): "*pro insita tibi pudicitia non ambigerem, quin praecederes filiam et primam dei sententiam secunda euangelii lege mutares."* In *Letter* 117 to Alagasia it appears again in relation to Scripture, in *Letter* 128 to Gaudentius it is part of a massive rant on inproper sexual behaviour; and then, as mentioned above, it occurs four times in the letter to Demetrias.

[507] Jerome, *Vita Malchi* 6.47. See also his *Commentarii in iv epistulas Paulinas. Ad Titum, col. 603 l. 37* (CPL 0591).

other hand, Jerome unmistakably connects it to purity that needs to be preserved, yet will be endangered by temptation faced when one embarks on the ascetic journey to perfection. So it is the very kind of purity which before was connected to respectable patricians with a reputation of being perfect Roman citizens, that now belongs to (or is appropriated to) the perfect Christian *nobilitas*.

In the same section we find other classical references to "the Charybdis of avarice," and "Scylla's dogs," which Jerome also used as illustrations to describe the foul acts of Heraclian in North Africa when addressing Demetrias. The voyage-narratives employed in the letter to Rusticus also bear references to jewellery, Jerome's much-loved *topoi*. They resemble the ascetic life: temporal goods and possessions must be sold in order to be able to purchase "the pearl of great price" (although Demetrias was allowed to merely "put them back in their cases"), and "with his whole substance," that is, with his entire being – body plus mind/soul – the ambitious ascetic can buy the 'field' wherein he *may* find the treasure sought after. Notice how Jerome uses the subjunctive mood 'may' (Latin: (*in quo*) *reperiat*) so as to indicate that this is a possibility but not a necessary/automatic outcome. However, contrary to the worries that trouble the wealthy – namely that their possessions might be stolen – the perfect ascetic needs not be anxious for their beautiful treasure is of such nature that it can be stolen by no man. This observation contrasts with Jerome's earlier warning that 'pirates' might steal Rusticus' purity. When we think of the above suggestion that the pirates must have been female, this could be supported by Jerome's references to the impious behaviour of those who run after strange women, and his subsequent observation: "I know some women of ripe age who in many cases take their pleasure with young freedmen, calling themselves under this pretence of motherhood all the licence of marriage."[508] Why would Jerome use a reference to 'young freedmen' here? Rusticus does not seem to be a freedman but rather an aristocrat, at least if his family belonged to the provincial senatorial aristocracy of Gaul. It could be that his 'peripheral' status prompted Jerome to use the comparison with 'young

[508] *Ep.* 125.6. Similar complaints are made of men: 'you may see some men also with girded loins, sombre tunics and long beards, who yet can never leave women's society. They live with them under one roof, they go out to dinner with them, they have young girls to wait upon them, and, save that they are not called husbands, they enjoy all the privileges of marriage." Both segments invoke a comparison with Jerome's narrative in *Letter* 122 addressed to two women in Gaul. Jerome clearly perceives a problem in the relation of senior persons with junior persons (particularly in an educative environment or mentoring realm): 'women of ripe age' engage with young men, and presumably senior men (long beards) engage with young girls. In both cases there seems to be an initial teacher/tutor-student relation, but it ends in, or the ultimate goal is sexual intercourse. In case of the 'women of ripe age' the relation even sounds incestuous as they call their subject their 'spiritual children'. Compare also Jerome's complaint in his letter to Gaudentius, *Ep.* 128.3: "I am ashamed to say it and yet I must, high born ladies who have rejected more high born suitors cohabit with men of the lowest grade and even with slaves." It shows how much Jerome is influenced by Roman tradition as he seems to particularly take offence in the fact that these ladies engage (he insinuates 'sleep') with men below their status.

freedmen,' or he considered this a legitimate excuse to draw the comparison. Yet, Jerome could also be alluding to accepted sexual practices in Roman society, where men and women were allowed to satisfy their needs with slaves and freedmen, but not with freeborn men or women.[509] Another explanation could simply be that it is just a general remark bearing in mind the broader readership rather than a personal comment to Rusticus. This is a tendency which characterises the letter to Nepotian as well, and the most evident example of such language is of course the letter to Eustochium.

In the letter to Nepotian there are also numerous references to the danger women entail. He is told that "a woman's foot should seldom, if ever, cross the threshold of your home." After all, it is women who embody temptation and who are the reason why men transgress into breaking their vow of chastity.[510]

What did change: mode of life?

In Nepotian we do find transformation which diverges from the letters we have analysed before, and that is the idea of complete renunciation. Whereas we could conclude that no total departure from worldly possessions was implied in the other letters, Nepotian is told he should have no possessions at all: God would not accept this. On the contrary, he should live off offerings from the community, similar to the priests and Levites in Jewish tradition.[511] However, contrary to a priest, a bishop is allowed to own properties or have a certain degree of personal wealth, since it is his task to alleviate the poor.[512] In line with this we learn of another transformation, namely that of the prohibition for priests to inherit.[513]

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[509] See Plautus, see also Emiel Eyben, *Restless Youth in Ancient Rome* (Routledge, 2003), 223. It is important to bear this in mind for Jerome's subsequent comment that Rusticus should stay away from his mother's female servants.

[510] *Ep.* 52.5: 'do not linger under the same roof with them, and do not rely on your past continence. […] always bear in mind that it was a woman who expelled the tiller of paradise from his heritage.' In the rest of chapter five Jerome lays out the tricks that women use to be alone with a priest so as to seduce him, and how priests fall for their *avances*. It must be admitted that he does speak dismissing of them as well.

[511] *Ep.* 52.5 : "Suppose, for instance, that he holds to gold or silver, or possessions or inlaid furniture; with such portions as these the Lord will not deign to be his portion. I, if I am the portion of the Lord, and the line of His heritage, receive no portion among the remaining tribes; but, like the Priest and the Levite, I live on the tithe, and serving the altar, am supported by its offerings. Having food and raiment, I shall be content with these, and as a disciple of the Cross shall share its poverty."

[512] *Ep.* 52.6 : "It is the glory of a bishop to make provision for the wants of the poor, but it is the shame of all priests to amass private fortunes." See for example the *C.Th.* 8.5.46 (385) which states that clergy are not exempt from the requirements to give their property to the public post. As for bishops, evidence of property can be found in *C.Th.* 13.1.11 (379) which refers to regulations concerning profit made by bishops; similarly when one looks at *C.Th.* 12.1.163 (399) states that bishops have to surrender their patrimony if they do not comply with the new code. This law indicated that bishops still owned property. See also 'Roman Law' in chapter one.

[513] *Ep.* 52.6: "Shameful to say, idol-priests, play-actors, jockeys, and prostitutes can inherit property: clergymen and monks alone lie under a legal disability, a disability enacted not by persecutors but by Christian emperors."

Transformation is also implied when Jerome advises Rusticus to take up manual labour of some kind: an activity most unusual for male aristocrats, unless one could argue that hunting was a form of manual labour, but then still one would take one's servants to perform the less pleasant tasks. Weaving baskets and gardening are amongst the suggestions: these are clearly tasks normally performed by household staff. Jerome tells Rusticus he should take an example from the apostles who made "the Gospel their livelihood," yet they "still worked with their hands."[514] It is a peculiar comparison for as far as we know the apostles were no aristocrats, and most aristocrats even with supposed renunciation of wealth still had ample means to live by without the need to beg for money, which is what is implied in this segment. It would be even better if Rusticus were to learn "to make hives for bees, for to them the Proverbs of Solomon send you, and by watching the tiny creatures learn the ordinance of a monastery and the discipline of a kingdom."[515]

Life in a monastic community would imply another transformation: Jerome describes in his letter to Rusticus how in such a community the entire day is ordered around prayer, the singing of psalms, communal worship, and work. This portrayal of monastic discipline as total subordination stands in stark contrast of what we have read above with regard to sexual practices only marginally restricted, and aristocratic life in general that was characterised by not only sexual 'freedom' but also the leisure to commit to study, travel, to entertain, and to engage in public activities. Yet the business of monastic life will help Rusticus to fight imagination and temptation.[516] Jerome is nonetheless confident that "[…] habits will gradually grow on you, and finally you will do of your own accord what was first a matter of compulsion; you will take pleasure in your labours, and forgetting what is behind you will reach out to that which is before, you will not think at all of the evil that others do, but only of the good which it is your duty to perform."[517] The letter to Rusticus, composed around the year 411 CE, reminds us of the letter sent to Heliodorus some thirty or forty years earlier. Jerome's ideological developments are clear: whereas in the letter to Heliodorus he seemed to favour an anchoritic life style, in this letter to Rusticus he argues the opposite, urging Rusticus

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Jerome seems to be referring to a law introduced in 383, *C.Th.* 16.7.2, by emperors Gratian, Valentinian II, and Theodosius I. The law was designed to protect offspring of rich families from being cast into poverty because their parents decided to give their heritage to the Church, or maybe individual clergy or the poor. However, see the discussion on 'Roman Law' where I refer to a law promulgated in August, 390, which alleviates some inheritance restrictions.

[514] *Ep.* 125.11.
[515] *Ep.* 125.11.
[516] *Ep.* 125.15.
[517] *Ep.* 125.16.

to remain in his monastic community and as such lead a cenobitic life, rather than to abandon his community in favour of the more solitary life of an anchorite.

Appearance

One aspect that deserves closer attention in the context of 'transformation' is the expected alteration of appearance. Outward appearance and material concerns should be disregarded, as Jerome argues "have no regard for your property – you began your vows by renouncing it – but for your soul."[518] This passage invokes what we have read in the letters to Lucinus and Julian: perfection has more to do with state of mind, the soul, than with material possessions. Yet Jerome seems to imply that these have already been given up at an earlier stage. Furthermore, we find recommendations to do with appearance, which resemble the instructions found in the letters to Demetrias and Furia. Jerome advises Rusticus:

> "Let a squalid garb be the evidence of a clean heart: let a coarse tunic prove that you despise the world; provided only that you do not pride yourself on such things nor let your dress and language be at variance. Avoid hot baths: your aim is to quench the heat of the body by the help of chilling fasts. But let your fasts be moderate, since if they are carried to excess they weaken the stomach, and by making more food necessary to make up for it lead to indigestion, which is the parent of lust. A frugal, temperate diet is good both for body and soul."[519]

They differ from the instructions to senior aristocrats in that they specifically focus on aspects of adolescence, 'troubles' Jerome remembers he had frequently encountered himself.[520] The instructions centre around training and care for the soul by means of restrictions and guidelines for physical care: wear rough, poor clothes rather than airy, silky fabrics that adorn the well-nourished, well-washed and oil-soothed bodies of (fellow) aristocrats; fast to temper the heat of a passionate body yet be aware that fasting has to be in moderation in order to achieve the optimum effect. The latter shows how Jerome has already greatly altered his course since his lengthy treatise to Eustochium, and the devastating effect his early career ideology had had on her sister Blesilla.[521] Jerome now links excessive fasting to having to eat more to recuperate, which, so he argues, leads to indigestion, allegedly the 'parent of lust'. At the same time there is a constant in his discourse, and that is his fear for the fire that heats the

[518] *Ep.* 125.7, quoted below.
[519] *Ep.* 125.7.
[520] Compare *Ep.* 22 to Eustochium, *Ep.* 14 to Heliodorus.
[521] See *Letters* 22 and 39.

bodies of youngsters and that makes them prone to surrender to sexual desire.[522] Nepotian, too, is advised to moderate his fasts,[523] and he is advised to avoid drinking wine unless it is absolutely necessary to keep his health. Wine is particularly dangerous for young people because it only increases the fire of desire that already burns in their bodies.[524] Furthermore, rather than a suggestion for Nepotian to wear coarse or dirty garbs, he is suggested to wear something more 'neutral' or 'balanced', as we read: "in dress avoid sombre colours as much as bright ones. Showiness and slovenliness are alike to be shunned; for the one savours of vanity and the other of pride."[525] However, one must add that Nepotian has a 'public' and representative office which is of a different nature than monastic life. Thus it calls for a different way of dress.

Jerome also sets out what kind of appearance is harmful for one's reputation, yet the illustrations call to mind accusations made at Jerome's address:

> "I myself have seen some men who after they had renounced the world – in garb, at least, and in verbal professions, but not in reality – changed nothing of their former mode of life. [Their property has increased rather than diminished; they have the same number of servants to wait upon them and keep the same elaborate table; though they drink from glass and eat from plates of earthenware, it is gold they swallow, and amidst crowds of servants swarming around them they claim the name of hermit.] Others, who are poor and of slender means think themselves full of wisdom, pass through the streets like the pageants in a procession, to practise a cynical eloquence. [...] Some, too, by reason of damp cells and immoderate fasts, added to the weariness of solitude and excessive study, have a singing in their ears day and night, and turning melancholy mad need Hippocrates' fomentations more than any advice of mine."[526]

Rather than Jerome's statement that he has 'seen some men,' what he indicates here might allude to a more common practice. In most letters there is no recommendation at all for slaves to be made redundant, and even Paula seems to have taken her servants along when she

[522] See the discussion in the previous chapter, and compare the letters to Eustochium (famously, 22.7) and Heliodorus (particularly 14.4, 14.6) where Jerome laments his own weakness in this respect.
[523] *Ep.* 52.12.
[524] *Ep.* 52.11.
[525] *Ep.* 52.9.
[526] *Ep.* 125.16.

established a monastery in Bethlehem.[527] Likewise, it was difficult if not impossible for aristocrats, particularly those of patrician descent, to part from all of their properties. Paulinus of Nola is a fine example of one of such aristocrats who still managed their estates after conversion to the ascetic life, as is Melania the Elder.[528]

Avoidance

The perfection of ascetic life does not only imply a transformation on the level of appearance, but it also bears effect on the level of social relations and engagement. The danger women impose, particularly for young men, has already been addressed above. However, women are not the only creatures that embody a threat to purity and perfection. Nepotian is advised to avoid clerics who can be of bad influence, yet Jerome's critique against such men at first sight does not sound as harsh as his critique of women. Jerome illustrates a profile of a 'bad' clergyman as such:

> "A clergyman who engages in business, and who rises from poverty to wealth, and from obscurity to a high position, avoid as you would the plague. For 'evil communications corrupt good manners' (1 *Cor.* 15:33). You despise gold; he loves it. You spurn wealth; he eagerly pursues it. You love silence, meekness, privacy; he takes delight in talking and effrontery, in squares, and streets, and apothecaries' shops. What unity of feeling can there be where there is so wide a divergence of manners?"[529]

In other words, being a priest is incompatible with being a tradesman, and one should not seek office for capital gains.[530] This reads as a critique exactly against the motives of those who

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[527] *Ep.* 108.20, on their servants who dwell in different wings of her monastery and only come together for prayer and meals.

[528] Pammachius is reported to have never renounced his properties either, see Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 62 which indicates it was only sold after his death. See also Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 13. For the argument that Paulinus of Nola and Melania the Elder continued to manage their wealth, see Curran, *Pagan City*, 314: "it is clear that Melania the Elder had never ceased being the possessor of a very large senatorial patrimony which she managed with great shrewdness." Curran adds that she was also known as such. Jerome alludes to this when he criticises Rufinus who is being supported by Melania, and he blames Melania from not having given up all her worldly possessions, though at the same time neither did Jerome himself: it is only in (presumed) financial hardship that he decides to sell off his 'landed property', as we read above in *Ep*. 66 to Pammachius.

[529] *Ep.* 52.5. The citation from 1 *Cor.* 15 :33 is also used in the letters to Eustochium (22.29) and to Magnus, orator of the city of Rome (70.2). In the latter, Jerome argues that Paul borrows the citation from Menander, '*in alia quoque epistula menandri ponit senarium: corrumpunt mores bonos confabulationes pessimae,'* yet it could also have been derived from Euripedes, as Fremantle acknowledges in n. 2132 of his translation of the letter.

[530] Imperial legislation also holds the two offices incompatible since clergy are exempt from tax: it would therefore have been appealing for them to engage in business, or vice versa for tradesmen to become priests, as such receive tax exemption, and continue their trade, see Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 196-7.

seek social advance through clerical office. Silence is contrasted with talking, meekness and privacy with effrontery and appearances in public spaces. Gold and wealth should be renounced, not acquired. Interference with those who seek the opposite of the ascetic ideal is to be avoided, as it can only corrupt good behaviour. Similarly, Nepotian ought to avoid 'men of the world;' socialising too much would lead to a bad reputation:

> "Avoid entertaining men of the world, especially those whose honours make them swell with pride. You are the priest of Christ – one poor and crucified who lived on the bread of strangers. It is a disgrace to you if the consul's lictors or soldiers keep watch before your door, and if the Judge of the province has a better dinner with you than in his own palace."[531]

Jerome is not so much criticising a potential engagement with prominent figures of the city as he warns against Nepotian taking upon him the task of host: the one who is criticised is a priest, who hosts dinner parties for *socialites*, who entertains his guests at his house. This priest will gain a bad reputation, because soldiers will be seen to stand watch in front of his door: a sign that he is hosting important people. However, social entertainment was expected of those in high positions, and particularly for those who were seeking to win respect. Jerome's condemnation of such behaviour might allude to a wider or more common practice.[532] He even seems to allude to Nepotian's engagement in social gatherings, this time positively, in his consolation to Heliodorus, where he records "in conversing at entertainments his habit was to propose some topic from scripture, listen modestly, to answer diffidently, to support the right, to refute the wrong, but both without bitterness; to instruct his opponent rather than to vanquish him."[533]

Rusticus also receives instructions as to whose company best to avoid. The greater part of chapter seven is dedicated to the danger of women. Jerome urges Rusticus to be vigilant, for although he should often pay visits to his mother, he should "not be forced to see other women when [he visits] her," for "their faces may dwell in [his] heart and so 'a secret wound may fester in your breast'."[534] The citation used by Jerome is derived from Virgil's *Aeneid* (IV, 67). When he links womanhood to social standing, Jerome gets explicitly radical:

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[531] *Ep.* 52.11.
[532] Compare Rapp, *Holy Bishops,* 103-4.
[533] *Ep.* 60.10.
[534] *Ep.* 125.7.

> "You must remember too that the maids who wait upon her [Rusticus' mother] are an especial snare; the lower they are in rank, the easier it is to ruin them."[535]

Female servants seem to impose a serious threat and should be avoided at all cost. Yet Jerome's take is remarkable for he does not imply the threat is for Rusticus, but rather the danger is for them to be ruined by the sight of a young bachelor of the likes of Rusticus. Furthermore, Jerome links rank to vulnerability: he assumes that women of lower social rank will fall for temptation much swifter than a highborn lady, whom we might assume, is according to Jerome more steadfast. It hints at the common practice of free men to engage in sexual relations with their servants as they pleased.[536] It could be exactly this aspect which frightens Jerome most. He sets out to show how history offers a plethora of examples of fine, holy men who have had to seek refuge away from parental residence and society in order to be able to keep to their vow of chastity. Jerome offers examples of John the Baptist, as well as sons of the prophets, "who are the monks of the Old Testament", who had all abandoned the 'crowded cities' so that they would be able ensure virtue and to spare their souls. For, as Jerome urges, "the stars are not pure in God's sight: how much less are men whose life is one long temptation! Woe to us, who commit fornication whenever we have lustful thoughts!"[537] Even the apostle Paul was not spared from such temptations put forward by the heat of the body, as Jerome reads in *Rom.* 7:24.[538] However, this actually says much more about the weakness of men than of the alleged wickedness of women: it is one of the few places in Jerome's correspondence where he seems to put the blame more to men who are not able to resist temptation when in presence of women, rather than to the devilish temptresses who seek to lure those poor, helpless men. Yet, how much women trouble Jerome's mind is shown by a reiteration of the dangers that lure in encounters with the opposite sex: Rusticus should not live with his mother, for "in a house that is full of girls you would see things in the day-time that you would think about in the night."[539]

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[535] *Ep.* 125.7.

[536] It was legitimate, see Elaine Fantham, "*Stuprum*: Public Attitudes and Penalties for Sexual Offences in Republican Rome," in *CV* 35/10 (1991), 267-291, and common practice, see Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humour*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 225. Compare Jerome's comment to Demetrias, *Ep.* 130.13, "Again in selecting for yourself eunuchs and maids and servingmen look rather to their characters than to their good looks; for, whatever their age or sex, and even if mutilation ensures in them a compulsory chastity, you must take account of their dispositions, for these cannot be operated on save by the fear of Christ." Jerome refers to criteria some would impose in the selections of slaves on the market, and the passage contains a reference to eunuchs being advertised, in most cases probably to the *pater familias*, as a 'safer option'.

[537] *Ep.* 125.7.

[538] *Ep.* 125.7.

[539] *Ep.* 125.11.

Such dangers are intrinsically connected to (public) society and therefore the city, and as we have seen Nepotian had already been advised to avoid hosting the city's or province's elites. As we read in Rusticus, it might therefore be best for (would-be) monks to seek the seclusion and safety offered by the countryside rather than to linger in crowded cities. The monastic life is preferred over a life among the people, for "a town is a prison, and the wilderness a paradise."[540] Even more, as we learn in the final chapter, Rusticus is only able to achieve perfection if he abandons his native city.[541] Although he may take respectable clerics as teachers and examples, only the ascetic monastic life will allow him to become perfect. A life of loneliness offers the best training for those who eventually seek a clerical career: like Moses and the apostles, Rusticus ought to be trained in the virtues of a monastic life of detachment before he could become an ordained minister, and before he would be able to teach others.[542] Jerome goes on to suggest Rusticus to read the letter he had sent to Nepotian if the former wishes to become ordained. His current address has the sole purpose of "discussing a monk's early training and character," which is particularly appropriate for someone who has decided to pursue the ascetic life "after a liberal education in his early manhood."[543] This passage is most clear in connection with classical education (in the liberal arts) which is a prerequisite for Christian ascetic education. Parallels can be found above in the letter to Demetrias, where Jerome also states classical education as an *a priori* requirement before learning and teaching Christian asceticism.

In line with this, Jerome thinks it is dangerous for Rusticus to set out on his own and be his own teacher,[544] so he should rather live under the protection and guidance of a society of holy men.[545] A solitary life of total detachment entails many a danger, yet Jerome acknowledges that he has frequently recommended it in the past.[546] Training in a coenobitic community is a good way to perfection, since "the soldiers who march out from a monastery-school" ideally "take pleasure in poverty, whose garb, conversation, looks and gait all teach virtue." This is contrasted to anchorites "who have been overcome by hunger or satiety," and who master the skills to invent "monstrous stories of their struggles with demons, tales invented to excite the admiration of the ignorant mob and to extract money from their

[540] *Ep.* 125.8.
[541] *Ep.* 125.20.
[542] *Ep.* 125.8. Compare *Ep.* 52.4 to Nepotian, where Jerome urges his addressee: '*disce, quod doceas.'* (learn, so that you may teach.)
[543] *Ep.* 125.8.
[544] Again, this recalls parallels with the letter to Demetrias, see above.
[545] *Ep.* 125.9.
[546] One can think of his letter to Heliodorus (*Ep.* 14). Already as early as his letter to Eustochium (*Ep.* 22) he seems to show preference for coenobitic monasticism. See *Ep.* 125.9: '*[…] quippe quam saepe laudauimus.'*

pockets."[547] When we look at the letter to Heliodorus, we cannot help but think that the author himself qualifies as one of the "foolish fellows" he now seems to despise. In the current passage he seems to mock the popularity of the literature of the desert fathers, which was circulated and quite popular among the Christian upper classes of Rome and the province. He might even be alluding to Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* (the legend which renounced classical education), in response to which Jerome composed his *Life of Paul the First Hermit*: ficticious, but offering a defence of liberal education and its compatibility with a life of ascetic perfection.[548]

Transformation through the study of Scripture

It must be stipulated, again, that wisdom is most cherished by Jerome. As we have learned from all previous chapters: to foster knowledge is the route to perfection. The opening chapters of Nepotian underline this, as already briefly recorded above. Jerome furthermore borrows Solomon's words on wisdom from *Proverbs* 5-9, where wisdom is presented as the principal attribute which will bring honour, grace, and glory.[549] When he explains the name of Abishag the Shunamite, he argues that "Shunamite means 'scarlet,' a hint that the love of wisdom becomes warm and glowing through religious study."[550] Ultimately, it is the study of Scripture which offers the way to wisdom: only through ardent study of this material is one transformed to become wise.

As already mentioned above, youngsters are not able to gain wisdom, and one of the greatest threats in them is the fire that heats their bodies and attracts them into sexual activities, as Jerome explains to Nepotian:

> "Youth prevents one to gain wisdom: youth, as such, has to cope with the assaults of passion, and amid the allurements of vice and the tingling of the flesh is stifled like a fire among green boughs, and cannot develop its proper brightness. But when men have employed their youth in commendable pursuits and have meditated on the law of

[547] *Ep.* 125.9.
[548] See *Vita Sancti Pauli primi eremitae* (PL 23, 17-28), see also P. Gemeinhardt, *Sancta Simplicitas? Bildung als Thema der spätantiken lateinischen Hagiographie*, in B. R. Suchla (ed.), *Festschrift für Antonie Wlosok: Von Homer bis Landino* (Berlin: Pro Business Publishers, 2011), 85-113.
[549] *Ep.* 52.3: "'Get wisdom,' he writes, 'get understanding: forget not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not and she shall preserve thee: love her and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her and she shall promote thee. She shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a corwn of glory shall she deliver to thee.'"
[550] *Ep.* 52.3.

> the Lord day and night (*Ps.* 1:2), they learn with the lapse of time, fresh experience and wisdom come as the years go by, and so from the pursuits of the past their old age reaps a harvest of delight."[551]

Passion prevents wisdom to nurture and develop, although when committed to the right regiment, that is through the study of Scripture – more particularly the Law –, one can eventually 'reap the harvest of delight' that is wisdom. We learn from Jerome that Nepotian had committed himself to such ardent study, and that he "indeed by constant reading and long-continued meditation […] had made his breast a library of Christ."[552] The emphasis is thus put on study and the centrality of the word. Jerome also stipulates the need of a teacher to guide the student in the study of Scripture, but he does not do so in the negative way as encountered in Demetrias: he does not blame men for being overly self-confident in their understanding of it, and he even admits that there are young men who already have knowledge.[553] Thus Nepotian is instructed to "read God's Book continually, learn, so that you may teach."[554] This is also advised to Rusticus, as Jerome tells him to "spend years in learning what you are to teach."[555] He also urges him to "not rashly leap into authorship, and be led by light-headed madness."[556]

The letter to Nepotian furthermore elaborates the necessity of such eloquence in Scripture: not only does Nepotian have to take what he reads to heart, he also needs to be able to instruct others in Scripture, and be able to communicate what he has read:

> "Hold fast the faithful word as you have been taught that you may be able by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers. Continue in the things that you have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them."[557]

Here we encounter doctrinal engagement (*cfr. infra*) which is expected from Nepotian: he will be challenged and so it is his task to defend orthodox doctrine. This is furthermore emphasised when Jerome asserts that Nepotian should "be ready always to give an answer to every man who asked you a reason of the hope and faith that are in

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[551] *Ep.* 52.3.
[552] *Ep.* 60.10.
[553] *Ep.* 52.3.
[554] *Ep.* 52.7.
[555] *Ep.* 125.18.
[556] *Ep.* 125.18.
[557] *Ep.* 52.4. Cain derives from this that "*epistula* 52 was never meant for the edification of Nepotian alone. Jerome in fact indicates to the young priest that his aim is to "instruct the others through you" (*in te ceteros erudiat*, 52.4.3)," *Jerome and the Monastic Clergy*, 13. See also introduction on the purpose of letter writing and the wider audiences reached through publication, copying, and distribution; and compare the chapters on Pammachius and the Roman circle in relation to publication and distribution of Jerome's works.

you.[558] Intellectual training thus is pivotal to gain wisdom and eloquence in Scriptures and doctrine so as to enable one to teach others:

> "A presbyter's words ought to be seasoned by his reading of scripture. [...] show yourself skilled in the deep things and versed in the mysteries of God."[559]

The central theme of knowledge and learning also appears in his letter to Rusticus, with parallels in the letters to Demetrias and Nepotian:

> "Always have a book in your hand and before your eyes; learn the psalms word by word, pray without ceasing, keep your senses on the alert and closed against vain imaginings. Let your mind and body both strain towards the Lord, overcome wrath by patience; love the knowledge of the Scriptures and you will not love the sins of the flesh. Do not let your mind offer a lodging to disturbing thoughts, for if they once find a home in your breast they will become your masters and lead you on into fatal sin."[560]

The segment quite nicely illustrates how character and virtue are built upon or by learning. The book, fountain of knowledge and as such source of virtue, functions as a barrier between the ardent student and the outside world which is full of temptations to mind and body. 'Love the knowledge of the Scriptures' is exactly what Jerome commends Demetrias, yet here he does not add 'and wisdom will love you,' but rather he adds a negative clause: 'and you will not love the sins of the flesh.' It sounds thus that he deems Rusticus to be more readily disturbed by carnal temptations than young Demetrias. The emphasis in the cited segment lies much more on physical desires than in the letters to young ladies. We can only speculate, but the general tendency of the letter invites the proposition that Jerome might envisage Rusticus as his younger self: a provincial, upward socially mobile, and well-educated young man originally destined for a promising civil career, who has been called to the ascetic life, who presumably still struggles with the 'flame of youth burning in his flesh'. The speculation seems supported by Jerome's exhortation in chapter twelve, where he narrates how he himself had suffered the challenges of bodily desires and youthful passions when he had been living in 'isolation' in the desert, and he claims that even fasting could not prevent his mind from always being "in a turmoil of imagination."[561]

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[558] *Ep.* 52.7.
[559] *Ep.* 52.8.
[560] *Ep.* 125.11.
[561] *Ep.* 125.12.

Jerome sets forth how he came to learn Hebrew, which could either be an allusion to his wishes for Rusticus to follow his example, or, in line with Andrew Cain, it could serve to portray Jerome as someone who shares the same educational background with his Roman aristocratic audience (prospective students) in order to appear more authoritative. Although it could be regarded as part of Jerome's 'marketing strategy' to reach out to peripheral aristocrats – and as such the letter could be lined up along those to Lucinus and Julian – I feel more reason to believe that these letters serve to allow for progression to the status of *nobilitas* to addressees whom would otherwise be regarded as of lesser rank in the eyes of Roman patricians. We can tie in Jerome's desire to belong to this *nobilitas* with the liaison offered in these letters to the young peripheral aristocrats: they are invited to identify themselves with the author. Should they be recognised as *nobilitas*, would this then automatically count for the author as well, and vice versa? The literary 'equality' is revealed in Jerome's narrative of his own biography: how he progressed through the school of rhetoric, studied the poets, how he suffered and struggled to learn Hebrew. He succeeded, so his addressees will succeed despite the efforts and struggles it might take. In a likewise manner, they are encouraged to face the challenges and after ardent work they may rejoice and 'pluck the sweet fruits' of their learning. What is even more plausible is that this 'shared background' should lead the addressees to conclude that Jerome would be their perfect teacher: "no art is learned without a master."[562] Although Jerome does not directly suggest that Rusticus should come to Bethlehem, it is implied in his suggestion that he "should rather live in a monastery under the control of one father and with many companions."[563]

Like in the letter to Demetrias, one of the central arguments in Jerome's letter to Nepotian seems to be the inseparable connection between intellectual and moral education. If a priest does not live to what he preaches, the congregation can question his authority:

> "Your deeds must not belie your words [...] why do you not practice what you preach? [...] In a priest of Christ mind and mouth should be in harmony."[564]

Above all the clergy, the spiritual mentors, and the teachers of faith have to live according to what they preach: they have to set an example.[565] In the letter to Furia Jerome quotes from 1

[562] *Ep.* 125.15.
[563] *Ep.* 125.15.
[564] *Ep.* 52.7.
[565] *Ep.* 52.11-17. Parallels, with regard to Jerome's complaints about malignent clergy, can be found in his letter to Eustochium, see *Ep.* 22.28, for example: *'Sunt alii – de mei ordinis hominibus loquor – qui ideo ad presbyterium et diaconatum ambient, ut mulieres licentius uideant.'* Jerome then sets out to describe how Eustochium could recognise this type of 'false clergy' in a very verbose style. In the letter to Furia too, Jerome's young addressee is warned against 'false monks,' where the author probably had Jovinian and his allies in mind:

Cor 9:27 and refers to Paul who subjected his body to his soul so as to prevent that "what he has preached to others he should himself fail to keep."[566]

Jerome's instructions here and throughout the letters are however not distinctively Christian, and we could maybe even argue not transformative to an extreme extent. Rather, they are – with some exceptions – as transformative as those of Hippocrates for his students. Jerome refers to these instructions in his letter to Nepotian, and compares his own instructions with them:[567]

> "Hippocrates, before he will teach his pupils, makes them take an oath and compels them to swear fealty to him. He binds them over to silence, and prescribes for them their language, their gait, their dress, their manners."[568]

As we observe in this passage, Hippocrates' students too were instructed on matters of appearance, behaviour, language, and study.[569]

Further instructions with regard to social responsibilities that are expected from Jerome's students, and particularly for priests such as Nepotian, who are advised to "welcome poor men and strangers to your homely board, that with them Christ may be your guest."[570] Here we encounter the other side of the coin with regard to social engagement as addressed above. Rather than hosting prominent people, Nepotian should invite poor people and travellers (strangers) to his house, and offer them dinner and lodging. Similarly, "it is your duty to visit the sick, to know the homes, the mothers and their children, and to guard the secrets of noblemen."[571] Whereas he is not to host noblemen at his own house, he is not encouraged to avoid all contact with them. As the last citation shows, he ought to provide services for people of all walks of society.

"They are backed up by men of my own order, who being themselves a mark for scandal spread scandal about others; they are fluent enough in attacking me, but in their own defence they are dumb. As though, forsooth, they were not monks themselves, and as though all that is said against monks does not reflect on the clergy who are their spiritual fathers! To hurt the flock is to shame the shepherd. On the other hand, we must praise the life of a monk who holds Christ's priests in veneration, and does not carp at the order by whose offices he became a Christian," *Ep.* 54.5. Of course this is all highly rhetorical, because Jerome himself is known to have severely criticised the Roman clergy and even the bishop, see e.g. his treatise addressed to Eustochium.

[566] The context in the letter to Furia has not so much to do with education than with Jerome's warnings for her not to be overly confident, as he adds to this clause: "can a mere girl whose passions are kindled by abundance of food, can a mere girl afford to be confident of her own chastity?"

[567] Hippocrates who teaches his students medicine, Jerome who argues his students provide medicine for the soul.

[568] *Ep.* 52.15.

[569] Similarly, silence is also advised in an earlier passage discussed above. Here it appears in the context of confidentiality: like doctors, priests should also keep silent to what they hear and encounter in the houses of the people they visit.

[570] *Ep.* 52.5.

[571] *Ep.* 52.15.

Doctrinal and public engagement

When it comes to doctrine, it is important to investigate if Jerome desires his young male correspondents to engage differently in doctrinal matters than the young female addressees. As we have seen above, both Nepotian and Rusticus are encouraged to teach others and to engage in public debates, particularly whenever they are challenged on their understanding of orthodox doctrine and on their faith. When we compare the instructions to the ladies with those to the young men, what cannot be overlooked are 1) the higher social status of the ladies, and 2) the (expected) clerical commitments of the young men. Both are essential components which make it more difficult to assess them equally. For the first group their vast wealth and social respectability makes them people who are listened to. For the second group, even if they do not enjoy the privilege of such noble status, their leadership roles in local communities also give them public responsibility, and the very nature of their ecclesial position will demand of them to actively engage in doctrinal debates.

In the letter to Nepotian Jerome emphasises the importance of knowing the correct, sound, and traditional doctrines so that a clergyman such as Nepotian could communicate it to his congregation – Jerome stresses that these congregations are often unlearned and even illiterate – and should be able to apply it when challenged in debates:

> "To mouth your words and by your quickness of utterance astonish the unlettered crowd is a mark of ignorance [...] There is nothing so easy as by sheer volubility to deceive a common crowd or an uneducated congregation: such admire most what they fail to understand."[572]

Jerome warns Neoptian not to deceive his congregation by novel, astonishing doctrines, explanations, even unlearned people pick up most readily, but to stick to what he has learned as sound teachings.[573] The segment clearly pictures the contrast between a priest (of Nepotian's standing) and the average congregation: the first is an educated, eloquent man whereas the congregation seems to largely exist of unlearned people.[574] Although Jerome does

[572] *Ep.* 52.8.
[573] *Ep.* 52.8. "When teaching in church seek to call forth not plaudits but groans. Let the tears of your hearers be your glory. A presbyter's words ought to be seasoned by his reading of scripture. Be not a declaimer or a ranter, one who gabbles without rhyme or reason; but shew yourself skilled in the deep things and versed in the mysteries of God." Jerome refers to Marcus Tullius and Quintus Gallius who have likewise spoken up against those who deceive crowds or who tried to mask their ignorance with eloquence.
[574] It is interesting to note that, as we have seen in the Pammachius-chapters, and actually throughout Jerome's correspondence with aristocrats – patricians and peripherals almost alike – is that Jerome never encourages

not offer explicit instructions or thoughts on doctrine in these letters, he emphasises the importance of knowing orthodox doctrine and having the ability to communicate it. He safeguards his students from being led astray by their own inclinations to appeal to curious congregations by importing foreign doctrines, but to remain with the rather complex and less graspable orthodox belief. If the theological knowledge of his addressees seems not sufficient enough, Jerome shows himself more than happy to refer them either to his own works, or to treatises of respected Christian authors. As such one could argue that he seems to consider himself the authority on exegetical, moral, and ascetic matters, whereas he chiefly delegates theological and doctrinal matters and questions to other Christian teachers.

There occur similar references to the assumption of leadership in Rusticus. Should he become ordained, Jerome argues that one can only become a true holy clergyman if one has been trained in a monk's virtues first:

> "Go then and so live in your monastery that you may deserve to be a clergyman, that you may keep your youth free from all stain of defilement, and that you may come forth to Christ's altar as a virgin steps from her bower; that you may be well spoken of abroad, and that women may know your reputation but not your looks. When you come to ripe years, that is, if life be granted you, and have been appointed as a clergyman either by the people or by the bishop of the city, then act as becomes a cleric, and among your colleagues choose the better men as your models. In every rank and condition of life the very bad is mingled with the very good."[575]

Ideally, the leader of a Christian community ought to be a virgin who enjoys a good reputation beyond the local community: even abroad they should be well spoken of. Furthermore, 'women may know your reputation but not your looks.' This is similar to how the respectability of Roman leaders was judged: did they choose their servants based upon their skills, or upon their looks? If the latter, this suggests that they had little self-restraint, for they would engage in excessive sexual activities with their slaves (hence the look-based selection).[576] It thus affected their reputation. Similarly, if a priest – Christ's servant to the

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attendance of services in Church, or active participation in the ecclesial community other than charitable activities (which they would have already committed themselves to in the first place by the nature of their social rank). There are references to the existence of 'study groups,' maybe 'domestic churches' which, as we could read in the introduction, provide for further class segregation, or serve to keep this segregation intact. If we think of the Priscillian controversy, here we find bishops who condemn the practice of these *socialites* to gather in their Spanish country villas rather than frequent the basilica, see 'Embedded in Roman Society' above.

[575] *Ep.* 125.18.

[576] See discussion above.

community – would be known by his looks, this comment is highly suggestive of his practices within the community. Likewise, if a priests assumes leadership and teaches his community the ideals of asceticism – which he himself must exhibit, *cfr. supra* – then, Jerome argues, he cannot simultaneously assume the role of matchmaker: it would be wrong for him to press virgins to marry or persuade widows into a second marriage as it is incompatible with his office.[577]

What is also remarkable in this segment is Jerome's comment that Rusticus should "keep [his] youth free from all stain of defilement." He repeats this in his concluding chapter, where he wishes "to free a young friend of mine from an itching tongue and itching ears, so that I may present him born again in Christ without spot or roughness as a chaste virgin, holy both in body and mind."[578] Jerome uses here '*sine ruga et macula,*' with recalls the parallel in the letter to Demetrias, and with his competitor Pelagius.[579]

Conclusion

To conclude, Jerome's young peripheral addressees are instructed to become examples, no longer in the strictly Roman traditional sense, but examples that exhibit Christian virtue and moral perfection, worthy of memory (*memoria dignus*). This should demand recognition and respect, and with this they will be able to express their views with authority, no longer based on social standing alone, but guided by a deep knowledge of Scripture and, therefore, encouraged to critical discernment, a step towards individualised studentship. As the peripherals proceed into clerical careers, they will achieve a leading position in their communities. Whereas formerly, and maybe still, they looked up to the example embodied in the patricians, they are now offered an opportunity to become examples themselves. Yet it remains to be seen to whom they would serve as such examples: the suggestion has already been made that those *socialites* from the highest strata do not frequent communal services. Congregations in churches would mainly consist of the unlearned or less literate, in other

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[577] *Ep.* 52.16: "The preacher of continence must not be a maker of marriages. Why does he who reads the apostle's words "it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none" - why does he press a virgin to marry? Why does a priest, who must be a monogamist, urge a widow to marry again? How can the clergy be managers and stewards of other men's households, when they are bidden to disregard even their own interests?"

[578] *Ep.* 125.20.

[579] Pelagius, *Dem.* 24, 3: "[...] *qui cum universam Ecclesiam salutaris aquae lavacro purificatam sine macula rugaque reddiderit, quotidie cupit eam fieri pulchriorem, ut semel a vitiis pecatisque mundata, semper ornetur decore virtutum* [...]". Compare this with his reply at the Synod of Diospolis, where he will argue that the Church has indeed been purified, and that Christ desires her to keep spotless: "*Dictum est [...] a nobis, sed ita, quoniam lavacro ab omni macula et ruga purgatur Ecclesia, quam velit ita Dominus permanere*", see Augustine, *Gest. Pel. Liber unus* 12, PL 44, coll. 336.

words, people of lower social statuses. On the other hand, it has been suggested that church leaders interact with municipal leaders, and it is on such occasions (entertainments) where the peripherals might have a chance to engage with those formerly out of reach.

Whereas for patricians, young and senior alike, actual transformation is near to negligible, it has been shown that for young peripherals there could potentially be, or have been, some form of transformation. This transformation has to be seen in the realm of property: peripherals seeking to pursue an ecclesial career would face a loss of property and loss of the right to inherit. Jerome presents it as a voluntary act, but in fact this was incorporated in Roman law, although only for some time, and limited to the lower clergy. Bishops seem to not have been subject to such restrictions. In this case the young men meet consequences their senior counterparts did not have to face.

Conclusion

Now that we have established some image of a couple of individual Roman *socialites* and ambitious peripherals, looking over Jerome's shoulder whose pen drew us a window to have a glimpse into their lives, could we determine if we could classify them as Christian *nobilitas*, or as Roman *nobilitas*, or, perhaps, as a combination of both?

One of the first statements made was that we are dealing with Jerome's highly idiosyncratic efforts to redefine Christian *nobilitas* by adopting basic notions of Roman *nobilitas*. His rhetoric advocates conversion which makes Roman nobles adopt his model of Christian asceticism, but the analyses have shown that the opposite was far more susceptible. Even more, I have suggested that the opposite might have been Jerome's underlying aim: to be recognised as, and as such become part of the *nobilitas*. The latter has become particularly clear as we progressed from Jerome's 'inner' circle of Roman patrician patron-students, via peripheral aristocrats, to young aristocrats of whom the final group, the 'peripherals' most closely resemble Jerome himself, or could be regarded as a mirror reflecting Jerome's own youthful ambitious self. One of the most obvious indicators for Jerome's own ambitions is the choice of medium. Letter-writing was an essential element in Roman social networks and particularly for the elite, where it had its own distinguished etiquette of epistolography. It was the go-to medium to keep in contact, to create 'presence in absence,' to convey recommendations, and to ask favours. A busy literary agenda could be interpreted as a measure of importance, reputation, and authority.

The reader has met Pammachius as the epitome of Jerome's patron-students who embodies the continuation of Roman tradition merged as the perfection of Roman citizen and Christian noble man in one person. He is the model for like-minded peers, for aspiring peripherals, and he is the ultimate model for Jerome. However, he is not a marketing product in the way Jerome's ladies have been presented in their transformed literary bodies of iconic perfection. Maybe Pammachius's (masculine, as *vir illustris*) superiority over Jerome would have prevented the latter from regarding his patron-student as marketing product. As a senior male teacher he can permit himself to, in the literary realm, patronise his female patron-students and artificially enhance their marketability because they were, in a way, more 'subordinate' and as such more suitable for 'branding' (brand wagons of Jerome's teaching). Similarly, young aristocrats, both male and female, are more suitable for such a subordinate role. There are *vitae* which have men as their subjects, although their historicity is heavily disputed and the nature of those literary productions is essentially different from the

hagiographies (eulogies or epitaphs) incorporated in Jerome's epistolary corpus. Despite Pammachius's prominent role as a patron for Jerome, he has not composed a eulogy for him. I have been unable to find a satisfying answer in the analyses of letters in the Pammachius-Jerome collection. It follows that research on Pammachius should be continued, and I hope to commit myself to a critical text edition of *Epistle* 66, contextualised of course with the other letters, for which I hope the two Pammachius-chapters of the current thesis could form a basis.

The peripherals do not belong to what Jerome and his inner Roman circle understood to be true *nobilitas*. Based on the singularity of the letters and an analysis of language we can establish that their connection with Jerome can be classified as 'weak ties.' Jerome is the facilitator of at least one (basically confirmed or quite sound) case where he is establishes, or is consulted to establish a new relation between an alleged 'peripheral' and a patrician: Marcellinus and Anapsychia, who had approached Jerome to be introduced to Oceanus. Although Jerome hints in his letter to Anapsychia and Marcellinus to the existence of more letters, there is no evidence that he personally knew them (convention of classical letter-writing might make it appear as such). As such they are an excellent example of how weak ties benefit from their connection: their (potential) use of Jerome as facilitator to connect with patricians. On the other hand we have seen that in the case of Nepotian, strong ties are used to establish weak ties: Heliodorus, who has a strong-tie-relation with Jerome, is used as facilitator to establish a weak-tie-relation between his nephew (Heliodorus and Nepotian have a strong tie by virtue of their biological and professional relation) and Jerome.

This leads us to assess the young aristocrats versus the seniors. The letters to young aristocrats are characterised by their emphasis on the students' perfection of knowledge of Scripture (exegesis) and doctrine, which serve to train the addressee in formulating (theological) arguments that could be perceived as authoritative, and enabled them to present themselves publicly as examples of an authentic, ascetic Christian life, worthy to be followed by others. In modern academic language, they embody the public impact of Jerome's scholarship.

When Jerome writes to young aristocrats, the character of the correspondence is more instructive and there is a clear aim for (trans)formation of the subject: the letters have a strong pedagogical focus with relatively frequent use of idealised examples or models, and more emphasis on ideal moral and ascetic conduct. Furthermore, Jerome extensively deals with the dangers of passion and sexual desire which are most present in the young bodies of his correspondents. Instructions on fasting, social interaction, and study are presented as fire

extinguishers. Jerome seemingly found it appropriate to offer a wide array of examples of where others transgress on these aspects of Christian conduct, learning, teaching, and knowledge. The young aristocrats are required to redefine their identities and his letters assist them so that they could grow to become perfect living examples of an authentic ascetic Christian life. In his instructions, Jerome tries to transform the 'old,' yet preserves the importance of an education in the liberal arts, with an emphasis on critical thinking. By this emphasis on one's own learning, on knowledge, wisdom, perfection, and an abundant use of classics and rhetoric, Jerome is presenting himself as a key role model, more than in his letters to senior aristocrats.

Could we establish if there occurred a transformation of identity for the individual actors of this study? It may be obvious that indeed the question of transformation of identity was far more complex than Jerome's idealised literary efforts would like to make the reader believe: agents, agendas, idealised reconstructed reality, rhetoric, social expectations and customs, rules of literary interaction, correspondence and interpersonal communication; external expectations, peerage, patronage, and the merging of, or rather the blurred overlap of the domains of various religious traditions, even perhaps the secular and religion; and how all of this is being presented to us, again, by actors or agents with particular agendas, one of which was clearly to be part of what was so attractive, namely to be a member of the Roman *nobilitas*. In fact, Jerome's individual agency offered us some insight into 'lived religion' of his aristocratic associates, and in line with this it offered insight into the rich diversity of a multitude of Christianities; *in casu* a particularly appropriated ascetic Christianity that hardly required a 'conversion.' Rather, Jerome's model offered intellectual challenges to an elite susceptible for this type of pastime (*otium*). Jerome shows himself more than aware of the fine details that define aristocratic life. He plays in to the 'code of conduct' for senatorial office, where holders of this rank were expected to demonstrate the virtues that characterise the order. These virtues, that is wisdom, self-control (discipline, *askeisis*), courage (perseverance), and justice (e.g. defence of orthodox doctrine, almsgiving), are carefully incorporated in the letters. Moral virtues such as *pudicitia*, virginity, chastity, and modesty were all highly praised in Roman aristocratic tradition, and they float seamlessly into Jerome's model of noble ascetic perfection. Aristocrats and the *illustres* in particular defined each other and continued to do so. This aspect can be detected in the exchange between the individuals that from the (narrative) network 'served,' and to some extent facilitated by Jerome. The hierarchy between patricians and peripherals is even preserved: the patricians are the examples for the peripherals and never vice versa. Although the peripheral aristocrats are

encouraged to embark on the path to perfection, the language has shown that the hopes for them to succeed are rather less rosy than for the exalted patricians. The distinction is further emphasised by the way the network operates. Jerome's strong ties with the Roman aristocrats secure a wider publication and distribution of his scholarly output, which are diffused through multiple circles and as such have the potential to establish new ties. On the other hand, a high number of weak-tie connections could equally enhance notability: it could benefit both parties as their bond confirms the noble pursuits and aristocratic character of their daily lives of the one, whilst it confirms the authority and expertise of the other. As such, they could win respect and recognition from those whom they seek to imitate, and whose status they seek to achieve (the true *nobilitas*).

The individual examples all show that at least the senior aristocrats continue to fulfil their social obligations. They did not abandon the city, they did not commit to a total renunciation of wealth. They often remain in the comfort of their own *domus* (palaces), which offer protected environments particularly for young ascetic aristocrats. Those few who do join a monastery find that social distinction is preserved. Regardless of remaining in their own house or joining a community, the aristocrats keep hold of their servants. Most importantly, they continue their practice of patronage: monumental patronage, euergetism, and patronage over clients, which include consulting individual religious agents (spiritual mentors); often they patronise a multitude of agents who do not always advocate the same views and might belong to different denominations. They themselves act as individual agents in the responsibility they take up to publish and distribute literature, as well as speaking up in doctrinal debates and institutional politics (be they ecclesial or imperial). Their monumental patronage now extends (but is not limited) to commissioning churches and shrines, they involve in charity and almsgiving for the populace which is both Christian and non-Christian.

Likewise, there remains the importance of representation, perfection, and the *exemplum* model. The ascetic aristocrats are furthermore not equal and one among other Christians: they have their own privileged communities where they read and study – just as they would do in the Roman tradition, with the exception that they now also read Scripture and theological treatises. Jerome praises them as the pearls among the Christian flock: they are presented as living examples of Christian virtue.

If we had to think of an example of genuine transformation, at first sight the only more or less significant transformation seems to have been virginity which implied the end of the pedigree, but as we have seen in the introduction and in the analyses the number of people whose families actually remained childless were very few, or the sources are not clear about

offspring. This however only relates to young aristocrats, although they often would have had siblings who might secure continuation of the family line. Hence, it could be argued that the extinction of an impressive family line was a genuine concern.

Although no generalisations can be made, and it was the explicit intention of the new methodology to break away from that tendency to look at individual agency instead, based on these individual cases formerly known to be just the 'very few radicals', de-radicalising them has shown we should readjust our picture of the 'general' aristocratic Christians: there seems to have been much more continuation and less transformation than commonly accepted. The grand narrative of the "conversion of the aristocracy" needs to be challenged and changed, and the same goes for the 'conversion model' which is too rooted in an institutional, hierarchical, and ideological approach. Conversion (religion) and transformation (identity) are terminologies and concepts that breathe an apologetic language and which reveal a defence mechanism for validity and credibility. What if the 'victory of Christianity' was not that glorious and victorious after all? The challenge of the alleged 'conversion of the aristocracy' based on a study of individual actors is but one example that questions the validity of the claim. The current work has sought to contribute to this, but it is obvious that this requires much further research. One of the limitations has been that my focus was solely concentrated on textual evidence. To get a more complete picture archaeological finds need to be assessed as well. For example, we need to complement the textual evidence with the use of visual arts which these aristocrats used to profile themselves, or to convey a certain message of themselves, but also what this said about alleged renunciation etc. Thus far, I have only sporadically referred to epigraphic and artistic expressions.

In sum, Jerome offered the most distinguished privilege and prestige with his model of Jeromian *nobilitas*: Roman *nobilitas* fitted with a Christian ascetic cloak (or toga), just as Jerome himself was a Roman classical author dipped in Christian ink. He preserved the exclusivity of Roman *nobilitas* by means of an appropriation of aspects of Christian asceticism to create a *nobilitas* that was at least Christian in its literary form. As such, the illustrious Roman aristocrats could secure their noble superiority in an environment where their senatorial status seemed to have been in decline. Jerome's model restored the old Roman exclusivist notion of *nobilitas* as an antidote against the opening-up of senatorial rank to civil and military officers by creating a status group of Christian elite. The letters reveal that there was a careful selection of Christian ascetic elements, which in practice did not radically alter aristocratic daily life. Rather, the analyses have illustrated the extraordinary continuation of basically all elements that constitute and define senatorial status culture.

What Neil Adkin has interpreted as ‘magpie’ behaviour, I would state fits Jerome’s attempt to offer a model that embodies continuation with all that breathes Roman aristocratic status culture of the *illustres*. The dramatic rhetoric of transformation and the narrative of perfection serve their need for distinction and their identification with *pars melior generis humani*. The literary representation of the *socialites* as exemplary nobles who embody perfection not only offered the temporal respect and recognition that were so essential to their status culture; above all, it secured *memoria dignus*.

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Labourt (Budé), Wright (Loeb), and primarily Fremantle (NPNF) have been consulted for the French and English translations. Most of the English translations used in this work are based on Fremantle, updated with my own translations where necessary. For Nepotian (52) and Rusticus (125) the translations are Wright's.

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